

TRANS/FORMING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: RETROSPECTIVES  
OF TRANSGENDER PERSONS AS PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS  
IN SCHOOL CONTEXTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study examines educational experiences of trans\* persons in order to apply those experiences as pedagogical tools to assist educational leaders with inclusive school leadership.

**Research Methods:** In this interpretive qualitative case study, eight participants were divided in two groups; the groups were not intentionally exclusive, but they did not overlap in key characteristics. Four participants identified as trans\*, and four identified as teacher leaders. Initially, each participant was interviewed individually. Trans\* participants described times in school when they took on the role of public intellectual around gender identity issues, and teacher leaders described their prior knowledge of trans\* issues. Second, trans\* participants discussed their desired outcome for a face-to-face discussion with teacher leaders. Finally, trans\* participants and teacher leaders met together to share experiences and to assist educational leaders in being allies to trans\* students. Domain analysis was used to analyze the text of interviews, group meetings, and participant journal responses. Techniques of Arts Based Educational Research were used to create poetry based on the data collected during the investigation.

**Findings:** Data demonstrated semantic relationships in the following areas: the adult trans\* person reflecting back on school as refutation of traditional structures; the adult trans\* person reflecting back on school as acknowledgement of difference; the adult trans\* person reflecting back on school as refusal of simplistic and derogatory images of themselves; the response of school leaders to trans\* stories as refutation of traditional structures; the response of school leaders to trans\* stories as acknowledgement of difference; the response of school leaders to trans\* stories as refusal of simplistic and derogatory images of themselves.

**Implications:** Interpretation of interviews, meetings, journals, and poems revealed that trans\* adults can serve as resources/partners for advocacy in schools; school leaders can act as learners in public pedagogy situations; public pedagogy can create a strategic alliance across difference among trans\* public intellectuals and teacher leaders; and there are several practical applications to school settings of the outcomes of the conversations between trans\* participants and school leaders.

**Keywords:** teacher leaders, educational leadership, transgender, LGBT, inclusion

## I. INTRODUCTION

*I hope you become a teacher  
who fights for a future  
fit for all children –  
a place of peace and justice.*

(Inscription from Bill Ayers in *To Become a Teacher*, 1998)

### The Skirt

The child was born in the year of Title IX.  
The mother was concerned with her own new pants,  
so the father liberally decorated the child's room  
in yellow and green.

The young child went to school  
in tube socks, athletic shorts and a Star Wars t-shirt.  
The child received high marks for creativity  
playing Father during games of house.

Yet, school confused the child  
with boy lines and girl lines and no coloring outside the lines.  
So out of school the child taught school in a new way  
in the closet  
with stuffed animal students and shoe box desks

But the child grew up  
Society clamored with its claws  
"To teach, you must wear a skirt" SHE was told

SHE returned to the closet  
to the shoebox desks  
and stuffed animal students  
and made yelling sounds

"I am I, not SHE;  
See how I will teach."  
- Beck, 2011, unpublished

### Background

I am a trans man (I was born with female genitalia, but I identify as male and am medically transitioning my body to align with my identity), and I write about trans\* (I use

trans\* to describe people who identify anywhere on the transgender spectrum because transgender people identify in ways beyond trans man and trans woman, and I choose not to leave any identity out; See **Figure 1**) experience, news, and issues for *Hothouse Magazine*. “Transgender” is the T in the often-heard acronym LGBT and means beyond, or on the other side of, gender, and typically refers to people who identify or express their gender in a way that does not align with their birth sex. LGBT stands for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender and is a simplistic way of grouping a wide variety of sexual and gender minorities into a community. Sometimes the acronym changes from LGBT to LGBT+ to LGBTQ or LGBTQI or LGBTQIA, where the Q stands for queer, the I for Intersex, and the A for Asexual or Aromantic. In any of these variations, many identities are still not represented by a letter in the acronym. In this research study, I will use the acronym LGBTQIA to be as inclusive as possible while still working within the bounds of the current linguistic practices.

In 2013, I wrote articles for *Hothouse Magazine* on school safety for trans\* students, the trans\* perspective on marriage equality, Germany’s acknowledgement of Intersex births with new birth certificate legislation, Laverne Cox and *Orange is the New Black* (Kohan, 2013), and more. My activism and trans\* voice on Facebook led to my position as staff writer for *Hothouse Magazine*, when the Gender Section Editor for *Hothouse Magazine* noticed my trans\* related Facebook postings and offered me a position writing regularly for her. I consider Facebook a public pedagogy forum—a place for me to educate others about my experience and the conditions of my interaction with society, so I was honored to accept the position—a position allowing me to educate others about trans\* issues on a larger stage.

2013 was a monumental year for trans\* rights and visibility in the United States.

On January 3, 2014, in *Hothouse Magazine*, I wrote the following:

James Nichols of *The Huffington Post* summed up the biggest transgender moments of 2013 as follows:

- 1) Chelsea Manning Comes Out
- 2) Cassidy Lynn Campbell voted homecoming queen
- 3) Carmen Carrera petitions Victoria's Secret
- 4) Laverne Cox had an amazing year.
- 5) McDonald's supports transgender rights with bathroom message
- 6) Pat Robertson makes progressive transgender message...sort of.
- 7) Alysia comes out in DC Comics' Batgirl
- 8) Transgender Military Conversation
- 9) Kristen Beck, former SEAL
- 10) Arin Andrews and Katie Hill, teen couple transition together
- 11) Ari South competes on Project Runway
- 12) Masha Best announces campaign for Russian presidency
- 13) California passed key legislation
- 14) Arizona's "Show me your papers before you go potty" Bill
- 15) Argentina grants gender identity ID card
- 16) Ashton Lee delivered petition to California governor
- 17) Domaine Javier sues California Baptist University
- 18) MMA Fighter Fallon Fox comes out

Did this all really happen in one year? Transgender people and transgender rights have been in the news in new proportions this past year, and I wonder if we will continue to see growth in this field of human rights in the coming year.

Some of the events highlighted in *The Huffington Post* are positive strides; some are still evidence of the negative backlash and discrimination that the transgender

community faces in our society. Whether positive or negative, it is a monumental step that we are being recognized as newsworthy—to get our stories told on a national stage helps begin to turn the tide from negative to positive.

Many of the stories highlighted in *The Huffington Post* are coming out stories, and it is important that the national stage is recognizing the transition process and the coming out that is involved in that, but the stories that amaze and impress me are the ones of the spokespeople advocating for the community. Masha Best speaking up for transgender rights in Russia when so much negative publicity and violence is being perpetrated against the LGBTQIA community in that country inspires me. Everything about Laverne Cox's career and work for the transgender community through her career helps me remember that we are people first and that we deserve respect as people. To see Cox play a transgender character on *Orange is the New Black* (Kohan, 2013) was inspiring. I've always been a fan of the transgender characters in books and movies, but to see a transgender actress play a transgender character took our campaign to a new level. And it paved the way for Cox to talk about what it means to be a person of transgender experience in a way that people could really listen to.

Nichols did not write about the murders and violence that are still perpetrated against our community. GLSEN's report *Harsh Realities* (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009) was not a part of the news. But at least we're being represented in more places and by more voices. Maybe each new year will continue to see more major firsts for people of transgender experience.

While trans\* issues and trans\* persons received somewhat more favorable portrayals in media in 2012 and 2013, prejudice still abounds. I do not propose to tackle

*all* of media, but I do want to highlight some significant steps in presenting the trans\* perspective in popular media, in the United States, in my lifetime. Wright and Sandlin (2009) posit that “Individual life experiences, beliefs, morals, ethics, political choices, and personal philosophies—our identities—are filtered through the images, commentary, and artful editing of the forces that operate through popular culture” and conclude that “Popular culture as a facilitator of, and catalyst for, self-directed learning can bring about learning that is far more powerful, lasting, and lifelong than learning informal educational setting and other traditionally researched areas of teaching and learning” (p. 135). Wright (2007) indicates that popular culture and media are powerful teaching tools and their effects have lasting impact on learners.

*Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991) hit the market in that same year that I was a freshman in high school and “Buffalo Bill” represented one of the first interactions with a trans\* person that I had. I had seen *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Sharman, 1975) when I was in grade school, but I didn’t know that Frank N. Furter represented a gender category that might actually be possible in real life. *Silence of the Lambs* presented a drama that seemed to me to be based on real-life possibilities; whereas, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* was fantasy and science fiction. In *Silence of the Lambs*, “Buffalo Bill” was portrayed as evil, sick, and backwards—very fitting with the label of “wrong” that my mom had given me. Born male, “Buffalo Bill” wanted to be a woman but resorted to violence when the medical establishment wouldn’t help him transition his body to that of a woman. I didn’t see or hear of Brandon Teena until 2012, which is sad for me because he was so much like me. Teena died in 1993—when I was a junior in high school and could have used evidence that other people like me existed. The movie *Boys*

*Don't Cry* (Pierce, 1999) in which Hilary Swank portrayed Brandon came out in 1999, the year I graduated college, and I still didn't hear of it until 2012. The trans\* community has mixed feelings about the film. Yes, Swank did an excellent job and Brandon's story is an important one to tell and it is told well in *Boys Don't Cry* but there are many young trans\* actors who could have done a good job as well, so why not use trans\* actors to play trans\* characters? Fortunately, one of my favorite current television programs, *Elementary*, has garnered huge support among trans\* persons and allies with its recent airing of Episode 1.19 "Snow Angels" as Candis Cayne (a trans\* actress) portrays Miss Hudson (a trans\* character).

Trans\* persons have now found a place on television in *Glee* (Brennan, Murphy, & Fachuk, 2009). The 16<sup>th</sup> episode of season 3 of *Glee* (first aired April 17, 2012 in the United States), introduced Wade/Unique who decides to perform with Vocal Adrenaline as a female even though he is biologically male. Even Kurt, the openly gay character on the show, advises Wade/Unique against such behavior. Kurt projects “drag” and “cross-dresser” as identities onto Wade/Unique, but Wade/Unique responds, “That’s because you identify as a man.” Wade/Unique is a trans\* person and succeeds in performing as Unique, to the shock and awe of many other characters, including Kurt. By 2013, we see Unique coming to school as herself and associating with the girls fulltime.

Interestingly, David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks* (Frost & Lynch, 1990), which originally aired in 1990, had a trans\* character (played by cis male David Duchovny)—DEA Agent Denise Bryson (MTF trans woman). I didn’t watch *Twin Peaks* at the time it aired and don’t remember hearing anything about this trans\* character, but I remember when I did watch it in 1997, with a group of college friends, that I was beside myself with



excitement to see someone I respected—David Duchovny—playing a trans\* character in a respectful and educated manner. One of the friends I watched with identified as a trans woman, and she loved Duchovny’s role. I wasn’t “out” at the time, but I know that seeing that helped me form the seeds that gave me the confidence to come out when I did.

*Orange is the New Black* (Kohan, 2013), a Netflix original series, originally aired in 2013. This has been of great importance for trans\* rights because trans\* actress Laverne Cox plays trans\* character Sophia Burset. In the series, Sophia’s transition is discussed, and since the show aired, Cox has been featured in the news speaking up for trans\* rights. In January of 2014, Katie Couric interviewed Laverne Cox and trans\* model Carmen Carrera. In the interview, Couric asked demeaning, dehumanizing questions about Carrera’s “private parts”. Cox responded to Couric in a way that has taught Couric and others about respecting trans\* people as people. In the interview, Cox replied to Couric—coming to Carrera’s defense—

I do feel there is a preoccupation with that. The preoccupation with transition and surgery objectifies trans people. And then we don’t get to really deal with the real lived experiences. The reality of trans people’s lives is that so often we are targets of violence. We experience discrimination disproportionately to the rest of the community. Our unemployment rate is twice the national average; if you are a trans person of color, that rate is four times the national average. The homicide rate is highest among trans women. If we focus on transition, we don’t actually get to talk about those things. (McDonough, 2014a, n.p.)

2012 also saw the release of the Glenn Close film *Albert Nobbs* (García, 2011). Albert is a woman living as a man in Victorian England. The film does not indicate

whether Albert and friend Hubert would identify as trans\* or whether they simply live as men because social needs dictate a necessity to do so, but the message is still the same. Gender identity and expression are fluid and are within an individual. Hubert and Albert each seek the company of women and live full-time as men, even going so far as to bind their breasts and to take on male names and male societal roles.

Even DC Comics has learned to include everyone. Superman has been my hero since I was a small child watching Christopher Reeve portray him on the Silver Screen, but it is more exciting for me now to know that the same company that created Superman is stepping up and including a trans\* character. Quinn (2013) reports “ ‘Batgirl’ introduced the first transgender character in a mainstream comic series: Batgirl’s roommate, Alysia Yeoh” (n.p.). The writer of Batgirl, Gail Simone, said the trans\* character is written in recognition of the diversity of fans.

And, yet, there has been great controversy over Jared Leto’s Academy-Award-winning role as Rayon in *Dallas Buyers Club*. *Dallas Buyers Club* (Vallée, 2013) tells the story of Ron Woodruff—played by Matthew McConaughey—and his journey into the world of HIV/AIDS. Along his journey, he meets a trans woman named Rayon—played by cisgender male Jared Leto—who is also facing the HIV/AIDS epidemic. At the 2014 Academy Awards, *Dallas Buyers Club* earned six Oscar nominations including best actor for McConaughey, best supporting actor for Leto and best picture (Reuters, 2014). Both McConaughey and Leto won their respective categories, while the picture lost its category to *12 Years a Slave*. According to Rachel (2014), the character of Rayon in *Dallas Buyers Club* was originally meant to be a drag queen. Rachel quotes Leto as saying, “[director] Jean-Marc may have seen Rayon more as a drag queen or someone

who enjoys pushing a gender envelope or dressing up in women's clothing" (n.p.). When Leto accepted a Golden Globe award for his portrayal of Rayon, he made transmisogynistic comments in his acceptance speech when he referred to anatomy and waxing, undermining the reality of trans\* women's experiences (Rachel 2014, n.p.). Friess (2014) aligned Leto's Oscar win to the 1940 Oscar win for Hattie McDaniel for her role as "Mammy" in *Gone with the Wind*. At the time, the Academy applauded her for her portrayal of black women's lives, and they are now applauding Leto for his portrayal of trans\* women's lives, but we now realize that the McDaniel role was a limited, stereotyped, demeaning portrayal of black culture, and we will soon (hopefully) realize the same thing about Leto's role in *Dallas Buyers Club*. While Leto has been criticized, rightly so, for his inappropriate comments at the Golden Globes and the fact that he said nothing specific to the transgender community at the Academy Awards, he did have a positive comment about the LGBTQIA community at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival's Virtuosos Awards after a heckler told him, "Trans-misogyny does not deserve an award" (Ehrlich, 2014). Leto responded with a somewhat thoughtful and pro-LGBTQIA comment:

Because I'm a man, I don't deserve to play that part?.... So you would hold a role against someone who happened to be gay or lesbian—they can't play a straight part? Then you've made sure people that are gay, people that aren't straight, people like the Rayons of the world would never have the opportunity to turn the tables and explore parts of that art. (Ehrlich, 2014)

Ultimately, the role and the critical acclaim Leto has received have brought more attention to the trans\* community.

Trans\* persons are in the news more and more often—although not often in an encouraging or affirming context. In fact, Google provides me, at my request, with a daily trans\* news feed, and it has more hits than my LGBTQIA news feed. On June 4, 2013, the headline from ABC news in the trans\* news feed impressed me so much that I rushed to buy the book being discussed. The article, “Former Navy Seal Reveals Transgender Identity” by Adam Weinstein, shares the story of Kristen Beck who was a SEAL for 20 years and even served on the elite Team 6 that killed Osama bin Laden. She has released a memoir called *Warrior Princess*, relating her story of trans\* identity in the military and her post-military transition with a special focus on her fellow soldiers’ understanding. ABC10News reported that the Pentagon has officially recognized another Navy veteran’s change of gender. In the military, trans\* bans remain despite gay and lesbian bans having been lifted; however, Autumn Sandeen has received a change of gender on all her military documents from the Pentagon (Chen, 2013). The headline of *The Daily News* on May 20, 2013, read, “Transgender student in Pa. fights to have male name read at graduation” (Ortiz, 2013), and the May 16, 2013, headline from KRQE.com read, “Graduation gown a problem for transgender student” (Jensen, 2013). While those high school students are struggling with graduation related issues, Tufts University is progressively facing transgenderism. Landergan (2013) reports, “Tufts University has adopted a new healthcare plan that includes benefits for transgender students, making Tufts the 37<sup>th</sup> university or college in the country to offer health insurance of this kind” (n.p.).

Two pieces of news have been particularly positive for the trans\* community recently. Particularly intriguing in relation to this study is news that has been circulating

out of California throughout the 2013 legislative session, culminating with action by Governor Jerry Brown in August of 2013. Governor Brown signed legislation affecting trans\* students in California K-12 schools. The new legislation guarantees trans\* students access to interscholastic sports, restrooms, gym classes and locker rooms based on gender identity rather than biological sex. California is the first state to write such access for trans\* identified students into law (Lovett, 2013). As I completed this research study, another interesting occurrence happened related to the transgender community in the United States. Becker (2014) reports that the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has interpreted the protections of Title IX—a federal law prohibiting discrimination based on sex—as extending to gender identity and expression. This is a groundbreaking ruling for transgender students who have traditionally been marginalized by the binaristic, sex-based expectations for behavior in our society.

On April 5, 2012, *The Vancouver Sun* reported that Jenna Talackova has known she was female since age 4, although she was born male. She has been in the news in March and April of 2012 because she was banned from the Miss Universe pageant because she wasn't born female (Woo & Hoekstra, 2012). On March 26, 2012, CBS News reported that a 70 year old man in New York wanted a new birth certificate issued to reflect that he had transitioned to male, not the one that currently existed representing his birth as female. Louis Birney's case highlights the inadequacies in our system for responding to trans\* persons, as lawyers and courts had to become involved in order to help him get his new birth certificate (Peltz, 2012). In general, trans\* persons who opt out of hormone therapy and sexual alignment surgery ("no ho, no op trans") struggle with having their gender identity represented in their government identification. Fortunately,

Illinois and Alaska have now adopted policies allowing trans\* persons to receive identification reflecting their gender identity rather than their birth sex even without sexual alignment surgery (Cannes, 2012c). And, Ferguson (2013) reports that “The Idaho state government has dropped its requirement that people undergoing gender reassignment produce proof that they have been surgically altered in order to change the gender their driver’s licenses” [sic] (n.p.).

*Gay Star News* reported, on March 26, 2012, that activists are protesting a German court decision to institutionalize an 11-year-old trans\* child (Jenkin, 2012). On March 29, 2012, *Care2 Causes* reported that a trans\* teacher in New Mexico was forced to quit her job because parents complained about her gender identity (Cannes, 2012a). Trans\* persons are gaining more legal rights, however. *LGBTQNation* reported on March 27, 2012, that a six-year battle to over turn a Wisconsin anti-trans\* law had ended with a ruling in favor of trans\* persons incarcerated in Wisconsin (Levasseur, 2012). According to Cannes (2012b), Oxford University—known for its adherence to strict codes of dress—has adopted a new policy that allows trans\* persons to dress according to their gender identity rather than their sex. Also, a prominent lawyer in Australia, Heather Stokes, has transitioned while maintaining her high profile clients and conducting trials (Broverman, 2012).

Despite the seemingly negative outlook on trans\* persons and issues presented by the news, strides toward understanding and equality are coming from the trans\* advocacy community. Sometimes our best advocates are our parents. In Germany, a father has taken to wearing skirts on occasion to show support for his dress-loving son (Garcia, 2012). The children’s book *10,000 Dresses* (Ewert, 2008) helps parents, children, and

teachers explore issues of gender difference. On Facebook, we participate actively and openly in a Facebook Transgender Alliance through which we share news, articles, and personal experiences with each other in order to advocate for ourselves and for others in similar situations. Through the Alliance, I have been privileged to participate in discussion related to sexual alignment surgery, hormone treatment, socialization, perceived and actual phobia and bullying, and best practices for educating the public. The Alliance has provided me a safe space in which to explore ideas about myself and others similar to me in order to be a more effective researcher and advocate for the trans\* community.

Fassinger and Arseneau (2007), in a chapter of the *Handbook of Counseling and Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Clients (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*, report:

Sexual minorities—typically classified into the four categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people—face common struggles with societal oppression related to their sexual minority status, and they therefore face similar difficulties in developing positive individual identities and healthy communities within that context of oppression. The increasingly frequent addition of ‘T’ to ‘LGB’ speaks to the public—and professional—conflation of all sexual minority concerns under a shared umbrella of invisibility, isolation, and discrimination. However, there are particular dimensions of experience that differentiate these four sexual minority groups in important ways, shaping group-specific trajectories for the development and enactment of identity. (Chapter 1, Section 1, para. 1)

The important point here is that each piece of the LGBTQIA umbrella is important individually and individuals within each piece are important as well. So, I want to know more about the ‘T’ piece of the LGBTQIA umbrella. Much of my own experience and the way I see the world influences my desire to deconstruct the ‘T’ of the LGBTQIA umbrella. Admittedly, I find the term “umbrella” somewhat problematic. Umbrella terms tend to group disparate people together in a limiting fashion; however, they also give language and voice to marginalized people and help to form alliances across differences in ways that can generate political action. If I identify within a group, then that is fine, but I should be careful not to place someone else into a category without their consent. As the blogger kstew (2014) noted, umbrella terms can create an “us-them mentality. . . eras[ing] our individuality by lumping everyone who is not cisgender and heterosexual into one big group of ‘other.’ On the other hand, [they can create] unity and community and power in numbers” (n.p.)

In 1991, I was 14 years old, a freshman in high school, and beginning to question how my gender and sexuality fit within the context of the society of which I was a part. I was born female but have always identified more with aspects of personality and activity that are more typically categorized as male. The only times I’ve worn dresses/skirts, it’s been under duress in order to please my mom. During my freshman year of high school, I was the only female in my school not shaving my legs and underarms. I also have female hirsutism, which results in extensive and rapid growth of facial hair. I ran for freshman class treasurer, and my advertising posters were defaced. My peers used Sharpie markers to draw moustaches and beards and to write the words, “If I win, I’ll shave” on my posters. I retreated into a silent, solo world away from peers. I didn’t



know anyone else like me, and I certainly hadn't seen any examples in the media. Everyone in the media was cisgender and met a certain stereotype of beauty that I didn't fit. I conformed to my peers' expectations to some extent, shaving my legs and underarms and beginning to receive electrolysis and medication to remove/control the facial hair. My mother labeled my natural development as “wrong” and took me to doctors all over Central Texas to “fix” me. I thought, like other males, I should shave my face or grow a beard and moustache. However, I became more and more depressed as the years went by.

### **Current Personal Events**

On my university campus (where I received three masters degrees and am earning my PhD), I am privileged to be part of the AdvoCats (a committee overseeing the Peer-to-Peer student LGBTQIA Allies trainings), Allies (the LGBTQIA advocacy group), and Alliance (the faculty/staff LGBTQIA advocacy organization) organizations. Since 2007, I have been a facilitator for Allies training (LGBTQIA advocacy) on our campus. Each year, I see new ideas and research come forth through the implementation of the trainings we provide to faculty, staff and students on campus. Our Allies training provides participants with role-playing scenarios, psychological and sociological theory, terminology and experiential stories to promote an understanding of peace and justice for all people in our campus community—especially those who identify as LGBTQIA. I have observed that in these trainings, even participants who identify within the LGBTQIA community often misunderstand the term “transgender”. Our participants rarely know anyone who identifies as trans\* and often come to us with the misconception that trans\* is a sexual identity rather than a gender identity. It is a slow and patient process to

provide appropriate research and story to help participants see that trans\* is a gender category and that within trans\* any sexuality is a possibility. The concept of choice often comes up during our discussions of trans\* issues in Allies training, as well. Because most people who choose to be trained as Allies are between tolerant and nurturing of LGBTQIA people, they come to us with a belief that sexuality is not a choice. Lady Gaga's recent pop hit "Born This Way" has certainly forwarded a message of nature over nurture as well. However, the understanding that trans\* is also not a choice becomes more difficult because gender expression is frequently misconstrued as gender identity. Participants come to us to learn tolerance, respect, admiration, acceptance, and nurturance of LGBTQIA persons in our campus community, but they come to us with varying degrees of experience and knowledge. When defining gender expression and gender identity for our participants, we seek to help them see that identifying our own gender is a "coming out" process that even cisgender (literally cis- means "on the near side of"; thus cisgender is someone who identifies their gender identity and expression "on the near side of" the sex they were assigned at birth) persons go through and that gender expression is a choice day-by-day. These discussions lead to further thoughts and investigations on my part about the choice v. "Born this Way" debate. Part of the reason that anti-gay spokespersons claim that homosexuals do not qualify for civil rights protection is that homosexuality is a choice; however, some studies suggest that homosexuality is biologically based. Most importantly to note, however, is that the battle of choice v. "Born this Way" limits our pedagogical power as a community because each is a foundational argument and creates further binaries and oppositions. What if sexuality

and gender are choices? Even then, we need to embrace all humans and extend human rights universally (Whisman, 1996).

The public pedagogy venue of Facebook has been an amazing asset to me as a trans\* person and as an activist/advocate. As will be addressed in detail later, public pedagogy refers to a “form of education . . . largely constructed as a concept focusing on various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond formal schooling and . . . distinct from hidden and explicit curricula operating within and through school sites” (Sandlin, O’Malley, & Burdick, 2011, p. 338-9). Through Facebook, people share their personal stories as well as news that they’ve read. Petitions for change circulate through Facebook and graphic memes representing ideas and ideals get posted from page to page. I use Facebook as a venue of public pedagogy in order that I might educate others about issues of import to me—such as LGBTQIA rights—and also to be educated by and about those who believe differently than I. Recently, the following meme (**Figure 1**) advocating for the trans\* population circulated around Facebook. It may not have reached as wide an audience as I would have liked, but someone started it and it was shared enough to reach me; subsequently, I shared it with my 1,155 friends.

# TRANS\*

I recently adopted the term "trans\*" (with the asterisk) in my writing. I think you should, too. If it's new to you, let me help clarify. Trans\* is one word for a variety of identities that are incredibly diverse, but share one simple, common denominator: a trans\* person is not your traditional cisgender wo/man. Beyond that, there is a lot of variation.

## WHAT DOES THE \* STAND FOR?

**\*TRANSGENDER**

**\*TRANSSEXUAL \*TRANSVESTITE**

**\*GENDERQUEER**

**\*GENDERFLUID \*NON-BINARY \*GENDERF\*CK**

**\*GENDERLESS**

**\*AGENDER \*NON-GENDERED**

**\*THIRD GENDER**

**\*TWO-SPIRIT \* BIGENDER**

**\*TRANS MAN**

**\*TRANS WOMAN**

read more at [ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com](http://ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com)

*Figure 1.* Facebook meme (2012) advocating for trans\* recognition. Trans\* is a term based on computer search language where an asterisk is used to search for any characters beyond those entered and thus allows for any type of transgender identity, not just trans woman or trans man (Killerman, n.d.)

Through my personal experiences, literature studies, Allies trainings and research, and pursuit of peace and justice for all children, I've come to realize that students, faculty, and staff in educational settings (K-higher education), are looking for ways to create equitable learning spaces but need resources to help them get to where they want to be. While studying for a PhD in adult, professional and community education, I have maintained my ties to, and interest in, school reform/improvement for K-12 settings. I have found that leadership is key to cultural change in organizations and that leader

preparation, especially in K-12 settings, is often lacking in empirical data related to equity issues for trans\* persons.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Three main problems encourage this research project: lack of research in educational leadership related to trans\* persons (Capper & O'Malley, 2012), the marginalization of trans\* persons in society and even in the LGBTQIA community (Greytak et al., 2009), and the binary and limiting nature of American English language (Valentine, 2007). A review of literature related to trans\* persons and educational leadership reveals the problematic lack of literature concerning this topic. Despite an increasing rate of news publications about trans\* persons, research in the field of education concerning trans\* persons remains limited. Within the minority group of LGBTQIA persons, trans\* persons are a minority. A recent report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) (2011) on LGBTQIA health states,

Although the acronym LGBT is used as an umbrella term, and the health needs of this community are often grouped together, each of these letters represents a distinct population with its own health concerns. Furthermore, among lesbians, gay men, bisexual men and women, and trans\* people, there are subpopulations based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic location, age, and other factors. (p. S-1)

Often educational research purports to address issues related to LGBTQIA persons, yet the main focus of said research is lesbians and gay men with significantly less attention to bisexual and trans\* persons. Even the progressive *Handbook of Research on Educational Leadership for Equity and Diversity* in the chapter "Creating Inclusive Schools for

LGBTIQ Youth, Staff, and Families” acknowledges “Various acronyms associated with identifying queer populations can admittedly be confusing” and recommends “using either LGBTIQ or queer as appropriate descriptors” while admitting “there is a lack of uniformity in the research literature that manifests itself in a wide range of available terms” (O’Malley, 2013). A review of dissertations and theses on *ProQuest* using the search term “transgender” and limiting the search for dates 1993-2005 reveals an impressive 156 dissertations or theses cueing on the keyword “transgender”. Of those 156 dissertations and theses, 44 cue from an added search term of “education”. Of those 44, only 10 address trans\* persons specifically rather than as a part of the LGBTQIA group.

Using the same search parameters and procedures but updating to the year-range 2006-2012 yields 360 results. Of those 360 results, 118 cue from the addition of the search term “education”. 26 of those 118 citations focus specifically on trans\* persons rather than on the LGBTQIA group. Within these recent 26 studies, only one relates to the relationship between trans\* K-12 students and their own educational experiences—Sullivan’s 2009 dissertation entitled *Hiding in the Open: Navigating Education at the Gender Poles: A Study of Transgender Children in Early Childhood*. In several of the studies which include the LGBTQIA community, educational leadership is addressed either from the perspective of the LGBTQIA educational leader or in relation to school leadership for providing safe spaces for LGBTQIA youth.

A second problem encouraging this study is that society still struggles to understand/accept/nurture trans\* persons. Fausto-Sterling (2000) reports, “The intersexual or transgender person who presents a social gender...that conflicts with h/her physical genitals often risks h/her life” (p. 110). The IOM (2011) reports, “The inclusion

of homosexuality in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* until 1973 shaped sexual-minority patients' interactions with the health care system" (p. S-1). And, we can extrapolate that such stigmata exist in education, as well. Educational leaders need to know more from and about trans\* persons in order to create and maintain safe and equitable schools where all students are nurtured and educated such that future adults create democratic communities in which all persons can participate. Greytak, et al. (2009) report, "transgender students face much higher levels of harassment and violence than LGB students" (p. vi). In this same report, data show that trans\* students report minimal intervention on the part of school personnel when homophobic language is used with reported intervention by school personnel toward negative remarks about gender expression at only 11% (p. x).

A third problem encouraging this study is the binary and limiting nature of the American English language (Valentine, 2007). Fausto-Sterling (2000) says, "Euro-American ways of understanding how the world works depend heavily on the use of dualisms—pairs of opposing concepts, objects, or belief systems" (p. 21). Such dualisms as sex/gender, nature/nurture, real/constructed, male/female, mind/body, self/other are part of what Fausto-Sterling is getting at and part of what the third problem addressed by this research project entails. In fact, Thurer (2005) begins her treatise *The End of Gender: A Psychological Autopsy*, "Let's face it, sexuality has changed—all sorts of deviations have been 'outed'—but theories about them haven't caught up. They have arrested in moth-eaten bias—the conviction that there are two, and only two, normal versions of gender" (p. xi). Our society is replete with labels and acronyms for so much of what goes on, especially in schools. Already, I've used several labels and acronyms,

much to my dismay. However, I acknowledge that I am a part of the American culture and must speak in the language I know. In our alphabet soup of labels, LGBTQIA begins our problem. Standing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual/Aromantic, LGBTQIA places gender and sexuality non-conforming persons into limited categories. I, myself, feel out of place in this label. I was born female but identify as male and have had and have the capacity for sexual relationships with people of all gender identities and expressions. I recognize the fluidity of my own gender identity. None of the letters in LGBTQIA represent my sexuality accurately. Bisexual would be the closest—especially when viewed as an umbrella term—but the term bisexual implies that there are but two sexes/genders with which someone may partner. Gender identity and expression are much more complicated than a simple male/female label can contain. Furthermore, American English privileges the male/female dichotomy through pronoun usage. When deciding how to make a pronoun referent to a person, I feel limited by he (male) or she (female). When someone is fluid, how do I decide whether to use he or she and to what effect is that decision made? Some proponents of the liminal nature of gender advocate the use of gender-neutral pronouns such as ze to replace he or she and hir to replace him or her. Sometimes, the pronoun they is used in a singular fashion as a gender-neutral pronoun. This is complicated by our rules and beliefs about what language is and how it is used. When someone sees “they,” one thinks multiple, so if a gender-neutral person is using it in the singular, it can become confusing. Furthermore, in academic papers where I have attempted to introduce these gender-neutral pronouns, I have been asked to revert to “standard” English so that everyone will understand. Even the addition of footnotes or in-text explanations of my use of ze and



hir, I have been asked to be less creative. I hope that expanded research on trans\* persons and their educational experiences can help to broaden the minds of readers such that alternatives to he and she can be more accepted.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Thus, the purpose of this research project was to use public pedagogy (Brady, 2006; Giroux, 2000; Giroux, 2003a, 2003b; Giroux, 2004a, 2004b; Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Hoagland, 2010; Huckaby, 2010; Luke, 1996a; Sandlin et al, 2011; Sandlin, Schultz & Burdick, 2010; Slattery, 2010) as a lens through which to examine educational experiences of trans\* persons and to apply those experiences as pedagogical tools to assist educational leaders. Traditionally marginalized populations have the opportunity and agency to advocate for rights and inclusion in mainstream society. The trans\* population is no different. By creating offshoots of and working with feminist and LGBTQIA rights organizations, trans\* people and communities enact efforts to educate people about their ways of knowing, their needs, and their desired roles in society. This type of social change action and effort is a part of public pedagogy as understood by Sandlin et al. (2011) and Brady (2006); thus, the use of public pedagogy research as a frame for working with trans\* persons in a pedagogical change process engages a reasonable theoretical perspective for this research.

In public pedagogy research, some scholars view educational leaders as public agents/public intellectuals (Sandlin et al., 2011); in order to fulfill this identity, they must create “a critical public engagement that challenges existing social practices and hegemonic forms of discrimination” (Brady, 2006, p. 58). Because social change often begins with popular culture and everyday life, trans\* persons’ own experiences and

media representations of trans\* persons serve as public pedagogy which can also lead to the challenge of existing structures. Public pedagogy occurs in both institutional and informal sites of learning and is characterized in part by the leadership of public intellectuals in forming democratic learning communities (Brady, 2006; Sandlin et al., 2011). “Public intellectual” may refer to specific individuals, though in feminist views of public pedagogy this construct often refers to grass-roots advocacy taken up by collaborative actors. I am interested in investigating how trans\* persons experience their educational communities, with particular attention to how they teach people with whom they come in contact. This line of inquiry also addresses a specific gap in the public pedagogy literature that reveals a need “to analyze more specific spaces or forms of pedagogies and to more clearly articulate their ‘informal pedagogical processes’—that is, to examine what makes them *pedagogical*” (Sandlin et al., 2011, p. 359). A secondary purpose of this study is to implement a public pedagogy project in which educational leaders experience and respond to the narratives of educational experience provided by trans\* persons. In order to challenge standard ways of thinking and acting among educational leaders, trans\* voices will provide fodder for investigation and discussion among educational leaders and the pedagogical process will be documented.

### **Need for the Study**

Several needs lead to this study. First, the use of public pedagogy as a critical lens fills a gap in the literature around public pedagogy. Sandlin et al. (2011) point to the increasing trend in numbers of publications about public pedagogy but note that more specific forms of public pedagogy and the processes of public pedagogy need further investigation. With literature using the term public pedagogy on the rise (Sandlin et al.,

2011), it is important to fill the gaps in extant literature with new research rather than just repeating what's been said. According to Sandlin et al. (2011), the body of literature examining processes of public pedagogy is "limited" (p. 21). Furthermore, Sandlin et al. (2011) note their purpose in conducting their literature review:

Despite the variety of research sites and theoretical framings scholars have brought to their work on public pedagogy, however, this project was born of our consternation with the widespread practice of authors citing the term without adequately explicating its meaning, its context, or its location within differing and contested articulations of the construct. (p. 2)

Thus, a need for more decisive definitions of public pedagogy appears. Sandlin et al (2011) suggest

Specifically, we argue that education researchers should attend to the following:

(a) Theoretical underpinnings of public pedagogy should be carefully specified in any scholarship that deploys the concept, (b) scholars should engage in more empirical research focusing on the process of public pedagogy and on the experiences of learners should be expanded, (c) researchers should engage in more discussion of methodological and ethical issues in researching public pedagogy, and (d) theorists ought to explore the issue of why this concept is called "public pedagogy" and not "public curriculum," particularly in light of curriculum studies' establishment as a field of research. (p. 22)

As a result of this project, the body of public pedagogy literature will be expanded as called for by Sandlin et al (2011). This project can increase our empirical understanding of the work of creating critically engaged democratic communities. The

examination of the connection between trans\* persons' educational experiences and educational leaders will provide empirical insight into ways that educational leaders and school communities might learn from public pedagogies and further contribute to the construction of critically engaged democratic communities.

Second, this study places trans\* persons in the role of public intellectual and acknowledges the value and power of their experiences. The presence and engagement of trans\* persons in academic discourse can be understood as public pedagogy through the role of the public intellectual as described by Sandlin et al (2011). As discussed earlier, research with trans\* persons as the focus is minimal in education, and absent in educational leadership. Greytak et al. (2009) indicate,

Perhaps transgender students are put in the position of having to educate school personnel and advocate for their rights in ways that non-transgender LGB students are not—for example, having to explain to others what being transgender means. School personnel and secondary students are most likely familiar with the idea of being gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and given that there are more gay, lesbian, and bisexual people than transgender people, they may have limited exposure to the concept of being transgender or to transgender individuals. (p. 45)

A Facebook advocate for trans\* rights posted, “Being transgender doesn't mean you have to be alone. Actually, I prefer ‘gender variant’, ‘gender free’, or ‘gender positive’ - but the point here is that together, acting as a community, we can and are changing the world.” Thus, this study can open doors and serve as encouragement to educational leaders to learn from trans\* persons.

Finally, educational leaders need to know who their constituents are. As trans\* persons come out, often while in school, school administrators need tools and information to use to create safety for their students. Educational leaders are in a powerful position with regards to policy and practice. Greytak et al. (2009) explain, “Along with providing access to LGBT-related resources, it is important for educators, advocates, and policymakers to recognize how the needs of transgender youth may both be similar to and different from the needs of their non-transgender peers” (p. 47). In allowing transgender persons to use their narratives of their educational experiences to influence/educate educational leaders, this study serves to take on the need described by Greytak et al.

### **Research Questions**

This research project is about a pedagogical process and the role of a marginalized group as public intellectuals in that process. Ultimately, the focus of the project is the process through which trans\* persons enact their role as public intellectuals in school settings and in conference with educational leaders. Trans\* is not a particularly new thing, but the study of it especially in the context of education and even more specifically educational leadership, is. Informed by the extensive review of the educational research literature on public pedagogy conducted by Sandlin et al. (2011), the study’s primary research question is as follows: How do trans\* persons reflect on their educational experiences through a public pedagogy lens? Secondary research questions include the following: In what ways do adult-selves reflecting back on their pasts describe/define/internalize/reconfigure/mobilize public pedagogy? How do trans\* and school leader/administrator participants enact a public pedagogy process of shared learning around trans\* issues in schools? How can public pedagogy explain/inform the

educational experiences of trans\* persons and the responses to those experiences of school leaders?

### **Definition of Terms**

According to the IOM (2011) study, “sexual orientation and gender nonconformity are multifaceted concepts, and defining them operationally can be challenging” (p. S-1). Furthermore, “individuals may be reluctant to answer research questions about their same-sex sexual behavior and gender nonconformity” (p. S-1).

Binding – a technique used by FTM persons to hide breasts

Biological sex – the genital condition with which a person was born; male is born with a penis; female is born with a vagina; intersex is born with mixed genital characteristics

Cisgender – literally cis- means “on the near side of”; thus cisgender is someone who identifies their gender identity and expression “on the near side of” the sex they were assigned at birth

Coming out – slang for the process by which a member of the LGBTQIA community identifies to the cisgender, heterosexual mainstream community that they are LGBTQIA. According to O’Malley (2013),

It remains a common expectation that if these silences are to be broken, persons who experience themselves as queer or gender nonconforming have a responsibility to ‘come out,’ which is to say individuals must opt to publically make known their desire in areas as vulnerable as sexuality and love, visibly perform transitions across gender, or discuss the intimate

complexities of biological difference amidst largely unaware audiences.  
(p. 355-356)

FTF – a trans\* designation indicating that the individual identified as a female and transitioned to a female body even though she was born with male genitalia

FTM – a trans\* person who was born female and transitions to male; according to Pollock and Eyre (2012), “female-to-males are less studied and less visible than male-to-females” (p. 210).

Gender Expression – the way a person performs gender

Gender Identity – the way a person views himself in relation to gender

Hegemony – term coined by Antonio Gramsci in *The Prison Notebooks* written in the 1930s, part of Marxist philosophy, designed around political and economic goals of egalitarianism, termed to describe the condition by which the group who has the goods exerts control over the group who does not have the goods (Gramsci, 1996)

Hir – a gender neutral pronoun replacing him/her

Intersex – According to Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), “ ‘Intersex’ is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.” (ISNA, 1993).

LGBT – Acronym for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\* community; limiting in that many genders and sexualities are not represented

LGBTQIA – Acronym for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, queer, intersex, asexual/aromantic community; limiting in the same way as LGBT although attempting to be more inclusive

MTF – a trans\* person who was born male and transitions to female

MTM – a trans\* designation indicating that the individual identified as a male and transitioned to a male body even though he was born with female genitalia

Packing – a technique used by FTM persons to give the illusion of a penis or to allow for a prosthetic stand-to-pee (STP) device to be used

Public intellectual – a person with agency (given or taken) to educate others

Public pedagogy - a “form of education . . . largely constructed as a concept focusing on various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond formal schooling and . . . distinct from hidden and explicit curricula operating within and through school sites” (Sandlin et al., 2011, p. 338-9)

Queer – often acceptable substitute as identifier of LGBT population or member of LGBT population. According to O’Malley (2013),

The import of LGBTIQ as a construct informing educational research and practice lies, from a queer perspective, not as much in the identities it defines and delineates as in the possibilities it evokes as signifier of a multiplicity of difference that exceeds the normalizing constraints of heterosexual privilege. (p. 357)

O’Malley further states, “Queer, having been used historically as a pejorative, is also used positively as an umbrella term indicating sexual, gender, or sexed minorities” (p. 7). In addition to serving as a noun and descriptor of a person who



identifies as LGBTIQ, queer can be a verb describing an action based on queer theory (Butler, 1990, 2004; Gamson, 2000; Pinar, 1998; Sedgwick, 1990)—a theory not only about queer persons but informed by queer experience and by making the Other central or the central Other.

Sexuality – the personal preference of an individual for who to have sex with;

homosexuality and heterosexuality are based on biological sex with homosexuality being a man having sex with a man or a woman having sex with a woman and heterosexuality being a man and a woman having sex with each other; many other sexualities exist but are seldom acknowledged; bisexuality has gained recognition but limits the options for sexual partners to people who are either male or female and indicates a desire to have sex with both men and women; no term currently exists to represent a person who has sex with a person based on criteria other than genitalia

Stealth – the condition of living undetected in the gender role matching the gender identity; important in the trans\* community for safety reasons; some trans\* people desire stealth while others live as “out” trans\* individuals

They – traditional third-person plural personal pronoun (subjective case); however, often used by gender non-conforming persons in a singular sense to represent gender-neutrality

Trans\* – inclusive popular term for members of the transgender community, regardless of their specific identity/label (e.g., transgender, transsexual, transvestite, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, genderfuck, genderless, agender, non-gendered, third gender, two-spirit, bigender, trans man, trans woman)

Transgender – Pollock and Eyre (2012) state, “The term transgender refers to a range of identities that do not conform to conventional notions of male and female, broadly referring to individuals who do not identify as the gender they were assigned at birth” (p. 209). Fassinger and Arseneau (2007) describe trans\* people as Individuals who are gender-variant or gender-‘transgressive,’ that is, expressing their gender in ways not considered socially ‘appropriate’ based on their (perceived) biological sex; also referred to as ‘gender-bending/blending,’ gender transgression can range from matters of dress and mannerisms to hormone treatments and reconstructive surgery aimed at changing one’s genitalia or secondary sex characteristics to fit one’s own sense of one’s gender. Designation as transgender (or any of its variants) refers to gender expression, not the sex of one’s (actual or imagined) intimate partner choices; transgender people may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual, and self-labeling may change over time. (Chapter 1, Section1, para. 3)

Trans man – male-identified, female-born person

Trans woman – female-identified, male-born person

Transsexual – According to Fausto-Sterling (2000),

In European and American culture we understand transsexuals to be individuals who have been born with ‘good’ male or ‘good’ female bodies. Psychologically, however, they envision themselves as members of the opposite sex. A transsexual’s drive to have his/her body conform with his/her psyche is so strong that many seek medical aid to transform their

bodies hormonally and ultimately surgically....Some transsexual organizations have begun to support the concept of *transgenderism*, which constitutes a more radical re-visioning of sex and gender. (p. 107)

Tucking – a technique used by MTF persons to hide the penis

Ze – a gender neutral pronoun replacing he/she

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Lipstick

I used to steal my mother's lipstick,  
use it to write on the walls,  
to wound the soldiers in my GI Joe collection -  
why they didn't come with blood I never understood -  
I knew they needed blood, belonged in blood;  
I grew up watching Vietnam.

My mom took me along  
always running to Mary Kay  
buying more blood-red lipstick.

I didn't understand why she needed  
so much lipstick.

What was wrong with her own lips?  
Didn't Daddy want to kiss her?

Once, I tried the lipstick;  
it made a mess;  
I looked like a clown;  
it did not taste like bubblegum.

I cried over world injustice -  
a little girl understanding more about makeup  
than the adults whose lipstick  
fades like the sunset  
over distant shores.

- Beck, 2009, p. 36

### Theoretical Framework

The research questions for this study and the data collected were analyzed through a theoretical frame based on public pedagogy. A common misconception among scholars of critical theory is that Giroux (2000) is the father of public pedagogy theory and that work using the language of public pedagogy must be derivative of Giroux (Giroux 2000; Giroux 2001; Giroux 2003a; Giroux 2004a, 2004b; Giroux & McLaren 1989). However,

the term public pedagogy actually first appeared in the literature in 1894 (Sandlin et al., 2011)—long before Giroux began his writings and thought experiments. In fact, the feminist public pedagogy as outlined and defined by Brady (2006) is a slightly earlier conception of public pedagogy that primarily frames this research project.

What is public pedagogy? According to Sandlin et al (2011), “the term in its earliest usage implied a form of educational discourse in the service of the public good.” In other understandings throughout the *Review of Educational Research* review of literature on the term “public pedagogy”, Sandlin et al. find uses of the term “public pedagogy” in contexts for learning outside the curriculum, staging youth activism, sexual equality, resisting dominant pedagogies, and popular culture. Sandlin et al. (2011), in the most thorough literature review on public pedagogy to date, define five major categories of public pedagogy: citizenship education, popular culture and everyday life, informal institutions, dominant cultural discourses, and the public intellectual as pedagogical agent. Sandlin et al. (2011) note that the number of articles published on public pedagogy has increased dramatically since 1975, with 281 publications occurring between 2006 and 2010—an increase of 194 over the period of 2001-2005.

Public pedagogy has many forms and movements. In its earliest constructions, the term public pedagogy described efforts in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to educate people for the public good—specifically in areas of development of national identity and citizenship (Sandlin et al., 2011). Public pedagogy grew widely in popularity and use in the 1990s with an increasing interest in the power of popular culture as an educative tool (Sandlin et al.). Through feminist interests in popular culture as everyday living sites of pedagogy, C. Luke (1994), K. Carrington and Bennett (1996), and Brady (1998) advanced a

particular form of public pedagogy that most closely resembles the public pedagogy as embodied by this research project. The term public pedagogy, according to Sandlin et al. comes into mainstream educational use through Giroux's purposing of it for reference to the hegemonic power of media and popular culture as sites of socialization. Giroux entered public pedagogy work through popular culture discourse, but his work with neoliberalism and public pedagogy more directly relates to my study, as it ties back to the role of the student as public intellectual. According to Sandlin et al. (2011), Giroux believes that public pedagogy creates a democratic space between youth and adults in which power is negotiated, and this is where the work of my study draws its hypotheses. In my research project, Giroux's notion of a democratic politics addressing the relations of power between youth and adults is paramount, as the stories being told by trans\* adults of their youth may represent power struggles between themselves and school adults seen as power figures.

Three basic tenets of public pedagogy describe the feminist/grassroots activist perspective being discussed here: (a) refute traditional structures through the complexity of real lived experiences, (b) acknowledge difference in order to construct specific alliances across difference, and (c) "refuse simplistic and derogatory images of ourselves, as well as uncover hidden bias and unexamined assumptions through critical self-examination grounded in social responsibility, ethical considerations, and social action" (Brady, 2006, p. 58). Brady's view of neoliberalism is similar to Giroux's, and she also values the use of public pedagogy to work against the scourge of neoliberalism. Brady identifies neoliberalism as the "dominant political economic ideology, which embraces free market and corporate values over civic discourse and responsibility" (p. 57), and she

points out that neoliberalism “poses a challenge to democracy” (p. 57). In an educational context, as teachers and school leaders, we should seek to engage our students in democracy in a Deweyan sense, and this means encouraging all students to have voice—even the traditionally marginalized and Othered. Unfortunately, “The corporate cultural values and discourses of neoliberalism have seeped into the educational context” (Brady, 2006, p. 57) and those who have the most capital are receiving the most education.

Brady (2006) calls educators and citizens to “critically comprehend and actively challenge the neoliberalism imbedded within the educational context” (p. 57). This research project seeks to answer that call by working with a traditionally marginalized group to bring about a more democratic system of educating people of difference within the school context. This project seeks to do as Brady asks—to “reclaim schools as democratic public places for children and adults alike” (p. 57)—by giving a democratic voice to the voiceless in the educational process. I would emphasize that this call is for *all* children and adults—not just for those of means.

Brady (2006) believes that part of the rally against neoliberalism in schools must be an opposition to hierarchical relationships and “bureaucratic rationality” (p. 58) by uniting “intellect and ethics with citizenship” and this is public pedagogy. For Brady, public pedagogy “challenges existing social practices and hegemonic forms of discrimination” (p. 58). In this study, Brady’s form of public pedagogy seeks to work against neoliberalism in just the way she describes. By using the voice of trans\* people to describe their own needs in education and in school, this project will challenge existing

practices toward trans\* people in schools and the hegemony of cisgender people over trans\* persons will be challenged as well.

Brady (2006) emphasizes, “practitioners of public pedagogy are not limited to educators, but involve a range of activist individuals and community groups that are providing democratic vision to challenge inequality” (p. 58), and I draw from this emphasis to add that students and former students who are part of a marginalized group can also educate educational institutions and that that practice can be researched in order to further advance the cause of the students of difference and the culture of public pedagogy.

Brady (2006) says that an activist can be “embedded in collective action” and can occur in “multiple spaces” such as “grassroots organizations”, “neighborhood projects”, “art collectives”, “town meetings”, and “spaces that provide a site for compassion, outrage, humor, and action” (p. 58). I think that certain organizations within schools describe this type of organization, and certainly places where marginalized adults gather to affect change in schools describe this type of activism. Thus, trans\* students can be activists on Facebook or in GSAs, and Trans\* adults can be activists within LGBTQIA groups. All can influence schools and work against the scourge of neoliberalism. Such activist groups as implementers of public pedagogy create “opportunities for the expression of complex, contesting, and subaltern perspectives” (p. 58); it is these subaltern perspectives that this project seeks.

Ultimately, “schools remain a significant site for democratic action” (Brady, 2006, p. 59), and this project seeks to demonstrate just how that democratic action can look by “advance[ing] and embrac[ing] a pedagogy that supports collective action across



differences and through strategic alliances” (p. 59). The prevalence of “OUT” trans\* people in schools as students and parents demonstrates a major shift in social life, and “As people witness major shifts in the nature of social life, they learn the necessity of collective action, and how to play a pivotal role in the campaign for basic human rights” (p. 58). This project seeks to share the stories of trans\* persons with school administrators so that administrators can join the campaign for trans\* rights within schools.

While the feminist vision of public pedagogy which sees everyday life experiences as pedagogical informs this research, it is important to note that other versions of public pedagogy also exist. Sandlin et al. (2011) describe the influence Giroux has had on public pedagogy research and literature, “as his scholarship represents roughly 15% of the entire sample” (p. 341). One area of public pedagogy theory strongly advanced by Giroux is that of neoliberalism as public pedagogy, looking specifically at “a democratic politics that addresses the relations of power between youth and adults” (Giroux, 2001, p. 33). Giroux has continued to advance the idea that neoliberal policies enhance a dystopian view of the future and that he must articulate the global operation of neoliberalism as a public pedagogy—one that reproduces identities as a part of the capitalist market (Giroux, 2003a). This research project identifies the presence and import of Giroux’s work, but makes a conscious turn away from the Giroux-ian conceptions of public pedagogy, toward the feminist constructions involving public intellectuals garnering, especially through everyday life, agency and power.

In that this research project relies on public pedagogy theory, it also advances a key piece in the body of public pedagogy research. Sandlin et al. (2011) indicate

one of the problems inherent in locating pedagogy in popular and public culture is that our very frameworks for understanding what pedagogy *is* and *looks/feels like* extend from our own cultural constructs of what counts as teaching and learning in institutional settings—constructs that reify traditional forms of intellectual activity as the only possible mode of critical intervention. (p. 364)

This research project serves to take public pedagogy theory and demonstrate how it is mobilized, engaged and understood by participants in the pedagogical process. The agency of the public intellectual role will be described for trans\* persons and their experiences of schooling and a pedagogical process will be observed and engaged in whereby participants can reflect on and apply views of pedagogy in ways that challenge traditional and stereotypical constructs of teaching and learning.

In 2010, Sandlin et al. (2010) collected essays on public pedagogy beyond the Giroux-ian and Brady-ian origins in *The Handbook of Public Pedagogy: Education and Learning Beyond Schooling* (The Handbook). In their introduction to The Handbook, they say, “We are constantly being taught, constantly learn, and constantly unlearn. Education is an enveloping concept, a dimension of culture that maintains dominant practices while also offering spaces for their critique and reimagination” (p. 1). They draw on Giroux and Brady in order to “deal with the bigger, more pressing issues of cultivating a pedagogy of humanity, which ultimately has implications for schooling and non-school settings” (p. 1). Reaching to their place in time of 2010 and the work done with public pedagogy post-Giroux and post-Brady, they define public pedagogies as “spaces, sites, and languages of education and learning that exist outside of the walls of the institutions of schools” (p. 1). Ultimately, this study seeks to accept and meet one of

the challenges issued by Sandlin et al. in the introduction to *The Handbook* to “address the challenge of recognizing and exploring the very pedagogies that undergird our own private and public lives” (p. 1).

Within the chapters of *The Handbook* are several gems explaining public pedagogy and addressing ways in which public pedagogy serves as a foundation and a hub for the work of this project. First, chapter 5 by Slattery informs on how and why one might consider self-reflection as a part of public pedagogy and relates to the use of narrative inquiry in this study. Slattery posits, “Poststructural investigations problematize notions of self-formation, multicultural understandings of difference, the politics of recognition, and autobiography—as well as public pedagogy” (p. 35). Furthermore, he asks, “What is the self? What wisdom can we glean from philosophers, poets, performance artists, and painters about the nature of the self?” (p. 35). So, what, then, is the self and how do we as public pedagogy researchers view the self? Slattery states,

Postmodernism views the self in terms of a multiplicity of ironic and conflicting interdependent voices that can only be understood contextually, ironically, relationally, and politically. Post-structuralism goes further and rejects the notion of the self because the search for the true and lasting self is a metaphysical dead end. (p. 36)

In this study, the search for the voices and experiences of the trans\* persons in relation to their academic experiences floats somewhere in this postmodern/poststructural milieu and serves to advance a political goal of integrating a traditionally marginalized population into a school setting. Slattery, in fact, says that public pedagogy “offers the opportunity for the researcher and/or artist to engage the postmodern and poststructural

philosophies in order to contextualize public projects and release the imagination” (p. 36), so this forms the foundation for the forthcoming methodology of this project.

In *The Handbook*, Chapter 8, Huckaby points out, “We too rarely acknowledge that education is political” (p. 77). This facet of public pedagogy relates to this research study because the researcher herein is looking to create a public pedagogical space for a traditionally marginalized group (trans\* persons) with school leaders. This type of political activism has precedence in U.S. public education through race rights and integration of schools with public pedagogy as a form of grassroots activism. Huckaby says, “We must know the simulations we live and their impact on our beings, learn how illusions are created in our worlds, and seek the real” (p. 79). In this study, I seek to take the creation and imagination of lived experience of trans\* persons in order to seek the real of how all students can achieve a safe and equitable education regardless of gender identity. One hopes that through this public pedagogy exercise, trans\* participants and educational administrators will, as Huckaby says “step into an ontological paradox that entraps us within an illusion materialized through our bodies while it shields us from immaterialized existence in the real” (p. 79).

Hoagland’s Chapter 10 of *The Handbook* relates women’s studies to public pedagogy. Since LGBTQIA studies still remain predominately hidden in women’s studies departments, this chapter sheds light on some common ground for the work proposed herein. Hoagland describes, “Women’s studies began because of omissions, distortions, secrets, silences, and lies in the academy and in society, bringing critical analyses to challenge pedagogical stasis” (p. 93). Trans\* studies is at this same crossroads now. Hoagland warns, “Navigating the waters between the public and the

academic, developing critical analyses of and interventions within those waters, public pedagogy advocates and practitioners must not underestimate the ability of Western neoliberal thought to finesse and assimilate radical activity” (p. 95). I heed this warning well as I proceed with this project. I want to also present my trans\* participants with this warning as we move forward so that they understand that public pedagogy is not a cure all and not a fool proof form of activism. We will still face resistance, but there is hope that educators understand their “responsibility not as *obligation* to respond but as ... *ability* to respond...an ability to be open to hearing things unfamiliar, things that will challenge normalcy, even our place in its reproduction” (p. 96). Ultimately, Hoagland advises public pedagogues to “understand how our own histories, particularly our racialized and gendered legacies, continue to affect our subjectivities today, understanding ourselves constructed in relation to Others and framed by dominant structures and our oaths of service” (p. 99). In this research project, it is precisely the stories of trans\* persons’ lives that will serve as constructions in relation to the lives of educational administrators public pedagogy.

Luke (1996a) anthologized a collection of essays on feminism and pedagogy, but she began the collection by discussing just what we Westerners mean when we use the term pedagogy. In this project, in reference to public pedagogy, it is from Luke’s definition of pedagogy that I draw my knowledge landscape. Luke says, “Pedagogy in strict educational theoretical terms variously refers to the ‘art’ or ‘science’ of teaching, the processes and practices of imparting knowledge to learners and validating students’ knowledge through evaluation and assessments” (p. 4). However, pedagogy can be seen

by some as synonymous with democratic education. For Luke, because of her own experiences with education, that synonym is too simple:

The gendered politics of classroom encounters – at school and university—have taught [Luke] and so many other women about the politics of voice and silence, even though we didn’t always have terms or theory to talk about how pedagogy can function as a silencing device. (p. 5)

Thus, this silencing device is also pedagogy and must be addressed in our definition and function of pedagogy. It is in Luke’s view of the silencing device of pedagogy that this study views pedagogy. One must understand that the marginalized populations in educational settings have different relationships to what is being taught than the populations hierarchically prioritized in the system. Luke explains,

For feminists, these relations often entail substantial moral and ethical dilemmas because ‘feminist pedagogy’ has long claimed that it refuses traditional authority and power in teacher-student relations, and, instead, claims to construct pedagogical encounters characterized by cooperation, sharing, nurturing, giving voice to the silenced. (p. 6)

This study is interested in those non-traditional relationships of authority and power whereby former students have the authority to speak to administrators about what is best for marginalized students like themselves. Ultimately, Luke moves pedagogy out of the classroom into the realm of everyday life: “Learning and teaching, in my estimation *are* the very intersubjective core relations of everyday life” (p. 7). And this is where her theories tie to our theories of public pedagogy. It is the lived experiences of our participants that can teach us how and why learning occurs and in what ways we can best

teach our students. Luke believes, “Sex, gender, or femininity needs to be studied and theorized in its constitutive relationship to other sociocultural significations, economic and political histories, hierarchies, and discourses” (p. 1); thus, “the lessons of life are always simultaneously hegemonic, contradictory, and enabling of difference and diversity” (p. 9). When studying the public pedagogy and discourse of the lives of trans\* persons in relation to their school experiences, Luke’s theory is relevant and necessary because these lives have not been lived in isolation and much of what results in the marginalization of the trans\* person comes from the social, cultural and economic surroundings and underpinnings of the everyday life brought to school with the student.

Viewing marginalized students as public intellectuals provides the researcher the opportunity to draw on Brady’s feminist public pedagogy in order to bring out grassroots collectivism in order to create action and education from a point of difference among trans\* persons in relation to their own education. When students know and understand their own everyday life experiences and are asked to be expert on these experiences, difference and diversity become talking points and education becomes multidimensional and the neoliberal agenda can no longer keep people of difference at the margins.

### **Gender**

In order to be able to hear and understand the voice and agency of the trans\* person, one must look to our culture’s views of gender itself. Fausto-Sterling (2000) expresses the idea that “sex and nature are thought to be real, while gender and culture are seen as constructed” (p. 27). However, she sees that as “false dichotomies.” She gives the following example:

In 1843 Levi Suydam, a twenty-three-year-old resident of Salisbury, Connecticut, asked the town's board of selectmen to allow him to vote as a Whig in a hotly contested local election. The request raised a flurry of objections from the opposition party, for a reason that must be rare in the annals of American democracy: it was said that Suydam was "more female than male," and thus (since only men had the right to vote) should not be allowed to cast a ballot. The selectmen brought in a physician, one Dr. William Barry, to examine Suydam and settle the matter. Presumably, upon encountering a phallus and testicles, the good doctor declared the prospective voter male. With Suydam safely in their column, the Whigs won the election by a majority of one.

A few days later, however, Barry discovered that Suydam menstruated regularly and had a vaginal opening. Suydam had the narrow shoulders and broad hips characteristic of a female build, but occasionally "he" felt physical attractions to the "opposite" sex (by which "he" meant women). Furthermore, "his feminine propensities, such as fondness for gay colors, for pieces of calico, comparing and placing them together and an aversion for bodily labor, and an inability to perform the same, were remarked by many." (Note that this nineteenth-century doctor did not distinguish between "sex" and "gender." Thus he considered a fondness for piecing together swatches of calico just as telling as anatomy and physiology.) No one has yet discovered whether Suydam lost the right to vote. Whatever the outcome, the story conveys both the political weight our culture places on ascertaining a person's correct "sex" and the deep confusion that arises when it can't be easily determined. (p. 30)



Fausto-Sterling's example is of an Intersex individual, but the implications for any kind of gender variation or difference are apparent. The way society and culture view gender determines the political power that an individual of gender difference can and will have. It is a part of the false dichotomy of real/constructed when it comes to sex/gender. The real/constructed dichotomy is false as is the sex/gender dichotomy.

As was the case in Pollock and Eyre's (2012) study of FTM persons, I am "not interested in the aetiology of 'truth' of gender, but rather in how gender is experienced" (p. 210). Gender is a language system in our society; the word male carries with it a set of expectations and standards. Its opposite "female" does the same. St. Pierre (2000) describes language as functioning according to socially constructed norms that "allow certain statements to be made and not others" (p. 485). Binary language, including that about gender (male v. female), needs to be deconstructed not as an exercise in deconstruction but in search of the structures innate to that language dichotomy that affect people's lives (Gamson, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000). In order to deconstruct this dichotomy, according to Fausto-Sterling (2000),

The transgender theorist Martine Rothblatt proposes a chromatic system of gender that would differentiate among hundreds of different personality types. The permutations of her suggested seven levels each of aggression, nurturance, and eroticism could lead to 343 (7x7x7) shades of gender. (p. 108)

In high school, a young man who sat next to me in most of my classes asked me one day why my mom wore the pants in my family. His statement offended me, but it describes the perceived gender binary in our society to a T. My classroom neighbor saw the world as having two distinct genders and ascribed certain behaviors to each gender

accordingly. In her opening to Chapter 1 of *The End of Gender*, Thurer (2005) quotes Drag Queen RuPaul, “We’re born naked, and the rest is drag” (p. 1). Thurer follows this quote with the following description of gender in our society:

Once there were only two genders: male and female. Males, typically, were the big hairy ones who left the toilet seat up. Females were the smaller, less hairy ones who put the toilet seat down. They had eyes for each other. It was easy to tell them apart. These days it’s not so easy. Men sport ponytails and earrings and teach nursery school; women flaunt their tattoos and biceps and smoke cigars. (p. 1)

And Thurer is correct; gender is not easy to define, nor should it be.

Luke (1996b) talks about the everyday life of childhood and its gendered effect on the development of social hierarchies:

From infancy, most children are immersed in the texts of popular culture. The texts and artifacts of popular culture frame children’s understanding of the world and of themselves, of narrative, heroes and heroines, gender and race relations, cultural symbols, values, and social power. (p. 167)

If a child sees evidence of him/herself in the texts being presented in and out of school, then the child develops a strong sense of self-worth, but if the child doesn’t find him/herself in the texts, marginalization and self-doubt develop. Luke says, “So, for instance, how one understands one’s location within a class structure, racial, gender, or national identity is made possible through the symbolic meaning systems available to social agents” (p. 168). She continues, “Learning the games of childhood play, learning gender, or parenting is enabled through mass cultural, media, and commodity forms” (p.

169). In other words, the TV shows we watch in childhood, the books we read, the toys we play with and the TV shows, books, and toys we hear about and see other children with determine what we know about who we are to be. In fact, according to Luke, “These public sites and texts encode constructs of childhood and parenthood, and act as powerful public pedagogies in the production of social identities of the ‘child’, ‘family’, ‘gender’, or ‘race’” (p. 169). Parents and teachers alike have to either buy into the system or not, but “Buying into the system means both buying into particular ideological narratives of social structure, gender roles, and power relations, and into a social construction of reality which is real, material, and constitutes the lived experience of childhood” (p. 170). The problem with that is that children in the margins are pushed further to the margins and opportunity for change is blocked and stagnated. Children who are of different genders—non-gender, bi-gender, trans\*, genderqueer, for example—will not find themselves in the TV shows, books, and toys being supported by the teaching and replicating of the status quo, so their reality is never constructed by buying into the system.

Still, feminists trouble structures that place women in a lower hierarchical position than men. St. Pierre (2000) describes the feminist belief that “the first term in binaries such as culture/nature, mind/body, rational/irrational, subject/object is male and privileged and the second term is female and disadvantaged” (p. 481). She further states, “Once a discourse becomes ‘normal’ and ‘natural,’ it is difficult to think and act outside it” (p. 485). But that is just what we must do with queer work through public pedagogy; we must think and act outside the dominant discourse. Gamson (1995) takes up the idea that collective identity can move us to think and act outside the dominant discourse.

Gamson states, “Identities . . . are typically conceived as existing before movements, which then make them visible through organizing and deploy them politically; feminism wields, but does not create, the collective identity of ‘women’” (p. 392).

Butler (2007) speaks to the problem of identity within movements related to gender and sexuality. She says that “to universalize, then, means first of all to render categories of sex obsolete in language” (p. 520). In describing the project of Wittig in advancing a feminine and lesbian position, Butler says

to ‘universalize’ the minority position . . . is to pluralize the feminine and the lesbian, to render existing categories of sex obsolete, to set up the plural feminine as an absolute subject, to produce a shock for the reader, any reader, and to conduct an assault of some kind. (p. 520-1)

Ultimately, Butler describes the need to “dethrone the presumptive place of masculinity as the precondition for the articulation of the universal itself” (p. 522).

Yet, it is a White Western phenomenon to have a two-gender system that prioritizes categorization. Fausto-Sterling (2000) describes cultural alternatives to our own:

Several Native American cultures, for example, define a third gender, which may include people whom we would label as homosexual, transsexual, or intersexual but also people we would label as male or female. Anthropologists have described other groups, such as the Hijras of India, that contain individuals whom we in the West would label intersexes, transsexuals, effeminate men, and eunuchs. As with the varied Native American categories, the Hijras vary in their origins and gender characteristics. Anthropologists debate about how to interpret

Native American gender systems. What is important, however, is that the existence of other systems suggests that ours is not inevitable. (p. 108-109)

Fausto-Sterling continues, “Simply recognizing a third category does not assure a flexible gender system. Such flexibility requires political and social struggle” (p. 110). And this is where we are today—in this realm of social and political struggle. With more visibility in the news and in popular culture, it is time to break into the world of education.

According to Fausto-Sterling (2000), “The problem with gender, as we now have it, is the violence—both real and metaphorical—we do by generalizing. No woman or man fits the universal gender stereotype” (p. 108). And yet we still fill out college entrance forms, job applications and the census with only two options: male or female. Minority expressions and feminist constructions neglect the advancement of the Intersex and Trans\* perspectives. In the film *Gendernauts* (Treut, 1999), Hida (an intersex person) describes feeling lost between male and female. Fausto-Sterling (2000) asserts that individuals born as mixtures of male and female should not be forced into a societal construction with only two sexes when their sex is biological and “normal” as well. Yet, Intersex and Trans\* are distinct from each other and remain as Other to the social construct of male/female.

### **Trans\* Persons**

Writing about trans\* persons in English is not easy. Our language reinforces a male/female binary and is often created by people of power without regard to how words may marginalize the Other. Valentine (2000) describes how and why he made certain decisions in writing about trans\* persons:

I use ‘transgender’ both as a noun and an adjective (as opposed to ‘transgendered’) following the usage of some study participants who object to the ‘ed’ suffix, arguing that ‘transgendered’ carries a similar (and negative) connotation to the construction ‘colored’ in speaking about people of color. (p. ix)

Valentine further discusses the multifaceted ways that pronouns can be used in describing trans\* persons. Third person (non)gendered pronouns are hir and s/he. Also gendered pronouns can be alternated. The third person plural (they/them) may be the choice of the trans\* person. Finally, gendered pronouns can be used based on the gender choice of a person. In writing about Intersex, trans\* and gender-nonconforming individuals in *Sexing the Body*, Fausto-Sterling (2000) says,

European and American culture is deeply devoted to the idea that there are only two sexes. Even our language refuses other possibilities;...I have had to invent conventions—s/he and h/er to denote individuals who are clearly neither/both male and female or who are, perhaps, both at once. (p. 30-31)

Somewhat satirically, Fausto-Sterling (2000) suggested, “In addition to males and females, ...we should also accept the categories herms (named after ‘true’ hermaphrodites), merms, (named after male ‘pseudo-hermaphrodites’) and fems (named after female ‘pseudo-hermaphrodites’)” (p. 78). While she wrote this tongue-in-cheek, science fiction writer Melissa Scott, according to Fausto-Sterling, “wrote a novel entitled *Shadow Man*, which includes nine types of sexual preference and several genders, including fems (people with testes, XY chromosomes, and some aspects of female genitalia), herms (people with ovaries and testes), and mems (people with XX chromosomes and some aspects of male genitalia)” (p. 78-79). Fausto-Sterling said of

her satirical theory of five genders, “Others used the idea of five sexes as a starting point for their own multi-gendered theories” (p. 79).

Valentine (2000) describes the term ‘transgender’ as one which “has been used to oppose psychiatric theories of non-normative gender, and which is increasingly used...to describe people whose gender expression defies ascribed gender roles and identities” (p. 2). The American Psychological Association is preparing to release its fifth edition of The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). In the current fourth edition, trans\* persons should be diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder, indicating that transgenderism is considered by the mental health profession to be a diagnosable mental health disorder that needs treatment by mental health professionals. In the new fifth edition, APA has proposed a new diagnostic category to replace Gender Identity Disorder. The proposal stands, closed for public comment, at Gender Dysphoria. During the five-year process of revising the DSM, trans\* advocates and trans\* persons have lobbied APA in order to remove such labels from the DSM in order to provide equity and acceptance in society for trans\* persons (Leff, 2012).

### **Trans\* News.**

In the United States, the murder of Brandon Teena in Nebraska in 1993 became a battle cry for trans\* rights. Brandon was born female but lived as a male. He is the subject of two films honored by GLAAD—*The Brandon Teena Story* and *Boys Don’t Cry*. The films accurately portray what it is like to be female-bodied yet male/masculine in lifestyle. According to these biopics of Brandon, two men in the small community where Brandon lived discovered that he was born female; they brutally raped him and later shot him to death because they feared and hated his trans\* identity. GLAAD has continued to

work for the rights of trans\* persons through the lens of Brandon Teena's life and death. Recently, GLAAD called the *Omaha World Herald* to task over their poor representation of Brandon in a report of his murderer's appeal 17 years after Brandon's death. The *Herald* referred to Brandon as a woman and used the wrong pronouns in their coverage (Bass, 2011).

The 2012 Summer Olympics seemed to avoid trans\* issues; but one young man competed for the U.S. Track and Field Team in Hammer Throw. He fell just short of qualifying for the 2012 summer Olympic games in London. Keelin Godsey is male but competes in Women's Hammer Throw. Keelin was born female and lives male; he has chosen the "no ho, no op" (no hormones, no operations) path for his trans\* experience (Wellner, 2012). In the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Caster Semenya's gender was called into question even though she is not transgender, so one can only imagine what a stir Keelin's qualification for Olympic competition might have caused. Semenya's gender was questioned by other athletes and eventually by the Olympic officials via testing resulting in the discovery of her Intersex condition (Hanlon, 2009).

The process Chaz Bono has gone through in coming out as a man has been highly publicized because of his famous parents Sonny and Cher; however, the majority of trans\* persons deal with everyday struggles similar to those faced by cisgender persons. For example, choosing a college that is the best fit is a regular part of the trans\* life. Recently, *The Advocate* published a listing of the top-ten trans\* friendly colleges, as rated by Campus Pride, in the United States. Beemyn and Windmeyer (2012) report that only about 10% of United States colleges and universities include trans\* protection in their non-discrimination policies. The ten colleges and universities recognized in Beemyn and



Windmeyer's report include Ithaca College, NY; New York University, NY; Princeton University, NJ; University of California, Los Angeles, CA; University of California, Riverside, CA; University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; University of Oregon, Eugene, OR; University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA; and University of Vermont, Burlington, VT.

Particularly intriguing in relation to this study is news that has been circulating out of California throughout the 2013 legislative session, culminating with action by Governor Jerry Brown in August of 2013. Governor Brown signed legislation affecting trans\* students in California K-12 schools. The new legislation guarantees trans\* students access to interscholastic sports, restrooms, gym classes and locker rooms based on gender identity rather than biological sex. California is the first state to write such access for trans\* identified students into law (Lovett, 2013). Since the bill was signed into law, a group called Privacy for All Students has been trying to put a referendum on the bill, however. According to Autostraddle's Maryam, "The bill came along at a time when the political climate was becoming gay friendly. It meant that anti-gay groups like NOM and One Million Moms were struggling for relevancy and cash. However, while attitudes towards trans people have improved, there's still a lack of knowledge about transgender issues. Like Arcadia, most people supported trans rights, but didn't know what that entailed" (Maryam, 2014). Privacy for All Students is taking advantage of the fact that people support trans\* rights but don't really know what that entails. The newness of trans\* rights is leaving the movement open to attack, and the California legislation that was designed to protect trans\* students is shouldering the burden of this attack.

As I completed this research study, another interesting occurrence happened related to the transgender community in the United States. Becker (2014) reports that the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has interpreted the protections of Title IX—a federal law prohibiting discrimination based on sex—as extending to gender identity and expression. According to Becker (2014), the new ruling will help trans\* students with inclusion and protection in school. The document issued by the Office for Civil Rights says, “Title IX’s sex discrimination prohibition extends to claims of discrimination based on gender identity or failure to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity and OCR accepts such complaints for investigation” (as quoted in Becker, 2014, n.p.). This is a groundbreaking ruling for transgender students who have traditionally been marginalized by the binaristic, sex-based expectations for behavior in our society.

### **Trans\* Literature.**

While research and publication related to trans\* studies and persons is limited (extremely rare in the field of educational leadership, see Educational Leadership and LGBTQIA Persons), some key social science scholars have provided a foundational literature base in the study of trans\* persons and issues. Fassinger and Arseneau (2007) describe the contemporary scholarly approach to sexuality thusly:

characterized by a continuum rather than by discrete categories, a continuum in which biological, physiological, and genetic contributions combine to determine an individual's ascribed or claimed sex, whereas gender expression, sexuality, and sexual behavior constitute fluid, dynamic, processes in which that individual engages. (Chapter 1, Section 1, para. 3)

Perhaps the best-known author/activist in trans\* studies is Leslie Feinberg, whose theory-based novel *Stone Butch Blues* has been integral to gender studies since its publication in 1993. Feinberg also published the critical work *Transgender Warriors* telling the history of trans\* persons in our world and *TransLiberation* providing insight into trans\* activism. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (2006) published *The Transgender Studies Reader* through Routledge in which they collected 50 essays by authors in the trans\* rights community, including Leslie Feinberg, related to topics of medical care, mental health issues, intersections of difference, and ethics. Finally, Genny Beemyn, of The Stonewall Center of The University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, writes and speaks about trans\* experience and for trans\* rights. Her recent book (with Sue Rankin (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011)) *The Lives of Transgender People* is the first empirical study on trans\* persons in the United States. In Shannon Minter's foreword to Beemyn and Rankin's treatise, Minter states

This groundbreaking study by Genny Beemyn and Sue Rankin is the first to examine the full diversity of the transgender community—not only those who are transsexual but also the growing number of individuals who identify their genders in nonbinary ways. (Foreword, para. 1)

For this work, Beemyn and Rankin surveyed 3,474 people and conducted interviews with 419 of their survey respondents. One of the most important results of Beemyn and Rankin's study is their approach to determining who qualifies as trans\*. This study includes not just post-surgical MTF and FTM persons but also people who no longer identify as trans\* because their transition is complete, those who cross-dress, those who identify as genderqueer, androgynous, bigender, third gender, trans\*, and others who

identify their gender in non-binary ways. Beemyn and Rankin begin with “People who do not identify entirely or at all with the gender assigned to them at birth have steadily achieved greater recognition over the past century” (Introduction, para. 1). Important statistical results from the Beemyn and Rankin survey include frequencies with which trans\* persons exhibit varying demographic characteristics. More than three-fourths of the participants were assigned male as their birth sex. 1,211 participants identified their gender as trans\* or other and gave a variety of labels to further describe that non-binary gender identity (Chapter 1, Section 3, Table 1.2A). Approximately 70% of the participants were between 23 and 52 years old (Chapter 1, Section 4, para. 1). David Valentine (2007) published his dissertation in book form in *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. While this work is not as comprehensive as Beemyn and Rankin’s recent study, it does provide a solid foundation for trans\* studies in its self-representation as “a critical ethnographic exploration of the origins, meanings, and consequences of the emergence and institutionalization of the category transgender in the United States since the early 1990s” (Introduction, para. 7). Valentine’s ethnography is based on his immersion in the trans\* community of New York City over an 18-month period. Valentine provides useful information on language related to trans\* persons but his experiences and way of seeing embody the social justice work that trans\* activists and advocates work for. Valentine concludes “Like my trusty bicycle, on these nights transgender is a useful way of getting around, or going from one thing to another, of framing a set of diverse moments and social practices in time and space as an entity” (Conclusion, para. 2).

Pollock and Eyre (2012) conducted a multiple case study on young adults who identified as female-to-male. In their research they learned, “In school, many youth first confronted their difference from their female peers. Although a few participants recalled their parents pushing them into more traditional female gender roles or discouraging their masculine behaviours, all focused mainly on the reactions of their peers to their masculinity” (p. 210). Interestingly, the group that Pollock and Eyre studied recognized their perceived differences as young as elementary school: “A few other participants recalled occasional criticism from peers and adults for not behaving in the correct ‘feminine’ way in elementary school. However, most participants focused on later school experiences” (p. 210). For the female-to-male participants, “strong social pressure to act more feminine” occurred in middle and high school. Pollock and Eyre report that “Some tried to conform to feminine norms of dress and behavior, which came off as unnatural, both to themselves and to others, paradoxically highlighting the youth’s masculinity” (p. 210). Furthermore, according to Pollock and Eyre, “Facing constant ridicule from peers impacted the self-esteem of gender non-conforming youth” (p. 210).

In 2014, “Duke University Press will begin publishing a transgender studies journal” (Stiehm, 2013, n.p.). With this new journal— the first non-medical journal dedicated to trans\* studies—edited by Susan Stryker, research and writing about trans\* issues will be advanced significantly. Stiehm quotes Duke University Press as saying, “TSQ will be instrumental in developing this growing and vibrant field and will advance the editorial mission of changing the way the world thinks about transgender issues” (n.p.).

## **Educational Leadership and LGBTQIA Persons**

The response to a fundamental question of literature reviews—what do we know about this topic?—is a resounding “very little.” This review documents that transgender persons and experiences are highly peripheral in the educational leadership research base, inclusive of research identified as social justice oriented or LGBTQIA/queer oriented. This review of the literature is supplemented by data from Capper and O’Malley’s (2012) survey of how LGBTQIA topics are included in principal preparation programs at UCEA member institutions. Those data document minimal attention to transgender persons in principal preparation programs and their institutional climates, as well as a lack of understanding on the part of educational leadership professors of rudimentary terms such as “gender identity.”

Grant, Mottet, and Tanis (2011) report the following results from a study conducted for The National Center for Transgender Equality: 41% of transgender persons surveyed (6,450) cannot change their gender on their legal identification; 57% of transgender persons surveyed were rejected by their families; 19% of transgender persons surveyed have experienced homelessness; 19% of transgender persons surveyed were refused medical care; and 47% of transgender persons surveyed have attempted suicide. GLSEN (2012) reports that gender nonconforming students are at particular risk for bullying and that teachers are unprepared to address issues of gender expression in elementary schools in the US. Greytak et al. (2009) report that transgender youth face higher levels of victimization in school than their non-transgender lesbian, gay and bisexual peers. Even though advocacy organizations are reporting on issues facing transgender students in schools and transgender persons in society, educational research

in the field of educational leadership and administration remains behind the mark by not directly addressing the needs and identities of transgender people.

I have conducted an integrative literature review, a process that involves reviewing, critiquing, and synthesizing relevant literature to come to new understandings of a topic (Torraco, 2005). The purpose of my integrative literature review is to see what scholars in disciplines within educational leadership say about transgender persons. Scholars in disciplines within and beyond education have been using the term transgender in their research and writing in earnest since the early 1990s; others have been drawing on the ideas of transgender as an identity, if not always specifically using that term, since the 1960s and 1970s. However, there has been little attempt to synthesize this literature—I did not locate a single review on the topic. I thus undertook this research to provide a synthesis of what has been done in this area and to provide guidance for future research, believing that this body of literature would benefit from “a holistic conceptualization and synthesis of the literature to date” (Torraco, 2005, p. 357).

The literature sample includes articles published in seven leading educational administration, policy, and research journals, in the US between January 1993-Januaray 2014 and one additional article from 2014 that stood out. The seven leading journals were chosen because of high impact factors in the year of the literature review or popularity among professors of educational leadership within my doctoral program in school improvement. *American Educational Research Journal*, *Educational Researcher*, *Review of Research in Education*, *Review of Educational Research*, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, and *Educational Leadership* comprised the journals of the primary literature review. The impact factors

were found on the journals' websites and represented the 2012 impact factor, as the literature review was conducted in 2013-2014. This impact factor was used because this is when and how the journals are being accessed now by educators and educational researchers. With the increase of online archiving, how we know the journal in the current year determines how we know the journal and how we interact with the journal, even when trolling the archives. The years January 1993-January 2014 were surveyed for articles containing transgender persons as a topic. 1993 was chosen as the opening year of the survey because Michael Warner published *Fear of a Queer Planet* in that year—beginning the discussion of heteronormativity as a problem in our society and our education system.

Within the seven leading educational administration journals surveyed from January 1993-January 2014, an alarmingly small number of articles addressed LGBTQIA issues at all and within those, transgender was mentioned as part of the acronym “LGBT” (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) and most of the information presented in the articles focused on lesbian persons and gay persons, not on bisexual persons or transgender persons. Many articles in the journals surveyed addressed race, gender, class, bullying, technology, and able-ism, yet, within those areas of diversity, intersectionalities with sexuality and transgenderism rarely came up. It also seemed that the issues related to race and class that have been part of educational struggles since *Brown v. Board* in 1954 still prevail and newer Civil Rights struggles such as those of sexuality and transgenderism cannot yet be addressed because we have age-old issues to address still.



I have decided to present the literature review journal by journal (highest impact factor to lowest impact factor), chronologically within journal, placing the singularity, stand-out article separate and first because I believe this representation gives the best view of how little material exists within educational leadership, policy and research literature on LGBTQIA persons. Interestingly, the journal with the second highest impact factor, *Educational Researcher*, had the most articles addressing LGBTQIA issues from January 1993-January 2014 with a total of 11. The journal surveyed with the fewest articles addressing LGBTQIA issues from January 1993-Januray 2014 was the one specifically policy journal, *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis*, with zero. Because no articles singly addressed transgender issues, articles addressing LGBTQIA issues were surveyed for content related to transgender persons.

#### **A 2014 Article From *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership***

*Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership* was not one of the journals included in my review of literature because it is a small, association-based journal with no recorded impact factor. However, in March of 2014, the *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership* published an especially significant piece. The only piece in my literature review focused specifically on transgender issues is the piece in *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*. Kaiser, Seitz, and Walters (2014) offer a case study with a scenario in which a transgender student is sharing the locker room at school with people of the same sex rather than the same gender. The case study offers “discussions, questions and activities about ethical and moral standings, policies, critical theory and queer theory, and legal frameworks” (p. 3). Kaiser, Seitz, and Walters also offer advice

about using media and literature to enhance a discussion around transgender policy issues.

**A Review of *American Educational Research Journal*, 1993-2014: Impact Factor 3.104.**

The only two articles in *American Educational Research Journal* related to LGBTQIA issues from January 1993-January 2014 were in September of 2008. Eckes and McCarthy (2008) wrote about LGBTQIA teachers and legal protections while Ashcraft (2008) wrote about teen sexuality. Ashcraft's article focuses on an ethnography of a community-based sex education program that has been shown to help diverse youth become leaders. Participants included openly gay students and opinions and discussions dealt with LGBTQIA health and political concerns.

**A Review of *Educational Researcher*, 1993-2014: Impact Factor 2.779.**

In *Educational Researcher*, the first article addressing a topic related to LGBTQIA persons or issues appears as a review in April of 1997; this is concurrent with the earliest LGBTQIA publication in any of the journals (see **A review of *Educational Leadership*, 1993-2014.**). Reed (1997) presents a review of three films: *The Crying Game*, *Orlando*, and *M. Butterfly*. The first line of Reed's review brings to light just how critical her review is to this study: "In recent years, there has been a significant proliferation of popular cultural practices that, in some way, include gender-bending, female 'impersonation,' or transgressive sexualities" (p. 30). The films reviewed actually came out in 1992, 1993 and 1994, respectively, but this review doesn't get published until 1997. Reed's work discusses ways that feminists theorize sex, gender and the body, and she draws on Foucault and Butler to talk about relationships of power when it comes to gender and sexual transgressors. Interestingly, the work has little to do with

educational leadership or research, yet this is where we find it housed because of Reed's understanding that popular culture such as media is reflective, productive, and distributive of knowledge. Reed's early inclusion in *Educational Researcher* with the context of gender bending and extending the context of what is educative is interesting and, this piece particularly speaks to my study which also looks at alternative forms of pedagogical processes through alternative gender contexts.

*Educational Researcher* published Capper (1999) on "(Homo)sexualities, Organizations, and Administration: Possibilities for In(queer)y" in which she addressed "the possibilities for research with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender school administrators and for the broader study of queerness in schools as organizations" (p. 4). Interestingly, Capper's article suggests low numbers of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender administrators in schools. However, low numbers are cause for more research following in suit of other minorities, such as women and people of color. Capper wonders, if there aren't more of us, why not? Capper also suggests that heterosexism in schools is detrimental to all people in the schools and thus greater work needs to be done in overcoming that heterosexism.

In April of 2001, Kumashiro's first piece in the body of literature reviewed for this project appears in *Educational Researcher*. Kumashiro (2001) writes on "anti-oppressive education" and uses feminist and queer perspectives to address the question of what it means to teach core curriculum in an anti-oppressive way. Kumashiro points out that

All students come to school with partial knowledges. In some ways they may not know much about marginalized groups in society, but even when they do know

about the Other, that knowledge is often mis-knowledge, a knowledge of stereotypes and myths learned from the media, families, peer groups, and so forth.

(p. 4)

In April of 2002, Kumashiro appears again in *Educational Researcher* when Butin (2002) writes an article in response to Kumashiro (2001). Butin (2002) uses a “Foucauldian lens...to provide an alternative means by which to further a more constructive and less constrictive classroom environment” than what Kumashiro had proposed in 2001.

Kumashiro (2002) offers a rebuttal to Butin (2002). Ultimately, Kumashiro is highlighting anti-oppressive education again as a means to social justice. Kumashiro (2002) reiterates that anti-oppressive education contains a range of approaches that all perspectives are partial, and that teaching toward social justice is a forward thinking process.

2002 also saw the publication of Davis’s (2002) review addressing race, gender and sexuality. In the review, Davis considers two books from 2000: *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* by Ann A. Ferguson and *Subject to Identity: Knowledge, Sexuality and Academic Practices in Higher Education* by Susan Talburt. Important to this review is the advancement of sexuality in the language of the conversation:

In the last few years, *identity politics* has emerged as a critical watchword in educational theory and practice. Special attention given to the intersection of identity categories such as race, class, gender, and sexuality in the academic and popular press attest to a growing interest in the politics of identities” (p. 29).

Ultimately, the review calls for “other work that challenges ‘understood’

theoretical positioning of gender, race, and sexuality and the representation of research subjects that occupy these categories. (p. 32)

*Educational Researcher* did not have another LGBTQIA related article for five years, at which time Asher (2007) addressed gender and sexuality as part of multiculturalism. As the abstract of the article describes, Asher “discusses the challenges of educating teachers to engage, rather than deny or repress, differences that emerge at the dynamic, context-specific intersections of race, culture, gender, and sexuality” (p. 65). Asher points out that in teacher education, by 2007, multiculturalism is a given and preservice teachers are expected to take multicultural courses as part of their requirement, yet she still sees “teachers typically let homophobic slurs go unchecked in schools” (p.65). Asher offers practical and relevant advice for operating an open and honoring multicultural preservice university classroom based on her experience doing so at Louisiana State University.

Glasser and Smith (2008) published “On the vague meaning of ‘gender’ in education research: The problem, its sources, and recommendations for practice” in *Educational Researcher*, Vol 37, No 6. Quite explicitly the authors are addressing the misuse of the term gender for biological sex:

Writers for both academic and popular audiences often use the term gender when considering differences between the educational experiences of male and female students, and the distinction often appears to be based on a traditional understanding of the term *sex*. (p. 343)

Glasser and Smith even criticize Asher (2007) for her vague use of the term gender. They seek to “draw readers’ attention to a more general problem in education research:

the lack of explicit clarity about the meaning of gender in researchers' analyses, especially with respect to the relationship between sex and gender" (p. 343).

Renn (2010) provides a report on the state of LGBTQIA and queer research in higher education. Renn states, "Although colleges and universities are the source of much queer theory, they have remained substantially untouched by the queer agenda" (p. 132). While analyzing the existing literature addressing LGBTQIA and queer issues in higher education, Renn finds that "colleges and universities have evolved to tolerate the generation of queer theory from within but have stalwartly resisted the queering of higher education itself" (p. 132). Even the terms "LGBT", "queer", and "queer theory" are contested terms in the literature.

*Educational Researcher* published Robinson and Espelage in 2011 and 2012. Robinson and Espelage (2011) address inequities in outcomes between LGBTQIA and straight students in middle and high school, while Robinson and Espelage (2012) examine bullying as a partial cause of the risk disparities between LGBTQIA and heterosexual students. Robinson and Espelage (2011) present a study in which a "large, population-based sample of students spanning middle school to high school" is investigated looking for "differences between LGBTQ- and straight-identified youth in both psychological and educational outcomes" (p. 315). The quantitative study presented in Robinson and Espelage (2012) suggests that "LGBTQ identification remains a unique predictor of risk after accounting for peer victimization, raising concerns about policies that focus almost exclusively on bullying prevention to address LGBTQ-heterosexual risk disparities" (p. 316). Robinson and Espelage found that bisexual youth are particularly at risk among the LGBTQIA group and that gaps in belongingness and unexcused absences

between LGBTQIA youth and straight youth are greater in middle school than in high school.

The final article in *Educational Researcher* between January 1993 and January 2014 was published in June/July of 2013 by Mayo (2013). Mayo (2013) is a case study of one gay-straight alliance. In the study, Mayo focuses on the role of the advisor in the GSA and the use of critical pedagogy in empowering students involved toward activism.

**A Review of *Review of Research in Education*, 1993-2014: Impact Factor 2.111.**

Only two articles appear in the annual *Review of Research in Education*—one in 2000 and one in 2007. Epstein, O’Flynn and Telford (2000) present the article “‘Othering’ Education: Sexualities, Silences, and Schooling” in which they present a review of literature on sexuality and education in response to “media across the Anglophone world [being] preoccupied with questions surrounding sex education, young people, and sexuality” (p. 127). They report that “heterosexuality has been the unmarked, the norm, the assumed but invisible” (p. 128). Specifically, they “have focused on using the literature to make an argument about the normalization and policing of heterosexualities, through homophobia and heterosexism, in educational institutions in late capitalist Anglophone countries” (p. 128).

Mayo (2007), in “Queering Foundations: Queer and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Educational Research”, says “Since the beginning of the modern homophile movement, gay people have made education of themselves and heterosexuals central to their political project” (p. 78). Mayo’s purpose in the chapter presented in *Review of Research in Education* is to discuss the theme “of the place of coming out in LGBT and queer research in educational foundations” (p. 79). Mayo uses “a wide range of

published research as well as some observations from [her] own research on queer youth...to show that youth are as involved in the complexity of questions researchers ask as the researchers themselves” (p. 79).

**A Review of *Review of Educational Research*, 1993-2014: Impact Factor 2.111.**

While *Educational Researcher* had articles addressing the topic of LGBTQIA issues as early as 1997, *Review of Educational Research* does not have any articles concerning this topic until 2000, at which time the Spring issue presents three articles related to LGBTQIA concerns. One of the articles is by Kumashiro, who appeared in *Educational Researcher* in 2001 and 2002. Kumashiro (2000) is a precursor to his *Educational Researcher* articles; i.e., it is an article leading up to his later work on anti-oppressive education. In this article, Kumashiro reviews the literature on anti-oppressive education and outlines four approaches to anti-oppressive education: Education for the Other, Education About the Other, Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering, and Education that Changes Students and Society. Also in the Spring 2000 issue of *Review of Educational Research*, Riehl (2000) presents a view of the principal’s role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students. This literature review serves to examine how schools can address

the recurrent nature of the theme of diversity [in which] American public schools arguably serve a more heterogeneous population now than ever before and are under increasing pressure to effectively educate a student body that is diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, social class, gender, national origin and native language, sexual orientation, and physical disability. (p. 56)



In the same issue, Blount (2000) tackles “Spinsters, Bachelors, and Other Gender Transgressors in School Employment, 1850-1990.” Blount begins, “Young people learn powerful lessons about gender in schools” (p. 83). She importantly historicizes the role of schools in housing gender transgressors in the role of teacher and administrator: “In spite of persistent efforts to maintain the gender status quo, however, schools also have been historically important sites for gender challenges and even rebellion” (p. 83).

*Review of Educational Research* takes several years to return to the issues so aptly addressed in spring of 2000. Unfortunately, their return is also their most recent publication related to LGBTQIA issues. North (2006) brings us back to the minority LGBTQIA student with “More than Words? Delving into the Substantive Meaning(s) of ‘Social Justice’ in Education”. North discusses ways to solidify the meaning of the term “Social Justice” and cites examples of these various methods. She says, “The remedying of recognition injustices therefore does not require eliminating group differences...but instead revaluing them or reinventing conceptualizations of the human being that lead to oppression and domination” (p. 514). For North, “With regard to sexual differentiation, for example, which remains largely though not entirely a recognition issue, the transformation of the unjust consequences wrought by a dominant view of heterosexuality as natural and normal and of homosexuality as perverse and despised requires a change in the status of particular social groups rather than an overhauling of the political economy” (p. 514).

***A Review of Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis, 1993-2014: Impact Factor 1.489.***

No articles in *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis* between January 1993 and January 2014 addressed LGBTQIA issues.

### **A Review of *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 1993-2014: Impact Factor 1.213.**

Four articles in *Educational Administration Quarterly* between January 1993 and January 2014 addressed LGBTQIA issues. The earliest from this journal was six years after the earliest in any of the journals. Lugg (2003) writes, “This article seeks to chart a course through the contested areas of gender and sexual orientation in hopes of establishing a theoretical framework and an agenda for much needed future research” (p. 97). Lugg points out that “neither our Constitution nor our governmental institutions that are bound by Constitutional strictures are colorblind—nor are they classless, gender neutral, and so forth” (p. 95). Lugg even points out that, since the 1970s, ballot initiatives have tried to prevent people suspected of being queer from working in public schools. Lugg’s article builds off of Queer Legal Theory, which developed in the mid 1990s in “response to larger political and legal events” (p. 102). According to Lugg, Queer Legal Theory “is dedicated to eliminating those U.S. legal and social structures that privilege and enforce heterosexuality, patriarchy, White supremacy, and class advantage, with the legal and social liberation of sexual minorities—queers—as its principal focus” (p. 103). Lugg posits that “Much of what is found in contemporary public schooling contains legacies from the cold war” and “Public schools still expect that students should exhibit a high degree of gender conformity, and schools can be intensely homophobic” (p. 110).

Several years later, we find Lugg addressing us again in *Educational Administration Quarterly*, this time as second author on a 2010 article. Tooms, Lugg and Bogotch (2010), in “Rethinking the Politics of Fit and Educational Leadership”, discuss what is meant by the illusive term fit in the hiring and firing practices in educational

leadership. Tooms et al. examine the nature of essentializing – “the act of treating a social category as standing for an essence or a set of intrinsic qualities or characteristics residing within a group of people” (p. 114) and discuss the damaging effects of the historical practice of many Anglo-centric cultures by which “school administrators have been historically essentialized as White, Protestant, heterosexual, male” (p. 114). Ultimately, according to Tooms et al., “In educational leadership, this has reduced those persons who are not members of this dominant culture to the status of ‘other’ or, more bluntly, someone *who does not fit*” (p. 114).

*Educational Administration Quarterly* has two articles in 2013. deLeon and Brunner (2013) share “Cycles of Fear: A Model of Lesbian and Gay Educational Leaders’ Lived Experiences” in the February issue. From the abstract, “The article’s purpose is to highlight a national qualitative study that generated a model for understanding how society’s actions and attitudes affect and inform the lived experiences of lesbian/gay educational leaders” (p. 161). deLeon and Brunner conclude that “study participants moved from silence to voice and back again to silence but with varying degrees of intensity” (p. 161). Ultimately, “Hetero-privilege power often forced the participants to live without emotion” (p. 194).

Marshall and Hernandez (2013) wrote on a study in which they analyzed principal-preparation student reflections on social justice teachings about sexual orientation. Marshall and Hernandez found that principal preparation students had varied experiences with LGBTQIA-identified persons and that discussion of sexual orientation was complicated by principal preparation students’ personal Christian beliefs. From the initial reflections in an introduction course to the later reflections in a concluding course,

participants' reflections moved from an emotional stance to a more analytic one. The study conflates LGBTQIA people into one group and does not differentiate people of sexual difference from people of gender difference.

**A review of *Educational Leadership*, 1993-2014: No Impact Factor.**

The second largest collection of articles from any one journal comes from *Educational Leadership* with six; however, this journal is not assigned an impact factor. As in *Educational Researcher*, April 1997 is the earliest publication of an article in *Educational Leadership* addressing LGBTQIA issues. While the earliest article in *Educational Researcher* was a film review, the April 1997 article in *Educational Leadership* is a call to action titled "Let's Stop Ignoring Our Gay and Lesbian Youth" (Edwards, 1997). Edwards describes gay and lesbian youth as a "hidden minority" (p. 68) and calls educators to follow some simple guidelines to make schools safer and more equitable for gay and lesbian youth, such as, "Use the words *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*"; "Provide classroom speakers"; "Display or wear a gay-positive symbol"; "Challenge homophobic remarks"; "Provide positive role models"; "Demand inservice training for all staff"; "Include discussions of gay, lesbian, or bisexual issues in class"; and "Create social situations for both gay and straight friends" (p. 70). However, the article does not address transgender students at all.

In October of the same year, *Educational Leadership* published Gevelinger, Sister and Zimmerman's (1997) article "How Catholic Schools are Creating a Safe Climate for Gay and Lesbian Students". Gevelinger, Sister and Zimmerman begin with the acknowledgement that "In schools across the country, students are struggling to deal with issues of sexual identity" (p. 66). They, like Edwards (1997), give advice to schools and

school leaders for making schools safer and more equitable for lesbian and gay youth. “Make careful decisions about the messages we convey to students concerning gender roles”, say Gevelinger, Sister and Zimmerman.

Lamme and Lamme (2001) present strategies for welcoming students from diverse families, those with gay parents, into schools. They use “gay” as “an inclusive term that refers to sexual orientation...include[ing] gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people” (p. 65). Their suggestions are that schools become informed about LGBTQIA people and “the issues that influence their lives” (p. 66), provide diversity training for faculty and staff, teach respect, provide quality counseling, and encourage activism and inquiry.

Four years after Lamme and Lamme (2001) appeared in *Educational Leadership*, Salas (2005) talks about using theater to address bullying with a tagline of “Acting out personal experiences with bullying fosters compassion and empowers all students—bullies, victims, and witnesses—to stand up for what’s right” (p. 78). Salas relates how the theater experiences empowered a gay youth to overcome the bullying he had been facing at school through voicing his experience in front of others. Salas says, “We have found that this sense of altruism is not unusual” (p. 80).

Another six years pass before another LGBTQIA related article appears in *Educational Leadership*, at which time we find McGarry (2011) writing on stopping antigay speech. McGarry describes an incident in which a gay student stands up for himself and others by speaking back against homophobic slurs. The gay student, pseudonym Fabulous, “articulated a key factor that he believed perpetuated homophobic language in schools—the silence of educators and other bystanders” (p. 56).

Another article in *Educational Leadership* was also about bullying. Weissbourd and Jones (2012) report statistics on bullying in United States schools and describe schools where “adults tout respect for others yet fail to act when they hear students using harmful language like ‘That’s so gay!’ or see boys making lewd comments to girls” (p. 30).

The final article in *Educational Leadership* between January 1993 and January 2014 was about adult bullying in schools. Hoerr (2013) focuses on the negative impact that a teacher bully can have on the environment and emotions of a school. Hoerr’s focus is not just on teachers who bully students, but on teachers who bully each other as well. Hoerr says that adult bullies “have very firm views on education, life, and how people should comport themselves; any deviation from their expectations is met with a cold remark, a snide comment, a harsh glance, or ridicule” (p. 82).

### **Teacher Leaders and Educational Leadership**

Theoharis (2007) identifies principals as leaders for social justice who “make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision” (p. 223), and, traditionally, those at the helm – superintendents and principals – were exclusively considered school leaders. Recently, school leadership has come to encompass a variety of forms of leadership in and around campus. Teacher leadership is a valuable part of this new milieu. Teacher leaders have been described as those who “lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 5). As Rodriguez,

Mantle-Bromley, Bailey, and Paccione (2003) share, “If change for underserved students is to occur, teachers who are committed to issues of equity must become active leaders in their schools” (p.229). Jacobs, Beck and Crowell (2012) point out that “In order to move beyond their classrooms to work with others, teacher leaders must not only have culturally responsive practices in their classrooms, but leadership skills, political savvy, and an understanding of organizations” (n.p.). A review of literature on teacher leadership shows that Nieto (2007) found that teacher leaders with a social justice orientation worked on “using their power inside and outside the classroom” (p.307). This included not remaining silent when seeing injustice. Lieberman and Miller (2004) discuss how teacher leaders

...can lead in reshaping the school day, changing grouping and organizational practices, ensuring more equitable distribution of resources, actively implementing curricula that are sensitive to diverse populations, upholding high standards for all students, and guaranteeing that all can share in the full bounty of good teaching, materials, and support. (p. 12-13)

York-Barr and Duke’s (2004) extensive teacher leadership literature review names school culture and climate, roles and relationships, and structures as the conditions that influence teacher leadership. While many issues of inequity and racism are connected to larger systemic and macro conditions, the work of teacher leaders on the ground level can make a difference in the lives and success of students (Nieto, 2007).

Teacher leaders must be responsible for their own learning in order to advance their leadership skills; much of this learning comes from the daily practice of teaching and from collaboration with colleagues. York-Barr and Duke (2004) describe a

professional model of teacher leadership that

values teacher knowledge and judgment grounded in practice, as well as equally externally generated knowledge. In the professional model, the daily realities of teaching-variety, uncertainty, and ambiguity-are recognized, and the need to exercise teacher judgment in addressing these realities is understood. It follows, then, that teachers hold tacit or craft knowledge needed to inform and lead improvement initiatives. (p. 256)

York-Barr and Duke surmise,

Teacher expertise is at the foundation of increasing teacher quality and advancements in teaching and learning. This expertise becomes more widely available when accomplished teachers model effective instructional practices, encourage sharing of best practices, mentor new teachers, and collaborate with teaching colleagues. (p. 258-9)

### **Teacher Leaders as Adult Learners**

Andragogy is the art and science of teaching adults (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). Forrest III and Peterson describe the andragogical process in terms of a trip with a tour guide. The learner has prior experience in “traveling,” but the teacher provides direction (p. 115). The philosophy of andragogy can be applied to teacher learning, as teachers are adults who, according to teacher leadership models, have the experience on which to base their learning.

Several key elements of the philosophy of andragogy can enlighten the way we think about the way teachers learn. First, Callender (1995) says that adult learners with questions gain an advantage by finding emotional engagement with a topic of interest.



Second, Merriam, Cafarella, and Baumgartner (2007) state, “[T]he learning that goes on in adulthood can be understood through an examination of the social context in which it occurs” (p. 7). Third, Merriam, et al. identify two paths through which adult learners seek growth: through self-directed learning and through reflection and critical thinking about that learning. Finally, Merriam, et al. refer to Kolb’s (1984) work regarding experiential learning in adults in which Kolb posits that adults need different abilities to learn from their experiences: willingness to try new things, reflective skills, the ability to integrate ideas into practice, and problem-solving skills (p. 164).

### **Summary**

From this review of literature in key categories related to trans\* persons and educational leadership, the need for further research on trans\* persons in relation to our educational system is apparent. While trans\* is but one category that needs to be advanced in educational leadership research, taking it up can pave ground for moving forward work with other marginalized persons, such as Intersex persons. Recognizing teachers as adult learners and understanding some basic tenets of andragogy helps set a frame for looking at the role of teacher leadership in public pedagogy. Teacher leaders must be responsible for their own learning in order to advance their leadership skills; much of this learning comes from the daily practice of teaching and from collaboration with colleagues. Leaders for social justice engage in critical self-reflection to recognize their own sociopolitical identities (Brown, 2006; Kose, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010), identify systems and structures that lead to inequities, promote inclusive practices and equitable access to curriculum (McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007), and support teachers in developing curriculum and pedagogy that include multiple perspectives and

experiences (Kose; McKenzie et al., 2008; Shields, 2004). Thus, this literature review demonstrates that principals as defined by Theoharis and leaders for social justice as described by Brown, Kose, and Marshall and Oliva are directly responsible for engaging in methods to correct the problem uncovered by this literature review.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### Of Other Worlds

By Ladonna Causey (2008)<sup>1</sup>

*(previously unpublished poem, printed with permission of the author)*

I once lived my life in quiet resignation

Embrace the alien

Content to go about my day progressing from one task to the next

Embrace the alien

Never really stretching myself or taking any risk

Embrace the alien

Afraid of what lay beyond my well-known truths.

Embrace the alien

Guarding myself with my own judgments and fears

Embrace the alien

In case you have had trouble reading between the lines

Embrace the alien

I am learning to embrace the alien in me

Embrace the alien

And am recommending you embrace the alien in you.

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<sup>1</sup> Author is a cisgender female who writes poetry and songs; she wrote this poem for the researcher some years ago and agreed to let it be published here.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This basic interpretive qualitative research project (Merriam, 2002) is a case study in which I collected data from the perspective of an insider to answer research questions informed by the extensive review of the educational research literature on public pedagogy conducted by Sandlin et al. (2011). The study's primary research question is as follows: How do trans\* persons reflect on their educational experiences through a public pedagogy lens? Secondary research questions include the following: In what ways do adult-selves reflecting back on their pasts describe/define/internalize/reconfigure/mobilize public pedagogy? How do trans\* and school leader/administrator participants enact a public pedagogy process of shared learning around trans\* issues in schools? How can public pedagogy explain/inform the educational experiences of trans\* persons and the responses to those experiences of school leaders? Merriam (2009) says, "Often qualitative researchers undertake a qualitative study because there is a lack of theory or an existing theory fails to adequately explain a phenomenon. Therefore, another important characteristic of qualitative research is that the process is *inductive*; that is, researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses as in positivist research" (p. 15). Because there is limited research on trans\* persons in relation to K-12 schooling and the role of the administrator (Blount, 2000; Capper, 1999; deLeon et al, 2013; Eckes & McCarthy, 2008; Lamme & Lamme, 2001; Lugg, 2003; McGarry, 2011; Riehl, 2000; Tooms et al., 2010; Weissbourd & Jones, 2012), qualitative research helps

build inductive theory in this area. According to Patton (2002), “*Inductive analysis* involves *discovering* patterns, themes, and categories in one’s data” (p. 453).

According to Yin (1981), “The need to use case studies arises whenever: •an empirical inquiry must examine a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when •the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 98). In the situation of this research project, the case study was selected because the empirical inquiry examined the contemporary phenomenon of the public pedagogical discourse in its real-life context. The case of interest was the process in which the school leaders and trans\* participants engaged in shared learning. Yin (1981) posits that case studies specialize in the study of knowledge utilization “because the topic covers a phenomenon that seems to be inseparable from its context” (p. 99). In this research study, the knowledge utilization manifests itself in the special situation of the public pedagogical process in terms of agency context in relation to trans\* participants and school leaders.

In the debate over strengths of research, case study is not considered ideal for generalizability. However, Stake (1978) claims,

When explanation, propositional knowledge, and law are the aims of an inquiry, the case study will often be at a disadvantage. When the aims are understanding, extension of experience, and increase in conviction in that which is known, the disadvantage disappears. (p. 6)

In this research project, the case study aimed to increase understanding of the public pedagogical process and to extend the experience of trans\* persons in the public pedagogical context, so the case study has merit, by Stake’s standards. Stake reminds,

“the case need not be a person or enterprise. It can be whatever ‘bounded system’ is of interest” (p. 7). With this research project, the case for study is the bounded system of the public pedagogy dialogues among trans\* participants and school leaders.

Tellis (1997) says that Yin defined three types of case study: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive and that Stake defined three others: instrumental, intrinsic, and collective. Each of these can be done as single-case or multiple-case studies. In this research project, a single-case study was conducted that combined the Yin typology of descriptive case study and the Stake typology of intrinsic case study. According to Tellis, Yin’s descriptive case study “require[s] a descriptive theory to be developed before starting the project,” and Stake’s intrinsic case study is ideal “when the researcher has an interest in the case.” Because I identify as a trans man and am operating from an insider perspective for this research the intrinsic case study served well for my work. Furthermore, I have described the theory of the public pedagogical interactions with trans\* persons serving as public intellectuals, so the descriptive case study paired well with the intrinsic case study for this research project.

## **Participants**

According to Tellis (1997), “Case study research is not sampling research” (n.p.); however, cases must be selected. In this research project, the case is a public pedagogy discussion among trans\* participants and teacher leaders. Still, participants for the discussion must be selected and this selection is kin to sampling. Merriam (2009) says, “Non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research” (p. 77). Many types of non-probability sampling exist, but the most common is purposeful sampling. According to Merriam, “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that

the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 77). As is the case with this study, a sample from which the most can be learned had to be selected, so four trans\* persons in addition to the researcher were recruited. As Patton says, “Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244). Four trans\* participants were selected from among a group of people with whom I am associated in the Central Texas area who are out as trans\* and are active in some way in organizing or educating for trans\* rights. I have used the colloquial language of “out” throughout this dissertation, but I want to take a moment here to acknowledge the difficult and problematic place from which this term arrives and the marginalized place from which my participants will be coming as “out” trans\* people. According to O’Malley (2013),

It remains a common expectation that if these silences are to be broken, persons who experience themselves as queer or gender nonconforming have a responsibility to ‘come out,’ which is to say individuals must opt to publically make known their desire in areas as vulnerable as sexuality and love, visibly perform transitions across gender, or discuss the intimate complexities of biological difference amidst largely unaware audiences. (p. 355-356)

Ultimately, the trans\* participants were not selected because of their current “out” status or their current role in activism and education; that is where the convenience sampling comes in. I am an out trans\* person involved in activism and education, so I conveniently know out trans\* people involved in similar activities. This might be a

limitation of my sample, as people currently involved in activism and education may address a project such as this differently from someone who is not out or not active.

Also, four teacher leaders were recruited from one local high school. Teachers who are cisgender were not intentionally recruited; however, the teachers who chose to participate are all cisgender-identified persons. All teacher leaders were recruited from the same school in order to facilitate answering the research question of “How do trans\* and school leader/administrator participants enact a public pedagogy process of shared learning around trans\* issues in schools?” In order to better understand this enactment, I purposively sampled teachers who know each other and who work together in order that they would be a natural community, making it possible that they might form a “politically engaged scholarly community” (Brady, 2006, p. 58), which is one of the fundamental missions of a feminist public pedagogy project.

I feel that it is important to note that my two groups were not exclusive by design but by who chose to participate. It was highly likely that I could have had a trans\* school leader who wanted to participate. In the event that a trans\* school leader had volunteered for the project, I would have allowed hir to interpret the role ze played—whether acting as a public intellectual with the trans\* group or acting as a participant in the pedagogical process as a school leader or serving in both capacities. As it turned out, the trans\* participants did not identify as school leaders, and the school leaders did not identify as trans\* persons.



## **Role of the Researcher**

As a trans man, I worked as an insider researcher, adding to the trans\* perspective in the conversations. Costley, Elliott, and Gibbs (2010) outline some key concepts for the insider-researcher:

As an insider, you are in a unique position to study a particular issue in depth and with special knowledge about that issue. Not only do you have your own insider knowledge, but you have easy access to people and information that can further enhance that knowledge. You are in a prime position to investigate and make changes to a practice situation. You can make challenges to the status quo from an informed perspective. You have an advantage when dealing with the complexity of work situations because you have in-depth knowledge of many of the complex issues. (p. 3)

I acknowledge that being an insider presented some unique challenges to this project. As an insider, I had my own story and experiences to share, but I had to be careful not to influence others to mimic my experience but to share their own experiences. I also encouraged different viewpoints from my own and avoided letting my experience be a dominant perspective because it is mine. Just because I am an insider does not mean I am an expert on the lives of others; each individual is their own expert, and I encouraged them to tell their stories in a way that demonstrates their authority and ownership of their lives and lived experiences. Costley, et al. (2010) describes the subjective nature of researching your own practice: “there may be a lack of impartiality, a vested interest in certain results being achieved and problems concerning a fresh and objective view of data” (p. 6). Thus, I state here clearly that I am aware of this nature of insider research

and paid careful attention to feedback from participants and awareness of issues represented in the project in order to work to minimize bias.

### **Information Collection**

To begin the research project I interviewed each participant. I asked the trans\* participants to share stories describing a time when they, either intentionally or unintentionally, enacted the role of public intellectual during their school days. In a one-on-one narrative interview, I encouraged them to speak about their experiences in school in order to find stories that they could share that tell of them teaching others about difference. I was especially interested in ways that they remembered themselves educating those around them—peers, teachers, coaches, staff, and administrators—at school about differences related to gender identity. I asked them the following questions:

1. What pseudonym do you want to use for the confidentiality of your story?
2. How do you identify your gender?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your race/ethnicity?
5. Where did you go to K-12<sup>th</sup> grade?
6. How did you identify your gender when you were in K-12<sup>th</sup> grade?
7. How do you identify your sexuality?
8. How do you think your gender identity and sexual identity intersect?
9. How are you involved in educating others about gender difference?
10. Think of a time in K-12 school when you acted as a public intellectual—an educator—for your peers, teachers, administrators, or others in the school setting—regarding gender difference or transgenderism—either intentionally or unintentionally. Describe this situation for me. How were you an active agent whether intentional or unintentional? How did others respond? How did this experience affect your further development?

With the teacher leaders, I was interested in seeing what they already knew about trans\* students and what they hoped to learn by participating in this research project. I asked some basic demographic questions that demonstrated openness to the independence of

gender and sexuality and opened a dialogue about the research project. The following questions were included:

1. What pseudonym do you want to use for the confidentiality of your story?
2. How do you identify your gender?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your race/ethnicity?
5. How would you describe the school at which you currently work?
6. How would you describe the leadership position or your capacity for leadership at your school?
7. What pseudonym would you like to use for your school in your story?
8. How do you identify your sexuality?
9. How do you think your gender identity and sexual identity intersect?
10. What do you know about transgenderism/persons/issues? Please be open and honest. Nothing you can say is wrong. This is an opportunity for you to learn. And I consider my role to be the observant educator, so I choose not to be offended by any mistakes you might make.
11. What policies does your school have regarding students of gender difference/non-conformity/variance?
12. What do you hope to learn or what questions do you have going into this project?

These initial interviews served as narrative opportunities for the trans\* participants to lay out experiences they have had in which they have been the public intellectual agent or the educational agent in their K-12 environment in order to help others learn about how and why they are often marginalized and for the school leader participants to critically examine what they know and what they hope to learn as a participant in this public pedagogical process. The interviews were conversational as described by Patton (2002): “The conversational interview offers maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate, depending on what emerges from observing a particular setting or from talking with one or more individuals in that setting” (p. 342). Also, there was great value in face-to-face interviewing as a beginning to this case study, as I sought a multi-week commitment from my participants. Knowing me and me knowing them helped encourage commitment. Also, the content I

was seeking might have been perceived as of an intimate and closeted nature by the participants, so face-to-face one-on-one time allowed for more space for participants to find what was comfortable for sharing and what was not. Ultimately, as Patton says, “I want to establish rapport with the person I am questioning, but that rapport must be established in such a way that it does not undermine my neutrality concerning what the person tells me” (p. 365). I was interested in interpreting what it meant for me as I heard the stories being told. Incorporating my perspective made me a “vulnerable observer” (Behar, 1997) and allowed for openness and accelerated sharing. I understand, as Patton says, “Interviews are interventions. They affect people. A good interview lays open thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experience, not only to the interviewer but also to the interviewee” (p. 405). Thus, the reason the interviews were open-ended comes from Merriam (2009) who says, “Less structured [interviews] assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways” (p. 90). Furthermore, Patton (2002) says of narrative inquiry, “[it] extends the idea of text to include in-depth interview transcripts, life history narratives, historical memoirs, and creative non-fiction....Personal narratives, family stories, suicide notes, graffiti, literary nonfiction, and life histories reveal cultural and social patterns through the lens of individual experiences. Rhetoric of all kinds can be fodder for narrative analysis” (p. 115).

Following the interviews, the trans\* participants and I engaged in an e-mail conversation about our goals, hopes, desires and intentions for moving forward with an interaction with the teacher leader participants. I facilitated the conversation by suggesting some topics that we might discuss: how we would approach the teacher leaders, what key points we would want to make, what stories of our own experiences we

would want to share, what questions we anticipated the teacher leaders having, what we could provide the teacher leaders, what kind of collaboration might come out of meeting with the teacher leaders. After the trans\* participants shared their ideas via an e-dialogue with each other, I brought the group of trans\* participants and teacher leader participants together for a face-to-face meeting. I prepared an agenda for the meeting based on the conversations the trans\* participants had in order to facilitate a discussion with so many people present and wanting to share at the same time. I secured a location at a local public library and invited everyone to attend. At the meeting, the following agenda was used:

- I. Introductions
- II. PRIDE (Participate, Respect, Interact, Discuss, Experiment)
- III. Guess who's trans—deconstruct reasons why we think this and then explore how and why we each identify the way we do
- IV. What's your first memory about learning about Trans\* (people, issues, subject matter)?
- V. What messages have we been given about Trans\* people, issues, subject matter? From where do we get those messages?
- VI. Vocabulary
  - a. Transgender – gender identity that transgresses assumptions and expectations that society prescribes for a particular sex; NOT the same as or related to sexual orientation; used as an “umbrella term” inclusive of subcategories/labels/identities
  - b. Cisgender – gender identity where an individual's self-perception of their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth
  - c. Cisgenderism – a term derived from heterosexism – a system of oppression that empowers those individuals whose biological sex aligns with their gender identity
  - d. Sex – typically understood as binary – female or male – assigned at birth based on genitalia
  - e. Gender – spectrum concept heavily influenced by culture and society; typically understood as a binary of female and male
  - f. Gender Identity – internal sense of being a man, woman, both, or neither
  - g. Gender expression – acting, dressing, speaking, behaving to show gender
  - h. Genderqueer – a subcategory of transgender; an identity that is non-binary and emphasizes that non-binary nature of gender
- VII. What we want you to know from Trans\* participants
- VIII. Questions from School Leaders

- IX. Read excerpts of *Trans-sister Radio* and *Stone Butch Blues* and discuss
- X. Wrap up
- XI. Share contact information
- XII. Take home assignment – Respond to tonight’s meeting – your thoughts, feelings, ideas – poetry, art, music, writing, video, etc.

The pedagogical process of these critical conversations is of utmost interest to my secondary research questions: “In what ways do adult-selves reflecting back on their pasts describe/define/internalize/reconfigure/mobilize public pedagogy? What does a pedagogical process of conference and together learning look like among trans\* persons and educational leaders? How can public pedagogy explain/inform the educational experiences of trans\* persons and the responses to those experiences of educational leaders?” Two important aspects of public pedagogy theory influence the way I set up this group conversation. Feminist public pedagogy (Brady, 2006) suggests that bringing people together across similarities and difference for pedagogical action is crucial to the collectivist approach to pedagogy which can and has affected societal change. Also, public pedagogy advocates emphasis on participant perspective, so this pedagogical process was designed where I was a participant observer but the agency was in the hands of the participants.

### **Information Analysis**

In order to investigate the data with the purpose of exemplifying and further understanding pedagogical processes among public intellectuals and school personnel in mind, the goal of data analysis was to focus on the stories of the participants. My data collection methods are derived from those used by Morgan (2003) in her dissertation on trans\* life experiences related to the field of nursing. Morgan described her study as a “qualitative narrative analysis” (p. 56), and Morgan described her data analysis process as

one in which she reviewed the data several times and then composed a narrative summary for each participant. She continued to find stories from multiple participants that linked to the research questions she had asked. This process then led to her findings of larger themes. Her process influenced the process that I developed for my study.

I began by reviewing the recordings of the interviews, the transcripts of the e-conversations, the recording of the group meeting, and the journal responses. I chose not to take verbatim transcripts of the interviews and the group meeting because I believe that tying spoken language to paper harms the value of our practice as qualitative researchers and denies the interpretivist/postmodern framework in which I am working because it links too strongly to traditional language and semiotics (Bucholtz, 2000; Duff & Roberts, 1997; Green, Franquiz, & Dixon, 1997; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). The sound, tone, and inflection of each participant's voice matters more than a dry transcription, especially in the expression of events as personal as those related to gender and sexuality. I struggle, in fact, with the finality and singularity that writing this document gives to the ongoing and growing nature of the ideas that are a part of the work itself, but I specifically here am concerned about how transcription deadens the orality of spoken conversations such as in interviews and focus groups. Participants' emotions and perspectives on emotions need to come through. I can only recognize those by listening to the sound of voices repeatedly, not by reading text on a page, and I am more capable of recreating my emotional response when I hear the conversations as if for the first time. Thus, rather than referring to a transcript, I referred directly to the tapes, listening multiple times to the participants' words, voices, and stories.

Several key steps occurred next. First, I listened for the stories that the participants were telling that answered the question

Think of a time in K-12 school when you acted as a public intellectual—an educator—for your peers, teachers, administrators, or others in the school setting—regarding gender difference or transgenderism—either intentionally or unintentionally. Describe this situation for me. How were you an active agent whether intentional or unintentional? How did others respond? How did this experience affect your further development?

These did not just occur in the interview in response to the question when it was asked, but they also occurred in the group conversation with the teachers. The stories themselves acted as “text”, and I interpreted it after listening several times through a process of hermeneutics as described by Merriam (2009): “Because the ‘text’ of the story forms the data set for what is analyzed in [narrative] research, the philosophy of hermeneutics, which is the study of written texts, is often cited as informing narrative analysis” (p. 32). Merriam’s definition of hermeneutics is problematic, in that it defines hermeneutics as the study of written texts, but it is understood through postmodernism that anything can be seen as text including oral stories, art works, and performances. The case with these interviews and group discussions is just that the orality is the text that I was listening for and that I was analyzing using hermeneutics.

After listening to and analyzing the stories, I collected quotes and key words from the interviews, e-conversations, group meeting, and journals that highlighted and emphasized the points, logical and emotional, that the participants made. As I was seeking to collect quotes and key words, I kept my research questions in mind and looked



for data that could answer those questions. Corbin and Strauss (2008) advocate a process of theoretical sampling of data and interactivity with the data such that the data are alive and interactive with the researcher. According to Corbin and Strauss, “Theoretical sampling is concept driven. It enables researchers to discover the concepts that are relevant to this problem and population, and allows researchers to explore the concepts in depth” (p. 145). The important part of the technique of theoretical sampling is a step-by-step process of gathering data, asking questions, gathering more data, asking more questions and so on:

In doing theoretical sampling, the researcher takes one step at a time with data gathering, followed by analysis, followed by more data gathering until a category reaches the point of “saturation.” In theoretical sampling the researcher has to let the analysis guide the research. (p. 146)

Corbin and Strauss say, “Every researcher wants to ask good questions [of the data], ones that will enhance the discovery of new knowledge” (p. 69). The questions that are asked of the data will vary and grow throughout the data analysis process in order to let the data guide the process of analysis. Corbin and Strauss say, “Asking questions and thinking about the range of possible answers helps us to take the role of the other so that we can better understand the problem from the participant’s perspective” (p. 70). Many types of questions were asked of the data throughout the analysis. Questions such as who, what, when, where, how and with what consequences were asked of the data but questions of frequency, duration, rate, and timing were also asked. Finally, spatial questions were asked (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Ultimately, these questions all come from several main typologies, according to Corbin and Strauss, and it is imperative to address all these

typologies when interacting with the data: sensitizing questions (looking to see what the data say), theoretical questions (looking to see how the data act), practical questions (looking to see what directions the data provide), and guiding questions (looking to see how the data lead to future methodology such as interviews and observations).

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), “What makes theoretical sampling different from conventional methods of sampling is that it is responsive to the data rather than established before the research begins. This responsive approach makes sampling more open and flexible” (p. 144). This type of flexibility is important both to my interpretivist philosophy and to the unknown nature of the data I will be collecting. In fact, Corbin and Strauss say, “Theoretical sampling is especially important when studying new or uncharted areas because it allows for discovery” (p. 145) and this study is addressing a new and uncharted territory in looking at the relationship of trans\* persons’ stories to educational administration.

Since I was using orality for the interviews and group conversation and the written text of the e-group conversation and the journals, the process of theoretical sampling was creative for me. What is commonly called coding in qualitative research is in essence what I was doing, but it looked quite different in the way that I was carrying it out. Perhaps one way to describe my process would be to say that it was akin to the everyday life of Generation M, today’s current teens who are hooked on multiple modes of media almost 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Rather than making notes on a transcript of keywords or common phrases that I was seeing/hearing related to the research questions, I was at my computer with multiple Microsoft Word screens open at once. Each screen represented a research question. As I listened to the recordings of the

interviews and group meeting, I would switch from screen to screen and enter quotes from the recordings where I thought they best fit—sometimes entering one quote on more than one screen. I also entered information from the e-group notes and journals on these same screens.

After I felt that I had gotten all that I could from listening to the recordings and reading the e-group notes and journals, I applied inductive analysis as described by Hatch (2002) wherein Hatch borrows heavily from Spradley's domain analysis. Spradley's processes "provide a useful place to start in discovering ways to 'read' stories people are telling by their lived experiences" (Williams, n.d.) This allowed me to analyze the data through a theoretical sampling process that presents a coding by semantic relationship. At this point, I was looking for ways to further break down my data into subcategories beyond simply by research question. Hatch describes a process where semantic relationships are used to organize the data based on a basic structure of "are ways to...", "are characteristics of..." My semantic relationships were derived from my theoretical framework. Specifically, the stories of trans\* participants are ways to and are characteristics of a "challenge to existing social practices" (Brady, 2006, p. 58), as a "challenge to hegemonic forms of discrimination" (p. 58), and through "creative engagement in which complex images, contradictory discourses, canonical themes and stories, and supposedly common sense versions of reality are disputed" (p. 59). Continuing with the inductive analysis on a research question-by-research question basis, I continued to develop semantic relationships across characteristics of public pedagogy as the data revealed information. Other semantic relationships used included the following: the adult trans\* person reflecting back on school as refutation of traditional structures; the

adult trans\* person reflecting back on school as acknowledgement of difference; the adult trans\* person reflecting back on school as refusal of simplistic and derogatory images of themselves; the response of school leaders to trans\* stories as refutation of traditional structures; the response of school leaders to trans\* stories as acknowledgement of difference; the response of school leaders to trans\* stories as refusal of simplistic and derogatory images of themselves. According to Patton (2002), through inductive analysis, “findings emerge out of the data, through the analyst’s interactions with the data, in contrast to *deductive analysis* where the data are analyzed according to an existing framework” (p. 453).

Finally, I presented narrative summaries to try to understand the original stories by writing from my perspective. Having a master’s of fine arts degree in creative writing gave me the desire and knowledge to pursue this stage of my project. I believe that using third person narrative and/or poetry to tell part of the stories of my participants helped me express the union of how I heard the stories and how the participants told the stories in order that I could create a bridge between their stories and my analysis. These stories were designed to introduce the participants to people who come to view the data that they shared. Specifically, after analyzing each participant based on the data collected, I wrote a poem that demonstrated my reflection on the data and the experience of working with the participant. This is a form of arts-based educational research (ABER), as described by Barone and Eisner (2006). According to Barone and Eisner,

Arts-based research is engaged in for a purpose often associated with artistic activity: arts-based research is meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities. For ABER, those activities are educational in character.

Second, arts-based researcher is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or *design elements* that infuse the inquiry process and the research “text.” (p. 95)

The purpose of including this poetry reflection section in my methodology comes from the field of ABER and is to enhance perspectives (Barone & Eisner, 2006).

As you noticed, the poems within the findings are not the only poems within this research study. Each chapter begins with a poem, as well. I chose to open each chapter with a poem as part of the ABER aspect of this research project in order to set a certain tone for bringing the poetry into the methodology and findings. According to Leggo (2008), poetry “invites us to experiment with language, to create, to know, to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience” (p. 165), and I believe that a group such as trans\* persons—who are marginalized and often left voiceless politically—need alternatives to the conversation. The poems that I use to introduce the chapters come from a variety of authors—a trans woman, a cisgender ally, and myself. All are about trans\* experience. Their presence and the way that they break the traditional language into segments and cause the brain to move from logical thought to creative thought as it progresses through the reading of this research study helps to prepare the reader for the inclusion of the poems that are a part of the methodology and findings.

Samuels (1987) says, “a poem might contribute an additional impact on the emotional and spiritual levels as well as on the cognitive level” (p. 55). The concept of ABER is to engage in this multi-dimensional impact, and I have written poems as part of the data description of each participant in order to accomplish something more postmodern than simple rote analysis. Each poem within the findings is unique to my

interpretation of the data I collected about that participant. I have not analyzed the poems themselves, nor did I seek member-checking with the participants on the poetry; however, I would like to use the poetry in future research about poetry as a methodology and go back to these participants to talk about the procedure I used.

### **Summary**

In this interpretive qualitative case study, eight participants (four trans\* identified and four teacher leaders) engaged in a public pedagogy process. First, each participant was interviewed. Then, the trans\* participants met via e-mail to discuss how they wanted the public pedagogy process to proceed. Then the whole group met together to carry out the learning experience. Finally, the participants provided journal entries about their experiences. Data was collected in the following manner:

1.	Listening to the recordings to become familiar with the participant stories.
2.	Readings of the e-group notes and journal entries.
3.	Open multiple Microsoft Word windows – one for each research question.
4.	Listened to recordings again and entered relevant quotes under relevant research questions.
5.	Read e-conversations and journals again and entered relevant information under relevant research questions.
6.	Hatch/Spradley Domain Analysis based on semantic relationships derived from feminist public pedagogy
7.	Poetry based on ABER ideology

**Table 1. Summary of Methodology**

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### Truth & Lies

By Lilith Annabelle Rios<sup>2</sup> (2013)

When will people understand  
I am not a Man  
I am a Woman  
But no one can grasp this  
They all look at my face and say "whoa man"  
Gender to them is about the skin  
They don't try to take the time to see within  
And society holds me back  
keeps me afraid, scared of the next attack  
I'm standing outside the bathroom afraid to pee  
Afraid to be  
Me  
They don't see who I am  
Just who I'm not  
And every time I represent my true gender, I'm afraid I'll get caught  
Get Shot  
Get Got  
Beaten, battered, and bruised  
Abused  
Raped and used  
My heart beats two beats ahead  
trying to pump as much blood as it can before I'm found dead  
Trying to breathe more breath  
Trying to cheat death  
Trying to be the best  
Woman I know how to be  
Trying to just represent me  
But how long before my luck runs out?  
How long before they scream and shout  
"Get that tranny! Get that f\*g!"  
"chop that Freak up, stuff Him in a bag!"  
To kill me will make them so glad  
And I think about it and I just get so mad  
And every November I see the names of those who didn't survive  
And I'm just so happy to be alive

---

<sup>2</sup> Author is not a participant in the study; she shared this previously unpublished poem as a chapter introduction at my request.

And then I feel survivor's guilt for people who I didn't know  
Couldn't know  
Couldn't ever meet  
Yet they were the ones found dead on the street  
And I don't know who to blame  
Someone should be ashamed  
How many deaths does it take?  
How many bodies must break?  
how many fears will quake?  
Until people realize what's at stake  
When will murderers be brought to justice?  
When will rapists no longer touch us?  
When are we people before we are statistics  
People don't know this, because they just missed it  
And when I make this cry  
People get angry and tell me I lie  
But they won't look me in the eyes  
to Realize  
that I don't deal in lies  
I only speak truth  
no matter how uncouth  
The truth is, that the lie is the man  
Everyone who thought the lie truth, I understand  
the Lie was too real!  
It was smoke and mirrors you could touch and feel  
How could you know it hid fact?  
But like all lies the surface begins to crack  
and I'm free  
Free to be me  
No longer shackled to this role I played too well  
But this isn't a part I will continue to sell  
this untruth I will no longer tell  
You see, my whole life I've been told to live this role  
To just do what I'm told  
by preachers and priests  
Lest  
I anger God  
God!?  
I thought God heard all  
Saw All  
Was All  
There is nothing you can hide from God's eyes  
God sees through all lies  
And if that is truth  
Then God is ahead of the curve  
And no matter how I try to cover it up



Do my best not to act up  
Try to be the best man that I can be  
God can still See  
So who am I lying for?  
What am I lying for?  
What am I dying for?  
So I can be depressed more?  
Hurt more?  
Be angry more?  
Who needs this lie?  
Why in this facade must I die?  
Why must I every night cry  
over a womanhood I am told I don't have  
Can't have  
Won't have  
I should be glad  
Not mad  
angry, upset, or depressed  
I shouldn't second guess  
This mess  
It's not a mess  
I'm just confused  
a product of being abused  
Not enough love  
Not enough hugs  
It's the fault of my father who wasn't there  
My Mother's the one to blame because she didn't care  
Enough  
to Stuff  
this imposed manhood down my throat  
Shove it down until I choked  
Stuff it in until I couldn't breath  
Please believe  
That my mother is not to blame  
Stop trying to make my father feel shame  
Love  
hugs  
Drugs  
Prescribed to fix a problem that wasn't there  
To cover a truth no one can bare  
But I do, like a cross  
it weighs me down, I am at a loss  
This manhood, this cost  
It's too much for me  
I can not afford to be  
A man

I'm a Sally not a Sam  
A Jill, not a jack  
I can't hold this back  
My Insides have cracked  
I'm screaming in vain  
It's driving me insane  
I'm losing my mind  
Please be patient and kind  
Because I'm trying with all my heart  
to Start  
Walking this walk  
Talking this talk  
Trying a new name  
One that doesn't cause me so much pain  
I'm not trying to be reborn  
I'm just trying to inform  
That under the man you see, there is a girl  
Her head is in a whirl  
her mind in a spin  
She's fighting to win  
Those Rights  
That weren't given to her when she first saw light  
So no matter what your feelings, politics, religion say  
Do not Stand in my way  
I'll knock you out , flat on your back  
Because now I'm the one who's ready to attack  
So before you say "whoa man"  
Understand that I'm a woman

### **Participant Data**

Participant names have been changed for anonymity and confidentiality. The name of the high school at which the four teacher leaders work has been changed, as well. The four teacher leaders all work at the same high school. They were intentionally recruited from the same school in order to elicit a collective reflection on the research topic within a shared context. The trans\* participants are from the communities near the school, but none of them attended that school when they were in high school. After describing each participant based on the data collected, I have shared a poem that I wrote

that demonstrates my reflection on the data and the experience of working with the participant (Barone & Eisner, 2006).

### **Participant One—Fay**

Fay is a white female in her 40's who identifies as part of the trans\* community. Fay responded to a Facebook invitation to a local trans\* advocacy organization to participate in the study. She lives and works in Central Texas and describes herself as an advocate and activist for LGBTQIA rights. She is in a monogamous relationship and has been for 16 years. Her relationship is important to her because in her youth, her gender transgression led her to identify as gay and her relationship was seen by her and others as a gay-male relationship. To have her partner's support with her identification as a woman despite the origins of their relationship in the gay-male community is powerful for Fay. Fay works for a law office, and she enjoys speaking about trans\* issues at local events and for organizations such as Get Equal. Even though Fay identified as gay when she was in school and wasn't yet out as trans\*, she had some powerful experiences around gender. She did not directly or intentionally teach others about her gender difference, but she believes that her reaction to the way she was mistreated served as a pedagogical tool for those around her. Fay would have liked to have been involved in sports or band, but she did not join those organizations because of her fear of entering male changing rooms. She describes the body dysphoria that trans\* people often face: "No matter how great of a body one might have when you are trans\* identified especially it is really difficult to accept your body; it's a subject of humiliation in a different way." Because she needed a gym credit and did not feel comfortable in situations where she would have to change clothes in front of other students, she opted to take ROTC. Fay

encountered rampant sexism in the ROTC program and found herself under constant ridicule from the ROTC instructor for not being masculine enough. She believes that her reactions to his comments served as educational opportunities for him to realize that gender differences exist and that children of some gender difference can be damaged by the language teachers use around them. Fay relates, “I hope he learned something just by the expression on my face. You’re just so weak and vulnerable at that time in your life. I didn’t respond.” To represent Fay and her story, I constructed this poem based on an analysis of the data I collected:

### **The Way We Walk**

Everyone wants what’s best for you  
but no one thinks to ask you.

So you hide behind the man’s body  
and struggle when the teacher  
tells you to man up  
because to you that is an impossible  
task.

You stand 5’10” tall  
and walk like yourself  
but people call you names  
because that is not the way a man walks.

“I am not a man,” you try to explain  
only to be ignored even by others like you.

It breaks your heart to see people claiming  
to teach tolerance when all they display  
is ignorance.

A field of daisies invites memories of  
days gone by and you brush the hair from  
your eye with your long, delicate fingers  
as you softly intone your belief that  
we are all transgressors of gender.

## **Participant Two—Dan**

Dan is a man in his 20's who is an undergraduate at a university located in Central Texas. Dan responded to a Facebook invitation to a local LGBTQIA organization to participate in the study. He is studying mass communications with an interest in videography. Dan leads worship at his church, and he identifies his race as "blaxican". Dan has recently transitioned from female to male with the support of his church and college friends. Dan identified as a lesbian in high school, where he was not out as transgender. Dan remembers a time in elementary school, when he already knew that he was male even though he was not out about it, that he taught others about gender difference. He was playing a game with friends at school and he declared himself King of the Dinosaurs (the poem I use to introduce Chapter 5 references Dan's story) and his friends told him that girls couldn't be kings. Dan challenged them: "I was insistent. Me and my friends butted heads over it. I don't remember why I knew it was possible, but I knew that it was, and I stood up for myself." At his university, Dan is an officer in a student organization that advocates and educates around trans\* rights for students at the university. He is especially interested in rights for trans\* students of color. To represent Dan and his story, I constructed this poem based on an analysis of the data I collected:

### **The Dress**

I play the violin and I play it well.  
The strings sing under my fingers.  
As the conductor readies his baton,  
I ready my bow, and I forget all  
but the music.

And the dress.

Why does the orchestra director insist  
that I wear a dress to play the violin?

Does the music sound better when my  
legs are split in such an unseemly way?

The men are in tuxedos, and their  
strings sound as flawless as mine.  
Perhaps they should wear dresses, too?  
We'd all sound so much better if  
we all wore dresses to the concert,  
I'm sure.

People don't see me as the man that  
I am, so they impose their standards  
of dress on me in order to make me  
look even more like what they want.

My short hair and broad shoulders  
confuse their binary brains, so  
I must wear a dress to help them  
differentiate the hims from the hers.

But they can't see inside me until I let  
my inside out. The man in me cannot  
bear this dress much longer, and with the  
last upbow, I will sing myself into  
manhood—never to wear a dress again.

### **Participant Three—Mark**

Mark is a gender non-conforming person in their<sup>3</sup> 20's who prefers not to put  
themselves in a box. Mark overheard the group meeting at the public library and asked to  
become a participant. They describe themselves as “a ‘male lady’” and make the joke “I’m  
a male lady and not the postal service kind!” They feel female but at this time don’t plan  
on transitioning. They do, however, perform drag. They shared that when they are  
getting into drag, they don’t feel any less like themselves. For some drag performers, the

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<sup>3</sup> Mark, a gender non-conforming individual, asked that I use the gender-neutral pronoun  
“they” when referring to them. Mark does not experience themselves as a “multiple.” They  
have a unified, singular identity, but that identity does not fit the language of the  
male/female, he/she binary, so they choose to use “they” to represent this separation from  
the binary. The use of the singular they as a gender-neutral pronoun is a common  
practice in the gender non-conforming part of the transgender community.

drag persona is a character that they get into, but for Mark it is part of themselves. Mark is a 21-year-old, White person who currently lives in Central Texas. They don't remember much of their childhood but do know that they had what were considered atypical interests for a male child. Mark talked about how teacher support was extremely important for them in school because they did not have parental support for their non-conformity. They would often dress one way at home (masculine) and another way at school (feminine). Mark said that the thing they have done that has been most educative for people around them is to just be themselves. They feel like this does a lot for others like them who do not necessarily fit into the metaphorical boxes labels create. To represent Mark and their story, I constructed this poem based on an analysis of the data I collected:

### **Male Lady**

I'm a male lady,  
but not the postal service kind.  
When I dress as a girl, it's another part  
of me.

I used to have pink bracelets up  
to my elbows showing  
the world that I am part girl.

I live my life out loud  
and I'll help you do the same.  
You can see yourself in my art  
the makeup I paint on the faces  
of even the manliest men.

I may have traveled a long way to  
get here, but there's no turning back.  
Metaphorical boxes that labels create  
can be broken out of with  
confidence and creativity.

Be. Just be.

### **Participant Four—Abraham**

Abraham is a Hispanic male in his 20's who is an undergraduate student at a Central Texas university. Abraham and I have known each other for some time. We met through a local LGBTQIA organization. I recruited him through convenience sampling. He identifies within the transgender community as FTM, but is “stealth” within some aspects of his life. He serves as President for a student organization at his university that serves in an advocacy and educational capacity for trans\* students. Abraham describes his high school as a “Podunk, middle of nowhere” school, and he says that even though he was not out, he was depressed and suicidal because he was bullied and called names like “dyke” even though he was not out. It was immediately after high school that he changed his name and began to be more out about his trans\* identity. One way that Abraham taught people about difference in high school even though he was not out as transgender was by playing with masculine versus feminine roles. In his hometown, the only way to be gay was to fulfill a stereotype. Abraham said there were two options: “super flamboyant sequins gay guys and the super butch lesbians that wanted to ride the Harleys.” One week, Abraham played with gender and dressed in various expressions throughout the week ranging from effeminate male to lipstick femme to super butch and when teachers asked why he was doing this gender expression experiment, he told them that he was just expressing that gender is a spectrum and not a binary. He realized that people were reacting to his experiment because other students were verbally harassing him as he dressed in various roles. Throughout the process, the teachers and administrators had to be educated by Abraham about gender and about bullying. He would approach the teachers and administrators and explain to them the harassment that



was going on. To represent Abraham and his story, I constructed this poem based on an analysis of the data I collected:

### **Fight**

First thing in the morning, I put my binder on.  
I am a man to the world; I am a man to me.  
Getting bullied in school was a constant fight.  
Harassment hung in the air, thicker than fog.  
Tell me I'm a dyke one more time.

Forging ahead and changing my name  
I am who I was always intended to be.  
Going along and gaining ground,  
Heading for success in college and beyond.  
Total annihilation of my foes.

Forever grateful of the lessons I've learned,  
I teach others now how to fight  
Gouging eyes and singing battle anthems  
Heedless of the consequence  
Together we can overcome.

### **Participant Five—Pat**

Pat is a high school art teacher at Central High School. She is a heterosexual, White, cisgender female in her 50s. Pat saw a post about this research project on Facebook and volunteered to participate. Her entire teaching career has been at Central High School. She has taught English and art courses and now teaches art courses, including AP Art History. She supervises student teachers and is a content leader (department chair). Her leadership capacity also involves sponsoring students for various art competitions and sponsoring student organizations such as National Art Honor Society. Pat described Central High School as the only high school in town. She said that it is “a bit of a fishbowl.” Pat said that Central High School is diverse and that the teachers at Central High School work hard to provide the best opportunities for students

that they can. Before this project she had some prior knowledge about transgender issues, including knowing some people who have struggled with these issues: “I hate to see that inner struggle.” When asked about gender non-discrimination policies at Central High School, Pat related a story about same-sex couples not being able to buy prom tickets, but she thinks that that has changed now. Pat is rearing her grandchildren and responded to a request for participants for this research project that she saw on Facebook. Pat was interested in participating in this project because she wanted to learn more about trans\* issues in order that she could be a better teacher and a better person. To represent Pat and her story, I constructed this poem based on an analysis of the data I collected:

### **Pans**

We took this photo of ourselves holding pans  
and we don't know what to call it

We think we'll call it pans.

Thank you for being the teacher  
that we can say that to  
the teacher who wants to learn  
more about the rainbow  
and who cares enough about students  
to reach out and open doors.

Thank you for being aware of  
difference but seeing the humanity  
underneath it all.

These pans are about the humanity  
inside all of us and the love  
that we can each have for people  
who are not the same as us.

You teach that love every day.

### **Participant Six—Rebecca**

Rebecca is a heterosexual, White, cisgender, female in her 50s who also teaches at Central High School. Rebecca also saw a Facebook post about this research project and volunteered to participate. Rebecca describes Central High School as a semi-rural school. She says that it is a one-high school community that is located between two urban centers. She says it has a “sophisticated rural” feel. Central High School is classified as Small 5A. Rebecca is an English teacher and an English facilitator for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level. She describes her leadership role as one of decision-making autonomy over instructional pathways for the English department. She said she also has leadership without it being formal because of her longevity at the school; she has been there 25 years. Also, she advises the National Honor Society. Rebecca described trans\* people, in her own words, as

They have a lot of courage. I think that transgender is a group comprised of individuals who have felt that they are not genetically or physiologically developed as they feel spiritually or sexually or in terms of identity. That they fit the other gender that they are not born into more so. They have made the choice and they have the wherewithal to go about transitioning their gender.

She does not think she knows any transgender educators. She thinks it is not safe for people to openly share their transgender status. Her plan in participating in the project is to be a sponge. To represent Rebecca and her story, I constructed this poem based on an analysis of the data I collected:

### **Bright**

When I wore the NHS stole,  
I was still in the closet.

I never imagined that anyone  
in your position could understand  
my gender struggles.

I called you Mentress; you called  
me Mentee and all along I could have  
called you expert.

A sponge—Porifera—allows water to  
circulate through all the openings and channels  
and your mind is open to new ideas.

When we are young, we think we know  
everything and that our teachers  
know nothing, but in working together  
as adults, we come to see that we  
all know a little something  
that can be shared.

### **Participant Seven—Martha**

Martha is a bisexual, White, cisgender, female in her thirties who also teaches at Central High School. Martha was recruited to the study by Pat. Martha describes Central High School as a large, urban school that is diverse but with extremely low socioeconomic status. She says that the school has a wide variety of AP course offerings and offers dual credit. Martha considers herself a leader first and foremost because of her position as a teacher. She says that being in front of a classroom is her biggest role as a leader; students listen and follow her example. She teaches academic and AP world history. She also sponsors several clubs and events on campus including the MLK march, Russian Day, Eurochallenge, the Anime Club, and XYZ—a safe space for students who want to talk about being who they are. The XYZ club started as a Gay-Straight Alliance but has expanded to be more inclusive and open. Martha's prior knowledge of trans\* students included the knowledge that there are students on campus currently at Central High School who are transitioning and that it is going to become an issue quickly

on campus. She is looking for more resources for when other teachers are looking for what to do. She knows that other teachers will come to her when they begin to see students of difference. She needs basic terminology and materials to take to a teacher on what to do in a classroom when they see gender fluidity in the classroom. She is interested in taking some materials and creating something for her campus in the lines of professional development for teachers in regards to trans\* students. To represent Martha and her story, I constructed this poem based on an analysis of the data I collected:

### **XYZ**

It used to be  
This is what women are supposed to do  
because of what parts you have  
And now biological sex  
doesn't really work for me  
I like looking at people  
and parts don't really matter

That's why we talk about  
everything the alphabet has  
to offer—your pronouns  
can be xe, you, or zie.

Once I called myself a tractor,  
but the truth of the matter is  
that I am in front of kids  
all day and they are  
influenced by all our actions.

I lead by the words I say  
and the actions I take, so  
I need to know that what I am  
teaching is sound.

Come to me  
and lay it all on the line.

### **Participant Eight—Kristi**

Kristi is a bisexual, cisgender, mixed race, female in her thirties who teaches English as Central High School. Kristi was also recruited to the study by Pat. Kristi describes Central High School as accepting and accommodating. She says that certain things have to be approached in the right way. She said that the school has a new administration this year, but that traditionally, the administration at Central High School has been reactionary. Kristi has lived in Germany and she pointed out that Central High School and Texas in general are more conservative than Germany. In Germany, she says, bathrooms are unisex and people are more relaxed about gender and sexuality in Germany than in Texas. Kristi says that the students at Central High School do not realize that they are in a conservative environment and that issues of sexuality and gender need to be approached with caution. She said the students are more open-minded and supportive of the other students than they realize. Kristi teaches English to sophomores and juniors and describes herself as a campus leader as someone who leads the students to be independent and critical thinkers. Kristi acknowledges that she has a lot of questions about the transgender community because she does not have the same feelings as a transgender person. She understands that depression and suicide are factors facing the transgender community and this is concerning for her. Kristi's goal in participating was to gain an understanding of the transgender community so that she can be a support person for students on campus. To represent Kristi and her story, I constructed this poem based on an analysis of the data I collected:

### **Hiding**

Not everyone yells as loud as you and I.  
Not everyone needs to.

Not everyone cares like you and I.  
Not everyone can.  
Not everyone tries to understand.  
Not everyone wants to.

But you climb the mountain  
because you love the mountain  
and the mountain loves you.  
And at the top of the mountain  
all the children gather round your feet  
to listen to you read from the Talmud,  
“Blessed are you, God, Ruler of the universe,  
for making me according to Your will.”

And each day the mitzvot accrue in your  
honor as you reach the azimuth of the  
sun directing you toward the rainbow  
opening your soul, allowing it  
out of hiding, into a world  
where everyone sings a new song.

**Data Related to Primary Research Question—How Do Trans\* Persons  
Reflect On Their Educational Experiences Through a Public Pedagogy Lens?**

In one-on-one interviews, the four trans\* participants each provided answers to the following scenario question series:

Think of a time in K-12 school when you acted as a public intellectual—an educator—for your peers, teachers, administrators, or others in the school setting—regarding gender difference or transgenderism—either intentionally or unintentionally. Describe this situation for me. How were you an active agent whether intentional or unintentional? How did others respond? How did this experience affect your further development?

Their answers to this question and stories they shared during the group meeting with the teachers provide data related to how trans\* persons reflect on their educational experiences through a public pedagogy lens. Across the four trans\* participants, the data

show that trans\* persons reflect on their educational experiences through a public pedagogy lens in several ways: as a “challenge to existing social practices” (Brady, 2006, p. 58), as a “challenge to hegemonic forms of discrimination” (p. 58), and through “creative engagement in which complex images, contradictory discourses, canonical themes and stories, and supposedly common sense versions of reality are disputed” (p. 59).

### **Challenge to Existing Social Practices**

Fay, Dan, Mark, and Abraham all told stories that demonstrated a challenge to existing social practices when they reflected on their educational experiences. Fay challenged the social practice of male-bodied people behaving in a masculine way with her everyday behavior. A teacher reprimanded her for the way she challenged existing social practices, indicating that her challenge was not going unnoticed. Unfortunately, being reprimanded at a young age resulted in a return to conformity for Fay and a shying-away from the challenge that had been so natural to her:

Fay: I look very masculine; I recognize that, but I don’t act it. I feel very different than I look. The Major—the guy who taught the class—he was a retired major—he called me into his office one day and was lecturing me about whatever I did wrong that time—not wearing my uniform properly or whatever it was. And as I’m walking out of the office, he said, “Next time you’re in here, act like a man.” I don’t know that he learned anything, but it was certainly a learning experience for myself. I’ve got to start acting more like a man, and I did for years. I tried to comply with the idea of what a man should be. I hope he learned just by the expression on my face, but you know you’re so weak and vulnerable at that stage



in your life. I didn't really respond. I was defeated. I thought this is somebody who's an authority figure.

As Judith Butler (1990) writes: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts . . . that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p. 33). Therefore, Fay had begun to congeal into a feminine gender, but this teacher disrupted that formation with his reprimand of "act like a man." After that reprimand, Fay began to repeatedly stylize her body such that it would appear masculine even though she felt very feminine.

Dan's story of challenging existing social practices is that of his childhood game of dinosaurs in which he declared himself king. Dan did not know that he was going to challenge an existing social practice, but his schoolyard friends made it clear that he had transgressed a boundary with his gendered declaration.

Dan: When I was a lot younger, I was really quiet. I do remember one instance. I believe I was in third grade. We would play this game about dinosaurs and eggs. We would just run around and whatever. There was this one point I declared myself, I said, I'm the king of dinosaurs! And, I remember. A lot of the kids looked at me, and they were like "What? You can't be the king. You're female." I was like "I'm the king of the dinosaurs." Me and one of my guy friends butted heads at it at the time. He was like "No, that's not possible." And I was like, "Yes, it is." I was insistent. Me and my friends butted heads over it. I don't remember why I knew it was possible, but I knew that it was, and I stood up for myself.

According to Michael Warner (1993),

Every person who comes to a queer self-understanding knows in one way or another that her stigmatization is connected with gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, maturation, reproductive politics, racial and national fantasy, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body.

Being queer means fighting about these issues all the time, locally and piecemeal but always with consequences. It means being able, more or less articulately, to challenge the common understanding of what gender difference means, or what the state is for, or what 'health' entails, or what would define fairness, or what a good relations to the planet's environment would be. (p. xiii)

For Dan, his transition to male did not happen until he was in college, but the roots of his "queer self-understanding" come in the form of a challenge to existing social practice in a third-grade schoolyard game of dinosaurs and eggs. By declaring himself king when he was seen as a girl, Dan challenged his friends' perceptions of gender and articulated a challenge to "the common understanding of what gender difference means".

Mark tells of challenging existing social practices in his educational experience, as well.

Mark: I've always just been myself and I feel like that in itself does a lot for others like me who don't necessarily fit into the metaphorical boxes labels create. When I was in school, I would change clothes at school. I would pack a bag of more feminine clothes and put them on after I left the house and change back

before I got home. One time, I got in trouble at school for wearing eye-liner. I used to wear pink bracelets all the way up to my elbows. I grew up in the country and did a lot of Internet dating. I especially liked to date pretty androgynous boys who liked to wear makeup because they reminded me of me.

While Mark's story is not a specific instance in which they educated someone about difference, their dress set them apart as gender variant. As Mark indicated, people can learn from being around them. Mark's performance of gender is a challenge to the existing social practice of gender performance as being aligned with biological sex and allows others the space to perform their own gender in a variety of new ways while also being open to others' performances as well. Airton (2009) posits a move in education toward anti-genderism and anti-heterosexism rather than the current trend of anti-homophobia. Airton states

My contention is that gender must be held apart from sexuality when articulating projects against the oppression arising out of rigid gender socialization. I understand the goal of this socialization to be the instantiation of a clear and unassailable demarcation between boys and girls, maleness and femaleness, masculinity and femininity. (p. 132)

Butler (2004) even claims that this demarcation structures who will be recognized as human (i.e. those perceived to be male or female) and who, in their unwillingness or inability to be so demarcated, will not. It is in normalizing and producing this demarcation in a classroom of variably sexed and gendered children that the specter of harm and oppression arises.

Mark's demonstration of a challenge to existing social practices in the

performance of gender supplements lessons of anti-genderism such as those Airton proposes to teach.

Abraham also challenges existing social practices in his story. Abraham's story presents the most direct and passionate challenge of existing social practices of the participants involved in the research project. Abraham intentionally varied his gender expression throughout a week of high school in order to cause other students, faculty and staff at his high school to question their assumptions about the gender norms that they followed.

Abraham: The whole idea of masculine v. feminine. In my hometown if you were out as gay or lesbian the only way to be out was to fulfill the stereotype. Like full-blown, you know, crazy, like super flamboyant sequins gay guys and the super butch lesbians that wanted to ride the Harleys. And so, I noticed that my junior year of high school and it drove me nuts. And so one week I did all these variations of dressing from masculine to feminine to like super lipstick to like the gayest gay man to like everywhere all over the place. And I had a lot of teachers ask me why I'm doing that, and I'm like because I'm tired of people acting like you have to be one extreme or the other. Gender expression is not like the binary idea of sex. It's a completely fluid idea. It's like a scale. And they were like Mind Blown.

Abraham challenged the existing social practice at his school of fulfilling a gender norm or a gay stereotype by dressing in a variety of gender expressions throughout a week.

Butler (1990) offers this alternative picture of gender:

Gender ought not be construed as a stable identity ... from which various acts

follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. ... the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (p. 140-141)

Abraham's challenge to existing social practices embodied Butler's description of gender as an unstable identity. His expression explored various acts, and the social audience responded. Because of the rapid shifts, his audience did not come to believe, but they did come to question, which was Abraham's goal in presenting his challenge.

### **Challenge to Hegemonic Forms of Discrimination**

Abraham's data present compelling evidence of a challenge to hegemonic forms of discrimination. Abraham tried to create a Gay-Straight Alliance at his high school. The creation of such an organization would be a challenge to hegemonic forms of discrimination.

Abraham: My senior year of high school I tried to set up a GSA. He [the Principal] said that we couldn't call it a GSA because it would upset the community. We had to call it The Alliance, quote unquote, and it wasn't allowed to be about sexuality specifically and we couldn't do anything political and we couldn't have a normal meeting room. We had to meet in the gyms on the far end of campus. My senior year I was the president of it. But it died after I left.

Hegemonic discrimination comes when an individual or group with power discriminates against a person or group who are under that power (Gramsci, 1996). In the case of a school, the principal has hegemony over the teachers and students. In society, hegemonic discrimination affects the LGBTQIA community, and this hegemonic discrimination infiltrates school buildings, as well. The role of a GSA on a high school campus, according to GSANetwork, is “to provide a safe place for students to meet, support each other, talk about issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and work to end homophobia and transphobia.” GSANetwork advises, “If an administrator is resistant to the GSA, let them know that forming a GSA club is protected under the Federal Equal Access Act.” By forming The Alliance and working to inform the administration of his school about GSAs and the need for a GSA at his school, Abraham challenged the hegemonic discrimination that the principal was imposing on him and his classmates who wanted to form the GSA and the hegemonic discrimination that he and other LGBTQIA students faced at their school (GSANetwork, 2009).

### **Creative Engagement In Which Complex Images Are Disputed.**

Mark, Abraham, and Dan all shared stories in which creative engagement allowed for “complex images, contradictory discourses, canonical themes and stories, and supposedly common sense versions of reality [to be] disputed” (Brady, 2006, p. 59). Mark creatively engaged language to form a contradictory discourse. Mark describes himself as a “male lady.” Mark says, “I make a little joke about it by saying, ‘I’m a male lady, and not the postal service kind!’” The contradiction of the terms “male” and “lady” creates a discourse around gender. Mark’s creativity in coining this term and

adding the quip about the term adds to the possibility that people will engage in dialogue with them about the term and about gender diversity.

Abraham and Dan's stories of their expressions of gender difference in school also serve as creative engagements in which complex images are disputed. When Abraham dressed in various gender expressions throughout one week, he used creative engagement to allow for complex images to bring other people into conversation with him about the trouble with the gender binary. When Dan declared himself King of the Dinosaurs, he exercised creativity that resulted in the common sense version of reality to be disputed by his classmates.

**Data Related to Secondary Research Question #1 - In What Ways Do Adult-selves Reflecting Back on Their Pasts Describe/Define/Internalize/Reconfigure/Mobilize Public Pedagogy?**

This research question, like the Primary Research Question, pertains to the trans\* participants. The trans\* participants did not have prior knowledge of public pedagogy and were not taught the history, philosophy, or principles of public pedagogy for this research project. In order to answer this question, I examined the data with my theoretical framework in mind. The feminist construction of public pedagogy was of utmost interest in this process, as it has provided the theoretical frame for this research project. Three basic tenets of public pedagogy describe the feminist/grassroots activist perspective being discussed here: (a) refute traditional structures through the complexity of real lived experiences; (b) acknowledge difference in order to construct specific alliances across difference; (c) "refuse simplistic and derogatory images of ourselves, as well as uncover hidden bias and unexamined assumptions through critical self-

examination grounded in social responsibility, ethical considerations, and social action” (Brady, 2006, p. 58).

### **Public Pedagogy Through Refutation of Traditional Structures Through the Complexity of Real Lived Experiences**

In meeting with the school leaders, the trans\* participants described/defined/internalized/reconfigured/mobilized public pedagogy through refutation of traditional structures through the complexity of real lived experiences. This occurred in two ways: through the interactions that happened in the circumstance of the meeting and through the stories the trans\* participants told in response to a question that Martha asked (“What can we do to make the school, if you were back in high school, what would need to change, what could we do to make it less of a hell for you? What can we do to make it a more welcoming environment?”).

**The course of the conversation.** In the course of the conversation, I asked the participants, “Who here at the table do you think identifies as trans\*?” Fay’s answer described/defined/internalized/reconfigured/mobilized public pedagogy through refutation of traditional structures through the complexity of real lived experiences. She answered, “All of us. I think we all transgress gender at times in our lives.” Fay took an opportunity to share a definition of trans\* to which other people at the table had not been exposed. Her definition of trans\* as a person who “transgresses gender” gave the participants in the conversation something to think about and triggered responses such as “That makes sense” and “I hadn’t thought of it that way before.” The complexity of the real lived experience for Fay is that she is not so different from anyone else, so she constructs the trans\* identity in a way that highlights those similarities. She refuted the traditional structure of trans\* as the opposite of cisgender in the conversation in order to



enact her role as public intellectual and to bring about a greater understanding among the participants in the conversation.

**Making school less of a hell.** Fay said,

I know a lot of schools are starting to implement gender-neutral bathrooms and things of that nature and that would have been hugely helpful for me in school. Not forcing us into a locker room where we're exposing ourselves to our classmates because no matter how great of a body one might have when you are trans\* identified especially it is really difficult to accept your body; it's a subject of humiliation in a different way, I suppose. And so just those changes would have been so helpful for me. I wouldn't have been afraid of gym or marching band. I would have been able to participate in so many of those things I always felt so excluded from.

Fay's answer to Martha's question refutes traditional structures through real lived experience. The traditional structure of school is gendered bathrooms and locker rooms, but Fay's lived experience as described in her response to Martha's question contradicts the efficacy of gendered bathrooms and locker rooms. Through this enactment, Fay mobilizes public pedagogy by acting as a public intellectual serving sharing expert knowledge from her everyday lived experience with the school leaders who are seeking knowledge.

In response to Martha's question, Dan said,

I was an orchestra kid. I guess it's kind of the same with band as well. The girls wear the dresses and the guys wear the tuxes or whatever. When I was in middle school it was uniform. Everyone wore concert shirts and black slacks and

everyone was somewhat comfortable in what they were wearing. But if I could really change anything it would be to have the option to be allowed to wear the tux as an orchestra kid instead of having to wear the dress.

Fay interjected with the astute comment, “Can you imagine if they kind of switched that up and said everyone has to wear a dress?” Dan’s response and Fay’s interjection demonstrate another instance of public pedagogy through the refutation of traditional structures through real lived experiences. The traditional structure of the orchestra and band programs is for female students to wear dresses and male students to wear tuxedos, but Dan’s experience indicates that this structure is flawed. Dan’s experience serves to further mobilize public pedagogy as he is also acting as a public intellectual teaching others about his lived experience. Fay’s comment demonstrates how she has internalized public pedagogy and is now refuting traditional structures in her own thinking and reconfiguring public pedagogy for the rest of the group by asking them all to consider what she is considering.

Mark shared, “I never felt like I was good enough for baseball, but I would have tried out for softball. Or like volleyball. They only had women’s volleyball.” Kristi pointed out that there are men’s volleyball teams starting to show up in the Central Texas area, so I asked the follow up question of, “But even that, why couldn’t Mark have played women’s volleyball?” Mark is also mobilizing public pedagogy with their statement through the refutation of traditional structures through lived experience. Their statement serves to mobilize public pedagogy because it enacts their role as public intellectual in the group meeting with school leaders. Furthermore, it demonstrates the

ways that Mark's lived experience in relationship to high school sports refutes the traditional structure of gendered sports programs.

**The journal response.** In response to participation in the research project, each participant wrote a journal response. Fay's journal response spoke particularly to the topic of public pedagogy through refutation of traditional structures through the complexity of real lived experiences. She wrote,

My thoughts lingered into dark places, but then I thought about Brandon. I thought about how bravely and openly he has transitioned in his hometown. I thought about the teachers—who want to learn more and do more to make their trans\* students feel safe and welcomed. That's when it struck me—I didn't feel hopeless. For the first time in many months, I was hopeful.

Her words describe the complexity of her experience and the depression often experienced by trans\* persons. But it also refutes this traditional structure of the depressed trans\* person through the events of this public pedagogy process. Fay describes the ways that the process made her feel hopeful because of the experiences she had with the group of teachers and other trans\* participants and the researcher.

**Public Pedagogy Through Acknowledgement of Difference In Order to Construct Specific Alliances Across Difference.**

In the group meeting among trans\* participants and school leaders, the participants described/defined/internalized/reconfigured/mobilized public pedagogy through acknowledgement of difference in order to construct specific alliances across difference. The group members acknowledged differences in two key ways: trans\* participants versus school leaders and elementary versus high school versus college.

**Alliance across difference: Trans\* participants and school leaders.** After the initial reflection on who might be trans\* identified in the group and Fay's comment that everyone might be, the group members self-identified as trans male, trans female, gender non-conforming, or cisgender. Fay identified as a transgender female; Dan identified as a transgender male; Mark identified as a "male lady"; and Pat, Kristi, and Martha identified as cisgender females who were school leaders (Rebecca and Abraham were not present for the group meeting). Once the differences in gender identity were observed, alliances across that difference began to form. Martha asked the question of the trans\* identified persons, "What can we do to make the school, if you were back in high school, what would need to change, what could we do to make it less of a hell for you? What can we do to make it a more welcoming environment?" As the trans\* identified persons shared their answers, Martha, Pat, and Kristi took copious notes. As an alliance across difference was building among the participants at the table, Fay suggested to the teachers, "If there's a way you can get through to your colleagues, I think that would be extraordinarily helpful." Kristi had the idea to share the ideas from this conversation with colleagues in "certain small group settings." Mark suggested that Central High School teachers attend the local university's LGBTQIA Ally training. Martha has attended it. She pointed out that it is very college focused and that some of the material is so catered to college professors that high school teachers would not be able to get from it what they need—"not so much how you would apply it in the classroom. It would really need to be modified for the high school." Kristi pointed out that teachers are bad in professional developments unless they are small group, hands-on experiences. Across the difference of school leader and trans\* persons, an idea for training teachers at Central

High School developed. From the public pedagogy experience of the conversation across difference, a new public pedagogy experience began to be formulated—one in which the school leaders participating here would go forward and collaborate with other teachers in order to create on-going engagement in professional development around LGBTQIA issues.

**Alliance across difference: Elementary, high school, and college.** As the idea for a future training project developed and the discussion of the difference between the needs of college faculty in trainings compared to high school teachers in trainings was discussed, Fay also brought up the point that her needs were very different in elementary school than in high school: “In elementary school it was line-up boy girl, sit boy girl. You don’t do that in high school because I would immediately say don’t do that, that’s a horrible way to be inclusive. So I wonder if with the Allies type trainings if you don’t ultimately need to take it in sections by grade level.” Martha responded, “Oh, yes. You would have to get an elementary school teacher in here.” Pat pointed out, “In the elementary schools the parents are so hands on.” Fay said, “We’re seeing a lot more in the media with gender non-conforming children,” and Martha added, “And we’re going to keep seeing that.” Kristi even shared that her own four-year-old is gender non-conforming in choices of clothing, sports, hairstyles, and toys. Martha had the idea to start with the high school and trickle the trainings down. So an alliance across the difference of grade level developed as well.

### **Public Pedagogy Through the Refusal of Simplistic and Derogatory Images of Ourselves.**

The group conversation also demonstrated how participants described/defined/internalized/reconfigured/mobilized public pedagogy by “refus[ing]

simplistic and derogatory images of [them]selves” (Brady, 2006, p. 58). During the conversation, we were discussing two book excerpts that we read: Chapter 2 of *Stone Butch Blues* (Feinberg, 1993) and Chapter 2 of *Trans-sister Radio* (Bohjalian, 2002). *Stone Butch Blues* presents a trans male character and is considered by some to be a semi-autobiographical novel while *Trans-sister Radio* presents a trans female character but is written by a cisgender male. During the discussion of the excerpts, Fay, with much emotion, said,

I’m so glad you mentioned that Chris Bohjalian was a cisgender male writing as a transgender woman because I was getting furious as I was reading it about the caricature of a woman. That is perhaps one of the most offensive things you can be called—a caricature of the thing you identify as. I mean, look at me. There’s no way I could put on a dress and they’d say look at the woman walking down the road. They’d say look at the man in the dress. And that can be very harmful. It’s exposed in this passage as something a trans\* person would want. While there are some people who want to “pass” as they call it or live in “stealth”, the fact is the majority of us couldn’t live stealthily.

Fay’s courage to speak about something so real to her and about which she is so vulnerable mobilized public pedagogy. She demonstrated how her own lived experience can be used as a measuring stick for literary analysis and how lived experience can be a powerful truth teacher. Fay refused the simplistic and derogatory image of a trans woman (herself) that Bohjalian presented, and her role as public intellectual reconfigured public pedagogy in that moment.

**Data Related to Secondary Research Question #2—How Do Trans\* Participants and School Leader Participants Enact a Public Pedagogy Process of Shared Learning Around Trans\* Issues In Schools?**

The public pedagogy process enacted by the trans\* participants and the school leaders occurred in the group meeting setting constructed by this research project. In the meeting, issues of trans\* inclusion in schools were discussed. Trans\* participants acted as public intellectuals, answering questions school leaders had using pedagogies of everyday life (Luke, 1994, 1996a, 1996b). Luke (1996a) describes pedagogies of everyday life: “Learning and teaching, in my estimation *are* the very intersubjective core relations of everyday life” (p. 7). When Martha asked, “What can we do to make the school, if you were back in high school, what would need to change, what could we do to make it less of a hell for you? What can we do to make it a more welcoming environment?” it set up a learning environment with the school leaders open to receiving information. This question gave the power of instruction to the trans\* participants.

The trans\* participants responded to the question with stories of their own experiences in school (Fay’s story of being told to act like a man; Dan’s story of orchestra dresses; Mark’s story of wanting to play volleyball). Storytelling was a significant piece of the public pedagogy process as enacted by the trans\* participants and school leaders around issues of trans\* inclusion. Even when discussing key vocabulary terms that are relevant to the trans\* community stories became a part of the process. Kristi asked what label Eddie Izzard would fall under which led to me explaining that labels are not something that one can assign to another. We agreed that without asking Eddie Izzard we could not know how he identified, but the discussion led Mark to tell the story about how at one of his recent drag shows he sang “Origins of Love” from *Hedwig*

*and the Angry Inch* and is excited that Neil Patrick Harris will be playing Hedwig on Broadway. Fay then told, “Oh, I love ‘Origins of Love.’ I don’t know if you know, or not, but it’s from Plato’s *The Symposium*—Aristophane’s speech. It’s just so brilliant. Watching that movie, I just start crying. Oh, yes, there’s Plato.”

**Data Related to Secondary Research Question #3—How Can Public Pedagogy Explain/Inform the Educational Experiences of Trans\* Persons and the Responses to Those Experiences of School Leaders?**

Public pedagogy can explain/inform the educational experiences of trans\* persons and the responses to those experiences of school leaders. The feminist construction of public pedagogy applies again in this scenario, as it has provided the theoretical frame for this research project. We turn again to the three basic tenets of public pedagogy that describe the feminist/grassroots activist perspective being discussed here: (a) refute traditional structures through the complexity of real lived experiences; (b) acknowledge difference in order to construct specific alliances across difference; (c) “refuse simplistic and derogatory images of ourselves, as well as uncover hidden bias and unexamined assumptions through critical self-examination grounded in social responsibility, ethical considerations, and social action” (Brady, 2006, p. 58).

**Public Pedagogy as Refutation of Traditional Structures Through the Complexity of Real Lived Experiences.**

Public pedagogy can explain/inform the educational experiences of trans\* persons and the responses to those experiences of school leaders as refutation of traditional structures through the complexity of real lived experiences. Fay related the educational experience of joining ROTC because she did not feel comfortable with her own body in the context of locker rooms for band and gym:



I can remember in my freshman year of high school. I was terrified of marching band because that meant yet another locker room that you had to change in. And I didn't want to be in gym class because I was so afraid of my body then. And to some degree still. Not just exposing it to others but to myself. And the guidance counselor convinced me to join ROTC, and I didn't know what that was. He was like "It's not gym and it's not band and it'll give you the credits you need."

As with previous data from Fay, this example shows her refutation of traditional structures of school locker rooms. She was not comfortable with the changing room experience, so she circumvented the process.

Kristi's journal response demonstrates a refutation of traditional structures based on Fay's locker room story:

I also thought a lot about what [s]he said about body issues that transgender individuals have as well. Those feelings resonated within me for several days and it is still difficult to aptly put a name to how I feel. I hate that. I want to apologize and I know most would not want to hear that. I want to fix it and I know I cannot alone. I want to empathize and I know my own body issues do not compare. I think that those feelings are why trainings are necessary. It creates a desire to learn, understand as much as possible and then a stronger support system.

Kristi's statement continues in the pattern of refuting traditional structures in that she acknowledges that she has body issues, as well, but that they do not compare to what Fay is experiencing. She refutes the traditional structure of women being self-conscious of their bodies and empathizes with the trans female experience.

## **Public Pedagogy as Acknowledgement of Difference In Order to Construct Specific Alliances Across Difference.**

Public pedagogy can explain/inform the educational experiences of trans\* persons and the responses to those experiences of school leaders as acknowledgement of difference in order to construct specific alliances across difference. During the group meeting Fay told the following story:

What may be a bad example but it comes to mind because it was recent.

Yesterday when I went to go vote, there was this lady in line in front of me in the line in County, TX. A very rednecky place. And they ask are you voting in the Democrat Primary or the Republican Primary and she says the Republican Primary and I'm like Ugh, Another ONE! And then they ask me and I'd actually been debating as I was going in because there were actually a lot fewer contested Democratic races than there were Republican contested, and I could vote against Lamar Smith and this'll be great, but at the last second I said because this county is going to be overwhelmed with Republican voters just give me the Democrat ticket. As we're leaving she stops me and we start having this conversation because as I said just give me the Democrat one she realized I was conflicted. She started explaining to me that living in a conservative town and being a business owner in that town she has to give the perception of being something she's not. You guys talked a lot about being teachers you sometimes can't say things, and so she just felt like she needed to talk to me and let me know that I'm not the only one. That moment was kind of really big for me. In such a conservative town you do feel that kind of isolation. Something that simple, just know you're not alone.

Throughout Fay's story, various teachers were adding "yes" and "uh huh"s of approval. Kristi responded by sharing how she demonstrates alliance across difference in her classroom so that students know they can count on her as a support system. She shares openly that her "Uncle Bobo" is gay and that "My father is an agnostic Jew, my mother is a minister, and my sisters are Catholic. When the students ask what are you, I say, 'Confused!'" Through the conversation, the difference between the trans\* participants and the teachers was acknowledged, the difference between Democrats and Republicans was acknowledged, and differences in religion were acknowledged. The public pedagogy process among the trans\* participants and the school leaders allowed for the alliance across these multiple differences to occur based on the stories that the trans\* participants told and the responses that the school leaders gave.

### **Public Pedagogy as the Refusal of Simplistic and Derogatory Images of Ourselves.**

Public pedagogy can explain/inform the educational experiences of trans\* persons and the responses to those experiences of school leaders as the refusal of simplistic and derogatory images of ourselves. In the group meeting, which Abraham was unable to attend, with his permission I shared one of his stories from the electronic conversations the trans\* participants had:

Abraham: One of the first things I did when I began transitioning was ask people to call me by my male name. I had one teacher who refused and would only call me by the name on her role sheet—my female name. I explained to her that I needed her to call me by my male name because it was a safety concern for me, but she said she didn't have to and wouldn't. I didn't know what to do, but

fortunately, I didn't have to be in that class very much longer because I was graduating.

Martha responded: "That's an administration issue."

Kristi pointed out that she has a student that goes by a name other than her given name.

Pat said, "On the very first day of school instead of reading role, I ask the students what they want me to call them, and I write it down."

Martha said, "It's specific teachers."

Kristi said, "It's a power play."

The female name is a simplistic and derogatory image of the self for a trans male person. Abraham refused to be called by the female name on the role and his story reflects this refusal. The teacher responses further explain and inform the process by showing the kind of support he would have had if he had had a different teacher. Pat's example of asking students what name they want to be called from the first day of class is a demonstration of a refusal of simplistic images—Abraham's story paints an image of teachers as intolerant, and Pat denies that image by her practices.

Ultimately, Pat's journal response demonstrates how she understands the educational experiences of trans\* individuals and her role in responding to these experiences:

After spending time with your group, I am inspired. Meeting the rest of the group was enlightening, and I felt that we really bonded over your research. I'm excited about discovering ways to help transgender students thrive in our learning environment.

This idea of being inspired by this public pedagogy process demonstrates the ways that public pedagogy was mobilized by Pat; she is excited for a discovery process to continue in her own life around issues discussed and discovered in this research project.

### **Summary**

The data first allowed for a detailed summary of each of the eight participants to be developed. For each participant, a reflective poem was written (Barone & Eisner, 2006). An inductive analysis on a research question-by-research question basis, allowed me to develop semantic relationships across characteristics of public pedagogy as the data revealed information (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Morgan, 2003; Patton, 2002). Data demonstrated semantic relationships in the following areas: the adult trans\* person reflecting back on school as refutation of traditional structures; the adult trans\* person reflecting back on school as acknowledgement of difference; the adult trans\* person reflecting back on school as refusal of simplistic and derogatory images of themselves; the response of school leaders to trans\* stories as refutation of traditional structures; the response of school leaders to trans\* stories as acknowledgement of difference; the response of school leaders to trans\* stories as refusal of simplistic and derogatory images of themselves.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

### King of the Dinosaurs

The psychiatrist with the broken hip  
hobbled to the desk:  
"It is not as it appears"  
she whispered in his ear.

He told her,  
"When I was seen as a girl  
I played as I thought a girl should."

She said,  
"Sometimes you fall too hard."  
And he looked at the ceiling  
and began to count the holes in the  
ceiling tiles as he wondered  
if the other boys remembered  
his days as King of the Dinosaurs.

The psychiatrist with the broken hip  
shifted in her seat and waited  
for him to return from the ceiling.

Cycles of socialization rotated around  
his little world, dictating what was right  
and what was wrong.

"I declared myself King of the Dinosaurs,  
but the boys said a girl couldn't be  
King. I climbed the jungle gym and  
reigned over the playground, pelted  
those boys with rocks, told them  
'Wait and See.'"

So much depends on the words people use –  
once Jason philosophized about women  
and pants, so I kept my eye on him.  
I used to not let on that I am a man,  
but I remember being King  
and I know that pants meant more to me  
than people could see.

"I hated cheese for awhile; I climbed

trees, with skinned knees and a backwards-turned baseball cap; I wore a tie-dyed shirt and white denim cut-offs while I rode my scooter down the hill, only to come home too late for Karate practice.”

The psychiatrist with the broken hip  
moved toward the door  
ready for a reprieve  
“I’ll see you next week”  
but he knew she meant  
*now they will call you King if you let them.*  
-Beck, 2014, unpublished

### **Interpretation of Results**

Teacher leaders such as Martha, Pat, Kristi, and Rebecca can play a role in changing the systems in play at schools like their own Central High School. According to Nieto (2007), the work of such teacher leaders on the ground level can make a difference in the lives and success of students despite the many issues of inequity and racism that are connected to larger systemic and macro conditions. I would extend this work of such teacher leaders to include battling transphobia and improving trans\* inclusion, based on the data collected in this study.

The primary research question in this study was concerned with the role of public pedagogy in the process of trans\* persons reflecting on their educational experiences.

Public pedagogy is a

form of education . . . largely constructed as a concept focusing on various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond formal schooling and . . . distinct from hidden and explicit curricula operating within and through school sites. (Sandlin et al., 2011, p. 338-9)

However, many different types of public pedagogy exist, and the feminist form of public pedagogy has been used in this research project. Feminist public pedagogy creates “a critical public engagement that challenges existing social practices and hegemonic forms of discrimination” (Brady, 2006, p. 58). Brady (2006) emphasizes, “practitioners of public pedagogy are not limited to educators, but involve a range of activist individuals and community groups that are providing democratic vision to challenge inequality” (p. 58). Within this research project, the stories of trans\* participants are ways to and are characteristics of a “challenge to existing social practices” (Brady, 2006, p. 58), as a “challenge to hegemonic forms of discrimination” (p. 58), and through “creative engagement in which complex images, contradictory discourses, canonical themes and stories, and supposedly common sense versions of reality are disputed” (p. 59). Based on the basic tenets of teacher leadership and public pedagogy outlined above, interpretations of results will be outlined below by several guiding principles that I have constructed from the data: 1) trans\* adults as resources/partners for advocacy in schools; 2) school leaders as learners; 3) public pedagogy as a strategic alliance across difference; and 4) practical applications of the outcomes of the conversations between trans\* participants and school leaders.

### **School Leaders as Learners**

York-Barr and Duke (2004) indicate that teacher leaders engage in collegial behavior in order to advance their leadership practices. Their review of literature indicates that teacher leaders gain their knowledge for leadership from practical experience and from shared experience with colleagues. In order to have experiences to



share with colleagues, school leaders have to operate as learners. In this research project, I had the privilege of observing four teacher leaders in the learning process.

Kristi, Martha, Rebecca, and Pat exhibited several behaviors indicative of adult learners: asking questions (Callender, 1995), self-directed learning, reflection, willingness to try new things, and an ability to integrate ideas into practice (Merriam et al., 2007). A reason that the four school leaders who participated in this research project are successful teacher leaders is because of their willingness and ability to learn. In the project setting, they asked questions, monitored and guided their own learning so that they would get out of the project what they needed and wanted, reflected throughout the process, tried new things/ideas, and integrated what they learned into planned practical applications.

Teachers, especially teacher leaders, spend most of their time in front of people disseminating information. To be able to step back and take a learning role and to self-direct that learning is a powerful position. Callender (1995), an adult educator and advocate of life-long learning, wrote, “Joy . . . indicates soulful engagement in life and learning” (103). Learning has the power to bring joy to people who fully engage with it, and the teacher leaders who came to be a part of this research project demonstrated this idea that learning is its own reward.

Ultimately, Martha, Rebecca, Pat, and Kristi showed that teachers can be learners, too, and that a crucial part of being a teacher leader is that connection to being a learner. Cannella and Reiff (1994) write

To most adequately address the needs of other learners, a teacher must first understand him/herself as a learner. How does it feel to be confused? What

happens when a peer proposes an idea that contradicts my own thoughts? How am I similar and different from other individuals in my own cultural community? This very personal understanding of learning creates the openness and flexibility for comprehending the learning of others. (p. 27)

If teachers are going to practice the art and science of teaching, then they need to understand the process of learning, so they need to practice that process as well. In order to have a personal understanding of learning, teachers must engage in learning processes. Kristi, Rebecca, Martha and Pat engaged in a learning process with the trans\* participants in this research study. In their journal response, Mark responded to this engagement: “I almost cried when I realized that these teachers from [Central High School] are interested in how to help kids who are anywhere on the trans spectrum, or questioning.”

### **Public Pedagogy as a Strategic Alliance Across Difference**

This study was not designed to divide trans\* persons from teacher leaders; however, the participants who volunteered in response to the recruiting measures used fell into two distinct categories: trans\* adults who are not teacher leaders and teacher leaders who are cisgender. Because of the gender identity difference among the participants, it was possible for alliances across gender identity difference to develop. Ultimately, the difference between trans\* persons and cisgender persons is a social construct, and it was in this realization that the alliance across the difference developed with the group participating in this research project. Butler (1990) describes the social construction of gender thusly:

Gender ought not be construed as a stable identity ... from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an

exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. ... the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (p. 140-141)

As Fay developed several points related to the social construction of gender, the group began to ally across the difference between trans\* and cisgender. Fay discussed body dysphoria, compared the isolation that trans\* people feel to the isolation a Democrat feels in a conservative county in Texas, and asked, “Can you imagine if they kind of switched that up and said everyone has to wear a dress?” The responses of the teacher leaders to Fay’s comments in these three areas demonstrated that they were allied with her in understanding the issues she was discussing. It was through that alliance that an idea developed with the group to begin to share the ideas being generated amongst the participants of this research study with other teachers at the Central High School campus with the possibility of even adapting the learning for teachers at lower grade levels.

Huckaby (2010) describes a public pedagogy across difference for social activism around race in which participants “step into an ontological paradox that entraps us within an illusion materialized through our bodies while it shields us from immaterialized existence in the real” (p. 79). The gender identity difference across which we allied in this research project took on a similar tone to that which Huckaby described. The ontological paradox inherent for the group participating in this research project was

trans\* or cisgender. Fay called that illusion in which we are trapped into question when she posited that everyone in the group is trans\* because “we all transgress gender at times in our lives.” To an outsider, our group presented the illusion of being four men and four women, but the reality was that we had five women, a male lady, and two men. But if you had investigated even further, you would have found that the two men had, in fact, transitioned from female to male. This ontological paradox and an in-depth discussion of it and the ramifications of such a paradox on a school-based setting allowed for our group to ally across our different gender identities.

In Brady’s (2006) feminist view of public pedagogy, alliances across difference are based on acknowledgement of those differences. In education, this acknowledgement and alliance takes part in the battle against neoliberalism. Brady identifies neoliberalism as the “dominant political economic ideology, which embraces free market and corporate values over civic discourse and responsibility” (p. 57), and she points out that neoliberalism “poses a challenge to democracy” (p. 57). In an educational context, as teachers and school leaders, we should seek to engage our students in democracy in a Deweyan sense, and this means encouraging all students to have voice—even the traditionally marginalized and Othered. Unfortunately, “The corporate cultural values and discourses of neoliberalism have seeped into the educational context” (Brady, 2006, p. 57) and those who have the most capital are receiving the most education. Trans\* students are not the ones with the most capital; therefore, they are not receiving the most education. However, the alliance formed across difference between the cisgender teachers and the trans\* adults in this research project has impetus for bringing about change in the democratic education of all students. As the teacher leaders participated

with the trans\* participants in the research project, differences were acknowledged through questions and stories. Ultimately, the group plans to work together to create professional developments through collaborative learning groups around trans\* issues so that more teachers are able to join this alliance across difference and engage in finding ways to hear the voice of trans\* students.

### **Practical Applications of the Outcomes of the Conversations Between Trans\* Participants and School Leaders.**

Several practical applications for the school leaders to take back and implement were constructed in the group process with the trans\* participants and the school leaders. Martha requested specific information from the trans\* participants about what they would change about schools to make high school “less of a hell” for themselves and students like them. After sharing stories and discussions, the teacher leaders and trans\* participants formulated a set of practical measures to implement at Central High School.

First, the teachers will continue to work together to be supportive of trans\* students. Martha, Kristi, Pat and Rebecca have committed to using preferred names and pronouns for trans\* students and to advocating among their colleagues for this respectful measure. Martha indicated that there is one gender-neutral bathroom at Central High School, but they will continue to work to educate administrators about the importance of gender-neutral facilities for bathrooming. They will begin discussion groups to talk about the policies and practices related to locker rooms and the safety and safeguards that are in place for all students, especially those who are experiencing trans\* related body dysphoria.

Martha, as co-sponsor of XYZ (the student organization at Central High School that talks about diversity) wants to continue to learn about trans\* issues in order to be

able to share information with other teachers who need to know how to handle certain practical situations in classrooms. She is also interested in working with the group to create some hands-on training for the teachers at Central High School around issues of gender diversity at the high school level. Kristi and Pat would like to attend further professional development related to LGBTQIA issues and advocacy in order to help Martha with her goals. Abraham, Fay, Mark, and Dan are interested in helping Martha and the other teachers as they progress in developing these trainings so that a trans\* perspective is present.

Throughout the research process, the teacher leader participants expressed to me how little time they have for engaging in activities like this. As they were making plans for carrying out some creative professional development, they again intoned the lack of time they have for accomplishing anything of this nature. This is why alliances across difference are so important. If they do not have the time, then they can rely on their new trans\* colleagues to help with some of the more time-consuming matters. In fact, I can offer them the case study I reviewed for this research project as something they may want to introduce to their discussion group about gender-neutral facilities (Kaiser, Seitz, & Walters, 2014). Furthermore, they may want to engage in the thought experiment I designed for the application phase of this project as part of their professional development (**Thought Experiment**).

Another practical application of the work that this group accomplished is that there are four more teachers aware of their role in ending heterosexism, homophobia and transmisogyny operating in Central High School. With the spread of information, they can now each influence someone who can, in turn, influence someone else. Capper

(1999) suggests that heterosexism in schools is detrimental to all people in the schools, so every person battling it is a step forward. Recent research even shows that we need to move beyond anti-heterosexism, anti-homophobia, and anti-transphobia to a more inclusive practice of anti-genderism (Airton 2009). Much of the work done in this project set the stage for Fay, Mark, Abraham, Dan, Pat, Martha, Rebecca, and Kristi to begin to think about anti-genderism as a work in which they can engage. With Fay's supposition that everyone in the group was trans\* and her question of "Can you imagine if they kind of switched that up and said everyone has to wear a dress?", the group was exposed to ideas of anti-genderism.

### **Applications**

This section sets out to describe what school leaders can do with the stories presented in this research project in light of the tangle of "complicated and interlocking series of culturally produced discursive structures . . . that allow heterosexism in P-12 schools to masquerade as a manifestation of the way the world is and needs to be" (O'Malley, 2013, p. 355). The section offers school leaders opportunities to engage in a thought experiment around issues of trans\* inclusion in P-12 schools and evidence-based strategies for creating educational equity for trans\* students in P-12 schools. Several trans\* participants described incidents of teacher-on-student bullying. The teachers who participated in this research project believed that the solution to such problems is an administration issue, as evidenced by the conversation they had around Abraham's story of a teacher refusing to call him by his chosen name (**Public pedagogy as the refusal of simplistic and derogatory images of ourselves.**) I assert that grassroots action in education can begin with teachers speaking up among their colleagues. Having been a

teacher, I know that we do not have adequate models for what speaking for social justice looks like in collegial environments. I propose the following thought experiment as a professional development method around which teachers can begin to have open and honest discussions with their colleagues about sensitive issues that they might otherwise be afraid to approach. The format for this thought experiment is based on a case study I reviewed for this research project in which teachers are exposed to the idea of gender-neutral facilities (Kaiser, Seitz, & Walters, 2014).

### **Thought Experiment**

This thought-experiment is designed to address teacher-on-student bullying. In this research project, several participants talked about teachers who mistreated them because of their trans\* identity. This thought-experiment gives you an opportunity to engage in a scenario to see how you might address a similar situation. Discussion questions are provided after **The Scenario**, along with media materials that may assist in a discussion.

### **The Scenario**

Setting: A large, suburban high school teacher's lounge.

Characters: Teachers of various ages, experience and subjects discussing students they have in common.

Scene: Walter (AP Chemistry teacher, 14 years experience, age 55): I kept Ken after class again today. He was wearing eyeliner in my class and refused to go to the bathroom and wash it off when I asked him to.



Amy: (Art teacher, 4 years experience, age 30): I don't know why you always have such trouble with Ken. Ken does extremely well in my class...always early, and such a brilliant eye for color.

Walter: He's early for my class, too, but he is always wearing eyeliner, and I've told him repeatedly that I will not stand for a young man wearing makeup in my classroom.

Sasha (first-year algebra teacher, age 22): I thought he was a girl when I met him. I called him "she" for the first week of school. The other kids kept laughing, so I finally switched to calling him "he."

Amy: I told my class, the first time I heard them laugh at Ken, that if they wanted to be a part of my class that they would have to show respect for everyone in it. I haven't heard anyone laugh at Ken since then. I guess I can't control what happens outside my room, though.

Walter: No one laughs in my class. I drive home the rules the first day, and no noise is the first rule we cover.

Amy: Oh, Walter, you're such a disciplinarian. Learning should be fun some of the time. Don't you let them talk to each other when they do labs?

Walter: No noise. They have to keep the conversations lab related and as quiet as possible.

Sasha: Can I come observe your class sometime, Walter?

Amy: Sasha, why don't you come observe my class instead? If you want to reach Ken and the other kids who are struggling, you need to see an approach more like mine, where the students are involved in what's going on in their education.

Sasha: I'm not really sure I want that. But I do see your point. I don't want to lose Ken. His grades have really been slipping this last six weeks.

Walter: In my class, too. I noticed that he failed a test for this first time last week. Do you think something is going on with him at home?

Sasha: Maybe we should refer him to the counselor?

Amy: I'll talk to Ken. I think Ken just needs to know that someone recognizes them as a person. Maybe you all should talk to Ken, too. And not to say "Ken, you messed up again. Ken, I know something's wrong." But to say, "Ken, I care. You can talk to me." And then really be there to listen.

### **The Discussion**

After sharing the scenario, several feelings and desired actions might come to mind. First, just sit with the scenario and reflect. Think about the scenario from everyone's perspective, including Ken's. Take a few minutes to write down some of what you are thinking and feeling. If you are studying the scenario in a group, process individually before you come together as a group. After you've reflected individually, then discuss the following:

- 1) With which character do you most relate and why?
- 2) If you were another teacher sitting in the workroom and you overheard this conversation, what would you do?
- 3) If you were Ken, what would you want/need/feel?
- 4) What typically happens at your school in situations like this?
- 5) What suggestions do you have for improving the policies at your school around issues for gender non-conforming youth?

## Helpful Materials

Most school districts, while they have anti-bullying policies, do not have inclusive policies regarding gender non-conforming and trans\* youth. Gender Spectrum offers a model school district policy regarding trans\* students and gender non-conforming students. It is available at

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/images/stories/csscmodepolicy1209.pdf>

(Gender Spectrum, 2014).

Many educators have limited experience with trans\* youth and gender non-conforming youth, but Trans Youth Family Allies provides information for educators about vocabulary concerning the trans\* community and current best practices being approached by other educators in the field. It is available at

<http://www.imatyfa.org/resources/educators/>

(TYFA, 2013).

The Trans Youth Equality Foundation provides advocacy and support to trans\* youth and has many useful resources for educators, including links to some other important organizations and their documents. Their website is

<http://www.transyouthequality.org/>

(TYEF, n.d.)

*Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools* is a report that was published by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (Greytak et al.) in 2009. The report gives statistics on how trans\* students are performing in schools. It can be found at the following URL:

[http://static.squarespace.com/static/530651b5e4b0b4d1ce2d7a88/t/5317bc26e4b0ab76f9004ff9/1394064422904/GLSEN\\_2009\\_Harsh\\_Realities.pdf](http://static.squarespace.com/static/530651b5e4b0b4d1ce2d7a88/t/5317bc26e4b0ab76f9004ff9/1394064422904/GLSEN_2009_Harsh_Realities.pdf)

The Transgender Law Center (2013) reports “many transgender and other gender non-conforming students face harassment, discrimination, and even violence on a daily basis.” However, they offer some quick steps that your school can take to “move beyond the binary.”

This link will take you there:

<http://transgenderlawcenter.org/issues/youth/quick-steps-you-can-take-to-move-your-school-beyond-the-binary>

### **Evidence-Based Strategies for Creating Educational Equity for Trans\* Students In P-12 Schools.**

O’Malley (2013) points out that

Caution is required when interpreting extant data regarding the clear exclusion, bullying, harassment, and assault that a significant number of queer youth experience in the nation’s schools. Researchers and school leaders need to locate such data as diagnostic of homophobic and heteronormative assumptions in the larger population rather than as primarily descriptive of LGBTIQ youth. This distinction is important to avoid a kind of patronizing or pathologizing victimization discourse in leadership practice that presumes queer youth to be more depressive or less resilient than other youth, a view often reflective of unfounded two-dimensional stereotypes as rudimentary as the effeminate gay male or the butch lesbian. (p. 367)

The first step, then, in creating educational equity for trans\* youth is to come from an assets-based approach rather than to rely on outmoded deficits-based models (Capper, 1999). Talburt (2004) says of queer youth, “they are complex, competent people whose

lives, experiences, resources, and needs are no more predictable than those of straight youth” (p. 120), thus we need to get to know them as individuals in order to best serve them in schools. O’Malley claims

An assets-based leadership practice also forwards queer theory’s insights into the multiplicity and fluidity of identity by advancing equitable conditions for all persons across innumerable instances and configurations of difference, inclusive or [sic] but not limited to persons identifying as queer. (p. 368)

In addition to an assets-based approach to leadership in schools, the formation of supportive student organizations can create equity for trans\* youth. While it would be wonderful to see organizations designed to support trans\* youth develop, the structure of the Gay-Straight Alliance can be a starting point for trans\* youth equity in schools (GSANetwork, 2009; Mayo, 2013). GSAs typically focus on sexual orientation, but many are becoming more inclusive of gender identity. The importance in creating equity for trans\* youth of a program like a GSA would be in the inclusion of gender identity in the programming.

Another area in which school leaders can provide enhanced equity for trans\* students is in curriculum. O’Malley (2013) reports an underrepresentation or overt absence of references to LGBTQIA “persons, experience, or cultural knowledge from teaching and learning experiences in schools” (p. 369). The inclusion of trans\* characters in literature and trans\* persons in history accelerates a move toward equity.

The policy arena is another area in which school leaders can work to improve equity for trans\* students. In a paper that S. C. Meier and I are working on, we suggest that schools include policies for the inclusion of trans\* students that include a variety of

areas of campus life. We suggest that gender identity be a part of the campus non-discrimination policy and that policies exist with the registrar of the school to facilitate preferred names for trans\* students. Facility policies need to exist such that restrooms and locker rooms are gender-neutral or at least trans\* friendly. The school nurse and the school counselors need to know how to address trans\* related health and mental health care. The college and career counselors for the school need a basic understanding of special issues for the trans\* population. Finally, the athletics and sports programs need to have a policy for trans\* youth participation.

Professional development is another area in which schools can work to achieve equity for trans\* youth. While training in the area of sexual minorities is still not widely practiced, implementing training for gender minorities needs to be handled cautiously. Guerra and Nelson (2009) describe a process for implementing changes in professional practice around diversity issues where they work with a small group of staff first. Then, that core group of staff helps disseminate information to others on campus by assessing readiness and building capacity as they are able. This process is similar to the one the participants in this research study have proposed.

### **Limitations**

According to Patton (1999),

Three kinds of sampling limitations typically arise in qualitative research designs:

- Limitations will arise in the situations (critical events or cases) that are sampled for observation (because it is rarely possible to observe all situations).
- Limitations will result from the time periods during which observations took place, that is, problems of temporal sampling.

- Findings will be limited based on selectivity in the people who were sampled either for observations or interviews, or on selectivity in document sampling.

This is inherent with purposeful sampling strategies (in contrast to probabilistic sampling). (p. 1197)

All three of these limitation types occurred in this research project.

### **Limitations in Situations**

Because it is rarely possible to observe all situations, limitations arise in the sample. In this research project, several limitations related to situations existed. First, I did not observe trans\* students in schools. I relied on the reflections of trans\* adults to tell the story of their school experiences. Because I was collecting stories from adults recalling their experiences in school, I did not have the opportunity to observe how trans\* youth are actually treated in schools. One way to expand this study would be to work with current trans\* youth and teachers who serve them in order to see what the current school climate is for trans\* youth.

Another limitation in situation for this research project is with number of sessions we had as a group. The group only met all together once. Some of the ideas being generated at the end of that first meeting could be more thoroughly fleshed out in more meetings. Greater analysis of how the public pedagogy process works could be further observed as more sessions continued. However, this study relied on one, and only one, group meeting.

The location of the group meeting provides a situational limitation of the study as well. The group meeting was held in a public space in a public library. While all the participants indicated that they were comfortable with the space, it is possible that the

location and the fact that other library patrons were in the vicinity hindered the nature and types of comments that the participants shared.

### **Temporal Limitations**

The four teacher leaders who chose to participate all indicated that they did not have enough time to participate in activities such as this research project and that taking time for the one interview and one group meeting was a major sacrifice. Several school leaders and other trans\* participants who expressed interest in the project dropped out or chose not to follow through on joining the project because they could not make a time commitment. One teacher leader cited commitments to the extra-curricular activity she sponsors as her reason for not joining the project. She indicated that their competition season overlapped with the project dates.

Not all of the participants were able to attend the group meeting. Abraham's work schedule conflicted with the group meeting, and Rebecca had a conflicting commitment that she could not reschedule. This temporal limitation reduced the number of participants in the group meeting and changed the final outcome by removing these two participants' perspectives from the group dynamic.

### **Sample Limitations**

The sample of the study serves as a major limiting factor of the project as well. Initial attempts to recruit participants failed. Advertisements and purposive sampling resulted in large numbers of people from diverse backgrounds being interested, but the initial group all withdrew for various reasons. One of the trans\* participants in the original sample group withdrew because he didn't have transportation from his home to the meeting location. Another trans\* participant withdrew stating,



I'm sorry, but once again, I'm changing my mind on this and I'm going to back out. I just...I've lost my passion for anything trans activism related anymore. Mostly because I feel it doesn't matter, my thoughts/opinions/input rarely matters or makes a difference in any way, OR, my ideas/thoughts/opinions DO matter...as long as someone else can take the credit for it, and to be quite honest, I'm tired of being the trans poster boy helping make a name for "other" people. But because I'm not all gung-ho activist waving trans flags in everyone's faces, or doing trans stuff 24/7, my thoughts/opinions/ideas on the matter often get pushed to the back burner in favor of those who "are" all gung-ho activists and "their" ideas. Maybe it's just my time to be a little selfish and help make a name for **myself** or put my **own** trans mark on the world.

Losing this participant was especially difficult and limiting for the study because this kind of voice—someone who does not see themselves as an activist—would have added variety to the sample.

Many of the teacher leaders I initially recruited withdrew citing time conflicts or lack of time as the reason they could not participate; however, the group of teacher leaders I worked with was a limited sample anyway because my broad-ranging recruitment process of contacting principals, assistant principals, and superintendents in the Central Texas area yielded no responses. After I had no responses from a distribution list of all administrators in the area, I moved on to purposively sampling people I knew to be teacher leaders in the area. In the end, I was able to recruit four teachers from one high school.

The four teachers are all people who I knew before the study. This close relationship among the group of us sets up another limitation of the sample population. Because these people have known me for a long time and have witnessed my own transition, they have some background knowledge about trans\* issues that other teacher leaders might not have had coming into this project. They also may couch their answers in certain ways because of their relationship with me.

### **Future Research/Implications**

This research project lends itself to much future consideration. Several key areas of future research are public pedagogy, trans\* youth in schools, trans\* persons as activists/advocates, differences within the trans\* community, and professional development for teachers around trans\* inclusion.

#### **Public Pedagogy Future Research**

More research is still needed on the process of public pedagogy (Sandlin et al., 2011). Several future studies in the area of public pedagogy could come from this work. First, this group could be followed to see what their process looks like over the term of a year, five years, and ten years. Significant to their public pedagogy process is the outcome of their intention to create similar groups at Central High School for other teachers. Their project is important to trans\* youth and to them as teacher leaders and to their colleagues. It would be interesting and valuable to study the group process as they continue to meet and work to share their interests and knowledge with others.

Because this public pedagogy project was successful in developing alliances across difference, similar public pedagogy projects can be designed based on this model. I would like to expand this project from the local area to regions other than Central

Texas. I would like to replicate the study in other small, local areas in other regions of Texas and eventually move out of Texas. Eventually I would like to compare the process in Central Texas to the process in other regions and to the process in other states.

### **Educational Leadership**

This project was limited in that it focused on teacher leaders. I would like to expand the research to other types of educational leaders and policy makers. It would be beneficial to trans\* students to have school administrators on board with trans\* inclusion movements and professional development designs. Also, to see feminist public pedagogy enacted by educational administrators and teacher leaders together would be of interest. Expanding both public pedagogy research and research around trans\* inclusion to include types of educational leadership beyond teacher leadership is necessary.

### **Trans\* Youth in Schools.**

Greytak et al. (2009) report quantitative data related to trans\* youth performance and quality of life in schools. Their work needs to be supplemented by significant qualitative work about the lives and experiences of trans\* youth in schools. While this project asked trans\* adults to reflect on a time when they educated others about difference, a similar project could work with trans\* youth currently in school to identify ways that they see themselves as public intellectuals. A similar public pedagogy process could be facilitated between trans\* youth and school leaders in order to frame the power of the experiences the trans\* youth are sharing.

Case studies of trans\* youth experiences in schools should also be explored and published highlighting both positive and negative aspects of school for trans\* youth. Yin (1981) posits that case studies specialize in the study of knowledge utilization “because

the topic covers a phenomenon that seems to be inseparable from its context” (p. 99).

The lives of trans\* youth are inseparable from the context of school. We cannot understand why trans\* youth have significantly lower GPAs than their cisgender counterparts unless we examine the picture of what their lives are like (Greytak et al., 2009). Without such stories, school leaders do not have the impetus to move forward with change toward equity for trans\* youth in schools.

### **Trans\* Persons as Activists/Advocates**

Not all trans\* persons live their lives out loud, and not all work for change for the trans\* community. The trans\* participants who participated in this research project happened to also be involved in activism and advocacy. I am interested to learn more about what decision-making process trans\* persons go through in deciding whether to be activists/advocates or not. This project could extend to other communities of difference around sexuality, race, religion, etc. It might be interesting to compare across differences what motivates someone to become an activist/advocate or to examine what resources/circumstances in someone’s life propel them toward staying in the field of activism/advocacy.

### **Differences Within the Trans\* Community**

Another area of future research centers on the trans\* community itself. Many identities fall under the trans\* identity. Within this research project, we had trans female, trans male, male lady, and FTM—four people, four identities. I would like to investigate a group of people like Mark who experience gender in a very fluid way and have unique non-binary ways to identify themselves but who are not interested in transitioning to learn what activities were educational for them around gender and what kind of

epistemological ruptures they remember encountering around gender in their identity development process.

I am also interested in comparing educational experiences of trans male identified persons to those of trans female identified persons. Without research to support this theory, I believe that trans male identified persons have an easier time negotiating school settings than trans female identified persons do. I would like to compare school experiences of the two groups to explore my hypothesis.

### **Professional Development for Teachers Around Trans\* Inclusion**

Finally, I believe it is imperative that professional trainings for teachers of all grade levels be developed around trans\* inclusion. At the university where I am earning my PhD, I facilitate a training on trans\* inclusion at the university level. It is new and has only been offered once to date. We had fewer than 10 participants at our inaugural training, but at least we have started. The group of school leaders who participated in this research project have set a goal for themselves to create some small group professional learning communities around issues of trans\* inclusion for the high school where they work. I would like to see trans\* inclusion professional development be professional and available for all campuses at all grade levels.

### **Summary**

Teacher leaders such as Martha, Pat, Kristi, and Rebecca can play a role in changing the systems in play at schools like their own Central High School. Several guiding principles were interpreted from the data: trans\* adults as resources/partners for advocacy in schools; school leaders as learners; public pedagogy as a strategic alliance across difference; practical applications of the outcomes of the conversations between

trans\* participants and school leaders. A thought-experiment presented school leaders opportunities to engage around issues of trans\* inclusion in P-12 schools. The researcher shared evidence-based strategies for creating educational equity for trans\* students in P-12 schools. Limitations of the research were discussed, and several key areas of future research were explained in the areas of public pedagogy, trans\* youth in schools, trans\* persons as activists/advocates, differences within the trans\* community, and professional development for teachers around trans\* inclusion.

## **VI. PERSONAL REFLECTION**

### **Bygone Days**

In bygone days, I hid behind my mom's skirt  
afraid to let anyone see me.  
The first day we entered the martial arts school,  
I wouldn't speak.

Soon, I came to be known as the girl with the  
black belt – the girl who could beat you up –  
but all I wanted was to be a boy.

I didn't know anyone like me;  
we didn't learn about transsexuals  
in school, and they didn't appear  
on TV or in the movies.

At puberty, my mother shuttled me to doctors  
trying to understand why I was different,  
and all they had to say was that I had too much  
Testosterone. I didn't understand.  
I wanted the Testosterone.  
But how could I tell them that?

Today, I stand tall, no longer hiding  
in skirts, and I increase my Testosterone  
in order to be the man I was meant to be.  
I meet with others like me and we speak  
so that no one has to hide in silence again.  
-Beck, 2014, unpublished

### **Brandon's Thoughts**

This research project proved to be everything I thought such a project should be:  
emotionally rewarding, frustrating, powerful, sad, confusing, and fun. It was emotionally  
rewarding because of the connections I made to other trans\* people in the Central Texas  
area. Of the four trans\* participants, I knew only one prior to the project. Fay and I are  
now good friends, and we work together on projects for trans\* justice and inclusion in  
and around Central Texas. She has taught me so much about myself and about the trans\*

population. I cannot imagine my life without Fay now. Simple things like seeing posts about her fairy garden (her garden at her house which she decorates with fairy statues and beautiful flowers) on Facebook and hearing her speak at trans\* events remind me why I do the work that I do. Mark is another emotionally rewarding part of this project for me. They are an active part of the drag community in Central Texas. They also do the make-up for a glam rock band in the area. They are excited to be participating in an upcoming make-up contest, and I am honored that they have kept me informed of their progress and preparations. I love seeing photos of their portfolio. They are a new addition to my close circle of friends.

The biggest frustration I had with this research project was in finding people to participate. I posted so many announcements and e-mailed people directly who are involved in educational leadership or in trans\* activism with no result. I have to admit that I was extremely disappointed when school leaders did not respond to e-mail invitations to participate in this project. I thought that an invitation to learn about trans\* issues would have been exciting and worthwhile to school leaders in this area, but only two teacher leaders responded. Those two teacher leaders then recruited two other teacher leaders to participate, but no administrators wanted to participate. At one point, I thought I had a line on some assistant principals in the area, referred to me by a friend, but they all turned down the opportunity when they found out that group meetings were a part of the project. They said they did not have time for something like that. My frustration was so high at one point that I actually considered stopping the project and resorting to a quantitative study of an entirely different sort; I'm glad I stuck with this project.



I think this project is powerful. I recently read *Beyond Magenta* (Kuklin, 2014)—a non-fiction account of the lives of several trans\* teens. I was moved by the stories in this book. I thought, “Why couldn’t I have written this?” and “Why isn’t my research project this powerful?” but then I realized that I have done something valuable, too. While Kuklin told the personal stories of trans\* teens focusing on the transition experience and health care and social issues, my story looks at education and the process of teachers learning about trans\* issues. The power of the stories told in this research project is evident in the data section. I am moved everytime I read Mark, Abraham, Dan, and Fay’s words. I hope that readers of this project will be moved, too. I know that Pat, Rebecca, Martha, and Kristi were moved.

Even though there was power in the stories, there was sadness, too. I was sad when I heard about the way teachers had treated Fay and Abraham. I realize that even though I lived with female expression in a female body for part of my life, I have always had male privilege. I have taken that for myself. Fay has never had male privilege even though she has a male body and male expression. Societal lack of understanding of the trans\* experience is sad, but educators’ lack of understanding is even more sad. Teachers are supposed to nurture students so that they can learn and grow. It breaks my heart to hear stories of teachers tearing students down. When I think of how the teacher’s might have done such horrible things to students like Fay and Abraham without even realizing how wrong they were, I am even sadder. I want to be able to talk to each and every teacher out there and let them know these stories so they see that trans\* people are people and that these microaggressions such as using the wrong name or not recognizing gender identity or stereotyping gender roles can cause great harm.

Ultimately, the research project was fun. I enjoyed telling my story and writing the literature review. Immersing myself in trans\* studies helped me develop my own trans-self. Going through my transition while I was working on this project created an even greater sense of fun for me. I was transitioning my gender while I was learning about how others have transitioned their genders, so I was never alone in my process. I also was able to explain to both trans\* and cisgender persons what I was going through and that helped me be able to explain it to myself and my loved ones as well. Being able to share my experiences with Mark, Fay, Abraham, and Dan helped make them more real for me. Celebrating transition milestones with them added to the magnificence of the transition process. Hearing Pat, Rebecca, Martha, and Kristi talk about their pride in witnessing my transition helped me have confidence in my transition. Seeing what Fay said about my story helping her feel hopeful made me feel hopeful. All of this was fun because it was a project of personal and intellectual rigor. The intersections of personal and project development kept me moving forward in each arena.

I know this is a project that I will remember and continue to develop as I progress in my career. I am currently applying for jobs/careers in higher education. I am interested in a position that would allow me to teach and research in trans\* studies. Arizona State has the only trans\* studies program in the country, and I did not earn an interview with that program, but I am applying for faculty positions in the field for which my M.F.A. qualifies me—English, and in the closely related field of Women and Gender Studies. I am also applying for staff positions in LGBT resource centers on college and university campuses. Any of these positions would allow me to apply the work I have

done in this research project and to extend the research in some of the ways I have discussed.

As a trans man, I am often conflicted about my political aspirations and how they align with my personal transition. I want to be seen as a man, and I want to live as a man, but I want to work against gender binaries. These two positions seem in conflict with each other. I see people like Mark and their identification as a “male lady”, and I wonder if I’m selling out by fully transitioning. I wonder if I would not better serve the trans\* political cause by living in a genderqueer persona rather than in a male persona, but then I remember that this is about identity and self-awareness, and I actually am male. I express on part of the gender spectrum that aligns with the male part of the binary. I have to use my words to supplement my expression so that people understand that I am more than my expression; my experience as both female and male and as the transitioning person in between helps me to be an advocate against the gender binary. I can be myself and still work for representation of the entirety of the trans\* community.

Part of what I have struggled with while doing this research is the role of the Intersex community. The Intersex community and the trans\* community should ally themselves more than they do in Central Texas. In *Beyond Magenta*, one of the teen stories is of a person who is transitioning while Intersex—a person who identifies as trans\* and was born Intersex. I used to wish that I was Intersex because I thought it would make it easier for people to accept my desire to transition. I often wondered if my high levels of testosterone while in a female body were enough to qualify for an Intersex condition. I realize now that these kind of thoughts are immature and unjust to people who are Intersex. I am reading *Middlesex* (Eugenides, 2010) in order to gain a better

understanding of Intersex individuals who chose to transition; however, I feel that the book is not an accurate or just representation of the Intersex community. I do not like the over-adherence to blame on genetic defects in Eugenides's book, and the transition experience does not seem authentic to me, at least not from my own transition experience perspective. I wish that my research project had included an Intersex individual, but none came forward to participate. In all the work that I do around LGBTQIA issues, I have yet to meet an out Intersex person. I think that knowing Intersex people when I was younger would have made me less likely to want their experience to explain my own feelings. Knowing trans\* people when I was younger would have helped me know that that was my experience. Helping teachers know how to integrate the experiences of trans\* and Intersex people into their curriculum will help other youngsters avoid the traps into which I have fallen.

As I continue to watch for news related to trans\* issues, I realize that we have a long way to go. Since I've finished my research, a substitute teacher in Lumberton, TX (a small town in Northeast Texas) was fired for being trans\* (McDonough, 2014b). She has since been reinstated (Roberts, 2014), but I cannot imagine that she is receiving respect from the students when they are hearing hateful comments from the parents at home who sought to have her suspended in the first place. One news source even called the female teacher "Mr.", "transgendered" and "male" (Price, 2014). Central Texas is typically considered more progressive than Northeast Texas, but this news demonstrates just how needed research such as this project is right now. If teachers do not receive justice as trans\* individuals, what hope do students have? We must make a difference,

and I hope that by being out as a trans man while being an educator and by conducting research on the trans\* educational experience that I can be a part of that difference.

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