

General Editors' Introduction

PAISLEY CURRAH and SUSAN STRYKER

As trans studies has become more institutionalized, it has rarely departed from the norms of elite academic traditions that privilege research and publication over teaching, while neglecting critical interrogation of higher education institutions themselves. While the market-based logics of outcomes assessment for teaching have begun to penetrate the domain of higher education, research output is still what really counts for getting a job, tenure, promotion, a better job, or even a raise. As the guest editors of this issue point out in their introduction, “in the three seminal publications that signal the emergence of trans* studies as a field (i.e., *The Transgender Studies Reader*, *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, and *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*), there is only one article that has a specific focus on formal educational contexts and pedagogical concerns.” While scholars of education and pedagogy have published highly regarded work in their own disciplinary journals regarding the reproduction and contestation of gender normativity in educational settings, there has been a marked absence of such scholarship in the field-defining venues of trans studies—until now.

With this special issue on “Trans*formational Pedagogies,” guest editors Z Nicolazzo, Susan B. Marine, and Francisco J. Galarte redress such absences and argue that explicit attention to the institutional contexts of formal educational activities should be central to trans studies in the moment of its increasingly rapid institutionalization. The collection of essays they offer here, described more fully in their own introduction to the issue, range from an examination of how teachers renaturalize the gender binary in classroom practices, to a study documenting the privileging of masculine norms of embodiment among trans men in college, to a dialogue between two trans teachers in Spain about their approaches to trans* pedagogy in public school classrooms. The articles make visible the reproduction of gender normativity in most educational settings and point to the transformative potential of education for dismantling such unthinking “genderism.”

Much of the content in this issue's recurring sections amplify the issue's theme. In "Book Reviews," j wallace skelton and Amy McNally each offer reviews of several children's books that feature "gender-independent" or transgender young people, while Cris Mayo reviews the revised second edition of trans icon Kate Bornstein's popular *My Gender Workbook*, and Aaron Link profiles *The Collection: Short Fiction from the Transgender Vanguard*, an anthology from all-trans Topside Press, which is gaining acceptance as a teaching text in trans literature classes. In the "Research Note," Tre Wentling's discussion of classroom pronoun attribution reveals that roughly 50 percent of the students he surveyed report that teachers use the students' preferred pronoun only some of the time or not at all, and that teachers were more likely to use the desired pronoun when a student expressed their gender identity in a binary rather than genderqueer manner. In the "Policies" section, which appears for the first time in this issue, Genny Beemyn and Dot Brauer examine resistance to making name and gender changes in student records at US colleges and universities; Don Romesburg chronicles the efforts of a committee of scholars to add LGBT history to California's elementary and high school curriculum and describes how material on transgender history was especially likely to be overlooked.

This issue debuts two other recurring sections: "Fashion" and "Translations." In the first, *TSQ* editorial board member Frank J. Galarte, who will regularly curate the fashion section, offers a brief autobiographical reflection on what trans fashion means to him and what it can teach all of us, before interviewing textile, text, and film artist L. J. Roberts, whose embroidery of a photo of Jackie Mautner carrying a sign at the 2012 New York Drag March expressing solidarity with incarcerated trans woman Cece McDonald is the cover image for this issue of *TSQ*. In the inaugural translations section, translation scholar David Gramling has selected contributions from Italian medievalist Fabian Alfie, who translates a fourteenth-century bawdy tale involving cross-dressing, and from gender studies scholar S. P. F. Dale, who translates a statement by Ray Tanaka, contemporary Japanese author of *Toransujendā feminizumu* (*Transgender Feminism*, 2006), on the neglect by feminist antiviolence activists of intimate partner violence experienced by trans individuals.

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Introduction

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In 2005, the Sundance docu-series *Transgeneration* first aired, chronicling an entire academic year in the lives of four trans*-identified college students and introducing viewers to issues that trans-identified college students grapple with at institutions of higher education. Ten years later, as transgender studies has begun institutionalizing itself as an interdisciplinary field and “transgender” and trans* narratives have become almost routine in mainstream entertainment, the editors of this special issue on trans* pedagogy find ourselves confronted with a paradox. While there is in general unprecedented social awareness of trans* identities, (particular) trans* people, and trans* issues, there has yet to be a serious concentrated effort to explore trans* subjectivities, identities, and experiences in educational contexts. For example, in the three seminal publications that signal the emergence of trans* studies as a field (i.e., *The Transgender Studies Reader*, *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, and *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*), there is only one article that has a specific focus on formal educational contexts and pedagogical concerns. This is not to suggest there has been no scholarly research or writing on trans* issues in education. Much to the contrary, scholars have produced exceptional work regarding trans* people and educational experiences in other venues. *Radical Teacher* devoted an entire special issue, titled “Beyond the Special Guest—Teaching ‘Trans’ Now,” to the topic in 2011 (Agid and Rand 2011). The voices and experiences of trans* educators and students have been centered in a variety of disciplinary scholarly texts and journal articles (e.g., Catalano, McCarthy, and Shlasko 2007; Jourian 2014; Marine 2011a, 2011b; Nicolazzo 2014). However, trans* experiences in education have not yet been featured in the main venues of the emerging field of transgender studies.

In an attempt to address this significant gap, this special issue of *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* takes up matters of schooling, learning, and pedagogy. Both Paulo Freire (2000) and bell hooks (1994) declared that education should be a “practice of freedom,” one that enables individuals to “deal critically

and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Freire 2000: 34). All too often, however, formal educational practices foster conformity, deter necessary transgressions, and systemically seek to regulate rather than radicalize (Aronowitz 2004; Entin, Ohmann, and O’Malley 2013). This is particularly true with regard to the concept of ‘genderism,’ which Darryl Hill defined as the “system of beliefs that reinforces a negative evaluation based on gender nonconformity . . . the cultural notion that gender is an important basis by which to judge people and that nonbinary genders are anomalies” (2003: 119). This concept, which refers to the biopolitics of gender from an overarching societal perspective, has also been found to operate within educational contexts (Bilodeau 2005, 2009; Marine and Catalano 2014; Nicolazzo 2015), regulating the lives of trans* people and thereby mediating how they navigate such spaces.

We contend that formal education typically enacts genderism. With this special issue, “Trans*formational Pedagogies,” we seek to reinvigorate ongoing conversations about education as a practice of freedom by exploring ways in which educational processes can specifically challenge the oppressive aspects of the binary gender system. In particular, the pieces included in this special issue center on the following questions: What counts as learning? What is pedagogy, and where does pedagogical practice occur? What are the roles of educational institutions in shaping and responding to genderism? How do educational institutions delimit and/or proliferate possibilities for the doing, thinking, and practicing of trans* genders? Who is excluded from educational systems? To this end, we have included several selections that address what room there may be for liberatory educational praxis, particularly given the overwhelming prevalence of state-sanctioned surveillance and neoliberal accountability standards. Finally, while we attempted to engage a robust set of questions regarding the current possibilities, limits, and experiences of trans* educational contexts, we also thought it important to suggest how the nascent conversations regarding trans* subjectivities, identities, and concerns in educational settings exceed the boundaries of the school grounds and disciplinary formations.

As Julian Carter, David Getsy, and Trish Salah (2014) suggest in their introduction to the *TSQ* special issue on “Trans Cultural Production,” the politics of trans* in/visibility are knottily entangled. Similarly, the push and pull of education as an apparatus of surveillance and the social reproduction of the status quo on the one hand and as an environment latent with liberatory potential on the other makes any discussion about educational institutions fraught with difficulty. The ways in which gender, race, class, dis/ability, faith, and sexuality coalesce to permit certain bodies—by which we mean both conceptually and literally—to enter, navigate, and succeed in education are by no means uniform.

As Grant et al. (2011) highlighted, trans* people—and in particular, trans* people of color—experience severely decreased life chances in terms of employment, health care, housing, and financial security. As a result, entrance into formal educational structures is also heavily policed, often resulting in the classroom doors remaining shut to trans* people. Furthermore, even when trans* people do gain admittance into educational systems, the overarching system of societal genderism, itself replicated in educational contexts, renders these contexts increasingly dangerous, risky, and alienating for trans* people (e.g., Rankin et al. 2010). This is particularly true when examining the effects of educational environments for trans* people of color, especially trans* women of color, who are disproportionately targeted. For example, consider the case of Black transgender activist, Monica Jones, who was arrested for the vague charge of “manifesting prostitution,” which trans* people and their allies translate as “walking while trans*.” Jones, a known trans* activist, had been among those protesting Project ROSE (Reaching Out to the Sexually Exploited), “an anti-prostitution collaboration between the Arizona State University School of Social Work, the Phoenix Police Department, and Catholic Charities, which claims to provide services to workers within the sex industry through a prostitution diversion program” (Strangio 2014). Jones’s arrest exposes the conjoining of racism, sexism, and transphobia in neoliberal initiatives such as Project ROSE. It illustrates how educational institutions work in conjunction with nonprofit organizations and other state-sanctioned and funded initiatives to criminalize trans* women of color, thereby simultaneously prohibiting their entrance into educational environments and subjecting them to a system of mass incarceration that Michelle Alexander (2010) has aptly named “The New Jim Crow” for communities of color.

In conceptualizing this special issue, we also struggled with the constant (re)framing of education by US scholars from an ethnocentric perspective, whereby the prevailing myth of US exceptionalism overshadows the possibilities for understanding non-US educational contexts as promising spaces to think about, interrogate, and practice shifting notions of gender. To this end, we sought to encourage submissions that engaged notions of pedagogy in the broadest possible ways, including in contexts other than that of the United States. While we were encouraged to see articles from European educational settings submitted, we also recognize that these submissions were still from Western Europe and thus still position various other educational contexts as “other,” “unknown,” and, by extension, “exotic.” Therefore, while we hope this special issue will be a productive space for the integration of gender identity and trans* lives into fields related to education, the lack of consideration of a wide range of geopolitical areas means that the essays we have curated on schooling as a site for the practice of gender freedom present a partial and limited picture.

In this sense, we envisioned this special issue as presenting scholarly work within the fields of education that demands further exploration and attention. Rather than being read as canonical, the scholarly voices and perspectives in this issue serve to disrupt educational spaces from the staid notions of binary gender that permeate them. Indeed, there have been seismic shifts in some educational contexts regarding how scholars and practitioners conceptualize gender in relation to their thinking and work. However, there is still fertile ground to be tilled in order to understand fully the myriad ways gender operates to (re)produce environments that constrict, proliferate, and otherwise mediate such settings. Thus, we invite readers to view this special issue as a series of questions demanding further investigation, or as an ellipsis that encourages ongoing theorizing and praxis from liberatory frameworks and perspectives. As an apocryphal quote attributed to W. B. Yeats rightly claims, “education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” We conceptualize this scholarly space as that lighting of a fire, one that we hope will burn with steady intensity for as long as it takes to illuminate how education can truly meet the ideal set forth by Freire and hooks as being a practice of freedom.

The first article examines reflections on practice—specifically, the power of classroom practices to instantiate or dismantle genderism (Bilodeau 2005). Susan Woolley’s ethnographic study of binary gender practices at the secondary level reminds readers of the power of such practices within schooling and of their invisible ubiquity. Teachers’ use of language and practices of classroom management implicate them in the production (or challenging) of gender norms. Woolley’s interrogation of “Ms. Green’s” behaviors in an extended case study clarifies how even well-meaning educators, armed with knowledge from participation in “safe space” trainings, act in ways that reinscribe the power of the gender binary on youth lives and identities. The teacher’s consciousness around inviting students to self-select their sex, while using words such as *honestly* and *really* to modify the invitation, signaled the tension of living out other possibilities within the containment of the traditional sex/gender system. Unsurprisingly, peer perceptions of and reactions to gender-nonconforming students devolved into policing of those identities, normalizing gender harassment. The affected students’ impotence, coupled with the teacher’s fragmented responses that failed to curtail the harassment, yielded minimal space for students to self-identify or even to act, given the forcefulness of the regulation taking place. In place of such practices, Woolley suggests adopting a stance of critical gender literacy as a means of challenging and changing these harmful dynamics. Such an approach extends one’s politics into one’s practices in a way that manifests coherence between the two and engenders space for nonbinary youth to learn and flourish in safety.

Classroom practice in the postsecondary realm is taken up by Hilary Malatino in her piece, “Pedagogies of Becoming: Trans Inclusivity and the Crafting of Being.” Malatino’s compelling account of being a guest speaker (representing her experience of being intersex) in a Smith College women’s studies class considers the potential (and limitations) of this practice for advancing learning. Reflecting on the questionable value of presenting one intersex person’s life experience as emblematic of anything, Malatino cautions against the urge to frame such narratives as triumphal, suggesting instead that her story and others (Beatriz Preciado’s *Testo Junkie* [2013] and Eli Clare’s *Exile and Pride* [1999] being among those she points to as equally complex) may be more appropriately conceived of as “part of a more expansive tableau of the terrain of gender transformation.” This terrain is marked by the machinations of late liberal and neoliberal ideologies, which insist on unifying narratives as a way to manage the disruption of diversity. Such machinations function with the academy, particularly, to appease anxiety about exclusion while simply attending to superficialities, a kind of “progressive window dressing” as decried by Malatino. Returning to the classroom, Malatino noted the hazards of presenting the trans* (or intersex) narrative, which displaces any serious consideration of the material realities of trans* lives with a “heartwarming affirmation . . . of ‘being true to yourself.’” Arguing instead for centering the discursive, heavily culturally encoded construction of all gendered bodies, trans* and nontrans* alike, Malatino employed the work of Eve Sedgwick and others in the service of signaling the complexity that exists universally, while also disadvantaging some disproportionately. She thus welcomes the opportunity to “move away from the special guest model and instead focus on our shared performativity.” Naming and deconstructing gendering practices, rather than absorbing the singularity of gendered individual subjects, becomes the deeper pedagogical platform for inviting and welcoming gender complexity in the classroom. This ushers in a space where self and community, in conjunction with explorations of power and agency, can generate more agentic logics of becoming and being.

In his study of trans* men in college, Chase Catalano examines the ways that these men think about and describe their genders, acknowledging that this process is always mediated through the lens of class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and other subjectivities. These students’ narratives were marked by struggle: the struggle to “make meaning of their visibility as men . . . or their invisibility as men” and to “connect with cisgender men in what felt [to many] like a forced affinity,” among others. Men in this study described choosing to pass, or eschewing passing, as a mixed outcomes strategy for visibility. Ambivalence about dominant discourses of manhood abounded: the men then focused their attention on embodiment as the primary site of the expression of masculinity, while

also being disinterested in the ultimate embodiment of maleness—the surgically constructed penis. Liminality was thus the defining characteristic of the men’s gender expression, which is directly opposed by the normalizing processes of the medical model, specifically the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care, which Catalano asserts are in heavy rotation in the postsecondary environment. Such entanglements, he argues, belie the potential of higher education to serve as a liberatory space for the holistic exploration of trans* masculinity. Constructing best-practice narratives to respond to these quandaries is tempting but ultimately fruitless. Catalano urges more emphasis on engaging trans* college men in conversation about their masculinities, about what would help them to healthfully define and embody them, and to allow the natural openness of this liminality to hasten affirmation of trans* college men’s varied masculinities.

Just as trans* students bring insights to the table that trouble the current basket of “best practices,” trans* professionals’ experiences in higher education also reveal important lessons for institutional transformation. The next article, “‘We Are Not Expected’: Trans* Educators (Re)Claiming Space and Voice in Higher Education and Student Affairs,” describes an important intervention in making trans* lives visible. In this piece, T.J. Jourian, Symone Simmons, and Kara Devaney discuss the creation of a group of trans* scholars and practitioners in the field of higher education and student affairs. Calling themselves the T*Circle, the group employs critical and trans*-specific theoretical perspectives to center and explore the lives of trans* people in the academy, particularly as their gender identities affect their (in)ability to navigate their collegiate environments. Held within an association that claimed to foster values of social justice, inclusion, and equity, the T*Circle employs Dean Spade’s (2011) concept of “critical trans politics” to interrogate and expose the way that value-neutral language and assumptions, which are regularly used by liberal institutions as a marker of their desire to remain inclusive, actually reify normative notions of gender and, by extension, delimit possibilities and realities for the trans* people at such institutions. In this sense, the T*Circle, the first of its kind for the field of higher education and student affairs, sought to establish a base from which gender could be de/re/constructed from a trans*-centered perspective, one that would emphasize liberatory possibilities and focus on privileging feelings of connection, safety, and resilience over notions of assimilation, passing, or getting by in hostile climates.

In their dialogue, “Two Trans* Teachers in Madrid: Interrogating Trans*formative Pedagogies,” Lucas Platero and Em Harsin Drager discuss their experiences as trans* educators in Spain. The distinctness of their identities from one another (i.e., Harsin Drager being a US citizen and Platero being a Spaniard)

converges with their similarities (e.g., both identify as presenting a masculine gender expression), and they converse about what it means to engage in a trans* pedagogy that seeks to “offer students the tools they need to participate in the political and economic power structures that shape the boundaries of gender categories, with the goal of changing those structures in ways that create greater freedom” (Galarte 2014: 146). Harsin Drager and Platero also explore issues related to neoliberalism, national politics in relation to who is granted access to teaching youth in Spain, and how the extension of US exceptionalism affords some—particularly native English speakers—greater access to employment in a country that has the highest unemployment rates in Europe and, as a result, forecloses those same opportunities to Spanish citizens. They also discuss the role of curiosity in the classroom, and how embracing students’ curiosity about gender can inform a trans*-pedagogical stance that recognizes one’s trans* identity while also attending to the potential precarity of what that may mean for various others beyond students (e.g., parents and administrators).

Finally, in “Bathrooms and Beyond: Expanding a Pedagogy of Access in Trans/Disability Studies,” Cassius Adair adeptly merges the fields of transgender and disability studies by using pedagogical engagements with students to ask critical questions about the current realities and future possibilities of access. Taken at its broadest sense, Adair posits access both in terms of being able to enter and use physical facilities such as restrooms as well as break through the many barriers to gain admittance to educational spaces. Adair’s article extends critical inquiry to its limit, even openly asking the question, “What is the role of gender-inclusive restrooms inside academic buildings or local coffee shops when so many people (including, of course, trans and disabled people) are being turned away at the academy’s front door?” Infusing transgender and disability studies perspectives with intersecting perspectives on race, nationality, and social class, Adair’s piece provides a foundation upon which to imagine possible futures for transgender, disability, and trans/disability studies. This traversing of disciplinary boundaries, and an emphasis on the possibilities of working alongside students due to such pedagogical enactments, pick up on Alison Kafer’s (2013) work in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, in which she imagined crippled futures, including the liberatory potential of envisioning such possibilities for those whose lives are always already positioned as short, tortured, and sad. In this sense, Adair’s piece provides a powerful end to the group of articles included in this special issue, as it motions toward possible futures for various populations who have always been, and continue to be, read as tragic, illegible, and leading impossible lives. Or, as Adair states at the end of his essay, “a thematic focus on ‘access’ as a critical lens offers a way to explore new forms of resistant pedagogies,” particularly as they relate and respond to encouraging students to reimagine the (un)desirability of nonnormative identities, expressions, embodiments, and subjectivities.

In the aggregate, the articles in this special issue provide a more complex and nuanced articulation of what it may mean to be, think, and teach trans* genders in educational settings. The issue also comes full circle to the moment this introduction begins with, as T.J. Jourian, one of the cast members of *Transgeneration*, appears in this issue as an author, thus demonstrating a pedagogical commitment to knowledge production that has shifted from the realm of representation to institutional and academic terrains. The most compelling thread that links together Jourian and other contributors in this issue is the diverse approaches taken in each essay to speak to trans* pedagogies as a potential enactment of education as a practice of freedom. Certainly, the field of education is not free from critique. However, the strength of these articles individually—and the special issue as a collective—is their power to continuously call attention to the limitations, opportunities, and possible futures for increasing life chances for trans* people.

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“Boys Over Here, Girls Over There”

A Critical Literacy of Binary Gender in Schools

SUSAN W. WOOLLEY

Abstract In K–12 schools, practices of dividing students by biological sex or gender into binary categories limit possibilities for students’ identification and representation. Dividing students according to their socially recognized sex or gender reinforces the perceived stability of binary male/female sex and binary masculine/feminine gender categories while also exceptionalizing transgender identities. Students and teachers who challenge such practices engage in critical literacy readings of school spaces and of the mundane ways binary gender and sex are read onto bodies. Critical literacy provides a method through which students and teachers may engage in reflection and critical practice to raise awareness and challenge everyday practices in schools that construct boys and girls as stable, discrete categories. Drawing on three years of ethnographic research in an urban public high school, this article examines the ways teachers and students enact, respond to, and subvert practices that articulate and distinguish categories of boys and girls.

Keywords critical literacy, binary gender, schools

“You are forced to *choose* a gender when you go to use a bathroom,” Siri explained to me.

Siri self-identified as genderqueer, as neither a boy nor a girl. Like the other transgender and gender-nonconforming students at their high school, Siri chose to leave campus in order to use the public restrooms available at the local YMCA where they could access safe gender-neutral bathrooms. Siri’s school, “MacArthur High,” was a large urban public high school in northern California, and its lack of gender-neutral bathrooms was not unlike the situation in most public high schools in the United States. Both California state law and MacArthur High School’s district’s policies aimed to protect LGBTQ students. The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 protects students from discrimination and harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity (AB 537 Advisory Task Force 2001). This school district also has an antislur policy in place that includes protections from inappropriate language and insults against one’s sex, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, and

gender identity. Yet, the infrastructure of the building as well as ingrained practices in schooling erases and silences trans identities while simultaneously drawing attention to students' transgressions of binary gender norms. Despite the fact that schools like Siri's are mandated by law to provide LGBTQ students with safe spaces to learn, and despite progressive curricular interventions aimed at addressing gender, sexuality, and LGBTQ issues, gender and sexual inequality are reproduced through students' and teachers' everyday language and social interactions, joking and teasing, and the social production of school spaces. Schooling practices and the built environment reinforce and reproduce binary gender and heteronormativity. While transgender and gender-nonconforming youth and their allies have won important legislative victories in a number of states and jurisdictions (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network 2014), legal changes have significant limitations if not accompanied by transformations in institutional practices and structures.

Critical Literacy and Reading Gender in Schools

The surveillance of bodies as binarily gendered is taught to young people from the very first days of schooling and continues throughout secondary school as the differences between boys and girls become more and more accentuated (Connell 1996; Ferguson 2001; Goodwin 2006; Martin 1998; Thorne 1993). In schools, the hidden curriculum of gender regulates bodily comportments, practices, and embodiments, making gendered bodies and their movements appear natural and rigidly dichotomous (Martin 1998). Individuals' experiences and subjectivities are constituted to a great extent by school policies, school-level processes, and the identity categories around which educational exclusions and inequalities revolve (Youdell 2006). School structures reinforce heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality through rituals of heterosexual performance, regulating binary gender expression, and meting out penalties for crossing gender boundaries (Epstein 1993; Khayatt 1995; Renold 2000, 2005). Moreover, such gendered and sexualized discipline often constructs racialized gendered meanings and subjectivities and reproduce a racial order (Ferguson 2001; McCreedy 2010). Schools' gender regimes are institutional arrangements that include power relations, divisions of labor, patterns of emotion, and symbolization of gender that work to construct definitions of masculinity and femininity (Connell 1996). A variety of seemingly mundane aspects of schooling govern and reinforce schools' gender regimes, including dress codes, team sports, segregated bathrooms, different entrance lines for boys and girls, typically gender segregated courses like shop and home economics, and heterocentric sex education (Connell 1996).

Dichotomous gender categories consolidate and become the basis of separate collectivities in schools, and when gender boundaries are activated, they

are accompanied by stylized forms of action, a sense of performance, and mixed and ambiguous meanings (Thorne 1993). Through processes of *disidentification*, identities are stabilized negatively, such that, for example, to be authentically masculine is to be in opposition to and distant from feminine and feminized versions of masculinity (Mac an Ghaill 1994). In ritualized interactions that demonstrate heterosexuality and dominance along with the repudiation of weakness, heteronormative masculinity is confirmed and, when threatened, rescued through misogyny, the objectification of girls, and homophobic discourses (Pascoe 2007; Renold 2000; Thorne 1993). The specter of homosexuality is evoked to police masculinity, and gendered and sexualized epithets like *sissy*, *girl*, and *fag* are used to repudiate the “other” and position oneself as occupying normative subject positions (Pascoe 2007; Thorne 1993). The specter of being called a fag operates as a powerful disciplinary mechanism pushing boys to police behaviors that may fail at masculine tasks of competence, heterosexuality, or strength, thus revealing weakness or femininity (Pascoe 2007). Yet, resisting such repudiation, students deploy discursive practices to refuse wounded identities and to reinscribe themselves in ways that insist on the legitimacy of nonheteronormative subject positions and desires (McCready 2010; Youdell 2004). Based on Paulo Freire’s ([1970] 2006) work, critical literacy analysis examines the semiotic means through which signification takes place—the naming processes, the reading and writing of meaning—at the levels of the word and the world. Within the word exist two dimensions, and through our engagement in the world, we act and reflect, make meaning and shape the world around us (Freire [1970] 2006). Critical literacy has served as a tool for women’s empowerment and emancipation from patriarchal oppression, allowing women to become active participants in critically analyzing social expectations of women’s roles in society and the family (Bee 1993). Similarly, critical literacy has been used to interrogate and disrupt inequitable power dynamics that fall along the lines of sexuality, race, and gender (Blackburn 2003). That is, it is a powerful tool in dismantling heteronormativity and for exploring identity work (Blackburn 2002). Critical literacy helps destabilize scripts for binary gender and create the possibility of positioning oneself in multiple subjectivities that can shift and that may or may not take their meaning in relation to an object “other” (Davies 1997). Such an approach opens up possibilities for students and teachers to become reflexively aware of the power of dominant discourses, such as hegemonic gender and heteronormativity, to shape subjectivities and relations in schools (Davies 1997; Young 2000).

Drawing on a critical literacy perspective, I argue that through language and practice, participants inscribe meaning onto bodies and spaces that reinforces a dominant ideology in society—that of heteronormative binary gender. As Dean Spade suggests in *Normal Life* (2011), inclusive policies guarantee neither the

enacting of inclusive practices nor the development of an inclusive gender ethos. In addition to creating policies to protect transgender and gender-variant students, teachers and school administrators need to learn and implement a critical gender literacy that places relations of power at the center of its analysis.

The Study and Researcher Positionality

For three school years, from fall 2007 to spring 2010, I carried out ethnographic research at MacArthur High to examine the ways students and teachers construct, negotiate, and talk about gender and sexuality. This research took place across various sites of inquiry, including the classroom, gay-straight alliance (GSA) meetings, and communal spaces such as hallways and courtyards. I gathered a wide variety of data, including ethnographic field notes, audio-recorded interviews, student questionnaires, cultural artifacts generated by participants in this school, and audio and video recordings of classroom interactions.¹ My positionality as a researcher in this setting was that of an outsider—or perhaps as “the outsider within” (Collins 1986)—in that I was not part of the school community in any way except as a graduate student conducting research, trying to answer questions beneficial to both my endeavors and the school’s interests in securing “safe space” for LGBTQ students. I came to this research having taught and tutored students for over a decade. This meant that my position as an educator was always at the forefront of what I did, yet I made a deliberate effort not to intervene in students’ work, academic or otherwise. As a queer-identified woman, my involvement with the GSA and in courses that addressed gender and sexuality was a political move. The students in the GSA understood me as an adult with experience starting a GSA in college and accustomed to tutoring and working with students. The students in the freshman social studies courses I observed understood me as an adult from the local university who was conducting research on gender, sexuality, and LGBTQ experiences in their high school. My status as a White, upper-middle-class, cisgender, nondisabled, and native English-speaking academic from a nearby prestigious university marked my privilege.

Dividing Students: Gender Identification as Definition of Self

Schooling is an important site for learning the possibilities and limitations of gender. It is commonly believed that sex is hard biological fact while gender is a social construction, but the work of biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) complicates the division of dimorphic sex and points out that biological sex is also a social construction, not simply an innate or essential state of being. Despite the fact that I adhere to Fausto-Sterling’s view of sex as a social construction mapped onto bodies through signifiers such as chromosomes, hormones, and genitalia, for example, the terms *sex* and *gender* are typically used interchangeably in K–12

schools. Such practice of using *sex* and *gender* interchangeably is evident in the teacher's use of the terms throughout the excerpts presented here. Practices dividing students by gender have been deeply ingrained in the institution of schooling (Connell 1996; Ferguson 2001; Goodwin 2006; Martin 1998; Thorne 1993). Boys and girls routinely queue up in two parallel lines, mirrored binary structures, marching down the hallway to use the sex-segregated bathrooms in early elementary school. Dividing students by gender into working groups in school classrooms reproduces rigid gender binaries. Common practices in education shape the way teachers and administrators think of students as falling neatly into gendered categories of girls and boys, which they expect will match onto the students' assigned sex at birth. Outside this binary imaginary but very present in US public school systems are students who identify as transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, or gender variant, or whose gender presentation and identification may not match onto societal expectations regarding binary gender norms.

Indeed, the structure of the built environment of MacArthur High, which has sex-segregated locker rooms and bathrooms, but no gender-neutral bathrooms, reinforced participants' expectations and conceptions of binary gender. Transgender and gender-nonconforming students at MacArthur High reported being subject to the scrutiny of others when they entered bathrooms at their school—scrutiny that manifested as searching glances up and down their bodies and as declarations of “this is the *girls*' bathroom,” implying they must have entered the physical space not designated for their gender. Such scrutiny and surveillance regulated the kinds of bodies and forms of gendered expression and presentation permitted to occupy and use gendered bathroom spaces. As Siri articulated, one must choose a gender in order to use a bathroom at school even if that choice does not reflect their true sense of self. The literacy practice of reading another's body as gendered and sexed, as belonging to one category or another based on the commonplace assumption that gender and sex signifiers are stable and real is a literacy practice that gender-nonconforming and transgender students know intimately. This literacy practice dictates that trans students confront the task of “passing” as masculine male or feminine female in order to be sanctioned users of gendered spaces. Students' attempts at “passing” as cisgender participate in the larger literacy practice of encoding, decoding, and using bodies as texts open for interpretation. In such semiotic practices, gendered presentation is read as a signifier that points to the signified of biological sex, which is commonly believed to be stable but in reality is as socially constructed and contingent as gender categories (Fausto-Sterling 2000). Students' occupations of school spaces like gendered bathrooms and locker rooms and their positions in same-gender working groups reinforce the concept of stable binary gender categories. The everyday mundane ways in which binary

gender and sex are constructed and reproduced in public schools shape gendered possibilities and boundaries for students. The students' literacy practice of reading school spaces shape their movement through and presence in spaces like the bathrooms, locker rooms, and classrooms.

Teacher instructions and classroom interactions also play a pivotal role in consolidating the gender binary. In the three classrooms I observed for one year, students were divided into binary gender categories through seemingly small mundane decisions and larger structural principles. "Ms. Green's" freshman social studies course was one of three classes with a unit focused on gender, sexuality, and LGBTQ issues. Ms. Green used a progressive and comprehensive approach to these topics, and as a self-identified lesbian, she made a point to educate her students about LGBTQ experiences. Her classroom bulletin board had many LGBTQ-related posters that indicated her classroom was a safe space to be LGBTQ, marking her as an ally. Yet, the practice of dividing students into gendered groups inadvertently marked transgressions of binary gender norms and positioned certain students as subjects of ridicule. In some moments, Ms. Green's interventions disrupted and challenged difference. Ultimately, however, her lack of critical literacy skills meant that her instructional practices reinscribed difference and with it systems of power.

One day, when students entered the room, Ms. Green directed the students to divide themselves into sex-segregated groups. Her intention was to deconstruct gendered stereotypes, to examine gendered social expectations, and to reflect on how these expectations made the students feel. Inserted below, excerpt 1 represents a moment of transition in which Ms. Green gave directions and framed biological sex as the delimiting factor for grouping the students. But she did allow students to identify in ways that may not match onto their biological sex. The teacher also described the process of gender identification as being about your definition of self, characterized by truthfulness and honesty.

Excerpt 1. Directions to divide into male and female groups

- 1 Ms. G.: So, I'm going to put you into—separate you into different sex groups.
- 2 And again, if you, I'm not going to,
- 3 if you identify with one sex or another,
- 4 honestly really identify with a sex that is different from your actual sex,
- 5 then I'm not going to stand in the way of that,
- 6 that's really your definition of self,
- 7 um but other than that we're going to divide along sex male female lines. Okay?
- 8 Kalil: Males.
- 9 Ms. G.: So, let me tell you what we're going to do. Um, each group . . .
- 10 Ryan: Females (in a falsetto voice)

Ms. Green asserted her authority by declaring that they were going to divide along male/female lines anyway. The teacher's announcement that she was not going to "stand in the way" of students' identifying their sex as different from their "actual sex" attached a stigma to those who would do so. Ms. Green allowed some room for student choice, but only if one genuinely identifies this way. The teacher marked those who do "really identify" as the opposite sex as a unique, small group that can step outside the boundaries, but only if they are truthful and honest about their transgression.

In Ms. Green's presentation of trans identities, even as she created space for those whose identity disrupts binary gender, her language also reinforced the stability of gender. She allowed for individual choice and simultaneously undermined that permission by demanding that choice be authentic. Being trans was marked as an option or a choice, which exceptionalized it, and such marking of trans identities was done through the discourse of authenticity. Furthermore, a student's decision to "identify with a sex that is different from [their] actual sex" (line 4) would have been a marked and highly visible choice in the classroom interaction.

Despite Ms. Green's efforts to push her students to think against binary constructions of sex, she lacked the scripts in her lexicon to express the range or continuum of ways people identify themselves beyond binaries. Trans identities were introduced as a third choice only after her initial decision to divide students into male and female groups, but third choices do not necessarily disrupt the stability of binary constructions of sex and gender. Critical gender literacy pedagogy would have students examine the constraints of choices and expectations of binary gender in society. The conundrum Ms. Green faced was trying to confront binary categories of sex and gender, while simultaneously working within the limitations of deeply rooted binary frames for gender that structure the English language (e.g., subject pronouns *he* and *she*, object pronouns *him* and *her*, possessive pronouns *his* and *her*), that shape schooling practices of dividing students into groups by systems of categorization (e.g., sex-segregated bathroom and locker room spaces, lining up boys and girls separately), and, as illustrated in the sections to follow, that influence how students interact and move through classroom space.

The teacher's indication that she would not stand in the students' way pointed to notions of access and led to the question of who was able to claim certain identities. In this case, who can claim a transgender, genderqueer, or gender-nonconforming identity? How does one frame the activity of identifying? These are also questions appropriate and germane to critical literacy—in understanding one's identity within their social landscape. As an instructor, Ms. Green could have stood in the way of students' identifying one way or another,

but she did not do so, nor did she scaffold it as an activity to be done, discussed, and processed at that moment. This served as a framing device for how to participate in the activity—seriously and genuinely. When the teacher asserted that she would not get in the way of the students' self-identifying as a sex different from their actual sex, she indicated that she was not going to deny them that choice, but she also may not support it.

Here, Ms. Green's directions were operating at two levels: the content of the class and the instructional level. At the instructional level, the message being communicated was a command to follow these directions so the class could proceed with the planned activity. The content, on the other hand, communicated that one could identify their gender in ways that did not match social expectations regarding their biological sex, but this process was riddled with challenges and assessed along lines of honesty and genuineness. This was a moment in which the teacher asked the students to move their bodies in the space of the classroom based on who they were, how they identified themselves, and where they saw themselves in terms of their gender and sex. In this, Ms. Green inadvertently and perhaps even against her own intentions reproduced notions of binary gender and socially constructed boundaries between boys and girls. Her emphasis indicated that sex and gender identification are really about one's definition of self, which is true, but marked as special and worth mention. *Honestly* and *really* modified *identify* and acted as intensifiers and assessments. By using a second redundant modifier, *really*, the teacher marked that this transgression was a problematic or contentious way of identifying oneself that needed to be taken seriously. By emphasizing that this is something one *honestly* really identifies with, Ms. Green indicated that there's some truthfulness and some falsehood, some room for interpretation. Here she marked trans identities as special cases, naturalized through authenticity.

When Ms. Green was done giving instructions, she finished her command with, "Okay, separate. You guys have fifteen minutes, go, separate!" When three students walked into class late, Ms. Green interrupted the lesson to direct the students to join the groups separated by sex. Found below, excerpt 2 shows how trans identities and ambiguous positions in the middle were not only marked as exceptional but also constructed as sites for the exercise of humor. Ms. Green characterized identifying as trans as a path wrought with an entirely different or anomalous set of questions and considerations. This was taken up as a joke when a student echoed her teacher and laughed (line 6). The jokes continued when one student indicated that Anna, one of the latecomers, should sit with the boys, making fun of her gender presentation and transgressions from binary gender norms. Rather than interrupt such teasing or question the meanings and intentions behind such jokes, the teacher was complicit in identifying and marking

difference in Anna's, as well as her own, gender presentation. At the end of the excerpt, the teacher further marked trans as special, by highlighting the truthfulness requisite for identifying as trans.

Excerpt 2. There's a bunch of us who are kind of found in the middle.

- 1 Ms. G.: I'd rather you segregate by sex, not gender, so,
- 2 boys over here, girls over there,
- 3 unless you really identify as trans, then,
- 4 that's a whole other set of questions.
- 5 (indistinguishable—students talk, yell, and laugh)
- 6 Gail (laughing): That's a whole other set of questions.
- 7 Andre (to Anna): Go back, go back over here.
- 8 (indicating where Anna should sit, motioning toward the circle of boys)
- 9 Ms. G.: Anna? Yeah, I know.
- 10 There's a bunch of us who are kind of found in the middle.
- 11 We could go one way or another based on your sex or gender,
- 12 unless you're trans,
- 13 unless you truly identify as trans.

In line 1, Ms. Green directed the students to segregate by biological sex and to situate themselves in the space of the classroom based on this distinction. Her specific instructions for dividing the groups—the boys as belonging “over here” and the girls “over there” (line 2)—spatially indexed their locations in the classroom: “here” and “there” designated positions on either side of her. In these instructions, Ms. Green upheld the stability of binary constructions of biological sex categories, which were able to be segregated spatially and conceptually. In line 3, however, Ms. Green again opened up the possibility for students to not have to choose whether they would join the boys' or the girls' group. Ms. Green qualified the possibility that one might identify as trans as a way out of having to choose to join the boys' or girls' groups. That is, Ms. Green allowed for students to join the group opposite of the biological sex they were assigned at birth or to sit out of the activity and not join either the boys' or girls' groups. Here, Ms. Green used the words *really* (line 3) and *truly* (line 13) to modify and intensify how one identifies as trans, marking the process of identifying as trans as calling on some degree of truthfulness and sincerity and framing such processes of identification through discourses of authenticity.

Andre, as a boy sitting in the circle of boys, called out and characterized Anna's gender presentation as boyish or somewhat masculine for a girl (lines 7 and 8). Andre's reading of Anna's gender as masculine and his preconceived knowledge that Anna was considered to be a girl served as the basis for his joke. His joke

operated as follows: Andre's line that Anna belonged back over here with the boys acted as a signifier for an imaginary signified—which, in this case, was also the implied, unspoken punch line—that Anna's biological sex must be male. By indicating that Anna should sit in the circle with the boys, Andre marked her gender presentation as masculine for a girl, so masculine that her biological sex *must* be male.

After clarifying that they were speaking about the same person, Ms. Green claimed knowledge of Anna's gender when she stated, "Anna? Yeah, I know" (line 9). Agreeing that Anna's gender presentation was more boyish than girlish and that she belonged with the boys, Ms. Green signaled her belief that Anna transgressed heteronormative binary gender expectations. The teacher supported the marking and naming of her own and Anna's gender transgressions when she said, "There's a bunch of us who are kind of found in the middle. We could go one way or another based on your sex or gender" (lines 10 and 11). Ms. Green claimed knowledge about gender transgression—both her own and Anna's—and the liminal space their gender presentations occupy, found in the middle of binary gender categories, blending both masculine and feminine elements. Here there was space for critical gender literacy—to reflect on how one's gender is read by others and how this shapes one's identification, but the opportunity for critical reflection was passed over and not realized at that particular moment.

The way Anna reacted to the regulation of her gender differed depending on the context and valence of the situation. At this particular moment at the beginning of the class, Anna remained silent, putting her head down on her desk, not engaging with her classmates or her teacher. Her silence may have been her attempt to ignore their gender policing and teasing. When Andre motioned for Anna to sit in the boys' circle (lines 7 and 8), however, Anna glared at him, frowning and shaking her head. Other times when Anna served as a site for the regulation of gender and sexuality norms, she snapped back with insults, curse words, and sharp looks. Anna claimed that she and others saw her as "a bad girl" because she often got into trouble at school, skipped class, and ran around with a group of boys. She self-identified as an African-American girl who was athletic and loved to play basketball. Anna's athletic identity stood in stark contrast to what she understood as societal pressures for girls to be feminine and sexy. Anna often wore jeans and a baggy hooded sweatshirt, sneakers, and no makeup. Because Anna did not perform femininity in the same ways that social constructions of emphasized femininity called for, she was subjected to her classmates' jokes and teasing about her gender expression and identity, which was at times interpreted by others as more masculine. In a situation such as this, critical gender literacy could have given students the space to unpack how societal

expectations manifest in teasing and peer pressure and shape possibilities for sanctioned gender expression.

Teasing and Reading Sex and Gender

Continuing with her directions for the students to divide themselves into groups based on sex, Ms. Green told Howard, “We’re segregating by sex.” Howard had just walked into the classroom and was standing in the middle of the girls’ group, chatting with Lisa, and looking for a desk to sit in. By calling Howard by name and telling him that they were dividing by biological sex, Ms. Green indicated that she read Howard’s sex as male and that by standing with the girls, he was in the wrong group. The teacher pointed this out in a teasing way, making a joke of the possibility that he may identify as female. The teacher and Andre teased Howard for being physically located in the girls’ circle because they read his sex as belonging with the biological males. Another student, Oren, echoed Andre’s earlier joke regarding Anna’s sex and gender (excerpt 2) and exclaimed that the boys’ group needs another seat for Anna. Excerpt 3 below demonstrates how the teacher and students coconstructed teasing and jokes around Howard’s and Anna’s sex and gender. In effect, the teacher and students collaborated in making jokes of gender transgression.

Excerpt 3. He’s with the girls! We need an extra seat for Anna.

- 1 Ms. G.: Howard,
- 2 (Andre bangs his fists on his desk in a rhythm.)
- 3 Ms. G.: we’re segregating by sex.
- 4 Andre: Ha ha! He’s with the girls!
- 5 Ms. G.: Well, I mean,
- 6 if you identify as female,
- 7 Andre: Ha! He’s with the girls!
- 8 Ms. G.: then I guess you can be over there.
- 9 Oren: Or he’d *like* to go over there.
- 10 Ms. G.: We’re segregating by sex.
- 11 (indistinguishable—students talking)
- 12 Oren (laughing): Hey, we need an extra seat for Anna!
- 13 (boys laughing)

The teacher’s statement, “Well, I mean! If you identify as female then I guess you can be over there” (lines 5, 6, and 8), made a joke of directing Howard to join the boys’ group and the possibility of Howard’s identifying as the opposite sex. Ms. Green’s use of the conditional “if . . . then” (lines 6 and 8) opened up the possibility that Howard may identify himself as one of the girls. Howard’s classmate

Oren, however, interpreted Howard's position in the circle of girls as reflective of his desires to be with the girls. Oren emphasized that Howard might "*like to go over there*" (line 9), perhaps reflective of a heterosexual desire to flirt with the girls or of a desire to identify with and be one of the girls. Such a move also positioned Oren as the arbiter of gender and sexual difference, occupying the privileged place of naming Howard's desires and Anna's sex and gender.

Andre teased Howard for being with the girls, "Ha! He's with the girls!" (lines 4 and 7), making fun of Howard's positioning in the classroom space designated for females. With his statement, "Hey, we need an extra seat for Anna!" (line 12), Oren echoed Andre's joke that Anna belonged with the boys' group because of her gender presentation and expression. The boys needed an extra chair for Anna in order for her to sit with the boys' group. The boys' laughter that immediately followed Oren's joke corroborated this interpretation and reading of Anna's sex and gender. The presence of a male-bodied boy in a group of female-bodied girls and the imagined belonging of a female-bodied girl to the group of male-bodied boys served as the punch line for these jokes. The teacher's and the students' jokes about gender transgression coconstructed a context in this classroom where teasing about gender and sexuality, normative expectations, and participants' transgressions of boundaries was sanctioned.

Whose Claims to Gender Identity?

As we have seen in the previous two excerpts, the teacher's instructions to divide students by sex resulted in marking gender difference and turned Anna, Ms. Green, and Howard into sites for examination. Ms. Green's students returned to class after their lunch break and found desks to sit in, still separated by sex. Anna sat in a desk against the wall near me, closer to the boys' group than the girls' group, but in neither group, peripheral to the class activity. Anna quietly sat with her head down on her desk—a position she often took in Ms. Green's class. During this class, the students reported what they had discussed in sex-separated groups during the morning's activity. In the afternoon, the students stood as a group and reported on their experiences as girls and boys to the teacher and the group of the opposite sex. Here, the students presented their individual and collective voices, how society expects them to be as boys or girls, and what the social consequences of breaking these expectations look like. As seen in figure 1, the girls presented their findings first, standing toward the front of the room, projecting transparencies on the screen, and facing the boys who were sitting in their desks.

The girls stood together as they read their reflections on gender expectations placed on them. After they presented, the girls fielded questions from the boys and Ms. Green. All the girls were standing on one side of the room, focused

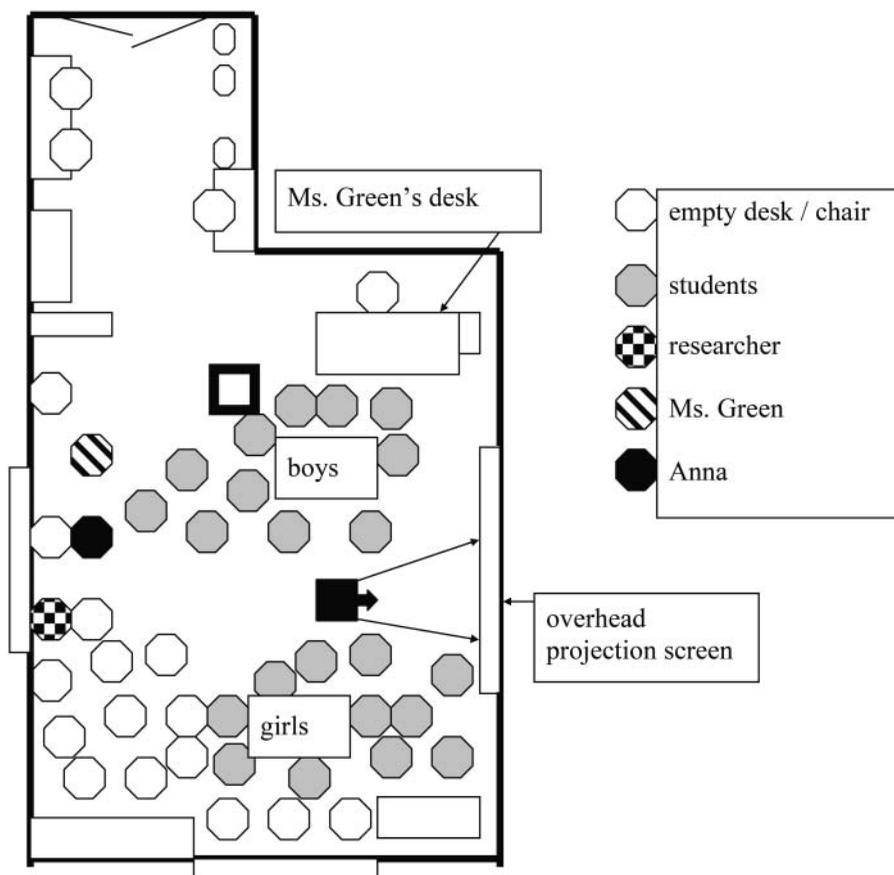


Figure 1. Floor diagram of Ms. Green's class. Girls presenting their findings. Image designed by Susan W. Woolley

around the overhead projector, except for Anna, who was sitting in a desk to the side of the room. Ms. Green, Anna, the boys, and I were sitting in desks facing the girls. Ms. Green interrupted the girls' reporting to the class in order to interrupt a side conversation. On the side, Shavonne had been trying to get Anna to stand up and join the girls at the front of the room. Anna resisted, remaining seated in the desk. In this moment of the teacher's intervention, transcribed below in excerpt 4, two students, Shavonne and Rex, claimed Anna's gender identity for her and the teacher passed over an instance of name calling. Both were friends with Anna—Shavonne was also an African American girl while Rex was a White boy. Their social closeness as friends who joked and teased may have made the following situation in which both Rex and Shavonne claimed Anna's gender identity for her possible. Nevertheless, it was a cisgender male-bodied boy and a cisgender female-bodied girl, both rooted in heteronormative gender presentations and

sexuality, who exercised the power to position Anna as a site for gender and sexual regulation.

Excerpt 4. Passing over name calling

- 1 Ms. G.: Uh, Shavonne! We're listening to one mic.
- 2 Shavonne: Uh, Anna, you're a girl,
- 3 get in the group!
- 4 (indistinguishable student talk)
- 5 Rex: Anna is trans.
- 6 (boys laugh)
- 7 Ms. G.: I can't hear her!

Ms. Green's interruption, "We're listening to one mic" (line 1), told Shavonne that Lisa was the only sanctioned speaker at the moment. Her intention in interjecting was to get Shavonne to stop talking on the side to Anna while Lisa was speaking to the class. Shavonne's claim that Anna was a girl was both an attempt to include Anna and an insistence that Anna physically come join the girls' group, where Shavonne posited that Anna belonged (lines 2 and 3). Rex countered Shavonne's insistence that Anna was a girl by saying, "Anna is trans" (line 5), a comment apparently intended as a denigrating joke and one that garnered laughter from the boys. Here, Rex calling Anna "trans" named and marked her gender transgression while echoing previous jokes (excerpts 2 and 3). A few boys looked at Rex and laughed, some whispering, "whoooah" as if he were going to get into trouble for his comment. Ms. Green exclaimed, "I can't hear her!" (line 7), in an attempt to redirect the students back to Lisa—the sanctioned speaker who Ms. Green was unable to hear. Instead of addressing the power dynamics at play in this interaction, the name calling, or the politics of claiming another's identity, Ms. Green continued her line of intervention to refocus everybody's attention onto Lisa as the designated speaker in the class activity. Ms. Green did not interrupt Rex's joke that named Anna's gender identity as "trans" and teased her for her gender presentation. Ms. Green's exclamation, "I can't hear her!" (line 7) highlights how difficult it is to hear everything that is going on at the same time in the classroom.

During my time at the school, I had observed that Anna was often called names by her classmates that reflected assumptions about her sexuality—like *dyke* and *lesbo*. During this particular exercise, Anna's classmates utilized a new term they had just learned in this social studies class, and began calling her "trans." *Trans*, like *gay*, as a descriptor is not inherently a derogatory term but here was utilized as a slur in the exercise of power through name calling. While words like *trans* and *gay* should be normalized as part of the everyday language used to describe gender and sexuality, we can see how in the context of teasing

and joking such words can carry multivalent meanings and do something different than just describe. Rex's joke buttressed already existing unequal power relations between boys and girls, between White and Black students, and between cisgender and trans people. This event also shaped a classroom context in which jokes may regulate gender or sexual identity, expression, and oppression. Rex's calling Anna "trans" legitimized Anna's choice to remain seated in her desk apart from either group for the duration of the class activity—a choice that the teacher earlier sanctioned. This example demonstrates the ways participants' claims of identity position others, in some cases as interpreted as belonging to a designated kind or group, while in other cases as the punch line for a joke. Anna's classmates' claims to her gender identity left little room for Anna to be a girl, trans, or gendered in any way she may wish. Ms. Green's inaction in interrupting the students' claims coconstructed a social context in this classroom in which declaring another person's gender identity and naming gender transgressions for the purpose of a joke was allowed. Rex's joke, the boys' uptake in the form of laughter, and the teacher's passing over of this name calling socialized classroom participants into relations in which teasing was a sanctioned way to regulate gender and sexuality. Ambiguity opened up spaces for humor to work on regulating gender and sexuality, reinforcing the structure and ideology of binary gender that is durable and difficult to step outside of.

Even in Ms. Green's classroom where the teacher was trying to interrogate and deconstruct binary notions of gender and sexuality, and in a classroom that was marked as a safe space to be LGBTQ, heteronormative binary gender was still being produced and reinforced through participants' joking and teasing the teacher could not control. Furthermore, by pushing students to identify as either masculine male or feminine female, classroom practices such as this run the risk of heightening and drawing awareness to the transgression of heteronormative binary gender norms and identifying as transgender. This pedagogical move worked to reproduce the gender binary and position some people as the site for examination and joking. Critical gender literacy, instead, could give students and teachers the tools to reflect and examine power relations that are reproduced in such interactions.

Conclusion

As illustrated in the data, the distinction between what Ms. Green says and what she does—or the content of her lesson and how she manages the class—maps onto the problem of policy versus practice. Policies are in place, and Ms. Green has the intention of drawing attention to the construction and constraints of binary gender, but everyday practices of categorizing students, joking and name calling, and moving through classroom and gendered spaces reproduce heteronormative

binary gender. Challenging such reproduction cannot be done without critical reflection and transformative action aimed at examining and changing dominant power structures. In the quest for a gender equality that includes transgender and gender-nonconforming students, steps are required to bridge policy and practice. Inclusive policies need to be translated into inclusive practices and the development of an inclusive ethos through critical literacy pedagogy. A critical literacy pedagogy that has at its heart an all-inclusive gender equality must call on students and teachers alike to reflect on their language, the ways in which they enact and enforce the gender binary, and their participation in exclusionary practices that reproduce unequal power relations. Such critical reflection is not easy or without discomfort, as it mandates deep engagement in open dialogue across and about difference. It is through such dialogue that students and teachers can reflect on and name the world around them and ultimately work to transform their present reality—one rooted in heteronormative binary gender.

A critical gender literacy that works to make transgender and gender-nonconforming people equal places at its center the deconstruction of binary gender as it is simultaneously tied to other axes of power such as Whiteness, ability, class, and heteronormativity. Critical gender literacy can be developed and put into practice through concrete changes in the curriculum and instructional practice. The curriculum needs to include the examination of binary gender and how it is constructed and reinforced beginning at a very young age and moving through the lifespan as well as how such meanings are situated contextually. Moreover, an open dialogue about gender variance and the ways people more often operate outside rigid gender expectations than within them helps students to see the diversity of gender expression and identity available. Similarly, the curriculum needs to include the contributions of transgender people to history and society as well as the respected and revered positions transgender people have occupied cross-culturally. Engaging what Freire ([1970] 2006) calls praxis—reflection and action in the transformation of the world around us—educators must implement in their pedagogy a critical reflection of practices of reading gender onto bodies and spaces. This involves a much more expansive scaffolding that requires teachers and students to think deeply about mundane daily practices and incorporate an awareness of those practices into curriculum, instruction, and reflective learning. Through such action and reflection, educators and students can shape social interaction and meaning making aimed at gender equity inclusive of transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors at *TSQ*, in particular Paisley Currah, for their helpful feedback throughout the process of getting this manuscript ready for publication. I also wish to extend my gratitude to colleagues who read earlier drafts of this article, including Patricia Baquedano-Lopez, Lawrence Cohen, Zeus Leonardo, Ingrid Seyer-Ochi, Emily Gleason, Erica Misako Boas, and Kathryn Zamora Moeller. Lastly, I need to thank the people who provided valuable insight in response to various talks I gave as iterations of what appears in print here: Chris Vargas, Greg Youmans, Danny Barreto, Sabina Vaught, Elinor Ochs, Mary Bucholtz, Genevieve Negron-Gonzales, Deborah Lustig, Christine Trost, and David Minkus. Carving out writing time was made possible by generous funding from the AAUW American Dissertation Fellowship, the National GLBTQ Youth Foundation Dissertation Grant, the Institute for the Study of Social Change Youth Violence Prevention Graduate Fellowship, the Dean's Normative Time Fellowship, and the Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Stipend at University of California, Berkeley. The views expressed in this article do not reflect those of the funding agencies, and any errors and shortcomings are my own.

Notes

1. The multiple sources of data I gathered enabled me to triangulate patterns and recurring themes in my data and research findings (Bogdan and Biklen 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2002). Ethnographic participant-observation gave me a view into participants' emic understandings, meanings, and relationships. Ethnography, through the recording and analysis of thick description, allowed me to look at the daily interactions and routines of students and teachers to examine patterns of behavior and events placed in meaningful context (Geertz 1973; Spindler and Spindler 1997; Tedlock 2000). Interviewing, as a qualitative mode of inquiry, calls on participants to answer and elaborate on their responses to open-ended questions, to narrate their stories and experiences, and to offer their interpretations of these experiences (Seidman 2006). Individual and focus-group interviews granted me insight into participants' processes of meaning making and explanations of phenomena in their social worlds as well as how they narrated and represented their understandings. I created and asked students to fill out questionnaires that solicited background and demographic information. Cultural artifacts I collected constituted a range of visual and written representations created by students and teachers. This collection included students' class work, notes, and essays; photographs and videos of students' posters and artwork; photographs of classroom visibility materials posted to the walls; reading materials, handouts, and assignments created by the teachers; gay-straight alliance club visibility materials and fliers; and t-shirts and sweatshirts designed and printed by students in the GSA. As cultural and material records of information produced in these classes and this club (Denzin and Lincoln 2000), these artifacts helped to round out a picture of how knowledge was generated, contested, and

negotiated across these sites. Lastly, audio and video recordings of students' and teachers' conversations during class offer a close view of the ways meaning is negotiated linguistically and socially during class discussions.

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Pedagogies of Becoming

Trans Inclusivity and the Crafting of Being

HILARY MALATINO

Abstract Conventional approaches to trans inclusion in the women's, gender, and sexuality studies classroom often involve what Diana Courvant has called the "special guest" approach of bringing in trans, intersex, and gender-nonconforming folk to represent and authenticate trans experiences, perspectives, and political engagements. This essay argues for the inadequacy of this pedagogical strategy, focusing on its complicity with a neoliberal politics of inclusion that fails to move students to deal with their own deep complicities in upholding understandings of sex and gender that are fundamentally transphobic, as well as its failure prompt pragmatic understanding and address of the maldistribution of life chances for trans, intersex, and gender-nonconforming subjects. I offer several alternative strategies aimed at producing more deeply transformative types of trans inclusion in WGSS classrooms. These strategies focus on mapping connections between cis and trans experiences of gendered transformation in order to produce an alternative understanding of gender as process, craft, and becoming.

Keywords pedagogy, trans inclusion, trans pedagogy, intersex studies, transfeminism

We must create a specific trans pedagogy.

—Diana Courvant, "Strip!"

Over a decade ago, I received a phone call from my best friend, asking me to speak on intersex issues at his college. The college was Smith; it was the historical moment when trans and gender-nonconforming students were beginning to push the women's college to revise the gender-specific language in its charter. This rhetorical shift was envisioned as a potential symbolic victory, as the revised language would more closely approximate the gender diversity of the student body and serve as an institutional declaration of trans inclusivity. My best friend was at the embattled vanguard of this struggle, a well-known trans man on campus and president of one of Smith's queer and trans student organizations. The agitated-for change has still not happened—to date, Smith has not changed

its charter, staunchly articulating itself as a *women's* college and recently drawing scores of negative press on account of a refusal to admit trans women if their application materials identify them, wrongly, as male. The recent publicity began in 2013 when Calliope Wong, a trans woman, was denied admittance because of gender discontinuity in her application materials (her letters of recommendation and transcripts identified her as female, but her FAFSA did not). Smith eventually shifted its policy, detailing that federal forms would “no longer be included on the list of documents needed to consistently reflect the candidate’s status as woman” (Waldman 2014). What Smith didn’t do, and what student activists, trans folk, and trans allies across the country are still calling for, is an end to the demand for gender continuity across identity documents. The demand for consistency ignores the difficult terrain trans folk—especially younger trans folk—must navigate in order to have their gender identities dignified by teachers, administrators, employers, and state institutions. While other women’s colleges—Mills and Mount Holyoke among them—have ruled in favor of admission policies inclusive of trans women that do not rely on continuity of identification, Smith has yet to follow suit.

My visit to Smith in 2003 thus coincided with the flourishing of a student-led movement for trans inclusivity at women’s colleges, one that is ongoing, increasingly visible, and widespread. It feels, in retrospect, like a tipping point of sorts in the struggle for institutional recognition of gender diversity, a moment when the binary, dimorphic logic of institutional sex determination began to come under severe criticism by groups of trans and gender-nonconforming students. Many of these students were encountering women’s and gender studies classrooms deeply informed by accounts of gendered embodiment that supported the proliferation of gendered identities. One of the intended purposes of my talk was to destabilize the fiction of binary sex through an autobiographical account of coming to terms with being intersex. This mission of producing conversation focused on denaturalizing the determination of biological sex dovetailed well with the aims of the student movement for trans inclusion, as well as the general ascendancy of social constructivism within women’s and gender studies. We were united in a critical stance against the dimorphic logic of gender regulation and engaged in a struggle for institutional recognition of forms of being in excess of the gender binary.

I lack a copy of the talk, but here’s what I remember: I told a crowd of roughly fifty people about my childhood and adolescence insofar as it had been shaped by the condition of androgen insensitivity. I discussed the impact of being told I had XY chromosomes at the age of fifteen, after having been reared female. I told them about not menstruating, about lying to peers about this phenomenon in order to mask my corporeal atypicality. I told them about the feeling of being a lab

rat as I circulated between multiple medical specialists, having blood drawn, submitting to genital examinations, having ultrasounds performed to see what—if any—kinds of internal sex organs I had. I remember the audience being strikingly empathetic, sensitive, and politicized listeners generally in support of the claims I made regarding both the problematic ethics of medical intervention in intersex conditions as well as the importance of gender self-determination and not being constrained by gender assignment at birth, particularly given the biological diversity possible in processes of sex differentiation.

There's another story to be told here, however, and that's the story of how I felt: exposed, vulnerable, raw, like a case study whose experience could be ushered in as proof of the necessity to re-vision commonsense understandings of sex, gender, and the messy relations between those terms. I felt the anxiety and responsibility that comes with being spotlighted as a representative of a relatively uncommon minority. I felt my story becoming exemplary and paradigmatic as I told it. I felt a bit like a genderqueer Tiny Tim, the story of my trauma an admonition and warning of the dire consequences of acquiescence to dominant logics of sex and gender. I also felt compelled to construct a triumphalist narrative, one that traced my movement through and healing from this trauma to proudly embrace both my status as intersex as well as my queer sexuality and gender.

The lure of the pride narrative is strong, appealing, and coercive. The publicity of the guest lecture operates as a sign of willingness, openness, and lack of shame in one's identity. Those who find themselves in a position of guest lecturer are often compelled to embrace this type of narrative, out of a felt need to be positive community representatives, but also as a kind of psychic defense against the vulnerability and invasiveness of the line of questioning that often follows the guest lecture. A troubling contradiction shapes this practice: it centers attention on trans and gender-nonconforming individuals in an effort to highlight the discrimination we encounter, while simultaneously being shaped by a dynamic that risks further harming us. There is an enormous psychic cost to answering the sometimes well-intentioned but often misinformed and deeply intimate questions that crop up. These run the gamut, but often involve interrogations regarding the configuration of one's genitals, what other bodily modifications one has undergone or intends to undergo, whether one's intimates are accepting or phobic, what one's sexual experiences and desires are and/or how they have changed in the process of transition. Claiming pride is one way of shoring oneself up in order to face questioning around these very personal, often traumatic issues, but it's also, often, a not-quite-genuine assertion. The guest lecture, however, is not a place to tarry with trauma.

I now teach full time in women's, gender, and sexuality studies, and I have staunchly refused to offer an autobiographical narrative of intersexuality

and gender nonconformance in the classroom or as a guest speaker since, as I have become convinced that this approach is pedagogically problematic. I also strategically refuse the piecemeal incorporation of autobiographical narratives from others, and I deliberately choose materials that, while sometimes autobiographical, are much more epistemically challenging, riskier, and more confrontational than the type of narrative I offered in that Smith talk years ago. I stay away from conventional (that is, triumphal) coming-out narratives that conclude with individualized banalities about the importance of being true to one's self and finding self-fulfillment, happiness, or some other dangling existential carrot. Instead, I utilize texts in which the autobiographical elements are interwoven with meditations on phenomena like institutional exclusion, the trouble with the medicalization of gender, the experience of being marked for social death, or the technoscientific developments that have shaped the contemporary terrain of gender transition. One of my favorites is Eli Clare's *Exile and Pride*, a deeply intersectional text that links gender nonconformance with disability rights, poverty, and the violence of corporeal normativity. Another is *Testo-Junkie*, Beatriz Preciado's meditation on h/er experience of taking testosterone that doubles as an analysis of how h/er particular transmasculine transformation is a phenomenon that assumes meaning through a complex cocktail of biomolecular transformation, dimorphic fictions of gender, and the circuits of hormone extraction and production. S/he explores the embeddedness of each of those aspects within the neoliberal and neocolonial processes at work in pharmaceutical production, trials, distribution, and access. These are not paradigmatic, representative stories. They are autobiographies recounted as part of a more expansive tableau of the terrain of gender transformation, especially as it is inextricably bound to the diverse racial, ethnic, sexualized, classed, and bionormed inequities that characterize what Elizabeth Povinelli has referred to as "late liberalism."

Povinelli uses this term to indicate "the twined formations of neoliberalism and liberal cultural recognition that emerged in the late 1960s as a method of solving the crisis of liberal economic and social legitimacy in the wake of economic stagflation and colonial and social revolutions" (2013: 31). It indexes a set of institutional responses to mid-twentieth-century emancipatory movements that sought, simultaneously, to promote inclusivity in the name of bolstering the economy. Within late liberalism, cultural and social difference is recognized, but only in order to tame and manage these differences. Communities of resistance become niche markets and target demographics. The recognition of diversity, in late liberalism, is utilized as a method of governance, population management, and social control.

I understand the "special guest" approach to addressing trans, intersex, and gender-nonconforming issues as part and parcel of this neoliberal management

of difference, and I find it inadequate for increasing awareness and action regarding the intense institutional and systemic discrimination trans and gender-nonconforming folk regularly encounter. I provide some recommendations that support a more deeply trans-inclusive curriculum, while remaining conscious of the fact that advocating for more substantive trans inclusion in the academy carries with it the risk that trans studies may become another site of merely symbolic inclusion, another manifestation of the kind of empty commitment to diversity championed by university administrators as a kind of progressive window dressing. This type of symbolic inclusion serves to paper over the realities of underfunding, understaffing, and the consistent threat of closure that departments and programs motivated by commitments to social justice and counterhegemonic knowledge production face in the current academic conjuncture, shaped as it is by “adjunctification,” emphasis on professionalization, the prioritization of profit, and the generalization of debt.

The Trouble with Guests

I’m not the only one to identify problems with the special guest model. Over the past few years, this approach to teaching on trans, intersex, and gender-nonconforming lives has come under intense criticism by scholars of trans pedagogy. Kate Drabinski, in an essay detailing the particular difficulties of incorporating trans issues within the women’s studies classroom, writes that trans issues “tend to be taught in the ‘special guest’ model, never central in their own right and always interesting insofar as they illuminate more clearly ‘women’s’ issues,” issues that are conceptualized as somehow distinct from trans issues (2011: 10). From the start, there is an epistemological roadblock produced, wherein students are encouraged to conceptualize “woman” and “trans” as discrete categories, and the narratives of trans folk are valuable only insofar as they prove the cultural contingency and constructedness of hegemonic gendering processes. Moreover, this approach risks calcifying the alterity of trans folk in the imaginations of the predominately cis-gendered student body. Drabinski smartly summarizes this phenomenon, writing that “the great potential of teaching and learning from transgender experience is reduced to a freakish footnote in our students’ notebooks to be trotted out at the next party as a crazy example of what they are teaching over in gender studies” (2011: 10). Trans folk—not just special guests in the classroom, but also the weird kids you gossip about at the party!

Diana Courvant has written eloquently on her extensive experience as a guest lecturer on trans issues, in the form of classroom visitor as well as the author of an anthologized and widely taught autobiographical essay documenting her experience at a 1997 Riot Grrrl gathering in Olympia, Washington, where she asked her friends to support her “in adding a last-minute lunch workshop” where

she would “strip and hold a dialogue about trans bodies, dis/ability, and the bathroom conundrum” (2011: 29). The essay was included in Ophira Edut’s 1998 anthology *Adios, Barbie! Young Women Write about Body Image and Identity*. During the extensive revision process, Courvant was asked three times to expand her initial blurb about coming out as trans; by the time the piece received publication, the coming-out tale took up a large chunk of the essay. The logic behind this expansion was that, according to the editor (and recounted by Courvant), the “book’s audience would not know how to react to a transsexual protagonist without a narrative explaining how [they] arrived at adulthood . . . so different from the other women attending” (2011: 29). Another pronounced change had to do with the ending; rather than the initial conclusion, which discussed the impact of stripping as a means of transforming “intolerable terror” at lack of inclusion and misrecognition to a “manageable insecurity,” Courvant was asked to simplify the ending, “focusing it more on the positive to better fit the anthology’s flavor.” In the end, then, an essay about coping with transphobia, the difficult and ongoing struggle to accept and embrace bodies that aren’t cis-normative, and the affective ambivalence of navigating everyday life as an out trans woman became reduced to a coming-out story documenting movement through insecurity toward a public declaration of pride and self-love—a narrative, much like the one I had offered at Smith, that “is commonly read as triumphant” (2011: 29).

Within many women’s and gender studies classrooms, the assignment of this type of story—whether in written form or in the form of a visitor—is taken as evidence of inclusivity. It is often considered pedagogically effective to have discussed one, ostensibly paradigmatic trans life narrative and then move on with the curriculum. This is sometimes coupled with a tendency to ignore key epistemological issues raised by grappling with these narratives as the students move through the rest of the course—for instance, the tendency to utilize cis-bodies as the unmarked referent when discussing sexual health and reproduction; the necessity of distinguishing gender orientation from sexual orientation in order to resist the conflation of queer sexuality with gender nonconformance; or the importance of introducing diversity within student’s understandings of trans narratives of embodiment, rather than recursively referencing one particular narrative as the “trans take” on certain ideas.

What makes this approach to trans inclusivity so popular? One reason is the ease with which students are able to digest this narrative. If the stress falls on coming out as a movement toward self-acceptance and self-love, it is possible to encounter the text as profoundly unthreatening. There is nothing in that narrative that necessarily unsettles the self-perception of the reader; it is, rather, a pleasing, perhaps even heartwarming, affirmation of the importance of “being true to yourself.” The reader (or listener) is encouraged to take on an attitude of

benevolent empathy and can emerge from the encounter feeling more accepting without having to engage in any kind of critical self-reflexive process.

Another reason this type of narrative is endemic is because it dovetails with the pedagogy of liberal, multicultural pluralism. Nancy Fraser (2000) has written convincingly on the transformation of an emancipatory, radical politics of identity into the politics of liberal, multicultural pluralism. This latter iteration of identity politics is fully compatible with the economic imperatives of neoliberal globalization, as it advocates symbolic inclusion and cultural sensitivity but not real, material redistribution of resources that would make the lives of marginalized folk more livable. This method of cognizing difference mainly at the level of the cultural isn't adequately attentive to structural and institutional stratifications that, as Dean Spade explicates, maldistribute life chances for trans, intersex, and gender-nonconforming folk (particularly T/I/GNC folks of color) (2011: 12).

We can see the form of identity politics problematized by Fraser at work in pedagogies that encourage us to take a tour of multiple gendered, racialized, classed, and sexualized cultural and political identities, exploring intersubjective difference through a series of staged encounters with alterity. In this model, the classroom becomes a sort of phantasm of a liberal democracy where identitarian difference is ultimately benign, where the struggle for "acceptance" and "equality" is fundamentally about an education in diversity that results in "tolerance" and "respect" for minoritized others. Instructors may attempt to actively guard against this buffet-style approach to encountering difference. However, we often have a hard time shifting this style of perception because it has become the hegemonic model for the pedagogy of difference at the elementary and secondary levels. What this means is that, even as we try to push through mythologies of achieved social equity for women, queers, and folks of color, difference is perceived most often through the lens of benign diversity: difference that doesn't, ultimately, make much of a difference.

Against Addition: Trans-Inclusive Innovations at the Introductory Level

This perceptual habit is often reified by the logic of course planning, especially at the introductory level, particularly if the course is organized according to the additive logic of identitarian difference (a week on African-American feminisms, a week on Latina feminisms, a week on trans/intersex issues, etc.). Toby Beauchamp and Benjamin D'Harlingue, in an article that critiques the organizational logic of several oft-utilized women's and gender studies textbooks, argue that "introductory texts that are less organized around identities or issues might be more conducive to centralizing transgender subjects" (2012: 32). This is because of the way in which course organization around identity discourages students from thinking about subjectivity in terms of intersectionality, mutability, mutual

constitution, and imbrication with shifting flows of institutional and geopolitical power. Students are taught to expect to engage trans issues only in a unit specifically on trans and gender-nonconforming folk, but not in class discussions of reproductive justice, decolonial feminisms, or gendered economic inequities. In light of the insufficiencies of identitarian course organization, I propose two alternative approaches for creating trans- and gender-nonconforming-inclusive classrooms—what I have termed, following Eve Sedgwick and Michel Foucault, *universalizing* and *genealogical* approaches and will discuss shortly. These approaches resonate with the long history of struggles for inclusion under the sign of “women” enacted by women of color, who have consistently pointed out the exclusions operative within women’s studies and assimilationist, white-dominant forms of feminist practice. They have done so while simultaneously developing accounts of identity that are mutable, contingent, and flexible in a way that lends itself to coalitional intellectual labor and activist praxis. Of note, here, are Kimberle Crenshaw’s coining of *intersectionality* (1989), Chela Sandoval’s notion of differential consciousness (2000: 15), and Jasbir Puar’s redeployment of the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of assemblage (2007).

When identities are posited as discrete entities prior to the beginning of a course, it is quite difficult to encourage the important epistemic habit of assuming that “the ontological integrity of identities prior to the social cannot be taken for granted” (Beauchamp and D’Harlingue 2012: 32). When identities are thought of as stable, discrete, preexisting entities, it is impossible to effectively focus course material on the construction, emergence, and mutations of differing forms of identity. In the absence of an ontologically tenuous approach, a fractionalized account of feminist theory and movement is offered: second wavers versus third wavers, sex positivity versus antipornography, women of color feminists versus white liberal feminists, essentialists versus constructivists, and so on. This renders the feminist movement a matter of warring camps and internecine battles, in which each group is locking horns with the others, informed by deep resentment and bad faith, with dialogic connection and coalitional possibilities downplayed.

Within this type of course organization, trans and intersex bodies are typically trotted out, on their particular assigned day or week, in order to demonstrate the fallacious logic of biological essentialism. We are posited as exemplarily disruptive bodies, the exceptional beings that expose the rigidity and coercion implicit in gendering processes. But, as Beauchamp and D’Harlingue argue, “this approach can easily displace gendering processes onto only transgender bodies, effacing the ways that all bodies are continually gendered” (2012: 38). Moreover, this approach can “foreclose further complexities by implying that the burden of gendering processes rests only on transgender people, and that transgender and nontransgender populations understand their gendered bodies

in fundamentally different ways” (2012: 38). We are made to bear the burden of demonstrating the contingency and constructedness of gender through being positioned as privileged objects of inquiry, rarefied beings with a unique perspective on the gendering process; cis-gendered folk are let off the hook.

This practice is extraordinarily common within programs and departments that are transitioning, or have transitioned, from “women’s studies” to some version of what I’ll call “women-plus”—that is, “women’s and gender studies,” “women’s, gender, and sexuality studies,” and so on. These nominal transformations, at least on the face of it, seem to be a progressive response to the insistence of critical race, ethnic, queer, and trans studies scholars that the nominal declaration of “women” as the object of study immediately forecloses intersectional approaches to gender and sexuality. Those of us at work on the ground know that there is a history of intense disagreement that is covered over by these nominal transformations. As Clark Pomerlou attests, in a roundtable on trans pedagogies that appeared in *WSQ* in 2008, “women’s studies is still a contested space” (see Muñoz and Garrison 2008: 290). So are many of the “women-plus” programs and departments, despite their movement toward epistemic expansion and inclusivity. When a classroom is structured by a cis-normative understanding of what gives form and content to maleness and femaleness, “the very condition of the women’s studies classroom’s possibility enacts a violence of nomination—a coercive gendering or sexing through naming that can be tangibly felt by classroom participants interpellated through such equations” (2008: 29). In my current academic post, I teach several sections of Introduction to Women’s Studies each year. Without fail, each term, several of my evaluations from these courses demonstrate surprise that we discussed gender and sexual diversity so much, given that it was a “women’s studies” course. In particular, students are surprised to have spent such a large chunk of time reading and discussing trans issues. For many of them, “women” and “trans” are incommensurate categories; trans issues have no place in a women’s studies course. This phenomenon is similar to student responses to thinking critically about racialization in the women’s studies classroom. In white-majority classrooms, there is the habitual surprise at discussing race and ethnicity in depth (“I thought this was a class on women, not race!”).

I try to teach past this presumed conflict through the use of two methodological approaches. The first is, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a universalizing approach to teaching gender construction; the second, following Foucault, is a genealogical method of framing the historical emergence of identity categories. These approaches can be combined in innovative ways in order to create more trans-inclusive women’s and gender studies classrooms, particularly at the introductory level.

I'd like to briefly recap Sedgwick's distinction between universalizing and minoritizing perspectives. This distinction leads the now-canonical *Epistemology of the Closet*, and it has become enormously influential as a method of framing the projects of critical sexuality studies; I think an analogous development has occurred over the past decade or so in trans studies. Sedgwick argues that there are two ways of considering the importance of the modern, Western hetero-homo binary: "The first is the contradiction between seeing homo/heterosexual definition on the one hand as an issue of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority (what I refer to as a minoritizing view), and seeing it on the other hand as an issue of continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities (what I refer to as a universalizing view)" (1990: 1). There has been a consistent tendency, at least since the mid-1990s, to denaturalize cis identities through emphasizing styles of being, performances, and behaviors that overlap and sometimes blur the boundaries of the cis/trans distinction. The invention of the transgender umbrella, well-documented in David Valentine's ethnographic volume *Imagining Transgender* (2007), is an important historical move toward identifying a range of gender expressions that stray beyond medicalized conceptions of transsexual realness. This expansive move produced a spectrum-based understanding of gender expression that framed transgender practices as part of many disparate methods of assuming and performing gender(s). We can also look at Kate Bornstein's *My Gender Workbook* (1997), another queer/trans classic that aimed to denaturalize all assumptions of gender while highlighting the agency involved in gendered de- and reconstruction. This is the same historical moment that witnessed the publication of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (2006), which framed all gender as performative and posited gendered naturalness as a phantasmatic construction. It was also the moment when we first encountered Susan Stryker's call, in one of the first issues of *GLQ*, for cis folk "to investigate your nature as I have been compelled to confront mine" (1994: 242).

Recognizing this genealogy, it's important to consider how trans issues are being taught in ways that destabilize the cis/trans binary, through a universalizing perspective that emphasizes, to rephrase Sedgwick, how this binary has continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the gender spectrum. One tactic is to emphasize the shared and resonant nature of what Courvant calls "gendered grief" (2011: 31). I understand this phrase, which Courvant mentions in relationship to nontrans experiences of grappling with testicular or breast cancer, to index the anxiety, pain, and tribulation we all experience in relation to gendered corporeal norms. Through emphasizing the commonality of gendered grief, we can link seemingly disparate experiential phenomena in ways that are not dictated by a focus on the supposed alterity of

trans experience. We can discuss, in intro courses, the ways in which beauty ideals work as disciplinary mechanisms and motivate conspicuous consumption and how this plays out across various intersectional iterations of gender; we could map this phenomenon across a cross-section that could include queer black masculinities, cis high-femme folk, and gender-nonconforming trans women, utilizing video, memoir, and theory in conjunction to discuss the effects produced by this highly gendered mode of disciplinary power. With a universalizing focus, we can render strange the experience of feeling a lifelong consonance with one's assigned gender at birth; we can relativize cis experience and think about all the corporeal modifications that occur while staying safely within the parameters of cis identification. We can move away from the special guest model and instead focus on our shared performativity. What is desirable, ultimately, is that students begin to see that "for all of us, there is a gap between gender ideals and the realities of our lived experiences" (Drabinski 2011: 16).

It is not enough to simply get students to realize this basic insight about gender performativity; it is also imperative that there is some education on the interacting social and institutional forces that constrain gender autonomy, in order to prompt a collective realization that, while we all may be doing gender, we can't just suddenly decide to start doing it in a radically different way without facing severe harassment, censure, and punishment. In order to bear out the implications of the disciplining of gender, a genealogical focus on the constraining and enabling conditions of emergence of contemporary gendering practices is essential. Genealogy—what Foucault describes as a focus on "systems of subjection" and the "hazardous play of dominations" (1984: 83)—is an examination of historicized relationships of forces at work in the emergence of "morals, ideals, and metaphysical concepts" (1984: 86). An examination of the construction of gender norms and ideals that regulate the enactment of legible and livable types of subjectivity is necessarily genealogical because to study the construction of gender is to study the historical emergence of dominant concepts of gendered realness, and the ways in which these concepts produce systems of subjection and domination that are experienced unevenly, more intensely for some than others.

There are a series of important developments that are worth addressing as part of a genealogy of gendered realness. A class collaborative could examine the development of modern concepts of sexual deviance and normativity (often complexly yoked to gender deviance) or look at readings in twentieth-century Western sexology concerned with developing taxonomies of deviance. They could explore the historical redefinition of "woman" as a category divorced from reproductive capacity and familial obligation, especially in relation to the emergence of twentieth-century feminist, queer, and trans movements. They could perform historical research on the series of contestations levied against feminist

universalisms, particularly those issued by women and queers of color, or read about the emergence of hormonal and surgical tactics that have enabled corporeal reconstruction of highly gendered morphological aspects. They could investigate the assimilatory trajectory of the Western LGBTQ movement and the concomitant sidelining of trans issues, or examine the nineteenth-century reconstruction of sex on a model of incommensurable biological difference and consider how that has played out in the search for dimorphic criteria for the determination of biological sex. There's a lot to cover that's of interest when considering the emergence of contemporary trans subjectivities.

So how can we parse it, particularly in the context of an introductory course? One way I've done it is through highlighting moments of rupture and transformation in the genealogy of gendered subjectivity, and by "tracing connectivities between varied social phenomena" in order to "make clear that identity is neither given nor hermetically sealed, but changing and contingent, part of social and cultural trends both sweeping and minute" (Benjamin and D'Harlingue 2012: 32). To study genealogical emergence is to study moments of contestation and reappraisal, moments of transformation, in their complex contingency. To teach a truly trans-inclusive introductory course, we must organize the course around gender-as-practice (the universalizing component), as well as ruptures in the "common sense" made of those practices (the genealogical component).

This strategy has the cumulative effect of making trans experiences resonate with other types of struggles and complicities with gender normativity. By centering gendering practices, rather than charting a tour of disparate identities, we can encourage students in introductory-level courses to approach all iterations of gender as a complex mix of regulation, discipline, determination, desire, and pleasure, as well as a concatenation of subconscious impulse and autonomous decision making. Considering how to reframe the introductory course with these two coimbricated approaches in mind is essential if we are interested in preparing students to encounter material in an upper-division course specifically in trans studies.

A Pedagogy of Our Own? The Case for Trans Studies Courses

An upper-division course specifically in trans studies? They're not too common, at least not yet, and certainly not as core curricula in major and minor degree-granting WGSS programs. A handful of universities are slowly integrating them; during my postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Gender Studies at Indiana University, I was able to teach one, entitled "Gender in Transition." Many of my concerns and strategies stem from this experience, one that was both challenging and gratifying in hard-to-predict ways. The class enrolled quickly; capped at twenty-five students, it was wait-listed only a few days into enrollment. I

attribute this partially to the recent pop cultural interest in trans issues, as well as the political groundswell of trans activism that has motivated an increased attentiveness to manifestations of trans and gender-nonconforming discrimination, harassment, and violence. It also has to do with the fact that the course was the only one of its kind available. Trans issues were discussed in other courses, but often only in the “special guest” style criticized earlier. Students would regularly discuss their frustrations with the treatment trans issues received in other courses, particularly those outside the department; they reported that these course sections were often perfunctory and rife with inaccurate information. The discussions were laced with phobic responses that the instructors failed to manage well. These issues have to do with the way in which the imperative to be pedagogically attentive to gender diversity is filtered through a liberal pluralist sensibility by folks with no training or intense interest in trans-specific theory, politics, or pedagogy. This creates a situation in which it seems to not matter how you talk about trans, intersex, and gender-nonconforming folk, nor why—it’s merely important to acknowledge our existence, often as a caveat to otherwise highly biologically dimorphic and binary understandings that operate a priori in course material and discussion.

That’s one set of reasons why a trans studies course, preferably housed within an academic program or department centrally concerned with gendered complexity, is valuable—as an ameliorative in relation to the piecemeal, inadequate flirtations with trans pedagogy happening in other institutional quarters. Another strong argument has to do with moving beyond the supposed impasse between trans studies, feminism, and sexuality studies; often, when trans issues appear within WGSS curricula, they manifest in a mode in which they are pitted against other areas of political and scholarly inquiry, presented through the question of compatibility. While these debates are certainly important, as clarifying historical footnotes or articulations of intellectual field formation and political vision, they also reify the epistemic and political divisiveness that shunts the development of coalitional endeavors, and they do not adequately engage the rich and extensive corpus of work that forms what we can perhaps refer to as the trans studies archive. It is more imperative, I think, to collaborate with students in ways that encourage them to think about the compatibilities of trans studies and feminism than it is to consistently worry the question of whether trans issues are relevant to feminist pedagogy and activism. Placing pedagogical emphasis on the emergence of intersectional transfeminisms, for instance, rather than emphasizing battles between trans exclusionary radical feminists and trans activists, is one way to steer coursework toward the coalitional.

There is a vast interdisciplinary backlog of historical artifacts, theoretical articulations, and political engagements to think with, and intellectual space to

encounter this archive is imperative, particularly for those students seeking a comprehensive WGSS education to aid them in activist, nonprofit, academic, and other endeavors. If we don't offer trans studies courses at the undergraduate level, taught by scholars with firm specializations in this area of research, we can expect to see trans issues given short shrift in the coming years because we'll have not adequately prepared this generation of students to advocate and educate on behalf of trans and gender-nonconforming folk—particularly those that lack the kind of cultural capital to effect institutional transformations or are systematically denied those proverbial seats at the tables of power. There is an important caveat that comes along with this argument for an upper-level trans studies course, however: we can't stop there. If we do, we risk the course becoming a site of containment for trans studies, for the epistemological and ontological trouble trans studies has and will continue to produce across a range of intellectual and activist domains. It can't become just another check in the administrative accounting of diversity, another manifestation of symbolic inclusion, another instance of the pedagogy of liberal pluralism. An upper-level trans studies course is a space to work out trans pedagogy and engage trans archives; but the work of trans pedagogy must always exceed this (and any) classroom.

Through grappling with trans and gender-nonconforming experiences, knowledges, and political movements, students are encountering a radically new way of thinking about gendered subjectivity, a different way of thinking about what it is to have a body, what it is to be in the world. Trans pedagogy, in its disruption of hegemonic certitudes about corporeal stability, sex determination, gender dimorphism, and naturalized linkages between gender enactment and sexuality, is infused by a concern with the mediation between disciplinary and biopolitical power, on the one hand, and, on the other, enactments of self-determination and autonomy. It teaches us about the commonality of gendered grief, the way in which all beings are constrained and determined by hegemonic conceptions of gendered realness; yet it also familiarizes students with disparate and overlapping struggles to reconfigure that terrain of determination, with embattled legacies to self-identify beyond the staid boundaries of naturalized dimorphic gender. In its best deployments, it effectively provincializes those conceptions of gender identity with genealogies grounded in the modern West, opening conceptual space for iterations of being and embodiment not solely orchestrated by Euro-/West-centric articulations of gender identity, transition, and mutability. In developing a critical take on histories of medical pathologization of gender deviance, it breeds a healthy skepticism of medico-scientific conceptions of normality and irregularity, ability and debility, as well as the fundamentally heterosexist institutional logic that has historically undergirded transsexual authenticity. It teaches gender according to a logic of composition or

craft, rather than one of naturalized determination, wherein gendered being is not about what one is but about what one does in the milieu(x) they inhabit. It teaches that gender identity, for each of us, is about negotiating forces, orchestrating elements, rearranging corporealities; it is an always simultaneously constrained and enabling performance. It shifts the register from a stable ontology of gendered being to an active, collaborative, and ever-shifting ontology of becoming, placing questions of genealogy on the table to inquire after what styles of gender liberation we can invent next. It is committed to thinking a profound transformation in the logic of gendered being. Trans studies is, for all these reasons, integral to the curriculum.

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“Trans Enough?”

The Pressures Trans Men Negotiate in Higher Education

D. CHASE J. CATALANO

Abstract Despite increasing attention on issues raised by trans students in higher education, almost no empirical research has examined the identities and experiences of trans students as a group, or of specific subsets of trans students. In this article, I draw on interviews with twenty-five trans-male undergraduate students to explore how their experiences of coming to understand their gender identities are shaped by their experiences in higher education. I show how participants’ concerns about being “trans enough” highlight contradictions within identity discourses of and about trans men, and how their narratives often rely on a medical model or “wrong body” discourse, even while students critique that model. Participants described expending significant energy navigating conflicting demands from other trans men, from other peers, and from their undergraduate institutions, in ways that often overshadowed their own desires and internal senses of identity. Institutions should support further research to explore the experiences and needs of trans men and other trans students, while implementing known best practices to become more trans-inclusive campuses.

Keywords transgender students, colleges, universities, trans men, transgender identity development

Higher education is in the process of being transformed by the presence of trans students (Beemyn 2003; McKinney 2005; Negrete and Purcell 2011). These students are challenging admissions policies at women’s colleges (Marine 2011a; Troop 2011), are hastening the push for gender-inclusive housing (Tilsley 2010), and are raising new questions about how gender functions on college campuses in the United States (Padawer 2014; Schulman 2013). Higher education has been characterized by genderism (Hill 2003; Marine and Nicolazzo 2014), the practice of strict adherence to the gender binary in college procedures and norms. Through their visibility and voices, trans students on campus are insisting on intentional attention by faculty and administration to provide an environment in which these trans students can thrive. Hostile campus climates (Rankin and Beemyn 2011) and experiences of institutional discrimination against trans students persist (McKinney 2005).

As Rob Pusch (2005) notes in his research on transgender college students, issues of misrecognition and invisibility of transgender identities “serve to reinforce a bi-gendered cultural system where one must look convincingly like their self-identified gender through hormones and surgery” (53). The search for recognition pushes trans students toward a hormonal and surgical imperative, which reinforces pathologizing of trans identities (Marine 2011b). In this article, I show how the persistence of biomedical transition narratives affects the experiences of trans men in college. I argue that the expressed desire of some of my study participants to begin biomedical transition options reflects the sometimes contradictory messages about what it means to be “trans enough.”

Research and policy initiatives that focus on improving trans students’ inclusion in higher education emerged relatively recently, with the first publications appearing in the early 2000s (Beemyn 2005; Beemyn, Curtis, et al. 2005; Beemyn, Domingue, et al. 2005; Beemyn and Pettit 2006). Absent from the few publications enumerating best practices of trans inclusion in higher education is empirical research supporting the efficacy of such practices, specifically, research exploring the complexities of trans students’ collegiate experiences (Dugan et al. 2012). The few published empirical studies that focus on the experiences of trans students include Bilodeau 2005; Dugan et al. 2012; McKinney 2005; and Pusch 2005. This study (derived from a larger one, Catalano 2014) and others related to it are attempts to give voice to a specific trans student population—trans men—based on empirical evidence.

In this article, I first review key texts on trans men and then situate my research in relation to the literatures on trans men in higher education. I provide an overview of my methodology and outline the demographics of my participants, and then I discuss key findings about participants’ insecurities about being “trans enough” and the dynamics of passing. I conclude by examining the potential influence of biomedical transition imperatives by institutions of higher education and providing suggestions for improving trans men’s inclusion in higher education. I use *trans* or *transgender* to refer to participants in my research, according to each participant’s self-description, and other permutations of *trans man* to reflect language used in a specific text.

The Literature

Since the mid-1990s, books that address female-to-male (FtM) transgender/transsexual identity have been published in a variety of genres, including memoirs (e.g., Green 2004; Valerio 2006) and essay anthologies (e.g., Diamond 2004), and in a variety of academic disciplines such as sociology (Rubin 2003; Schilt 2010) and anthropology (Cromwell 1999). Books about biomedical and social transitions have also been written by mental health practitioners seeking to aid

transsexual people or their families (e.g., Lev 2004). These writings have helped to resist the marginalization and silencing of trans men's existence; yet prior to the late 1990s, the dearth of empirical research specifically attending to the experiences and identities of trans men left a pronounced gap in understanding (Califa 2003; Cromwell 1999).

This literature has opened a much-needed window into the lives and experiences of trans men. Jamison Green (2004) discusses his personal transition into manhood and the legal, medical, and policy requirements of his biomedical transition process. Morty Diamond's 2004 anthology collects narratives that express nuanced perspectives of gender and juxtapose FtM narratives "alongside the stories of those who also started their life as female, but identify as something else entirely" (8). Sociologist Henry Rubin's (2003) qualitative research develops theoretical perspectives on FtM identity, embodiment, bodies, masculinities, and histories from twenty-two participants who were not undergraduate students. Kristen Schilt (2010) takes up employment as a site to examine the experiences of transgender men in the workplace, and how their experiences can illuminate complex structural inequalities based on race, gender, and sexuality. The robust research on trans men fills some of the gaps that prior research neglected (Devor 1997; Lothstein 1983; Rubin 2003; Schilt 2010), though none of this rich qualitative research focused on college students.

Jason Cromwell's work on FtMs and his critique of the "wrong body" narrative is especially apt for my research. He points out, "For many transsexuals . . . their wrong body (a biophysical entity of sex), now 'corrected [by surgery],' becomes a gendered body of a woman or a man" (104). In this account, "the wrong body" is a superficial description for the misalignment between body and cultural meanings of gender ascribed to specific parts of the body. "If breasts were defined as male, transmen and FTMs would not be dysphoric about them or have them removed. Because breasts are a sign of femininity, however, chest reconstructions are requested" (Cromwell 1999: 106). He questions for whom the body is wrong and suggests that the "wrong body" language is rooted in our sex/gender binary system; it is the limitation in language "that cannot accurately hear or adequately interpret the individual experience of transness" (105). Cromwell's analysis of the failure of language to describe experiences of and needs around physical embodiment provides an entry point to consider the pressures on trans men to access biomedical transition options.

Cromwell reproduces an essential part of the medicalized narrative, however, when he asserts that most trans men have always had a childhood desire to identify as a man or with manhood. He writes, "It is the rare FtM or transman who does not know from an early age what his gender identity is" (1999: 105). The expectation that there is a shared narrative that begins in early childhood for trans

men has been contested. Some writers have suggested that medical gatekeeping geared to the preservation of gender norms has influenced how trans men think of their gender. Prior to 2012, when my study was conducted, trans men were required to describe a “gender troubled childhood” (Spade 2003: 23) in order to receive a diagnosis of gender identity disorder and gain access to biomedical transition options.¹ Trans people have employed various tactics and strategies to become recognizable to medical gatekeepers, such as constructing narratives to meet requirements that do not fully reflect their lived experiences (Califia 2003; Rubin 2003; Stone 1997). Rubin (2003) also notes the strategic utility of these narratives but argues that such narratives are also a way for trans men to make sense of themselves. Still, the persistence and consistency of narratives’ citing a “wrong body” discourse seem to signal its continued influence on the construction of authenticity within trans-male communities.

Rubin (2003) notes a hierarchy based on “community standards [that] stress that hormones make the man” (9). Among Rubin’s twenty-two participants who were all from urban settings and ranged from twenty-three to forty-four years old, “transitioning, at least a desire to transition, is hegemonically regarded as the truest sign of a transsexual identity” (138). The centrality of bodies in Rubin’s (2003) research reveals a hierarchical structure about what it means to be “authentically transsexual” (and authentically a man), determined by use of hormones and language. Rubin’s assertions are likely influenced by the fact that all but three of his participants were on testosterone at the time of the study. Whether or not Rubin or Cromwell’s participants are representative of all or most trans men, their theorizing emphasized a perspective of physical bodies’ being primary sites of transformation with consistent stories and trajectories. Their studies cannot tell us the degree of influence trans men may have felt to tell a certain narrative to satisfy the requirements of medical gatekeepers. Trans men who do not experience a persistent childhood desire to become (or be seen as) a boy, or do not desire any biomedical transition options, may face exclusion, be unrecognizable, or experience rejection by trans and cisgender people because they are not “really” trans. As I will discuss in this article, the historical implication of what it means to be trans enough has an impact on the participants in my research.

Literature on student affairs and higher education tends to “conflate the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer populations” (Dilley 2004: 113). This conflation reflects assumptions that transgender people are affiliated with broader LGBTQ communities and that transgender identities logically belong among the other identities referenced by the LGBTQ moniker, despite many scholars’ contestation of both assumptions (Bilodeau 2005; Dugan et al. 2012; Marine 2011b; Pusch 2005; Stryker 2008). Susan Marine (2011b)

similarly notes that the extant literature often conflates the experiences of trans students with LGB students, thus obscuring their unique histories and perspectives. Of the publications about trans students specifically, most consist of suggestions for policy and practice changes that would increase support services; reduce bureaucratic barriers for trans students (e.g., names and gender change); ensure that gender-segregated facilities are accessible according to self-determined gender identity; offer access to trans-specific health care, including biomedical transition options for those trans students interested; and make campuses more inclusive (Beemyn 2003, 2005; Beemyn, Curtis, et al. 2005; Beemyn, Domingue, et al. 2005; Beemyn and Pettit 2006; Sausa 2002; Bilodeau 2007; McKinney 2005). A more radical recommendation from within some of the same literature calls for the dismantling of what some researchers identify as an oppressive gender binary system and suggests a more fluid, nonbinary system for gender self-identity options (Bilodeau 2007; Bornstein 1994; Butler 1990).

Methodology

The findings presented here address one of a larger study's (Catalano 2014) overarching research questions: how are trans men's experiences of coming to understand their gender identity shaped by their experiences in higher education? Participants' reflections on their identities also connect to issues of gender expression, gender roles, definitions of masculinity, and expression of masculinity. My analysis of these trans men's narratives revealed their desire for recognition and their navigation of dynamics around embodiment and passing in college. Higher education is a site where many people explore and define their identities (Torres, Howard-Hamilton, and Cooper 2003). Collegiate settings allow for an examination of how a specific institutional context may enact oppression and diminish power of trans men as they explore their identities.

My research is based on an explicit social justice education framework (Bell 2007; Hardiman, Jackson, and Griffin 2007; Love 2010; Young 1990), which provides tools for systemic/cultural, institutional, and interpersonal analysis of power, privilege, and oppression. The study examines the impact of power structures on the lives of trans men, including the complexities of multiple social memberships and identities along with the institutional and cultural structures that perpetuate oppression. The social justice education framework is informed by scholarship from a multitude of disciplines and draws on a range of social theories (Bell 2007).

Theories of social identities are of particular relevance to this research. As Beverly Daniel Tatum describes, identity "depends in large part on who the world around me says I am," and it is complex, "shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts" (1997: 18).

Tatum builds on Charles Cooley's (1922) concept of "the looking glass self" which, according to Tatum, theorizes that "other people are the mirror in which we see ourselves" (Tatum 1997: 18). Tatum also turns to Erik Erikson (1968) for a more nuanced account of how "other people are the mirror" and describes a process of identity formation that is simultaneously reflection and observation, in which the individual views their identity based on how others judge them and on typologies available to them. For the trans men in my study, the distinctions between the self and the mirror or between the individual core and the communal cultural core are complicated in ways that Erikson hardly anticipated. The narratives of the trans men in my study describe struggles to find individual and group affinity identification. Their gender expressions may not have been accurately "read" by others, and/or the trans men may not have an easily referenced gender others can understand. Trans men find themselves dealing with how to align their "inner conditions and outer circumstances" (Erikson 1968). Trans men discussed having trouble distinguishing how they view themselves and how others group them (as men, as women, as trans) because the "looking glass self" becomes a kaleidoscope or multifaceted crystal rather than a simple mirror.

I used grounded-theory methods for data collection (Charmaz 2006; Corbin and Strauss 2008; Glaser and Strauss 1967) and waited to conduct my literature review until after the completion of my coding process (Charmaz 2006). I utilized qualitative descriptive method (Sandelowski 2000) and phenomenology (Seidman 2006) for my data presentation. Based on the procedure outlined by Charmaz (2006), I conducted twenty-five in-depth, face-to-face interviews of undergraduate students enrolled at various colleges and universities in the New England region of the United States in the spring of 2010. My use of the term *trans man* in my call for participants attempted to include everyone with the general experience of having been assigned at birth as a female, having been socialized in female gender roles and treated as a girl, and later having come to identify as something other than a girl/woman and/or female.

Sixteen of the participants were enrolled in private four-year colleges (three at single-sex institutions), eight at large public universities, and one at a public community college. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 52 years with a median age of approximately 22.5. The racial identities of participants were as follows: seventeen identified as White, one identified as African American/Black, and seven identified as biracial/multiracial/multiethnic. Not all participants in this study wanted to identify with trans (as a noun or as an adjective), and not all of them identified as trans men. In all cases, the words they used about their transness and gender conveyed their desires about transitioning. As will be further articulated in the next section, for these men the social components of transitioning (name, pronouns, and gender roles) were secondary to the "realness" of the body.

My research participants described more than one “communal culture” in their accounts of interactions with their families, college administrators, faculty, peers, and the public as encountered in public restrooms, in shops, on the street, and on campus. They also described more than one “core self” in their accounts of their past selves. For some, the past self was an indefinable not-female, for others male, and for others trans—in bodies that they or others identified as previously female and as in transition toward becoming male or not female. In the three findings sections that follow, I discuss the three major themes in my data: managing expectations about being “trans enough,” dynamics of passing, and the imperative of biomedical transitioning.

Trans Enough: Managing Expectations of Peers and Norms

Participants’ identification with being trans was complicated by their desires for, access to, and decisions about biomedical transition. As Rubin (2003) points out, “Decisions not to transition are regarded skeptically [by other FTMs], although more leeway is given to those who want to transition but cannot due to reasons beyond their control” (138). As echoed by participant JB,

I think guys that have chosen hormones and surgery have this—not obviously not all of them, I’m not meaning to make a generalization, but there is a large sect or at least some sort of sect of [trans guy] that goes on the thought of: if you choose not to do that, and even if you’re a femme boy, kind of thing, you’re obviously just not trans, and you should go seek out the genderqueer community. And I think that no one can choose someone else’s identity and regardless if you’re trans, I think the whole point is: if you think you are trans, then you’re trans.

JB points out that while it is not true of all trans communities, there are widely known opinions that those who are not interested in transition options are not “really” transgender or transsexual men. Messages of not being “trans enough” are linked to biomedical transition choices and ideas (inside and outside trans communities) about what it means to be a “real” trans man. Participants articulated messages they and/or others believed of who is trans enough, characterizing those who use testosterone and have surgeries as the most “authentic.” These messages, coming from both within and outside trans communities, emanate from the pervasiveness of the wrong body narrative that equates legitimacy among trans people with biomedical transitioning. JB argued for more of a self-determination model, which many scholars also argue for (Bilodeau 2005, 2007; Catalano, McCarthy, and Shlasko 2007; Cromwell 1999; Spade 2003; Sullivan 2008). Such a self-determination model would simultaneously eliminate requirements (or

pressures) for biomedical transition *and* remove barriers to biomedical transition for those who desire it.

The idea of not being trans enough was articulated by Micah in response to a question about any negative changes he may have experienced since identifying as trans:

Negative things that have happened were definitely this idea that I wasn't trans enough. That I had to get through a lot of hurdles where I realized that it's okay to be myself, but at the beginning of that process, I was just like, "Oh my God. I'm not trans enough. People are not going to take me seriously. Oh my God." People are going to think I'm a joke and all this sort of stuff. And after a while, I actually realized that's not true, and I have every right to identify as exactly how I want to identify and nobody else can tell me different.

To be taken seriously as trans by others (regardless of self-understanding) means one must perform or embody a trans identity based on certain requirements. That is, one must be not just transgressive or ambiguously gendered or going through a phase but also en route to being a man. Within trans communities, participants reported that chronological age was less important than the length of time they had been utilizing hormones. "Transition age" was more of a factor in establishing oneself as a "legitimate" transgender or transsexual man: "In particular in the trans community, I think it's sort of this thing like, oh I'm not on hormones and everyone else is. Am I trans enough to be hanging around with these people? . . . Do they accept me as one of them? So I tend to sort of stay away from the trans community" (Jackson). Participants frequently expressed concerns of legitimization, including Micah's early fears of identification and Jackson's reluctance to be involved within the trans community at his college. Thus self-determination was ignored because those not accessing hormones were seen as not having "proven" they were serious about being men, or as not having met a threshold for being trans enough to other trans men. Participants were influenced by messages they received from other trans men and cisgender people about being trans enough, and sometimes these messages trumped their self-confidence in their trans identity.

Biomedical transitioning was not the only area in which participants experienced concerns of not being trans enough. Ren disconnected from the trans community at his university because he felt their rigid notions of gender were antithetical to his trans identity. In particular, Ren's embrace of certain qualities viewed by others as "feminine" was problematic:

So when I first started identifying as trans, I was really trying to be masculine. Doing all the things that everyone's always like, "Oh, walk this way." And like, "Sit

this way and wear this clothing." And then I was just like, "Well yeah, but why do I have to be one specific—one type of guy?" Just because I'm trans? It's like, so you're allowed to be an effeminate guy [if you're not trans], but if I am, it just means that I'm not being trans good enough. And I feel like [my university]—a lot of the [my university's] trans community is very much like that, at least from what I've found.

Contrary to some popular beliefs about trans identities as transgressive gender expressions, Ren's experience indicates that some university communities enforced gender-normative expressions among trans students. Although some would argue that the alignment with normative masculinity is meant to help trans men pass as men, it simultaneously reasserts the privileging of gender normativity and trans oppression (Bilodeau 2005, 2007; Catalano, McCarthy, and Shlasko 2007). Ren's experience highlights the impact of trans oppression (through the assertion of gender-conforming expectations), which led to his alienation from the trans community on his campus. Participants describe the importance of normative masculinities as a valid (and necessary) embodiment for trans men, as these masculinities set up distinctions of authenticity and may have implications for how trans men locate and experience other men in college communities. Judgments about "authenticity" within trans men's communities replicate ways in which oppression of trans men evolves into internalized oppression through the concept of transnormativity (LeBlanc 2010; Warner 1999).

While many participants felt pressured to legitimate their core maleness, a few participants indexed "trans" as subverting the gender binary by embodying a liminal gender. For Riley, his alignment with stereotypical masculinity seemed incongruent with his sense of transness:

The way I see masculinity or I guess it's not something I can. . . . It's just kind of what you feel. It's like a casual kind of thing. . . . So yeah, I kind of fall into a lot of male stereotypes, like my room is really messy, and I don't do laundry until I absolutely have to, and I watch football and all that stuff. So yeah, I'd call myself [laughs] pretty stereotypical. I'm supposed to be shaking the gender binary or what have you, and I guess I'm not doing a very good job of that. . . . I feel like as someone who is aware of the gender spectrum, I should do my part to try and educate other people and . . . I've kind of not. I watched football instead.

Riley seemed disappointed in himself because his gender presentation and traits were "too normatively masculine," and he failed at "shaking the gender binary." For most, however, "trans enough" means crossing the gender binary, not living between two genders. For example, Ren felt ostracized from his university's trans

community because his gender expression was too transgressive. Riley's understanding of "authenticity" of transness reflects a trans politics focused on the idea that it is better to be more transgressive and to resist the invisibility that comes with passing, whereas Ren internalized messages implying that the authenticity of transness is about replication of gender normativity through transition, masculine embodiment, and passing.

Another factor that influenced perceptions of being "trans enough" (in the normative sense) was connected to messages about what types of biomedical transition options the trans students in my research would access. Although the standards of care operative at the time of my study (Meyer et al. 2002) acknowledged the possibility that not all FtMs consider genital surgery, there is a "focus on genital surgery as the marker of the 'realness' of gender . . . [and a] drive for 'wholeness' on the part of the transsexual, a drive that is supported and reified through interactions with medical and psychological institutions" (Schilt and Waszkiewicz 2006: 6). The assertion that "realness" requires genital surgery came up in numerous participants' responses, regardless of whether they identified as a man. Robert aptly characterized how the biomedical transition process made being trans "real": "When I do the medical stuff, then it's gonna be real." Even for participants who desired to conform to the gender binary, the standard route to biomedical transition was a source of stress because of the difficulty of accessing and paying for transition procedures and services, compounded by limited campus resources.²

The tensions within these participants' campus-based trans communities about passing and embodiment versus transgressing gender norms push aside much-needed conversations about limited access to biomedical transition resources (for those interested) and the oppressive institutional structures that make existing in a gender-liminal state (for those interested) relatively untenable. Instead, conflicts over the authenticity of transness center on expectations of whether one is "trans enough," based on passing or looking masculine. For those who do not experience their transness as a transgressive gender expression, passing as trans enough only compels them toward biomedical transition. These conflicting positions distract from the structural issues trans students experience and put pressure on those students who might not otherwise take hormones and/or pursue surgery.

Passing

Participants struggled to make meaning of their visibility as men and invisibility as trans (for those who passed), or their invisibility as men (for those who did not pass). Passing and (in)visibility had implications for their ability to connect with cisgender men in what felt like a forced affinity, since they lacked familiarity with

the norms, social cues, behaviors, and other dynamics of this group. Awareness of one's own passing is a mode of understanding how others view one in the "looking glass." The looking glass highlights the external social world of the gender binary, but because the world does not align with self-perceptions, it also presents a muddled image for trans men. Gender identities are based on individual self-perceptions but are also simultaneously impacted by others' views (West and Fenstermaker 1995; West and Zimmerman 1987). Jack felt odd about how the others group him with men, based on his appearance: "Most people just receive me as masculine, as a man, and they wouldn't separate me from other men at all, which is so strange. . . . To really get the feeling that I'm just like everybody else, and I am, sure. But I've always felt on the outside, so I have feeling like I'm separate." Some trans men desired to have their transness visible, and others desired to place their trans identity firmly in their past, even if they were uncertain how they wanted to be identified by others. The body is the site for FtMs to claim manhood (Rubin 2003), but perceptions of their bodies can also make their transness invisible.

Some trans men discussed feeling able to see in cisgender men a physical form they hope to achieve, but for those uninterested in passing, there may be few models available: "I don't really see myself as a very masculine person. I don't know masculinity and femininity, I have issues with [them]" (Ben). Regardless of an ability to clearly express their gender in a way that felt comfortable or authentic to their core gender identity, participants continually managed others' perceptions of their gender: "Yeah, I guess how safe I feel directly correlates to how genderqueer I'm willing to look" (Sal).

Participants described the experience of passing as cisgender men on campus in contradictory terms. On one hand, passing was seen as an achievement, on the other, passing resulted in silencing and invisibility. Participants described their relationships with masculinity as sometimes uncertain, sometimes aligned, and sometimes as a compromise gender expression. These varying relationships only exacerbated their complicated opinions about passing. In many of the participants' accounts, passing provided opportunities for trans men to become more comfortable in their appearance as men. Joshua discussed how he tried to present his body and its movements in ways that were imitations of cisgender men: "Because, for me, the whole point of transitioning was to be able to be authentic and to just be myself, and I think pretty early on I spent a lot of time trying to fit a mold of what I thought a guy was supposed to be. . . . You know, walk a certain way. Talk a certain way. Body posture. Whatever. . ." For Joshua, his early efforts at normative masculine embodiment trumped his desire to simply be authentically himself.

The dilemmas posed by passing emerged in the language participants used to describe their current gender expression. For example, some participants were

mostly focused on not being seen as women, even if they did not identify as a man and did not reject their female past. Tucker, for example, described his gender expression as “masculine to androgynous. I tend to err on the side of masculine, but I like androgynous clothing and I like androgynous looks. I’m more interested in removing obvious gender markers than I am in creating them.” JB described his desire to be seen in a way that was accurate, but he believed others saw him through their own perceptions of gender. He noted, “I want to feel queer, but I think I just pass as an Abercrombie boy.” JB felt powerless to influence how others understand his internal feelings of “queerness” from his outward embodiment, as normative for young (white) men of his age. Participants’ gender expressions were rooted in a presentation of the body that aligned with social and cultural expectations of masculinity. For those willing to compromise their desired gender expression for the sake of readability as men, passing as a man is the only way for participants to be read as not-women, given naturalized assumptions about the gender binary (there are only men and women).

Because passing on campus causes transness to become invisible, some trans men in this study experienced forced or desired reabsorption into the gender binary as men. Here personal history becomes important to current identity. Cisgender men have a long personal history *as boys/men*, with role models, and the experiences of learning the rules through gender enforcement (Harro 2000); trans men’s personal histories do not include such opportunities. Trans men are left with stereotypes and assumptions about the world of “Guyland” (Kimmel 2008), and there are few supports available on most college campuses to help them navigate their new role in the gender binary (Marine and Nicolazzo 2014). In a consistent pattern, participants described a discomfort or caution with cisgender men and with the category of “man.” For some, the experience of being categorized with cisgender men raised the question of whether their masculine postures reified normative masculinity, which was troubling to them because of their ideological connections to feminism and other ideologies (Hansbury 2004). For example, Sal describes his discomfort with balancing recognition of his whole self (past and present genders) and others’ recognition of his current gender:

A lot of times [with women] it’s like, “Oh well, you were born a girl, you must be more sensitive, right?” . . . It’s kind of ungendering. It’s like, “Oh well, because you were born this way you must be able to identify with me in these ways,” which is weird because I’ve also found a lot more validation from girl people because some of my friends can—who are girls can see me as different from them and therefore, as a guy. Whereas guy friends see me as not the same as them and therefore, not a guy. So I’m like, I don’t know.

The expectations that he would be more "sensitive" and less stereotypically masculine in his behaviors served to "ungender" Sal's masculine embodiment. He also experienced unfair expectations from the group of people (women, or "girl people" as he called them) who were most likely to provide him with gender validation because his gender stood in contrast to their gender as women.

Choosing to come out as trans, or to risk losing the ability to pass by revealing a divergent gender history, can endanger one's claim to being a "real man" or thrust one into a specific role based on one's past as female. Brandon noted, "In some cases you come out to people and suddenly they're like, 'Oh you're not a man anymore.'" They initially read him as a cisgender man, and they ignore his bodily signifier when he comes out as trans. The rejection Brandon describes is a form of misrecognition that impedes his passing or self-identification. As Jay Prosser notes, "for in coming out and staking a claim to representation, the transsexual undoes the realness that is the conventional goal of transition" (1998: 11).

Participants in this study described numerous fears and uncertainties that influenced their expression of masculinity, many of which revolved around how their bodies were read and their comfort with their bodies. Their visibility was fraught with uncertainty that arose from the (in)visibility of transness that sometimes competed with their self-identification. Cisgender college men were not an appropriate group for comparison for participants because trans men did not experience (for better or worse) the same gender socialization. For those participants who were out about their trans identity, they had to endure cisgender peers' gender-essentialist assumptions or experience rejection of their current gender identity as men. These disconnects were subtle and tended to push trans men toward biomedical transition options and silence of their pasts.

The Biomedical Transition Imperative

Another factor that influenced participant concerns about authenticity were tensions within their campus trans communities about who falls under the "transgender umbrella" as it is connected to embodiment. Those who accessed biomedical transition services became more aligned with gender binary notions and internalized the medical model (Davidson 2007), and thus they were viewed as more legitimately trans than those who did not pursue gender-related body modification. Although access to medical care was seen as validating one's transness, it was not always easy to do, even when colleges provided avenues for doing so. For Robert, accessing biomedical transition options was not as simple as he imagined: "As I'm getting ready for surgery, like mentally for that, [I am] realizing things like: you can want something with absolutely all of your being and still be absolutely terrified, which is sometimes hard to explain to people." As noted by

Katrina Roen (2001: 504), “it is not uncommon for trans communities to operate within the opposite hierarchy, valuing passing and ostracizing those trans people who do not seem to work hard enough at passing.” Ren discusses how on his campus the trans and queer reinforce gender normativity: “It’s a very limiting kind of community and we have . . . almost everyone has transitioned or is planning to.”

Conflicts in trans communities over distinctions of embodiment indicate how trans men experience marginalization, particularly when they align with assumptions of what it means to be a man. Types of body modification unrelated to transition (e.g., rhinoplasty and penile enlargement) do not require psychological oversight and approval (Wilchins 1997; Spade 2003). But trans people must legitimate their claims, even when those claims serve to reinforce the hegemony of the gender binary and cast doubt on those who wish to claim trans identity but refuse to conform to the medical model and gender norms (Stone 1997). Shawn, who was uncertain about when or if he would pursue biomedical transition options, shares his struggle to articulate his self-perception: “I can’t look in the mirror and identify with that name [my birth name], but I can see myself as Shawn.” Without the masculinizing impact of hormones or surgeries, Shawn has to legitimate his identification as Shawn and not the gender associated with his birth name.

Discussion and Suggestions for Improving Practice

Participants in my research described their search for balance between internal confidence and external recognition and pressures. For the most part, participants struggled with self-confidence in their trans identification because of the reification of hegemonic notions of gender from within and outside their trans community, mostly expectations of coherent and normative masculine embodiment; a few participants also articulated the opposite pressure to perform gender transgression and incoherence from some trans communities. What to do with or to their bodies becomes central to these students’ genders and identities, as well as their access point to acceptance. James Messerschmidt (2009: 87) posited that “the body is a participant in shaping and generating social practice, and consequently, it is impossible to consider human agency without taking embodied gender into account.” To be a full participant in social practice, with few exceptions trans men in this study usually characterized “trans enough” as the desire and ability to access biomedical transition services (hormones and/or chest reconstruction).

The worlds of trans men in college were generally bounded by their immediate campus environment, which depended on enrollment size, friends, and visible trans communities. These structural realities influenced their abilities to pass, to embody masculinity, and to interact with cisgender men in homo-social

communities. As noted in the findings, higher education as an institution is enmeshed in systemic processes that exist beyond the boundaries of any specific campus. The life experiences of these trans students cause their identities to shift and change, whether they understand these shifts as only external or as also encompassing shifts in their understanding of themselves. In my study, many trans students' lived bodily experience of passing or not passing became central to their gender identities, overshadowing their other feelings about their internal sense of gender. Their focus on embodiment, which echoes Rubin's (2003) research, was reinforced by people and dynamics within a higher education context and by the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association's standards of care, version 6 (now World Professional Association for Gender Health [WPATH]), which was in use at the time the data were collected. In order to access biomedical transition options, they had to advocate for themselves tirelessly, and in narratives intelligible to the medical model (Meyer et al. 2001). Some participants had internalized the notion that people who do not conform to the gender binary need to biomedically transition. That imperative was reinforced by structures they encountered in higher education.

Trans men are not monolithic in their relation to gender. For trans men, there is no single approach to being a man, as demonstrated by the participants in my study, and that signals a need for higher education professionals to create more inclusive campuses for a variety of trans men. The focus on bodies and embodiment in these participants' descriptions of identity and experience indicates that messages trans men receive emphasize material biomedical options as a primary path to recognition. Policies created by administrators that set the parameters of trans men's legibility can affirm or disavow students' identities. Creating change on a college or university campus is a dynamic process, not a simple checklist. Based on these findings, I offer two suggestions to attend to issues of support for trans men (and possibly all trans students) in higher education: adopt known best practices, and put resources toward research and assessment. The complexity of this study's findings revealed that there is no "one size fits all" model for supporting trans inclusion and agency, and sometimes those we seek to support may be discouraged, silenced, or marginalized by our attempts at inclusion. Findings from the theme "trans enough" expose the pressure to biomedically transition that trans men in college feel; this should prompt faculty and administrators at institutions that have policies and practices requiring medical verification to question the utility and fairness of those requirements. The newest version of the WPATH standards of care allow for a lower threshold of medical gatekeeping; institutions of higher education should review policies to ensure alignment with these new guidelines (Coleman et al. 2012).

Conclusion

Because this was a small study focused on students in New England, slightly more than half (64 percent) of whom attended private institutions, questions remain about how central issues of passing and embodiment are for trans men in higher education more broadly, and how that may manifest in different geographies and institutions. Regardless, participants reported few campus-designated opportunities to explore their internalized questions about attaining “realness” or being trans enough. More opportunities are needed for trans students to explore their own conceptions of their gender. Current limitations to programming for—as opposed to about—trans individuals and communities have been noted by other researchers (Marine and Nicolazzo 2014). Further, there need to be spaces where cisgender people examine their own understanding of trans identities, to ensure they are not replicating genderism or pathologizing trans students more broadly. All members of a collegiate institution need to educate themselves beyond the assumptions of biomedical transition and refrain from contributing to enforcing a medical-model understanding of transness. In summary, this study points to three specific improvements to supporting trans men in higher education: evaluating current policies and practices for adherence to updated standards of care requirements; providing ample space, time, and opportunity for individual and group exploration of trans identities and “realness”; and assessing whether positive developments in insurance coverage for transition-related health services (hormones, surgeries) promote biomedical transition as the only way to achieve “real” manhood.

If a trans man in college is unnecessarily diverted from focusing on curricular involvement because he is primarily worried about whether he is viewed as a man, then he is unable to develop intellectually and socially with his peers (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). If trans men spend most of their time worried that they are not trans enough because they pass as too normatively gendered or not normatively gendered enough, then their focus is not on self-exploration and college success but on others’ perceptions of them. Trans men in this study understand their legibility as men and/or the ability to pass as being tied up in embodiment. As much as we need to theorize the possibilities of trans identities beyond the medical model, colleges and universities must also attend to the limitations of the lived day-to-day experience of trans students’ struggling to survive their college or university administrative processes and resources. The real and central concern for the trans men in this research is the lack of space, time, and effort put forth by institutions to actually understand their needs. Only through continued support for, and attention to, trans men and their needs can we create college campuses that are truly trans inclusive.

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Notes

1. The current WPATH standards of care, version 7 (SOCv7; Coleman et al. 2012), requires less rigid requirements for access to biomedical transition options, but at the time of this research, SOCv7 was still two years from publication.
2. There has been a significant increase in access to biomedical transition options for college students since the time of my data collection. Currently, sixty-two colleges and universities have trans-inclusive coverage for student health insurance plans (Campus Pride Index).

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“We Are Not Expected”

Trans Educators (Re)Claiming Space and Voice in Higher Education and Student Affairs*

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Abstract Despite slowly expanding literature on trans* students in higher education, there is virtually nothing examining the lived experiences, identity processes, and needs of trans* educators in higher education and student affairs. This awareness led to the inaugural T* Circle dialogue in March 2014 among nine diverse trans* educators, moderated by a cisgender facilitator, to make visible and begin to fill this gap. The manuscript describes the trans*formative participatory process of designing and implementing this unique program, key themes from the dialogue and postdialogue reflections, and an expressed intention to trans*form higher education through future collaborations and projects.

Keywords educators, student affairs, higher education, participatory, trans*

Genesis

The increasing visibility of and advocacy by trans* students in higher education (Beemyn 2003) has led to emerging literature on these students' campus experiences (e.g., Hart and Lester 2011; Rankin et al. 2010) and identity development (e.g., Bilodeau 2005). This has also led to a number of campuses' providing services and revising policies to accommodate trans* students (Campus Pride 2014). Although the literature is still limited in scope, depth, and intersectional analysis, and thus needs further development, there is virtually nothing examining the lived experiences, identity processes, and needs of trans* higher education and student affairs (HESA) educators.¹ Additionally, the only identified need for trans* people who work in higher education institutions (not limited to HESA) appears to be the provision of trans*-inclusive health care coverage (Campus Pride 2014).

As three trans*-identified HESA educators in the same higher education PhD program, we became aware of the aforementioned gap in literature and practice as we worked together. We explored trans* and genderqueer students'

experiences, prompting us to talk about how our voices as trans* educators were missing from the conversation. Reading about a roundtable discussion called “Sister Circles” (Niskode-Dossett et al. 2012) held between diverse women hosted by College Student Educators International’s (formerly known as American College Personnel Association, still referred to as ACPA) Standing Committee for Women, we desired something similar. Their discussion was an opportunity for reflective dialogue and to do some of the “personal work” they desired. By applying a transformative pedagogical framework to the dialogue, the women centered their own voices and shared in the complexities of their multiple identities, a practice we sought to mirror with trans* educators. Similar to Sister Circles, we chose ACPA—one of the two most prominent associations in our field with an annual convention—as this dialogue’s venue. This manuscript describes the conceptualization, planning, execution, and reflections of the first “T* Circle: A Dialogue among Trans* and Gender Non-Conforming Educators,” a program held at ACPA’s 2014 Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. We aim to present a trans*-centered approach across those stages in preparing for and carrying out a dialogue for, by, and with trans* educators, and some of its initial impact for participants.

Conceptual Framework

In envisioning this dialogue, we employed a framework informed by critical theories and trans*formative pedagogy, including the incorporation of critical race theory (CRT), critical race feminism, and critical trans* politics. We centered the counternarratives of trans* people to provide “necessary contextual contours to the seeming ‘objectivity’ of positivist perspectives” (Ladson-Billings 2009: 22) and as contrasts to dominant ideologies about underrepresented trans* populations that often maintain a hierarchical system of gender domination (Enke 2012). Critical race feminist theory challenged us to examine how our various identities intersect with each other to reproduce hierarchies and varying access to resources (Thandi Sule 2011). Critical trans* politics challenges gender policing, arguing that assumed value-neutral organizations actually extend administrative control over and violence toward marginalized racial and gendered identities and bodies, including through policy reform (Spade 2011). As the location of these narratives, higher education is not immune to institutionalized genderism that essentializes gender identity based on sex assignment at birth and impacts trans* people institutionally (Bilodeau 2009).

By applying a trans*formative participatory pedagogy, we sought to interrogate the realistic and emancipatory potential for trans* people to access and structurally shift the worlds we inhabit (Cope and Kalantzis 2009; Spade 2011). As the first trans*-centered dialogue in HESA that we knew of, the T*Circle necessitated actively involving the multiple perspectives of all panelists and was

not fully defined in advance (Siemens 2008). Utilizing dialogue and reflection as the central pedagogical tools allowed for the interconnections of our knowing to surface by restructuring how we conceptualized our experiences, rather than merely transmitting them (Freire 2002; O’Sullivan, Morrell, and O’Connor 2002), particularly from our individual social locations vis-à-vis our intersecting identities (Landry 2007). By foregrounding trans* educators’ experiences and voices, as authors we elicit empowerment toward social action for trans* justice (McGregor 2008). Collectively we resisted a single trans* narrative and challenged our exclusion within higher education.

The Design and Planning Process

The design and decision-making process of the program was participatory, with the three authors acting as facilitators and taking care of logistics. In recruiting other trans* educators, we reached out to an initial list of nine trans*-identified educators in HESA in August 2013, based on our personal knowledge of and relationship with both trans* and cisgender individuals, whom we either recruited and/or asked for further contacts. By prioritizing having a diverse group based on race, gender identity, and expression, and whether they were primarily practitioners, scholars, or scholar-practitioners, we employed maximum variation sampling to capture a wide range of perspectives (Merriam 2009). We aimed to coalesce a diverse group of trans* educators “to discuss contemporary topics relevant to their personal and professional lives” (Niskode-Dossett et al. 2012: 194), including intersecting identities, being trans* in higher education, and other important issues for trans* educators. We took into account the ease with which we could have had a group primarily made up of white trans*-masculine individuals without prioritizing diversity. This intention was important to minimize the impact of facilitator bias, which was also addressed by our engaging in dialogue about each potential participant, what we knew about their experiences and identities, and how they might enhance rather than duplicate perspectives. Despite intentional outreach to colleagues, we could not locate any trans*-identified faculty or any trans* women of color in HESA to reach out to, which made us take pause and consider the issue of access. Matriculating in higher education is a necessary step to enter the HESA field. As the collusion of genderism, sexism, and racism severely impacts the lives of trans* women of color in particular (Grant, Mottet, and Tanis 2011), placing them the most at threat of exclusion and expulsion from educational institutions, they are summarily excluded from the field as well. This is an issue that ought to be better evaluated and addressed.

Keeping this limitation in mind, the final nine individuals did include people with different gender identities and expressions, racial identities, and roles

in HESA.² Additionally, the panelists came from seven different universities across the country, both private and public four-year institutions, with many having previous experiences at several other universities. Although ability-related identities were not specifically asked about and thus cannot be accounted for accurately, disclosures confirmed that different abilities and disabilities were present in panelists' lived realities.

Following recruitment, we solicited and incorporated panelists' feedback into the construction of the proposal so as to consider all voices from the onset. Prior to submission, we collectively made a couple of noteworthy decisions. The first was to submit for an extended two-and-a-half hour session that would allow us to have a deeper conversation around the many topics we wanted to discuss, rather than a general one-hour session, the more common format. Secondly, the group came to a consensus to have a cisgender-identified moderator to allow all of us to focus on engaging with each other. This also ensured parity among ourselves as panelists rather than placing one of us in a differential power dynamic in managing the flow and direction of the discourse. In order to not then place a cisgender person in a position of power in what was meant to be a trans*-driven dialogue, the role of moderator was narrowly prescribed to be fairly logistical. The moderator would manage time, ask questions we had prepared in advance, provide instructions for attendees, and pull in those of us who needed more direct encouragement to add our perspective if we failed to do so ourselves. Following program submission and eventual acceptance, the planning process utilized a number of avenues to solicit information, insight, ongoing discussions, and relationship building beginning in December. These included

- a survey on what the group wanted to discuss, what we all wanted to get out of participating, and what we hoped others would get out of attending,
- three conference calls, and
- a Wiggio (2011) page.

During the first conference call, the group virtually met and reviewed and discussed the survey responses. Overwhelmingly, the group indicated that what they most wanted to gain from the experience was a supportive HESA trans* community that would help navigate the field and share each other's stories. The group wanted an intersectionally minded conversation, with opportunities to think of ourselves and our work, and how we were each situated within our institutions and our field. The list of topics suggested included the daily grind of pronouns, names, and facilities; the contributions of trans* people to an institution; racism in the trans* community; access to higher education; the need for

theory and scholarship about and by us from nondeficit lenses; experiences with tokenization and being de facto gender educators; trans*-inclusive policies as starting points and not end goals; and navigating both on- and off-campus spaces as trans* people. A list with such varied topics further confirmed the need for this session, as well as the desire many of us had to connect and dialogue with each other. Also, it was clear that the ACPA session would merely allow us to scratch the surface of most of these and thus ought to serve as an initial spark to ignite a deep and sustainable community-building effort among us and among many other trans* people in HESA.

Although the range of topics we wanted to discuss was wide, what we wanted those in attendance to gain was narrower. Many of us had previously participated in panels serving mostly cisgender audiences, and we wanted to avoid replicating elements of these experiences. We wanted to move the conversation away from what we perceived as the singular trans*normative narrative to talk about the assumptions often made of us, and the ways those assumptions limited the possibilities for trans* people.³ Moreover, we saw little need to share “best practices,” as most trans*-themed sessions at HESA conferences tended to focus on them. We preferred instead for our colleagues and our institutions to learn how to ask better questions in order to understand genderism on individual, organizational, and cultural levels. Finally, in addition to highlighting the diversity of our experiences, we wanted audience members to reflect on their own identities and the complexities of gender as a whole.

The conference calls were used to get to know each other, build trust by sharing our stories, and discuss the structure of the session. As the intent of the session revolved around our collective need to dialogue among ourselves, these calls did not include our moderator, Dr. Patton Davis. We maintained contact through Wiggio, a platform we used to share documents such as conference call minutes, articles, and the survey responses, as well as the evolving session outline. So as not to replicate the dominance of white and trans*-masculine voices, the collective was called to attempt balance across our narratives in the session outline through self-monitoring, requiring us to have some level of trust in each other’s intentions.

Coming Full (T*) Circle

Our Dialogue

During the session, we emphasized the interaction among ourselves by placing chairs in a half-moon shape, enabling us to see each other and the audience to see all of us. To engage the audience, those in attendance reflected on our dialogue both with each other in structured breaks moderated by Dr. Patton Davis, as well as by utilizing the hashtag #ACPA14TGQ on Twitter. We foregrounded our

experiences as trans* educators and did not allow the audience to participate in a traditional panel way, which we believed would only reinforce what Paulo Freire (2002) described as the “banking method” of learning. This specific fishbowl format was not one we had read literature or theory about, nor seen operationalized, rather one the collective chose to try to provide a learning opportunity for observers that was driven by our own voices and priorities.

Despite our preparations, it still took time for us to get going, and we initially simulated traditional panels by taking turns answering questions. Our nervousness and excitement for this opportunity to come together and allow attendees to see behind the fourth wall of our experiences were palpable. As time went on and we let go of our awareness of the audience, our conversation emerged. After all, engaging in such a personal dialogue with an audience was a fairly unique experience for us, as well as the audience.

In addition to prompting us with the questions we had prepared, Dr. Patton Davis utilized thematic segues to guide the conversation. Following the conference, she provided us with a compilation of these main discussion points. These are presented below in a summarized format.

Motivated to Participate

When discussing our motivations for participating, we emphasized the importance of finding community among ourselves. This involved learning to support each other through navigating external perceptions, such as what we termed the “cisgender gaze” and dealing with well-intentioned people, who did not “get it.” For some of us, participating was challenging, as it forced us to confront notions of being “trans* enough,” a concept both internally and externally imposed on trans* people that some of us internalized or had to manage more often than others. These challenges contributed to all of us at one time or another being “othered.” Othering also presented itself as we discussed the racialized nature of gender and had the conversation from multiple intersectional perspectives, something we all agreed was missing in HESA.

(Un)Supportive Experiences

As we moved to talk about examples of supportive experiences in HESA, we responded with individual interactions and practices rather than institutional and cultural ones. We shared examples of being asked about our pronouns and how we would like to be supported, thus allowing for our self-determination rather than their assumptions to guide their behavior. One person shared their appreciation of seeing gender-variant pronouns in position descriptions as a signal of awareness of trans* people and needs. We desired spaces to vent about our frustrations and daily struggles, for legal protections, as well as wanting to avoid being an institution’s “dry run” or “test case.”

The discussion about unsupportive experiences in HESA, while still including individual actions such as misusing names and pronouns, elicited far more systematic and cultural responses. We talked about dealing with the whiteness that pervades how we and others understand trans* identities and experiences, particularly felt by the three people of color in the group. Transphobia, gender policing, and the politics of disclosure and “passing”—which felt ubiquitous in higher education and society at large—meant that many occupied liminal or in-between spaces, were forced to choose identity spaces, and experienced feelings of uneasy tension with gendered expectations. Our lack of access to trans*-inclusive and trans*-affirming health care was a policy-related limitation embedded within all the social systems we traversed. Our concerns regarding intimate and romantic relationships also surfaced, as we often experience desexualization or hypersexualization as trans* people.

The State of Trans* Inclusion in HESA

When Dr. Patton Davis asked us how inclusive we would characterize HESA for trans* educators, it was clear that we did not experience the field to be sufficiently welcoming. Often not included in discussions on diversity, we simultaneously felt both invisible and hypervisible, often leading to tokenization. We experienced pressure to conform to a monolithic trans* narrative mired in whiteness, ableism, and binary constructions of identity and transition in order to be “accommodated.” Although we desired a changing landscape, we sensed a lack of urgency from the field to recognize our presence, and thus dealing with people in HESA felt like “a punch in the gut.” In the end, as trans* people are not expected to survive the higher education system, HESA does not expect us to be here.

Closing out the dialogue, some of us struggled to name particular milestones that could serve as markers to indicate HESA’s trans*formation and a recognition of our presence in and contributions to the field, while others had clear ideas. Increasing visibility of trans* educators, particularly trans* women of color was an explicit milestone. Trans*-inclusive and -affirming health care was a definitive policy implementation that was unquestionably important in this regard. We named mentorship and spaces of support and continued community building as tangible and immediate needs. We had a hunger for research to be expanded, deepened, and driven by trans* people. There was also a desire to see HESA lead the effort to address systemic issues of genderism within and beyond higher education.

Postconference Reflections

Following the conference, as we returned to our campuses, the three of us asked our fellow panelists to reflect on our shared unique experience. These reflections,

much like our dialogue, touched on a breadth of thoughts and feelings triggered by the session. There were four overarching themes across the solicited reflections. Central was the theme of community and connection, something that was sought, sparked, and continues to be desired. A second theme, the uniqueness of T*Circle itself, including the ways it allowed for authenticity and voice to come through, was not lost on anyone. For some, the dialogue brought up self-work needs and professional anxieties that pushed them to continue to question concepts and identities. Finally, many found themselves acknowledging privileges and internalized isms, highlighting sources of division among the trans* community.

Community and Connection

Panelists felt reinvigorated, owing to and in appreciation “of the community that we had formed as a collective group,” as Alandis Johnson described it. For Erich N. Pitcher, the creation of this collective was a hopeful experience, one that he distinguished from being a part of a queer community: “Connecting with other trans* educators, particularly in higher education, made me feel that there might be some hope for community among trans* people working within HESA. While I have the support of my queer cisgender peers at MSU, being a trans* person has given me a different perspective and vantage point that non-trans people do not seem to have. I yearn for connection to a social justice oriented, multiracial, gender diverse community of educators.” Jordan Turner’s (JT) reflection spoke to the professional development and mentoring impact of being able to connect to trans* colleagues, “and getting insight on topics like managing the job search process as a trans* person, being misgendered, support systems, all have been beneficial for me as a young professional navigating the field. I don’t feel I have a lot of role models as a trans* professional of color.” Similarly, for J’Lissabeth Faughn, the experience further illuminated her desire for practitioner mentors that reflect her identity in higher education, something she has thus far not encountered because of her unique position as an open trans* woman director of an identity-based center.

For some, the ability to connect with each other was partially due to the intentional program design that decentered the audience’s role in the conversation. This was apparent in JT’s statement, “I never felt I was on ‘display’ in the circle, but instead like I was inviting people in,” which contrasted with often feeling questioned as a trans* person in other contexts. Z Nicolazzo also shared this sentiment when ze said, “I don’t think I looked at the audience more than once, and it was just nice to talk to each other without even a thought as to whom may hear, what they may say, or how audience members were reading me.”

Alandis reflected a lot on their desire to continue connecting with the group online and at conferences, even though they did not know many of the

people involved previously. They were particularly heartened by the fact that so many were doctoral students like themselves, “which presented an additional opportunity to continue the conversation. I am grateful that this group allowed another trans* collective to take root and allow additional opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and community.”

Uniqueness of the Experience

Several people alluded to the experience’s uniqueness of allowing us to be fully present in our authentic selves, speak our truths, be seen, and want to make those feelings last. This authenticity was not restricted just to one’s trans*ness. JT exemplified this by sharing that the T*Circle “allowed me space I never felt I had to be genderqueer, while also acknowledging my racial identity. I felt visible with the group. I’m not sure I knew what that meant as a trans* person before this experience. . . . I’m glad we were able to offer this session at ACPA and feel it’s very important to keep creating this space at future conventions. It was a transformative experience being a part of the group and helps the field to See [*sic*] us.”

Z reflected on how the comfort of the space conflicted with his other experiences in HESA, and how it pushed him to deepen his thinking and purpose in the field. Ze stated,

I guess one of the things I am left reflecting about is how much the experience has me reflecting. It was such a unique experience for me to be in community with a core group of trans* people, especially people who are all a part of the [HESA] field. After experiencing feelings of isolation, and being othered in various overt and tacit ways since coming out four years ago, I was finally in a space where I felt comfortable to be and do me. I felt heard, encouraged, and understood. I felt challenged to think deeper about who I am, how I live, and how to promote equity and justice in higher education.

For Alandis, participating in the T*Circle, hearing everyone’s truth, meant they got to experience something they had only heard about from their nontrans* colleagues. It was a powerful moment that asserted our presence as undeniable:

During the conversation, I found myself at times in awe of the many brilliant folks within the T* Circle, and each of their voices were strong and authentic. Often, educators (and others too) speak of the “high” that comes from attending a conference. I have not gotten the “conference high” the past few conferences that I have attended; however, this program allowed us all the opportunity and the space to fully engage and reflect upon trans* and gender non-conforming people within this field and subsequently, that “high” was tangible. Indeed, we are limited, yet we

have so much to say where our voices have often been stifled. This program presented a rare and precious gift to speak our truths and firmly assert that “Yes, we exist.”

Z and Alandis shared a deep desire to hold onto the feelings and the power invoked by the T*Circle. Alandis referred to it as a “distinct feeling of possibility,” something that was very rare at a campus lacking the diversity of people and perspectives they had grown accustomed to elsewhere. They stated, “I struggled after the conference, knowing that this brief glimpse into the trans* community would soon end.” Through reflection, Z “was glad to have been a part of the dialogue, because after about ten minutes, it felt so good to just be with everyone.”

Self-Work Needs and Professional Anxieties

The T*Circle and people’s willingness to show up authentically evoked some uncomfortable truths and questions for people. Some of this was of a personal nature, surfacing or resurfacing conflicts and identity processes within. finn schneider in particular felt unsettled, albeit with a sense of hope for the growth and learning to come.

To be honest, I am feeling more conflicted about gender than I have in a long time. A confluence of experiences related to gender, including our session, have drudged up in me curiosities, fears, and sub-conscious beliefs which are now swirling about my head and my heart. It is a feeling of ungroundedness and sometimes isolation. At the same time, it is a rich juncture in my journey and I find hope in thinking about the plethora of ways in which I will grow and learn. . . . Another theme has been my relationship with my body. Without going into too much detail, suffice it to say that I feel growing disease between my body and my consciousness. And that scares me. Immensely. This is where the ungroundedness piece comes in. And I find myself playing mental gymnastics, questioning incessantly what is it that I really want.

Through others’ voices, JT found parallels between their race and gender journeys, both requiring constant questioning, evaluating and reevaluating, and meaning making. JT remarked, “Hearing the stories and journeys of my trans* family, inspired me to keep doing my own self-work . . . unpacking and digging. Similar to the African American experience, I think much of the trans* experience is questioning what it means to be trans*. That is the legacy of slavery and oppression.”

Erich reflected on his professional anxieties as a doctoral student looking ahead at the job-search process, worried about the reifications of gender norms

and tokenization, a far cry from what he had envisioned as higher education institutions' potential and his purpose in it:

While I fully intend to job search as a trans* person and to be clear with my future employer about my trans* identity, I worry about the push back or enforcement of norms that manifest under the guise of professionalism and/or public/private domain regulation. I also worry that wherever I might land after graduate school that I might be made into an example or “accommodated.” I am interested in neither thing. Rather, I want to see education institutions moving away from the reification of gender binaries and towards intersectional, social justice praxis.

J'Lissabeth reflected that she was particularly concerned with some of the ways sexism impacts her in higher education. She shared that “as I have become viewed as a woman, I have become valued less as a student affairs employee; treated less intelligent, told I was too loud and/or aggressive—conditions I never heard as a male. I've had to ask to join committees, rather than having been asked, and I am no longer welcome in small circle conversations with my male colleagues.”

Some of Erich's professional anxieties also connected to discussions of being “trans* enough” and exasperated by the demands of the academic world, making him feel less-than-enough and vulnerable in scholarly and professional arenas:

I feel vulnerable when I talk about being a trans* person who studies trans* things. I worry that others will interpret my work as some sort of mental masturbatory activity that is ultimately self-serving and an effort to make my own reality become more intelligible. I worry too that I am simply writing into existence unmarked and unacknowledged dominance and whiteness in my work. Perhaps put more simply, I worry that I am not enough. That I do not write well enough, that my trans*ness is not visible enough, that I do not acknowledge or question my own subject position (as a white person who benefits from male privilege) enough. In this incessant worrying of “being enough” (that the academy breeds) I worry that I become self-absorbed, out of touch; that my work will not matter, nor will it make a difference. I worry that I come up short; with too little explanation, too little experience.

The “trans* enough” discussion emerged in a number of reflections. J'Lissabeth shared how others'—perhaps well-intentioned—perceptions of her as “passing” easily and being seen as a woman effectively erased her identity as a trans* woman: “[It felt like] a kick to my stomach” and “embellished not diminished the anxiety.

Is it important my identity is in their conscious? It is to me, and it is certainly in the core of my conscious.”

For finn this topic connected to the silencing of trans* voices within and outside the trans* community. finn commented that “one of the ways I have experienced gender being used as a social tool is that we rely on it as a point of comparison among people,” alluding to how notions of trans*ness, and who is and who is not trans* or trans* enough, created unnecessary hierarchies within the trans* community. finn identified the practice of comparing themselves to others as something they wished to cease doing.

Acknowledging Privileges and Internalized Isms

Some of the uncomfortable truths that had a particularly powerful and resounding impact as they emerged in the panelists’ reflections involved unmasking internalized dominance or oppression and their manifestations in people. The most prominent isms that panelists reflected on were white privilege, masculine privilege and transmisogyny, and internalized genderism. Some also alluded to how these systemic forces underlie some of the divisions within/among the trans* community/communities. Trans*-centric dialogues such as the T*Circle are ideal and necessary spaces for these conversations to be had and deepened, so as to invoke within-community justice work and healing.

While acknowledging the varied perspectives present in the session, Erich worried about the space taken up by the white panelists and his own “complicity.” Z went into some length about the tough moments during the dialogue that ze was troubled about.

I remain frustrated that I didn’t take a more active role in discouraging one person from dominating the conversation. It felt deeply uncomfortable at the time, but the reality is that I still did nothing to stop it. . . . And my inaction meant there was less time for others in the group to share and express their thoughts. . . . I feel even worse knowing that, as a White person, I was not impacted by the lack of airtime as the people of color in the group, as the person dominating conversation shared a similar racial identity to me. Thus, my racial privilege likely had some role in my not intervening. As someone committed to equity and justice, these types of reflections are never comfortable for me, to say the least. Much to the contrary, they are deeply unsettling and make me feel like a bit of a racial justice imposter.

The T*Circle offered finn the opportunity to notice that the majority of the trans* people they knew were masculine of center. That fact and an unrelated event gave finn pause and challenged them to reflect on their internalized transmisogyny and

masculine privilege. These constructs impeded finn's ability to be in community with trans* women:

Recently I was at a luncheon for trans* employees on my campus; being a new staff member, I didn't know anyone there. Most of the other folks present were transwomen, and I found myself being much more reserved than I typically am in trans* spaces. As I sat in my discomfort and questioned its roots, I realized that I had put up a wall and was feeling a bit on the defensive. I had already drawn the conclusion that the folks with whom I was sharing this affinity space would not understand me as a masculine-presenting, genderqueer person based solely on their expressed identities as transwomen. Effectively, I had shut out the possibility of building meaningful connection and relationship without even realizing it. As I left the luncheon, I felt disappointed in myself. . . . Confronting my own internalized dominance is not a pleasant endeavor, but one that I am convinced is 100% necessary to understanding my own privilege. . . . [Julia Serano's 2013 book *Excluded*] got me thinking more about our session and some of the stories I heard from my co-panelists, as well as the ways that my own masculine of center gender expression is often applauded or ignored as opposed to being policed or ridiculed. Recognizing that the deep and insidious roots of sexism and transmisogyny are alive in me in ways I didn't realize is unpleasant, and I acknowledge that I have much work to do in interrogating my subconscious beliefs and values.

The unraveling and naming of internalized genderism for JT was also an opportunity to resist it. They stated, "The T*Circle helped me realize how much internalized oppression I host in regards to my gender identity and expression. How silenced I feel in and out of the field. Simply sharing our stories was a radical act of love."

Conclusions

The authors saw a need for this type of dialogue and session and were intentional and participatory in constructing a meaningful session focused on trans* educators. By valuing and centering our counternarratives, the T*Circle dialogue and the participatory planning process resisted the entrenchment and maintenance of genderism at our institutions, our professional and scholarly conferences, and HESA as a whole. The process leading up to the dialogue, as well as the chosen facilitation of the session, allowed for the needs and desires of trans* people in HESA to be prioritized over the questions and needs of cisgender people. As a group with diverse perspectives, experiences, and social locations, this session further demonstrated that there is no singular trans* narrative and no one homogeneous and unified trans* community. There is a clear need for the

creation of more dialogues and spaces for the convergence of trans* educators, ones that also include attention to and the voices of trans* HESA faculty, trans* women of color, and trans* educators at community colleges, just some of the perspectives missing from this particular dialogue.

The emergent themes highlighted the importance of having these spaces, informed and led by trans* people, for much-needed deepening of reflection and dialogue among trans* HESA educators. While the focus of the session was our dialogue, anecdotally from observations of the #ACPA14TGQ Twitter posts as well as conversations had afterwards with individual attendees, the authors surmised that the session was also transformative for folks in attendance as a unique and immersive experience. Finally, in addition to this manuscript, a trans* collective for scholars has emerged post-T*Circle. Thus, the session has served in some ways as an initiator of infinite possibilities of future collaborative and collective efforts in building and informing relationships, networks, scholarship, and practice among and beyond this group of trans* HESA educators with the express intent of trans*forming higher education.

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Notes

1. HESA educators include practitioners who are employed by a university or college for the cocurricular development of college students in tandem with and support of their curricular pursuits, such as those working in residential life, student activities, career development, academic advising, and multicultural affairs. HESA educators are also scholars engaged with the research and scholarship that informs and evaluates the work of HESA practitioners, educational policy makers, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and others. Scholars include but are not limited to faculty and graduate students in masters and doctoral programs in educational leadership, higher education administration, college student personnel, and other related areas.

2. The nine individuals were T.J. Jourian, a trans*masculine Middle Eastern queer man, and a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago; Symone L. Simmons, a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago and program assistant in the Gender and Sexuality Center at University of Illinois at Chicago, who identifies as a Black gender-queer educator; Kara C. Devaney, a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago who identifies as white, a transgender woman, lesbian, Lutheran, and disabled; Erich N. Pitcher, a doctoral student at Michigan State University, who identifies as a white genderqueer trans*man; finn schneider, who does violence prevention education in the Office of the Dean of Students at University of California, Berkeley, and identifies as white, queer, and genderqueer; Z Nicolazzo, a white gender-nonconforming assistant professor of HESA at Northern Illinois University; Jordan “JT” Turner, an African American, genderqueer residence hall director at the University of Connecticut; J’Lisabeth Faughn, the director of TransEducator based in Kentucky; Alandis Johnson, a genderqueer doctoral student at Miami University; and Dr. Lori Patton Davis, an associate professor at Indiana University.
3. For a discussion on trans*normativity, see www.boldlygo.co/trans-normativity/ (accessed April 11, 2015).

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Two Trans* Teachers in Madrid

*Interrogating Trans*formative Pedagogies*

RAQUEL (LUCAS) PLATERO and EM HARSIN DRAGER

Abstract Trans*formative pedagogies are explored through dialogue between two trans* teachers working in Madrid public schools. The queer methodological approach of personal dialogue and reflection provides an inside perspective into the emergent development of trans* pedagogy in public school classrooms. The authors' divergent positionalities raise challenging questions for trans* teachers: How are gender and sexuality still perceived as dangerous topics in education, and how can these issues be addressed with students? Can we move beyond *chicos y chicas* identity politics? Is the presence of a trans* teacher in the classroom enough to create transformative pedagogy? How does this work connect to, uphold, and challenge the neoliberal economic paradigms that shape public education? The specificity of the Spanish educational context is emphasized, with attention to the complexities of bilingual education and cultural imperialism.

Keywords transformative pedagogies, trans* studies, Spain, bilingual education, public education

Em: This dialogue took place over the spring and summer of 2014 in numerous places in Madrid, from the cozy familiarity of our homes to queer bars and cafés in our neighborhood of Lavapiés. Lucas and I are two trans* identified friends in Madrid. We met because of a chance encounter at a photocopy store and connected over our experiences as trans* teachers in the Spanish public education system. While our positionalities are quite different, our friendship transcends nationality, age, and education. Lucas is a Spanish scholar with a PhD in sociology who, due to the precarious economic situation in Spain, combines research work at the university with teaching in an adult vocational training school. I am a recent college graduate from the United States with a BA in ethnic studies who works as an English teaching assistant in a bilingual public elementary school in Madrid. The choice of a dialogic approach as opposed to a traditional academic essay illustrates the need not only to talk about queer pedagogies but also be immersed in those pedagogies, queering our work. Since queer methodologies help to “highlight the instability of taken-for-granted meanings and resulting power

relations” (Brown and Nash 2010: 4), we chose to have an ongoing conversation because it allows for a more reflexive and horizontal work analyzing what trans*formative pedagogies could look like, based on our daily lives as teachers as well as our theoretical backgrounds as teachers. Our choice is not original; we are following the long tradition of using dialogues as transformative pedagogies, seeking to empower students and teachers as radical agents of change (among others, see Freire 1970; Wells 1999; Habermas 1984; Bakhtin 1981; Koschmann 1999).

Lucas: I have been a queer activist in Spain for over twenty years, traveling abroad often because of my research on LGTBQ studies, but meeting other trans* teachers is new to me. Although I have lived the majority of my life in Madrid and have developed an extensive queer network, before meeting Em I knew only one other trans* teacher in the entire community of Madrid. I have often longed for the opportunity to discuss how to better deal with trans* and queer issues in the classroom and also reflect on my own gender performance as a trans* teacher. As a researcher, I am aware of the subjective feeling of isolation that many trans* professionals face, while at the same time, many of us are trying to innovate how to make trans* issues a part of our teaching (Platero 2013). When I first met Em Harsin Drager I was so happy to find out that we share so many common grounds: a masculine presentation, while being hired as a female worker; teaching in the Spanish public education system in Madrid, in a period in which teaching is a job that the conservative government is presenting as suspicious; having done similar queer readings; and most important, sharing an experience of research on queer and trans* youth. Em is a young trans* activist, writer, and educator, who researches trans* youth cyber communities. I feel lucky that our lives have coincided in Madrid.

We started to have a series of conversations on critical pedagogy, sometimes based on how students perceived us, breaking not only what is expected in regards to the gender binary, but also being able to discuss topics that often are not included in the classroom, such as gender and sexuality. We thought that by bringing these discussions into the article we could better reflect not only on our personal experiences as trans* teachers in an open dialogue with other professionals but also frame them in a dynamic context of Spain—a country that is often infra-studied—and also within the context of bilingual education, specifically, the rise of English bilingual education. For this reason, we would like to start by introducing some brief notes on the current cultural and political context of Spain.

Firstly, it is important to note the impacts of the economic crisis, a crisis that is strongly linked to corruption (Kassam 2014a) and the criminalization of protests (Kassam 2014b). Spain has the highest unemployment rate in Europe

(Sedghi and Burn-Murdoch 2013) with thousands of young, educated people emigrating, creating a conservative backlash that threatens the notion of democracy. This affects civil rights and sexual citizenship, challenging how Spain is often portrayed internationally as being at the forefront of sexual minority rights.¹ To give a recent example, in April 2014, the Pew Research Center's Global Views on Morality poll showed that "Spain was the least homophobic country of the 40 surveyed," based on legal rights, which don't reflect the homophobia and transphobia experienced daily by the queer community. The approval of same-sex marriage in June 2005 and the recognition of transgender rights in the Gender Identity Law of 2007 (Act 3/2007) sets a "horizon of equality," a rhetoric of progress challenged as relevant civil rights (such as abortion, same-sex marriage, or access to universal health care) are under threat by the conservative government of President Mariano Rajoy.

Focusing on trans* people, the current legislation (Act 3/2007) recognizes the right of Spanish citizens (age eighteen and above) to identify a name and sex of choice on all documents if they have been diagnosed as "gender dysphoric"—but without "other mental health disorders"—by a doctor or psychologist and have undergone two years of medical treatment (usually interpreted as hormone treatment). Interestingly, gender reassignment surgery is not mandatory, and being sterile is not a requirement, though it can be argued that after two years of hormonal treatment, fertility is affected. Inspired by a notion of gender identity as irreversible, the new name must be unambiguous with respect to gender. The approval of Act 3/2007 can be credited to several factors, including the existence of an active trans* movement since the beginning of the democracy in the seventies, European and international influence on domestic legislation, and the recognition of new rights for women and same-sex couples in Spain, along with the implementation of gender equality policies. The national identity card has been the locus of transgender activism, since it is the most relevant form of legal documentation and is constantly used to establish a person's identity, including their gender identity.

Em: This is the dynamic context in which we live and our conversations have taken place. Our goal is to engage wider debates with other scholars, activists, and educators on what trans*formative pedagogies are and have the potential to be. We follow Frank Galarte, when he states (2014: 145–47), "Transpedagogies should offer students the tools they need to participate in the political and economic power structures that shape the boundaries of gender categories, with the goal of changing those structures in ways that create greater freedom." Trans*formative pedagogies imply a critical approach that goes beyond inclusion and assimilation of minoritized groups, that takes into account the social conditions and power relations involved in knowledge production (Elenes 2013: 343). As trans* teachers,

we embody an interruption to the norm. For us, being invested in trans*formative pedagogies is about disrupting notions of how the teaching-learning relationship takes place through fostering curiosity and providing students with skills for critical thought and inquiry. This dialogue is an exploration of trans*formative pedagogies.

Lucas: Since 2008, the Madrid government has been inviting native speakers to become English “language assistants” (*auxiliares de conversación*) in public schools, to promote bilingual education. This entrance of foreign teachers in the Spanish education system has been controversial, since they are hired outside the regular civil servant hiring procedure; meanwhile, there are increasingly severe cuts in hiring Spanish teachers. Em, how has your experience been as a teacher, and more importantly, as a trans* teacher from the United States?

Em: My experience has been overwhelmingly positive, but not without challenges, especially in regard to my relationships with other teachers in my school. I find that in a lot of the trans* authors I read, a common shared experience of trans* folks is the constant need to be aware and alert of one’s surroundings to navigate spaces. Trans* survival is about reading signals of those around you and adapting.² It brings to mind an S. Bear Bergman quote from *Butch Is a Noun* in which he says, “I am constantly scanning people to see how they are identifying me, how close it is to my actual identity, and making decisions on the fly about how to deal with that information. I read and respond in the same instant, a response determined by where I am, who I am with, and what I am doing” (Bergman 2006: 25). For years of my life I have been refining my skills of observation and navigation, but the process of moving outside my home country and working in a school where the primary language is not my own has really tested my ability to adapt and perform.

But as you mentioned, my gender performance is not the only thing that requires navigating. The position of an English language assistant in Spain has been extremely controversial for a variety of reasons. I have encountered a lot of Spanish teachers who have lost their jobs teaching English because of the increased certification levels they have to obtain; and US and British language assistants fill a lot of English positions in public and bilingual schools. The issue becomes more complicated by the fact that the language assistants are not required to meet the same standards of a civil servant in Spain. We enter the classroom with none of the certifications that the other teachers have. Given the current economic crisis in Spain, foreign English teachers are a cheap alternative to paying certified Spanish teachers. For the governing political party, the conservative Partido Popular (PP), foreign workers are also considered to be less threatening because we are nonpoliticized workers in that we do not belong to

teacher unions and we do not vote. I do, however, also have to mention that the expansion of the bilingual education program throughout public schools in Madrid, which has only been economically possible because of the relatively cheap cost of the language assistant program, has allowed for many young people of working-class and immigrant backgrounds to receive a bilingual education, when they would not have in the past. Because of the opportunities that English language proficiency provides, not only in Europe, but also globally, I find myself in favor of making bilingual education something that is free and accessible for all.³ So in this regard, I see the benefits of the language assistant program, despite the complicated context of the economic crisis and conservative political climate in Spain.

The disagreements are not just limited to Spanish jobs; they also extend into the school and school programming in terms of how cultural activities become divided in a bilingual school. At Halloween, a holiday not traditionally celebrated in Spain, many teachers in my school made it clear to me that they felt as if US teachers serve as extensions of US cultural imperialism by (among other things) bringing US holiday celebrations into the classroom. It was really interesting to me that this discussion came up when it did because just days prior was the Spanish Columbus Day celebration, a holiday that brings up tensions for me as someone from the US Southwest, a region that has many remaining open wounds from Spanish colonialism. In the Madrid public schools, we serve a high number of students with one or more immigrant parent(s), and dialogues about cultural activities in the classroom should focus on how to serve *all* our students. The response to US cultural imperialism in Spain should not be to glorify Spanish imperialism and thus alienate and isolate more students. How do we push back on Anglo-centrism while simultaneously decentering European colonial narratives? I think these different tensions are really important for understanding how complex public education is in Spain right now.

Lucas: Often I feel that the Spanish context is difficult to understand for people outside the country. Spain is in constant change since the transition to democracy in the 1970s, not always for the best. Nowadays, challenges in education concern the impact of neoliberal policies and privatization. A key component is the political role played by teachers both as civil servants and activists. I became a vocational training teacher almost by accident. In 2004, I was working as a researcher at a European-funded project on gender equality in the Complutense University when an older gay friend of mine told me his school was looking for a teacher who could teach Spanish Sign Language. He advised me to try to find a more stable job teaching outside the Spanish public university system, where jobs and funding are rapidly disappearing. I applied for the job in vocational training. Although some people think it is odd that I do research and teach young adults, I

really like doing these two jobs, while at the same time remaining an activist. It is a way to introduce an “academic activism perspective,” a task developed simultaneously within social movements and within the academy. I strongly identify myself with this position, one that requires a proactive attitude in questioning how knowledge production takes place. I agree with Ana Cristina Santos that this choice requires “double agency”—understood as the politically engaged role of scholar-activists within academia—which offers the opportunity to build and disseminate empirically grounded knowledge while maintaining a sense of social responsibility and political engagement (Santos 2012, 2013).

Nonetheless, my jobs are quite different from yours. Teaching young children requires a different set of skills than teaching young adults, along with different societal concerns, for instance, the ways in which children are perceived as vulnerable and innocent subjects that require protection. Claudia Castañeda talks about how the gender expressions of children are constantly scrutinized throughout their “process of becoming.”⁴ I wonder, how is your relationship with students, parents, and teachers? Does your gender presentation become an issue for your teaching practices?

Em: My students are all between the ages of six and nine years old, so they are very young and still at an early point in their socialization process. Being a gender-nonconforming teacher with young students is no problem; the challenge is their parents and other teachers in the school. Obviously, when I say that working with young children is no problem, it doesn’t mean that they aren’t full of questions and I don’t have to come well prepared to talk about my gender; it just means that they are more open to my answers.

Children are naturally very curious. My students will comment about every component of my gender performance, from my clothes to my mannerisms to the ways I play with them. One day during story time, all the children were sitting on the floor, gathered around my feet, and a first-grade student rolled up my pants to feel my leg. Mid-story she turned around and declared to the other students, “I told you Teacher Em is a boy! He has hair on his legs!” This curiosity is never-ending, but because what manifests in children as curiosity often manifests as fear in adults, my colleagues and my students’ parents silence these questions and comments, trying to move away from what they perceive as uncomfortable or inappropriate.⁵ Trans*formative pedagogies are about fostering this curiosity and allowing space for it in and out of the classroom so the unknown can be something that is discussable and sometimes even playful, rather than fearful or threatening.

Generally, to answer their questions we dialogue about gender and difference through storytelling, analogies, and role playing. For example, we read the children’s picture book *Elmer* (McKee [1968] 1989), a story about a patchwork

elephant who feels self-conscious for not being gray like the other elephants. By the end of the story, he realizes that he is loved and appreciated by the other elephants not despite his differences, but because of his differences. I asked the students how they would describe Elmer, and they decided on “Elmer is special and different.” A few students even made the connection, “Elmer is special and different like Teacher Em.” The book served as a frame of reference for their understanding of me and my differences.

I think that for me, dealing with parents and teachers in my school is a process of dealing with my own internalized homophobia and transphobia. Because of the historical construction of queer sexualities as deviant and perverse, along with the social construction of elementary school teachers as feminine, heterosexual, moralistic, pure, motherly, and so forth, I am always concerned as to how I am being perceived (Weems 1999). I find myself being hyperalert to how students express affection with me, while also always trying to avoid situations that other teachers could potentially consider problematic, such as being in the student restroom or being alone in the classroom with only one student. And while I am not sure how much my fears of surveillance are warranted because my gender has never been under *direct* scrutiny by parents and teachers at my school (at least to my knowledge), it is something that is always on my mind.

To return to what I was saying about the role of curiosity in fostering trans*formative pedagogies, I wonder how much fear of the unknown plays into my relationship with teachers and parents. While it has been nice to never be directly challenged about my gender, I have also never been directly asked about it either. Adults have a lot of ideas about manners and difference, and I find that it is generally considered polite to not comment on difference. Because of these ideas about what is polite or appropriate, my gender becomes something to be ignored, rather than discussed. For me, ignoring identity and difference can be equally as troubling as scrutinizing it.

Lucas: My own identity has changed over time, meanwhile I was already teaching, so my own understanding and how others perceived me have evolved. Also, the Spanish social context has changed so much over the past ten years, with a greater amount of acceptance and visibility of same-sex unions, although this does not always translate to less transphobia or discrimination against gender-non-conforming people. At first, because my masculine presentation and how I was teaching my classes—connecting disability to gender and sexuality—other teachers and students said that I had to be a lesbian. It was my political identity, being a member of the Madrid Lesbian Feminist Collective in the 1990s, a leader of the first LGTBQ college organization in Spain (Rosa que te quiero Rosa; RQTR), and also the author of the 2008 book titled *Lesbianas. Discursos y representaciones* (*Lesbians: Discourses and Representations*). Over the years, I found out that “trans”

described better how I felt, so not only my politics became more involved with trans* issues but also my research. My whole process has been public; any student or teacher can watch a video or find a text online in which I talk about it.

This shift shows in daily life, for instance, in how I name myself at school using my last name, Platero. I explain to students that my ID says Raquel, but that those who care about me use my chosen name, Lucas, and that at work it is appropriate to call me Platero. It is not as difficult as it sounds (laughing), and students are better at it than teachers. The more students that engage with me using Platero or gender-neutral and masculine terms, the more teachers do as well. This choice can be seen as risky at a sensitive place such as a school, but certainly it is not enough; as Valeria Flores states, as teachers we need to reflect on “how our own identities are articulated in the dynamics that can be developed in the classroom” (Schüller G. 2014). So, just announcing ourselves differently can create some ruptures in the norm, but transformation implies acting on the political dimension of being trans* in the classroom and becoming part of the education.

Em: I agree with you Lucas, while simply the act of having trans* folks in classrooms as teachers is important, that is not enough. Trans*formative pedagogies are active and don't simply happen on their own; however, I do have a hard time bringing my political self to school and having conversations about queer and feminist politics in a way I have never experienced in the United States. I feel more vulnerable as a foreigner, perhaps because of language barriers or perhaps because I am less familiar with the political terrain. On the other hand, Lucas, we have discussed how not being a Spaniard works to my advantage because it means I can slip by the attention and criticism of colleagues. I think it is important to put that observation in conversation with Jasbir Puar's work on US exceptionalism (Puar 2007). Because of my US citizenship, my gender is accepted and respected in a way that is not granted to all foreigners, especially nonwhite foreigners. In what ways do you think it is both beneficial and challenging to be a trans* teacher in your home country and native language?

Lucas: I think that in your case, you often “get away with” the possible disruption that your gender presentation causes because it is attributed to being a foreigner, which is great (in a way). But as you mention, not all foreigners are given that same privilege. My daily strategies as a Spanish native speaker include being able to use words and phrasings that avoid gender, which is a difficult task, since every word in Spanish is gendered; for example, *el vestido* (the dress) or *el agua* (the water) are masculine terms, for no particular reason. On the other hand, my training as a feminist included the awareness that women need to be visible in language rather than hidden in a general masculine term that obscures their contribution. So, I often say *chicos y chicas* (boys and girls) to name all students,

or try to use general feminine terms for students (by saying *chicas*, the feminine rather than the masculine, to refer to all of them), which comes in conflict with how I name myself in the masculine or the strategy of avoiding gender while talking about myself. My way out of this trouble is to use terms like *alumnado* or *infancia* (general terms for students and children, that are shorter and include the full spectrum of genders in a nonsexist way) while talking about myself in gender-neutral or masculine terms, if possible. It sounds confusing and requires some degree of consciousness, but it is my only way to remain political and still fair to my own feminist and queer choices. I am aware of the different efforts to use new pronouns in English, Swedish, and other languages, but so far, it has not been possible in Spanish beyond the attempt to use *chicos*, *chicas y chiques*, although this approach never gained much traction. When I speak English, using male pronouns feels easier for me, but that may be because I am not used to other ways of doing it.

Em: Working in two languages is interesting because of what gets lost. It is interesting because even though, in theory, you have two times the number of words to choose from, it often feels like you are very limited in terms of language because of misunderstandings and ambiguity. But really I think that there is a lot of possibility or potential in ambiguity. What interests me is how my students use English and Spanish. For example, because they hear other teachers talk about me in English using the pronouns *she* and *her*, they mimic this format for describing me. English is also a far less gendered language, so when they want to choose adjectives to describe me in English, those adjectives don't end with an *a* or *o* as they would in Spanish, denoting the gender of the person being described. When speaking in English, it is easy for them to stick to the feminine and align with how other English teachers expect them to talk about me.

In Spanish though, because for most of them it is their mother tongue (or at least a language they are more familiar with than English), they use language to gender me as they see me. While in English they consistently use *she* and *her*, in Spanish they almost exclusively use the masculine *o* to describe me. I have tried to figure out why this happens, and the best answer I have is that for them, English is a learned formula; it isn't the language to which they have any form of emotional attachment, so they can follow the format that is given to them. But then, in their own language, they use their own words to describe me as they see me. It's all very interesting and I haven't quite figured it out. But I do hear them get scolded quite often by their parents, grandparents, older siblings, and others for the ways in which they will gender me in Spanish, because it is intermittent and random.

For me, I prefer to use *they*, *them*, and *theirs* in English, which is impossible in Spanish. There is not this gender-neutral option, except for the innovative ways folks have used *x*'s, asterisks, and "at" symbols (@) to queer written Spanish. So

for me, I haven't found pronouns that feel really comfortable in conversational Spanish. This is why I often enjoy the irregularity of how my students gender me, because it changes from situation to situation; the randomness of it feels very queer. But, as I previously mentioned, because of the age of my students, most of our conversations about gender and difference happen through storytelling and role playing, not direct conversation about gender-neutral pronouns. They generally get very bored when I do try a direct approach [laughing].

Lucas: Teaching young adults is different. The subject I teach is quite broad; it tackles disability, communication, and different strategies to reach out to people with problems speaking, so intersectionality comes up all the time. I could just follow a more strict understanding of speech disorders, but for me it is impossible not to understand individuals and their needs in a complex and intertwined way, especially because teaching is a task that becomes personal (and political). We are not robots while teaching—students look at us all the time, judging our performance as we embody gender, sexuality, class, accent, and many other aspects that are not under our conscious control all of the time. My biography becomes (even more) relevant for my classes, since my parents are deaf, so I have a personal investment in fighting against ableism and the tyranny of “normalcy.” Even today, the Deaf community in Spain still faces discrimination, especially in regard to access to the labor market and higher education.

My approach to trans*formative pedagogies includes discussing difference, not only by the content I teach but also through taking into account the personal experiences of students, myself, and the participants they will be working with in the future. We discuss the false dichotomy between public and private, something that is challenged with the direct experiences of people who are perceived as a minority, people with disabilities for instance. My students are aware that in my class they can discuss more openly these issues of difference, assimilation, and normalization. Other teachers wonder why this is and often say things like “you get all the gay students” or “they tell you more things,” as if they themselves do not act in ways that may be discouraging the students from using their personal experiences by enacting heterosexism and ableism in the classroom.

Bringing alternative pedagogies also implies cooperation with other teachers. In your case, there are always two teachers in the classroom, a Spanish teacher and an English language assistant. How important is your alliance with Laura Martínez Madroño, a feminist teacher you work with, for you? How does it influence and/or mediate your gender presentation in the classroom?

Eucas: I think one of the biggest challenges of my job is sharing a classroom with another teacher and learning how to work in tandem. I have been really fortunate in that one of the main people I coteach with is someone who is highly committed

to feminist pedagogies. Working with her has been insightful because I get to experience her feminist praxis in the classroom. With that being said, though, it can also be complicated and challenging.

It is interesting that you mentioned the example of *chicos y chicas* earlier, because one of the first conflicts Laura and I had was about how to address the students in the classroom. I was really troubled by how she would always refer to the students as *chicos y chicas*. To me, it felt like an entirely unnecessary reinforcement of the gender binary. I was approaching the topic from my native language and my preference to avoid any “boys and girls” or “ladies and gentlemen” binary-type language. When I brought it up with Laura, she was adamant about how, for her, using *chicos y chicas* has been and is a very deliberate choice. For her, it is a validation of the feminine in a language in which the feminine gets enveloped by the masculine anytime you talk about/to a group of people with varying genders. In English we don’t have this same conflict because words like *kids* and *students* don’t denote any specific gender. For me, addressing the students as *chicos* felt more comfortable because it was not enforcing any binary. As a nonnative speaker, I wasn’t fully aware of the feminine erasure that that perpetuates. However, I do have a problem with the idea that naming the feminine or privileging the feminine in the classroom is an effective strategy for combating sexism and cissexism. While I think that naming the feminine is important, it isn’t the solution. Trans*formative pedagogies are about presenting a multiplicity of ideas about how one can live in this world, not just two.⁶ Laura and I try our best to do that. I feel fortunate to work with someone whom I have a symbiotic relationship with though, someone who pushes me to be a better teacher and critically examine my pedagogies.

I spend a lot of time reflecting back on my experiences in elementary school, thinking about what memories have stuck with me. I am always wondering what my students will remember from their time with Laura and me. Do you think about this, Lucas? What do you hope your students take away from their experiences of having you as a trans* teacher?

Lucas: One direct outcome of having a trans* teacher is getting to know us personally, and therefore, I believe in helping to reduce students’ prejudice by challenging wrong ideas and confronting stereotypes (Berry 1984; Brewer and Brown 1998; Cook 1978). But as I said earlier, this is not enough; in order to become transformative, a contribution to critical thinking must be enacted. This includes, for instance, showing the intersectional connections between ableism, sexism, classism, and other inequalities that are present in our society. It involves addressing different ways to express gender identity, as well as presenting heterogeneous representations of trans* lives that are raced, classed, and embodied differently. In regard to the embodiment of gender identities, I feel closer to Susan

Stryker's idea of *trans* as being defined by departing from the gender assigned at birth, rather than having a precise transition from one gender to another (Stryker 2008).

Since we are writing this conversation, on the last day of school in June I asked my students about what it was like for them to have a trans* teacher. I asked them to write some ideas and drop them anonymously in a box, while others wanted to actually talk about it. One eighteen-year-old girl said, "The first weeks of school we googled you and we found out a lot of things. First, we were surprised you were teaching us, since you were at the uni and so on. Later, we were concerned with not knowing how to talk to you, despite the fact you told us to call you Platero, because we saw other teachers address you differently. We were concerned about not offending you." Often, this kind of conversation does not take place with us, as teachers, but behind us and amongst the students. This discussion made me aware that my young adult students may feel trapped and unable to ask questions or be curious. I learned that my role needs to be more active in the future. Usually my approach is to provide a bit of information on how I would like to be addressed and move on, rather than focus on me or my own identity.

When I think about how could we make schools more trans*formative, what that process would involve, my dream begins at the grassroots level with schools, families, trans* experts, and so forth but also extends to the policy-making level. It requires a coalition, since the initiatives that are perceived as "from outside" the school, or that take place as a top-down mandate, can easily be boycotted or simply not implemented at all. Often, teachers, students, and parents have different needs in terms of deciding "what is the problem" and how to resolve it. Lastly, it is relevant to acknowledge that there are new social agents emerging, such as organizations that gather parents of trans* children, as we are seeing surface in Spain.

This kind of coalition strategy based on the need for consensus may seem too difficult, but there are great examples that show it can be done, for example, with the revolutionary 2011 Chilean high school students' protests. They challenged the whole education system, successfully transforming the role of the state in public education (see the 2013 documentary *Three Moments, a Shout* by Cecilia Barriga). At first, these underage students lacked social support for their demands, but surprisingly, they were able to create massive mobilizations and stopped a whole educational reform, along with starting discussions that included gender and sexuality. Using different channels, very young students introduced new conversation topics that became part of the political and social agenda. There are many ways in which trans*formative pedagogies can take place, not only using coalitions promoted by adults and administrations but also by granting opportunities to

young people to speak up. In my opinion, we have to take into account the current social movements that are demanding radical changes in education, such as the Marea Verde movement that fights for public education in Spain. The Marea Verde movement was started in 2011 by teachers, students, and families protesting against the cuts and reforms in education; the name comes from the green t-shirts with the slogan “Public school for everyone” (*Escuela pública de tod@s para tod@s*). These movements can address trans* rights and an integral trans*formation of education. How do you envision such schools and pedagogies?

Em: You know, it is really hard for me to answer this question in any sort of definitive or succinct manner. When I was writing my undergraduate thesis on trans* youth cyber-communities, I spent a lot of time thinking about different ways of envisioning trans* liberation outside an assimilationist framework. I am always thinking of different utopian scenarios of what a trans* positive world could look like, but with that being said, I don’t really think there will ever be an end point to this process of imagining and striving, and in this way, I have been highly influenced by Jose Esteban Muñoz’s work on utopia. Muñoz says, “Queerness is the thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing. . . . Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (Muñoz 2009: 1).

Truthfully, working in a classroom and teaching children is hard. I think most teachers would tell you that. Most days I leave the school thinking about some of the interactions I had with students and how I could have done better. And in that regard, I think teaching and being someone who is committed to education is quite similar to how Muñoz describes queerness—it is a constant striving and pushing for a future and/or different world.

So what does my utopian, trans*formational, trans* positive classroom look like? It is a space where children *and* teachers are free to experiment with who they are, trying on a variety of different identities and roles, feeling like they are supported and respected and affirmed throughout this process of self-exploration and formation. But how do we get there? That’s the striving component. That is the pushing and correcting and self-evaluating. And while this is very utopian and hard to tangibly imagine, I think that there are so many very tangible things we can do to begin this process. For example, I have mentioned the importance of fostering curiosity from a young age. I believe in creating learning environments in which the unknown is exciting and fun and open for conversation. Trans*formative pedagogies are about providing students with a multiplicity of narratives and possibilities, along with the tools to critically assess these narratives. Debunking the idea that young people (even *very* young people) are incapable of talking about gender

and difference allows for us to move beyond societal concerns about innocence and protection and begin to foster beautiful, beloved learning environments.

Lucas: As a final thought and connecting with your last comment on challenging the childhood innocence, I remembered Paul Amar's work, describing the hegemonic project of global governance and state administration that we face nowadays. In Amar's perspective, such a project requires social subjects, like children or women, who embody the typical global humanitarianism of someone that has to be protected, with or without their consent. These subjects are gendered, sexualized, aged, racialized, and class stratified as "victims," in order to justify a governance regime that "aim[s] to protect, rescue, and secure certain idealized forms of humanity," while imposing "security" as a justification for repression (Amar 2013: 6). Somehow, children become "queer subjects" who are difficult to control and are kept under surveillance while used as an argument in all moral and sexual panics.

Em: That brings us back to José Esteban Muñoz when, in *Cruising Utopia* he said, "Racialized kids, queer kids are not the sovereign princes of futurity" (Muñoz 2009: 95). There is so much rhetoric about protecting the innocence of *some* children that a whole bunch of other children are forgotten. And so for me, that is the goal of trans*formational pedagogies: to serve all children and eliminate the monitoring and shaming and reforming of queer and trans* kids in the name of innocence and protection.

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Notes

1. The universal understanding of citizenship first introduced by Thomas H. Marshall (1950) has been challenged by feminist and queer perspectives through critically examining the binary of public versus private. Sexual citizenship has been presented as a tool to study the role that sexuality and gender play when one is trying to access the rights that are linked to citizenship. Bell and Binnie (2002: 443–45) highlight how citizenship is taken up again in the 1990s, especially around "minority groups," generating debates around equality, different forms of families, and the denaturalization of sexuality (Weeks 1995).

Sexual citizenship is not only a critique of heterosexism, but it also poses the question of who is the citizen subject that is granted rights and duties (Evans 1993: 64). The concept of sexual citizenship is used when studying how people act out their identities and relationships, stating that citizenship contains gender, sexual and racial bias, among others (Richardson 2000).

2. The ability to observe and adapt to the world is commonly written about as a key component of trans* identity, but the experience of reading signs and modeling behavior to match people's expectations and assumptions is not limited to gender-nonconforming people. The concept of "code switching," which was originally coined as a way of describing the linguistic ways that bilingual or bicultural people are able to change and adapt their language for various situations, has expanded as a more general term for describing the performative survival skills of people of color (Anzaldúa 1999; Auer 1998; Nelson 1990). There are many similarities between linguistic code switching and the ways in which trans* people observe and navigate the world.
3. My decision to teach English abroad has been a constant process of evaluating and reevaluating the global reality of not only English linguistic imperialism but also US cultural imperialism. For me, I have come to find that English dominance is the outcome of continuing legacies of colonialism, US militarization, and capitalism. However, another reality of the situation is that linguistic imperialism is not going away anytime soon. For me, one of the main concerns becomes asking the question, "How do we make English language learning accessible to people of all races, classes, genders, and so forth?" This is something I am still figuring out, but I think that the answers fall somewhere within the trans*formational pedagogies framework.
4. Claudia Castañeda (2014: 59–61) underlines that children are always in the "process of becoming," as unfinished entities that undergo a development process, in which their gender identification and expression are central. Therefore, there is an ongoing suspicion of the possible influences children may receive, especially from those that embody queerness and transgression.
5. In "Questioning Safe Spaces: An Introduction," Barbara Stengel and Lisa Weems discuss the necessity of uncomfortable moments in learning: "Learning is necessarily dangerous: but humor facilitates the learning process by displacing fear with curiosity that feels safe" (2010: 506). For me, the combination of being open to *all* questions students have, along with using humor and storytelling as a way of discussing things that many teachers and parents find uncomfortable, allows for curiosity to be something that is not only allowed but also encouraged. When we make room for curiosity, we combat fear.
6. In Kevin Kumashiro's article, "Toward a Theory of Anti-oppression Education" (2000), he questions the notion that radical pedagogies should privilege the feminine in classroom spaces to challenge the reign of masculine methods of teaching and learning. Kumashiro poses the following questions: "When implementing feminist pedagogies that strive to teach in feminine ways or empower girls to enter non-traditional fields, one might ask, is the goal of these pedagogies to challenge gender oppression? If so, who is the Other that these pedagogies are targeting? Only girls, and perhaps non-hegemonically masculine boys as well? What about other people oppressed on the basis of their gender, such as transgender and intersexed people?" The questions that Kumashiro poses reflect the conflict that Laura and I have had in the classroom. By acknowledging and naming the girls in class, how are those methods further contributing to the oppression of students with nonnormative genders?

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Bathrooms and Beyond

Expanding a Pedagogy of Access in Trans/Disability Studies

CASSIUS ADAIR

Abstract Drawing on personal teaching experiences, this pedagogical reflection asks whether a “pedagogy of access” might connect various strands of trans, disability, and critical race teaching methodologies. Such a pedagogical practice centers questions of nonnormative embodiment and histories of inclusion/exclusion from academic spaces within “trans” instructional praxis.

Keywords access, disability, engaged learning, embodiment, bathrooms

“I mean, I guess a wheelchair could fit in here,” one of my students says to a classmate, swinging open the wide door of the single bathroom, “I don’t know. How big are wheelchairs? Aren’t we supposed to be talking about wheelchairs?” There is a pause; her classmates fidget but remain silent. It’s 5 p.m., right after class on a winter Wednesday, and all eight of the students in my Transgender Politics and Community Activism course are crowded in front of a brand-new gender-inclusive bathroom. We’re on the first floor of a mixed-use academic/university housing building, the same building that houses the office from which I had received permission to design and teach this small “engaged-learning” class.¹ On this particular evening, which marked the official beginning of their self-designed project to map gender-inclusive bathrooms and assess their accessibility, my students have suddenly discovered that they are unsure how to define “access.”

On one hand, my students are familiar with disability issues; fully half identify themselves as people with disabilities, while only a quarter of my students (and I) identify as trans or gender nonconforming. On the other hand, the logic of bathroom accessibility on the project’s *gendered* axis—is this bathroom marked “men”/“women” or not—seems to have created a false sense that assessing accessibility on an *ability* axis will likewise be binary: is this bathroom marked with the familiar person-in-wheelchair logo or not? It is this initial encounter with

the built environment that creates fissures in this logic; in order to map which gender-inclusive bathrooms are accessible to people with a variety of potential disabilities, my students realize that they need to start asking different questions.

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My students are certainly not the first to experience the complexities of working at the nexus of transgender and disability theories and activism. A glance through the inaugural issue of *TSQ* (Currah and Stryker 2014) shows a sustained and multifaceted concern with disability: Elisa A. G. Arfini (2014) on “Transability,” micha cárdenas (2014) on “Sick,” Trystan T. Cotton (2014) on “Surgery,” Justus Eisfeld (2014) on “International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems,” and Jasbir K. Puar (2014) on “Disability”; these are just a few of the “key concepts” for transgender studies that specifically concern this intersection. Fully six years before *TSQ*, *Disability Studies Quarterly* had already published an article on “the threads of commonality in transgender studies” (Mog 2008). On the issue of bathroom politics alone, both nonacademic pieces such as “Calling All Restroom Revolutionaries” and “Dear Austin Special Needs Bathroom” and academic book chapters by Alison Kafer and Isaac West have discussed how “peeing is political” for both trans people and people with disabilities (Chess et al. 2006; Florez 2010; Kafer 2013; West 2014). Indeed, my students appreciated the rich critical turn toward trans and disability studies. Encountering these texts allowed students to blend the physical labor of trudging from bathroom to bathroom during a record-cold Michigan winter with new theoretical understandings of privacy, medicalization, and embodiment.

Our reading of “Calling All Restroom Revolutionaries,” which includes an expansive checklist for assessing restroom accessibility at the end of the essay, was especially generative. Checklist questions such as “Is [the toilet paper holder] too far from the toilet to reach without losing one’s balance?” not only brought up specific metrics of accessibility that my students and I had not yet considered but also productively destabilized students’ confidence that they could adequately assess whether a built environment was accessible (Chess et al. 2006: 204). “Whose balance is the standard?” my students wondered: just because *we* might not lose our balance while testing the toilet paper, that doesn’t mean that someone who is shorter-statured, or whose body might shake without warning, wouldn’t lose balance. Eventually, student frustration at not being able to clearly determine whether a space was “accessible” or “inaccessible” (as one might determine, based on signage, that a restroom was or was not “gendered”) began to give way to conversations about normative embodiment, bodily diversity, and “compulsory able-bodiedness” (McRuer 2006). As students moved into and within strange

bathrooms and asked themselves whether people with different bodies could also perform those movements, they seemed to become more and more convinced that such questioning and guesswork was simultaneously productive and inadequate. In doing so, they gained the ability to “challenge [the] cultural logic . . . that believes that ‘the physical body is the site of identic intelligibility,’” a challenge that A. Finn Enke (2012: 75), quoting Elaine Ginsberg (1996), defines as central to both disability and trans theories.

* * *

In broader local and national contexts, however, the intellectual and practical struggles around accessibility and bathrooms take on a new valence; what is the role of gender-inclusive restrooms inside academic buildings or local coffee shops when so many people (including, of course, trans and disabled people) are being turned away at the academy’s front door? Embedded within the question of physical access is always the question of social access. This is, of course, a key tenet of disability activism and theory, and an idea that my students grappled with directly as they attempted to define “accessibility” for the purposes of their bathroom-mapping project. However, when one situates the project of bathroom mapping within the larger context of the neoliberal university, the scope and the stakes of “accessibility” are inseparable from issues of race and class. Although one subgroup of students did explore and map gender-inclusive and “accessible” bathrooms in various off-campus locations, including those not necessarily primarily patronized by students, most of those locations still cater toward a generally wealthier and whiter demographic than would be present in the rest of Southeast Michigan. Most of the bathroom mapping did indeed take place on campus, whose most recently distributed demographics report the percentage of students whose family income is more than \$200,000 per year at 22.4% (University of Michigan Student Affairs Research 2008). Additionally, I taught Transgender Politics and Community Activism during the same term that students of color, Black students in particular, were mobilizing against racist and exclusionary treatment by both university policies and their white classmates (Amron and Bryan 2014). Constant micro- and macroaggressions create barriers for students of color to equitable access to *all* university and community environments, not just restrooms. Furthermore, as Nirmala Erevelles (2000) has argued, educational systems in the United States have long used “tracking” practices in elementary and secondary schools, which use the language of ability and disability to restrict educational access for poor students and students of color. These are concerns that my course did not—to its detriment—take as its primary object of analysis, although we did discuss the parallel activist

movements occurring on campus and the role of the university in the gentrification of its surrounding neighborhoods.

* * *

What questions of embodiment, gender, and ability become salient when critical trans and disability studies pedagogies consider issues of access—both physical access and social access—as *central* concerns? I can imagine an engaged-learning course of the type that my students and I participated in this past winter, in which students design and implement a community-engagement project related to issues such as gender or ability, but one that is less attached to an identitarian framework than my course (Transgender Politics). As students begin to understand nonnormative bodies as having shifting and complex needs, shapes, abilities, and desires, an instructor might bridge those understandings to structural questions about who benefits from *normativity's* being the precondition of access itself. Thus the answer to my student's question—doesn't "access" mean we're supposed to be talking about wheelchairs?—is both yes and no. A critical trans/disability pedagogy might invite students to see questions of nonnormative embodiment as coextensive with questions of fundamental educational in/exclusions, to see bathroom politics on campus as part of a pattern of university-enforced hierarchies. A thematic focus on "access" as a critical lens offers a way to explore new forms of resistant pedagogies, while still retaining attention to the specific needs—peeing included—of trans subjects.

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Acknowledgments

My class was designed in collaboration with the local nonprofit organization Transgender Michigan. My students and I later collaborated with the on-campus organization Trans*Form. Thank you to Rachel Crandall and Susan Crocker of Transgender Michigan for guiding the initial phases of the project, a member of Trans*Form for creating the project's primary digital infrastructure, and Denise Galarza Sepúlveda and Matthew Countryman for their pedagogical mentorship. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Tobin Siebers.

Note

1. An “engaged-learning” course at the University of Michigan combines traditional coursework with work involving communities outside the university.

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Trans* Disruptions

Pedagogical Practices and Pronoun Recognition

TRE WENTLING

Abstract There are an increasing number of university students who express a fluid gender embodiment and identity, resisting binary gender categories as well as binary transgender categories. The use of gender-neutral, as well as third-person plural pronouns, disrupts linguistic gender hegemony and creates particular gendered meanings. With the increasing number of trans* people who queer the gender binary, how does language affirm or deny their personhood? This research note uses data from an online survey (N = 557) to examine teachers' recognition of trans* individuals' pronouns. Results demonstrate that trans* students who identify as genderqueer tend to use gender-neutral and third-person pronouns. However, educators are less affirming when it comes to gender-neutral pronoun recognition. Educators must resist taken-for-granted gender attribution processes and explicitly ask all students to state their pronouns. Accurate pronoun recognition supports trans* students' identity development and honors their personhood.

Keywords trans*, identity, pronoun recognition, pedagogy

Educators engaged in critical pedagogy are tasked with developing productive learning spaces that both respect and invite students' multiple, embodied differences into a curriculum that inspires action and social change (Freire 1970). To do so, teachers must acknowledge students' full personhood and identities. Teachers are likely to have a diverse group of students who identify as cisgender, transgender, genderqueer, or gender nonconforming.¹ An increasing number of university students express a fluid gender embodiment and identity, resisting both traditional binary gender categories (i.e., women and men) as well as binary transgender categories, such as female-to-male and male-to-female (Beemyn 2008; Wilchins 2004). My research suggests that students do in fact identify and express their gender in multiple ways, and that educators are more likely to use correct pronouns when students reinforce the gender binary. Educators must resist taken-for-granted gender attribution processes in order to honor and value each student's personhood. This can be simply achieved by asking all students to indicate their pronouns—much in the same way students introduce themselves by their name.

Trans* Identity and Recognition

Identities are personal, phenomenological essences of the *self* (Lindesmith, Strauss, and Denzin 1999) and yet are also simultaneously “formed in dialogue with significant others” (Rubin 2003: 15). Gender identity is the internal identity of oneself as male, female, in-between, or beyond the gender binary (Bornstein 1994; Nestle, Howell, and Wilchins 2002). The term *transgender* is used as an umbrella term to describe gender identities that differ from expectations based on birth sex assignments (Cromwell 1999; Singer 2014). Despite the notion that *transgender* is inclusive of multiple and diverse gender identities and expressions, the catch-all category erases important racial, class, and sexual differences (Davidson 2007; Namaste 2000; Valentine 2007). The term has also been critiqued for conflating gender-conforming identities with gender-nonconforming identities (Singer 2014). In response to the ways that the term erases and marginalizes lived complexities, the term *trans** has emerged to reflect identities and expressions beyond *male-to-female* or *transwoman* and *female-to-male* or *transman*, to include genderqueer and gender-nonconforming people (Tompkins 2014: 26). I use *trans** in this research note to reflect the diverse realities of gender identity and embodiment among people who do not identify with their sex assignment at birth. Regardless of one’s affinity with ever-evolving terminology, teachers must honor students’ gender identity and pronoun recognition.

Language is a system of power. It socially constructs that which has meaning and therefore has the potential to affirm or deny personhood (Wilchins 2004). Traditional gender pronouns like *he* and *she* rely on two assumptions: first, that anyone who is not *he* is *she* and second, that anyone who is neither *he* nor *she* is impossible. Yet, *trans** subjectivities demonstrate that there are multiple identities and expressions that disrupt the gender binary and exist beyond it (Bornstein 1994; Cromwell 1999; Feinberg 1998; Hines 2006; Stone 1992; Wilchins 1997). Gender-neutral pronouns, such as *sie*, *zie*, and *hir* as well as the third-person plural (i.e., *they/them*), not only disrupt linguistic gender hegemony but also create particular gendered meanings beyond and outside the gender binary. The use of these gender-neutral and third-person plural pronouns is becoming more popular in writing and day-to-day conversations (Valentine 2007).²

*Trans** university students expect to be recognized and supported by the academic institutions that they attend (Beemyn 2008; Beemyn and Rankin 2011). Some student affairs professionals and advocates suggest enhancing the campus climate for *trans** students through improved practices and revised policies related to health care, residence halls, bathrooms, locker rooms, as well as gender and name change procedures (Beemyn et al. 2005; McKinney 2008; Pusch 2003; Singh, Meng, and Hansen 2013). However, less attention has been paid to classroom interactions between teachers and *trans** students (Lovaas, Baroudi, and

Collins 2002). This research note explores trans* students' pronoun selections (i.e., traditional, gender neutral, or none at all) and the extent to which educators recognize these.

Sample

The data for this note are from a mixed-methods research project about trans* citizenship. Participants eighteen years and older, who identified with the term *transgender*, responded to an online survey that included closed- and open-ended questions about gender identification, desired name and pronoun recognition, and demographic information. Similar to other trans-related research projects (Cromwell 1999; Rubin 2003; Schilt and Connell 2007), I relied on the snowball sampling technique to recruit participants. I sent e-mail invitations to 175 universities listed on the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals directory; 113 US-based community centers, support groups, and associations; as well as trans-specific listservs and personal networks. Although Internet surveys tend to exclude user groups based on age, education, income, and language (Zickuhr and Smith 2012), the Internet has been important for trans* identity development, allowing access to information and connectivity to other trans* people (Beemyn and Rankin 2011; Shapiro 2004). Thus, the use of an online survey was ideal for the purpose of this research.

The analytical sample for this research note includes 557 respondents. The sample is predominantly white (82 percent); 8 percent of people identified as bi- or multiracial and 6 percent as Black, Native American, or Asian. Participants are youthful, with 59 percent ranging in age between eighteen and twenty-four years old. Approximately 40 percent of the participants have earned some college credit, but no degree; 7 percent have earned an associate's degree, another 24 percent a bachelor's degree, and 16 percent a graduate or professional degree.

Method and Results

The focus of this special issue interrogates how formal education and its agents (e.g., teachers) may enact "genderism"—that is, the privileging of gender conformity rather than embracing and valuing gender transgression (Bilodeau 2007; Wilchins 2002). Examining how often teachers recognize trans* individuals' pronouns offers a window into pedagogical practices that honor or value the individual personhood of each student. The following results are based on the chi-square test of association using three survey questions to examine gender identity, pronoun, and recognition among teachers. The first question accounts for gender identity: *What is your primary gender identity today?* (1 = man, 2 = woman, 3 = part-time man/part-time woman, 4 = genderqueer). The second asks about pronouns: *What set of pronouns do you prefer?* (1 = he/him/his, 2 = she/her/her, 3 = sie/

zie/hir/they, 4 = none). Finally, a Likert-style survey question inquires about pronoun recognition by teachers: *Teachers refer to me using my desired pronouns* (1 = all of the time, 2 = most of the time, 3 = half of the time, 4 = some of the time, 5 = none of the time, 6 = not applicable).

Overall, 56 percent of the sample indicated their gender identity as men, 17 percent as women, 6 percent as part-time man/part-time woman, and 22 percent as genderqueer. There is a statistically significant and strong association between gender identity and pronoun preference ($p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .620$). Among all the participants who identify as men, 97 percent use masculine pronouns (see table 1). Similarly, among the individuals who identify as women, 94 percent use feminine pronouns. Of the participants who identify as part-time man/part-time woman, 39 percent use masculine pronouns, 29 percent use feminine pronouns, and another 26 percent use no pronouns at all. Among the participants who identify as genderqueer, 42 percent use gender-neutral or third-person plural pronouns, and 34 percent use masculine pronouns. Thus, the majority of participants who identify within the gender binary overwhelmingly use traditional gender pronouns. However, pronouns vary among the participants whose primary gender identity disrupts the gender binary.

In general, 50 percent of participants reported that teachers recognize their pronouns all of the time, 26 percent reported that teachers inconsistently use their pronouns, and 24 percent said that teachers use their pronouns none of the time. To examine the effects of *genderism* and teacher pronoun recognition, I created two analytic categories based on participants' gender identity. The first category, *transnormative*, includes participants whose gender identity is within the gender binary (i.e., man or woman); the second category, *transqueer*, includes participants whose gender identity disrupts the gender binary, either because they are not consistently one gender (part-time man/part-time woman) or because they identify outside or beyond it (e.g., genderqueer).

The results show that there is a statistically significant and moderate association between gender identity and teachers' use of pronouns ($p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .477$). As shown in table 2, for trans* individuals whose identity is within the gender binary, 63 percent reported that teachers use the correct pronouns all the

Table 1. Gender Identity and Pronouns

	<i>He/Him/His</i> % (N)	<i>She/Her</i> % (N)	<i>Sie/Zie/Hir/They</i> % (N)	<i>None</i> % (N)	<i>Total</i>
Man	96.8 (300)	1.6 (5)	0.3 (1)	1.3 (4)	310
Woman	2.1 (2)	93.6 (88)	3.2 (3)	1.1 (1)	94
Part-time man/woman	38.7 (12)	29.0 (9)	6.5 (2)	25.8 (8)	31
Genderqueer	34.4 (42)	9.8 (12)	41.8 (51)	13.9 (17)	122

$p < .001$.

Table 2. Teachers' Use of Pronouns

	<i>All Times</i> % (N)	<i>Most/Half/Some Times</i> % (N)	<i>None of the Time</i> % (N)	<i>Total</i>
TransNormative	63.4 (256)	23.3 (94)	13.4 (54)	404
TransQueer	15.0 (23)	32.0 (49)	52.9 (81)	153

$p < .001$.

time, whereas only 15 percent of participants whose gender identity disrupts the gender binary reported the same. Among respondents whose identity disrupts the gender binary, 53 percent reported that teachers never recognized their pronouns, while 13 percent of those who identify within the gender binary reported the same. Almost one-fourth of respondents within the transnormative category and one-third within transqueer were inconsistently recognized by teachers.

Conclusion

Research suggests that the university and college institutions that have incorporated policies and practices concerning trans* students are still less supportive of genderqueer and gender-nonconforming students (Beemyn and Rankin 2011). This research note provides evidence that educators are in fact less affirming of genderqueer and gender-nonconforming students, at least when it comes to pronoun recognition. My research also suggests that, although few, there are trans* students who use pronouns that would appear to contradict their gender identity. The practice of misgendering (intentionally or unintentionally) as well as the reinforcement of the gender binary are two ways that trans* people experience microaggressions (Nadal, Skolnik, and Wong 2012).³ Therefore, educators need to reconsider pedagogical practices that assume students' pronouns based on gender presentation or forenames. Asking all students to explicitly name their pronouns disrupts the linguistic hegemony embedded in taken-for-granted gender attribution processes. Moreover, it interrupts beliefs that cisgender identity is essentially normative while trans* subjectivities are socially constructed through discourse and action (Nordmarken 2014).

These results are useful in highlighting an understudied phenomenon, but there are a few notable caveats. First, the results are based on a convenience sample and cannot be used to make any generalizations. Second, it is based on respondents' account of teachers' behavior and includes participants' present and past experiences. Third, gender identity is fluid, yet these results reflect participants' gender identity at the time of the survey. More research is required to further our understanding of pronoun recognition among teachers, which could also take into consideration differences among teachers across academic disciplines. Future research should examine teachers' attitudes toward trans* students; teachers'

sense of, and access to, institutional support for trans* inclusion; and the effects of teacher recognition on trans* students' learning and performance.

Let this research note be a reminder to educators that the recognition of trans* students, including the correct use of pronouns, is supportive of their identity development and fundamental to their personhood. Students who are invited into learning spaces—as their full selves—are more likely to contribute and engage in the curriculum and learning community. As Jacqui Alexander points out, “outside of courses for which there is mandatory matriculation, the desire to show up stems from our curriculum that brings a promise to satisfy some yearning, as faint or well-formed as it might be, to imagine collectivities that can thrive outside of hegemony’s death grip” (2005: 8). Educators must create the space for students to introduce themselves with both their name and pronoun. This practice takes work, and this work is necessary.

Tre Wentling is a PhD candidate in sociology at Syracuse University. His research and teaching interests include sex and gender, LGBT studies, governance, citizenship, and health inequalities. He is a coeditor of *Sex, Gender, and Sexuality: The New Basics* (2012).

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Paisley Currah and Natalee M. Simpson, without whom this article would not have been possible. I would also like to acknowledge the thoughtful feedback from the anonymous reviewer.

Notes

1. *Cisgender* is a term that encompasses identities and embodiments in which sex and gender align or are “on the same side” (Aultman 2014: 61).
2. See Forge (2015). for a resource guide that helps with pronunciation and conjugation.
3. Microaggressions encompass the “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward members of oppressed groups” (Nadal, Skolnik, and Wong 2012: 59).

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Introduction to “Policies”

PAISLEY CURRAH

We are delighted to debut “Policies” in this issue of *TSQ*. This recurring section will feature work that details how change happens—or is prevented from happening—in the arenas of rules, regulations, and other technologies of governance. While the visibility of trans issues has never been greater, seemingly small-scale mechanisms and decisions at the micropolitical level of institutions and bureaucracies are often overlooked, although they can have considerable effects on transgender lives. In this issue’s “Policies” section, we feature two policy pieces related to this issue’s theme of trans*formational pedagogies. First, Genny Beemyn and Dot Brauer examine the failure of colleges to make it possible for students to change name, gender, and pronoun preference on campus records. Don Romesburg then reports on the challenges of adding LGBT curriculum after California became the first state in the United States to mandate its inclusion. We welcome proposals for potential submissions to this section, and we are especially eager for proposals examining policies outside the United States.

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Trans-Inclusive College Records

Meeting the Needs of an Increasingly Diverse US Student Population

GENNY BEEMYN and DOT BRAUER

Abstract This article focuses on one area in which most US colleges and universities fail to meet the needs of trans students: the ability to use a name and gender other than the name and gender assigned to them at birth and to indicate their personal pronouns on campus records and documents. After explaining why name, gender, and pronoun processes are needed, we present cases studies of how aspects of these processes were carried out at the University of Michigan and the University of Vermont, two of the first schools to make these changes. By describing the means by which these institutions did so, we hope to encourage more colleges and universities to develop similar policies and procedures.

Keywords campus policies, college information systems, trans data collection, trans students, trans-supportive colleges

Colleges and universities in the United States largely remain entrenched in a gender binary and, as a result, fail to provide equitable access, creating an uncomfortable if not a hostile environment for students who identify as gender nonconforming. Trans students face discrimination in campus housing, bathrooms, locker rooms, and athletics, which are commonly divided into “female” and “male”; are invisible in most college curricula; and lack access to supportive health care and counseling services (Beemyn 2005; Beemyn, Curtis, et al. 2005; Bilodeau 2009; Goodrich 2012; McKinney 2005). A growing body of literature (Beemyn, Domingue, et al. 2005; Hobson 2014; Singh, Meng, and Hansen 2013) offers recommendations and best practices for addressing the needs of and improving the campus climate for trans students, but relatively few colleges and universities have implemented any of these policies (Beemyn 2015).

In this article, we focus on one area in which most US colleges and universities fail to meet the needs of trans students: the ability to use a name and gender other than the name and gender assigned to them at birth and to indicate their personal pronouns on campus records and documents. These changes are

lawful in all states and have been made easier to implement at most colleges as a result of the pioneering work of the University of Vermont, the University of Michigan, and other schools that have modified the most commonly used student information system software (Beemyn 2015). By not offering this option when it is readily available, colleges and universities violate the privacy of trans students; publicly out them, thereby exposing them to possible violence and harassment; and create a situation in which the institution will inadvertently discriminate against them in gender-segregated environments like housing, bathrooms and locker rooms, and athletic settings. By explaining why name, gender, and pronoun processes are needed and how these changes can be accomplished, we hope to encourage more colleges and universities to develop such policies.

The Importance of a Trans-Inclusive Records Process

While more trans students are coming out before or when they enter college, many who want to change their first names legally are not in a position to do so. They may be financially dependent on a parent(s) who is opposed to the change, or they may be financially independent and cannot afford the cost of the legal process, which can be as much as a couple of hundred dollars. Newly out students may not be ready to take the major step of a legal name change, even if they are publicly presenting as a gender other than their gender assigned at birth. Thus, from a practical standpoint, it is a valuable service for colleges and universities to offer trans students the ability to use a first name other than their legal first name on campus records and documents, including course and grade rosters, advisee lists, directory listings, e-mail addresses, and unofficial transcripts. Such an option also helps students who are known by a nickname and international students who wish to anglicize their first names.

Giving students the ability to change the gender marker on campus records is similarly an important accommodation, even though they are largely limited at this point to switching from one binary gender category to the other. Trans people cannot change the gender on their birth certificates in many states without evidence of gender-affirming surgery, and in some states, they also cannot change their driver's licenses without such proof (Lambda Legal 2015; National Center for Transgender Equality 2013). However, physicians in the United States generally do not perform gender-affirming surgeries on individuals under eighteen years of age, making it impossible for traditionally aged college students to change their gender marker before entering college. The surgeries are not covered under most private or student health insurance, thus few students will be able to do so during college without parental financial support. Furthermore, many students who present as a gender different from their assigned gender have no interest in surgery; they do not feel that they have to change their bodies in

prescribed ways to identify and present as their true selves. Others are not ready to make such a life-changing decision in their late teens or early twenties (Rankin and Beemyn 2012). Colleges and universities should not police students' gender by requiring major, expensive surgeries that they may not want or be ready for, in order to make a relatively simple informational change to their campus records.

While changing the name and gender marker on students' records, or giving them the ability to indicate the pronouns they use for themselves, may seem like small matters from the perspective of the institution, the value to students can be immeasurable. It is insulting and hateful to dismiss a trans person's identity by not referring to them as how they see themselves. For students who are not known publicly as trans, a mismatch between their birth and chosen name or between their assigned pronouns and the ones they actually use can also lead to their being outed, such as when their instructors call roll in class, when they apply for a job and have to submit a transcript, whenever they have to present their campus identification, and every time someone looks them up in the institution's online directory. In short, trans people who are not read as trans and who are not out are at constant risk of having their identity disclosed should their assigned name appear, which makes them targets for discrimination. Given the high rates of harassment and violence against gender-nonconforming people (Grant, Mottet, and Tanis 2011; Stotzer 2009), colleges and universities should not ignore the perilous positions in which they place their trans students.

Having a student's gender marker match how they present is likewise important for preventing harassment and discrimination and for avoiding possible legal action. Because college officials use gender in assigning campus housing, determining which bathrooms and locker rooms students are permitted to use, and deciding on which sports team students can compete, a gender marker that does not correspond to how a student identifies might mean that their institution will place them in unfair, uncomfortable, and potentially dangerous situations. Moreover, denying a student access to facilities consistent with their gender identity is considered a violation of Titles IV and IX by the US Departments of Justice and Education, and such complaints of discrimination are subject to investigation by the government's Office of Civil Rights ("Resolution Agreement" 2013; US Department of Education 2014). While litigation involving the rights of trans students has been limited to date, colleges and universities that fail to address the needs of their trans students today are increasingly likely to find themselves facing lawsuits in the future (Hunt and Pérez-Peña 2014).

Student Information Systems

College information systems that communicate with federal and state agencies, such as with the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration,

are required to use a student’s legal name and the gender on their birth certificates to prevent record mismatches, so a different name and gender cannot be used on financial aid and campus employment records. A student’s legal name is also required on official transcripts because they are considered legal documents (some colleges insist that student identification cards and diplomas are also legal documents and thus require a student’s legal name, but this is typically a campus practice, rather than a legal need). Colleges and universities are free to let a student be known by a different gender and first name, as well as to include their pronouns, on records that are internal to a given campus. But changing information systems to allow students to indicate their chosen name and the pronouns they use is not simple. The assumptions that an individual goes by their birth name, that gender is a binary, and that an individual’s pronouns correspond to their assigned gender are woven into the fabric of existing information systems, which means not only having to make wholesale changes to software but also having to educate the software managers and programmers about the need for these changes (Johnson 2015; Ingraham, Pratt, and Gorton 2015).

Complicating matters, colleges and universities rely on multiple information systems for data collection, management, and communication within and between individual offices and departments. These systems often do not collect, code, or share information in the same way. The diagram below illustrates the Banner “preferred name” interface at the University of Vermont (UVM). Although

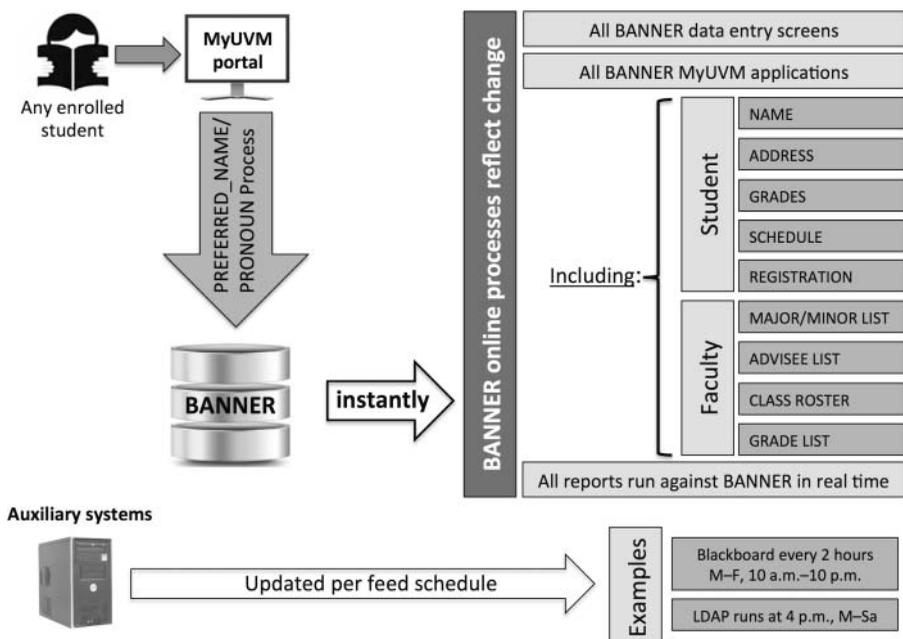


Figure 1. University of Vermont Pronoun and Preferred Name Field Process Flow.

the UVM's information system is less complex than systems at some larger campuses, changing its software still required significant planning and coding in order to ensure compliance with the Family Educational and Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations and to avoid disruptions in data transfer between existing systems.

The intricacy of campus information systems makes modifying software complicated; even a seemingly small change to the main database requires adjustments to virtually all other systems. While providing chosen name and pronoun options throughout a college's information systems is very achievable, doing so requires an investment of time upfront, followed by periodic checking and testing, and the periodic retraining of administrative staff.

A Note on the Inappropriateness of the Term *Preferred Name*

The term *preferred name* became associated with creating a trans-inclusive name option on records in part because it is the designation of a field within the Banner student information database. The "preferred name" field was used at the University of Vermont to give students the option to specify a first name other than their legal name (see the section on Banner below). Since then, *preferred* has been widely adopted among trans advocates in higher education to describe the chosen first name of students, as well as the pronouns that students use to refer to themselves.

While the word *preferred* can be accurate for students who seek to change their name in information systems because they go by a nickname, this usage when applied to trans students often feels trivializing. It is the name and pronouns that they use, not their "preferred" ones; using any other name or pronouns is inappropriate, just as it would be for nontrans students. While it is understandable how the term *preferred* took hold, the higher education community needs to replace it with other language, like "chosen" first name. Pronouns require no modifier; they are simply the pronouns someone uses for themselves.

Case Study 1: PeopleSoft at the University of Michigan

The University of Michigan is credited with being the first college to enable students to use a chosen name on all nonofficial campus records and documents. The issue arose in 2003 at a Trans Town Hall meeting sponsored by the Task Force on the Campus Climate for Transgender, Bisexual, Lesbian, and Gay (TBLG) Faculty, Staff, and Students, a group formed by the provost to examine the environment for LGBTQ people at the University of Michigan. Trans students and staff told the task force that "changing one's name at the University is very hard" and is especially a hindrance for individuals who are not openly trans, who constantly face being outed because their "old names" often remain on records and documents, even when they have legally changed them. In response, the task force included a recommendation in its final report in April 2004 that a

subcommittee for name changes be created to identify the scope of the problem and how it might be addressed (Task Force on the Campus Climate 2004). The subcommittee was subsequently formed, and its report, submitted in September 2005, recommended that Wolverine Access, the university's online administrative system, be upgraded to allow students and staff to input a "preferred name" that would appear in the University of Michigan online directory (TBLG Subcommittee for Name Changes 2005). This recommendation was accepted, and the change went into effect in April 2007. The following year, the university broadened the use of an individual's chosen name to all records in PeopleSoft, except where a legal name was required, such as on payroll records, license certifications for faculty and staff, and student transcripts (Frank 2007).

Case Study 2: The Banner System at the University of Vermont

In 2003, a graduate student who documented the difficulties experienced by trans students prompted UVM to establish a manual workaround to allow trans students to have their chosen first names appear on their campus ID cards and class rosters. In 2005, UVM updated its nondiscrimination policy to include "gender identity and expression," created trans-inclusive policies in housing and campus health care, and began a trans awareness training program that resulted in more than sixty presentations being given to students, staff, and faculty. In addition, since 2003, a student-led group has organized an annual daylong conference on trans topics for members of the campus community and other area colleges. All these steps helped prepare the university to support the records change project.

The version of the Banner system used by the University of Vermont includes a field for an "alternate first name." However, the field, which Banner calls a "preferred name," is essentially a nonfunctional placeholder; it is not included among the data elements readily available to be used within any of the vendor's template reports or within the user-built custom reports. At UVM, the goal was to make the existing "preferred name" field functional within and across the University's various systems in order to give students the ability to self-manage, via a Web interface, the way their first name is represented within all campus records.

The registrar assembled a task force for the project that included himself, a trans student leader, a faculty member who is a strong trans ally, the director of the campus LGBTQA center, system programmers, and a Web designer. To enable chosen names to appear on any documentation within UVM, programmers wrote a database procedure that says, "If preferred name exists, use it; otherwise, use first name." Students' chosen first names automatically appear on all reports generated directly from Banner, including their ID card and their entry in the university's online directory, unless they choose not to be listed. Students are also given the option of generating a new campus e-mail address based on the first name they have entered.

The task force decided early in the project to modify an additional field in order to give students the ability to specify the pronouns they want to appear, along with their name, on class rosters and advisee lists. Programmers and staff from the registrar's office worked steadily over a period of four months to get the front end of these changes ready to go live in January 2009. Prior to implementation, a series of trainings on the changes were provided to the managers of each of the various systems that interact with Banner.

Since UVM's "preferred name" option became available, it has been a popular option with both trans and nontrans students. In the first year, 527 of the university's approximately 10,000 students opted for a first name other than their legal name (in many cases, they entered a nickname or a shortened form of their name). About 500 students now choose this option each year. The 2,822 "preferred names" currently in the system represent a little over 28 percent of currently enrolled students. The university has been praised in the national press for its pioneering work on a trans-supportive name-change process, and a number of other colleges that use Banner have utilized UVM's code, which the university's registrar made available through the Banner online code repository.

Despite the success of the project, and the pride and goodwill it generated across campus, the work to make all of UVM's information systems represent students' names accurately and consistently is ongoing. In the past year alone, three separate offices have identified instances in which students' legal names were being displayed, either instead of or in addition to students' "preferred names." In one case, a student reported being outed by a campus office that publicly displayed their legal first name. The office concerned had worked earnestly on systems problems in the past, and staff members were convinced that they had resolved the issue. But in implementing some new Web interfaces for students, the programmer responsible for the work, who was unfamiliar with the "preferred name" field, failed to have this field appear instead of the "legal name" field. Looking into the issue, the office discovered a second systems problem. Two other offices have also had problems: one because of a massive systems overhaul by new programmers who were likewise unfamiliar with the "preferred name" field, and the other because of staff turnover at its reception desk. The point of these stories is not to suggest that this work is impossible to achieve but to demonstrate the complexity of making changes to information systems and the need for diligence and commitment.

In 2009, the University of Vermont also gave students the ability to designate the pronouns they use for themselves—*she*, *he*, *ze* (or to choose "name only" or "none")—via the same Web portal they use to specify their first name, becoming the first college in the country to offer students this opportunity. In response to student feedback, UVM recently added *they* as an additional pronoun

option. These pronouns, like chosen first names, are available for use by any campus subsystem. At a minimum, they appear automatically on course rosters, major and minor lists, and advisee lists. The appearance of pronouns, including less familiar gender-inclusive ones, has prompted surprisingly little controversy among UVM faculty. New faculty are alerted during their campus orientation to expect the appearance of pronouns on their class rosters, and since the change, there have been only a handful of reports of pushback by a faculty member. While UVM's pronoun options fall short of the fifty-six choices currently available to Facebook users (Oremus 2014), the presence of options beyond *she/he* is important for the full inclusion of students who identify outside a gender binary.

Conclusion

Since the University of Michigan pioneered the ability to use a chosen name in PeopleSoft and the University of Vermont did the same in Banner, more than 130 colleges and universities have changed their policies and information systems to enable students to use a chosen name on campus records and documents (Beemyn 2015). Many more institutions will undoubtedly make this change in the next few years, as trans students advocate for their schools to follow suit and as more schools recognize the importance and feasibility of making this option available. But less than half of the colleges and universities with a name change process also provide a means for trans students to easily change the gender marker on campus records from M to F or F to M, and no school gives students the ability to identify officially outside a gender binary. Moreover, while it has been more than five years since the University of Vermont modified its software to enable students to indicate the pronouns they use for themselves, only one other school (Hampshire College) is known to have a similar process (Beemyn 2015). Non-binary trans students continue to be ignored, and their needs remain unaddressed. For colleges and universities to be fully trans-inclusive, they have to recognize and support all gender-nonconforming students.

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Dot Brauer has served as the director of the LGBTQA Center at the University of Vermont since 2001. They have a master's degree in psychology from Antioch New England and are currently ABD at the University of Vermont in educational leadership and policy studies.

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There's No T in FAIR?

Implementing a Trans-Inclusive K–12 History Law

DON ROMESBURG

Abstract The Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History's scholarly *Making the Framework FAIR* report (2014) recommends substantial revisions to California's K–12 History–Social Science Framework in order to bring it into compliance with the FAIR Education Act. The law, passed in 2011, mandates inclusion of the roles and contributions of LGBT Americans and people with disabilities in the state's primary and secondary school US history education. To date, efforts to get state agencies, school districts, and educators to fully implement the FAIR Education Act have been insufficient, particularly in relation to transgender history. As the state undergoes History–Social Science Framework revision, it should adopt the transgender-inclusive changes suggested by *Making the Framework FAIR* report for grades two, four, five, eight, and eleven. This represents a golden opportunity to create comprehensive and lasting change across elementary, middle, and high school, in California and beyond.

Keywords K–12 education, transgender history, US history, history education, California

When Governor Jerry Brown signed the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act into law in July 2011, California amended its education code to mandate that the roles and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, as well as people with disabilities, were incorporated into history instruction for kindergarten through grade twelve. This groundbreaking law, which extended the recognition to LGBT people that had already been legislated for many other groups, required that implementation begin in January 2012.

Unfortunately, the state provided neither guidance nor funding. Only a handful of districts allotted monies for teacher training. Those districts that did nothing faced no penalty. In addition, few grade-appropriate LGBT materials were (or are) widely accessible, and what existed was (and is) largely focused on cis-gender lesbians and gay men. Without substantial intervention, K–12 incorporation of the FAIR Education Act's mandates toward transgender history would be marginal at best. LGBT scholars and advocates came to realize the necessity of a comprehensive approach to implementing this important legislation.

In the spring of 2013, the Committee on LGBT History, an affiliated society of the American Historical Association, partnered with the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Network to determine where the most impactful intervention could be made to bring all of the state's K–12 US history education into alignment with legally mandated LGBT inclusion. In California, history standards are linked to the state Department of Education History–Social Science Framework. School districts, textbook publishers, educators, and university schools of education use the framework to set expectations of pedagogy, content, interpretation, and outcomes. The framework also provides a grade-by-grade narrative to guide instruction in California, US, and world history. In 2014, the Department of Education's Instructional Quality Commission (IQC), tasked with making framework revisions, was set to initiate an effort to bring the document into alignment with new legislative mandates, including the FAIR Education Act. This process presented LGBT history advocates a golden opportunity to create comprehensive and lasting change across elementary, middle, and high school.

As the Committee on LGBT History's then cochair, I became the lead editor of a project to systematically make recommendations of framework revisions to the California Department of Education. Historian Leila Rupp (professor, Department of Feminist Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara) and education professor David Donahue (interim provost, Mills College) joined me on the executive committee. We identified five grades where revisions seemed most productive: second-grade social science on families and communities, fourth-grade California history, fifth-grade early US history, eighth-grade nineteenth-century US history, and eleventh-grade modern US history.

We worked throughout summer 2013 with over a dozen historians from around the country to make line revisions in the framework based on their period and subject areas of expertise.¹ Taking a transformative approach, we encouraged them to focus on LGBT history but include related material on gender, race, class, and ability. They also submitted scholarship-supported justifications for all revisions and suggested resources for teachers. In the fall, the executive committee evaluated revisions and justifications for accuracy, relevance to the US history survey, and grade-appropriate content. We synthesized everyone's work into a single document. By the year's end, we had a draft of the report, entitled *Making the Framework FAIR: California History–Social Science Framework Proposed LGBT Revisions Related to the FAIR Education Act* (Romesburg, Rupp, and Donahue 2014). At that time, we shared preliminary findings and recommendations with representatives from the state Department of Education and its Instructional Quality Commission.

In brief, recommended framework revisions by grade and theme included the following:

- Grade 2: LGBT families in the context of understanding family diversity as a contemporary and historical reality
- Grade 4: Central roles played by gender and sexuality in California's history as a site of rich, contested, and changing diversity
- Grade 5: Variation over time, region, and culture in indigenous and colonial American practices and laws with regard to gender and sexuality
- Grade 8: Fundamental transformations in gender and sexuality in conjunction with nineteenth-century urbanization, industrialization, and expansion
- Grade 11: The evolution of modern LGBT communities and identities, twentieth-century persecution of sexual and gender minorities, and the growth of LGBT civil rights movements

At each grade level, the report intentionally represents facets of history that can fall under the transgender umbrella. This is necessary not only to meet the FAIR Education Act's mandate to include the roles and contributions of transgender people but also to begin to address the dearth of trans history in K–12 educational materials. Considerable work has been done to imagine lesson plans that include iconographic gay and lesbian heroes or issues such as Stonewall and gays in the military. Discussion guides exist for a handful of documentaries, such as *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*, but not for *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria*.² When a children's book exists on Harvey Milk but not Sylvia Rivera, little to no transgender history will make it into the classroom. Existent efforts to bring LGBT history into K–12 education, though admirable, tend to be tokenizing or anecdotal. These require teachers to set aside a particular block of time for a specific "diversity" segment, rather than integrating analyses and arrangements of gender and sexuality across the full primary-to-secondary US survey.

In hindsight, as I reviewed *Making the Framework FAIR's* transgender-specific content for this article, I realized that some inclusions are less specific than others. Second-grade revisions, for example, push students and teachers to study "the stories of diverse families in the past, including immigrant families, lesbian and gay parents and their children, families of color, step- and blended families, families headed by single parents, extended families, families with disabled members, and adoptive families." While the chapter also calls for teaching about "LGBT-parented families," this slippage between "lesbian and gay" and "LGBT" could

easily lead to the erasure of bisexual- and trans-parented families when teaching and learning about family diversity (Romesburg, Rupp, and Donahue 2014: 10).

On the other hand, the report's suggested revisions for the rest of the elementary school chapters do a far better job. In fourth-grade California history, it specifically calls for students to explore diverse Native Californians' gender identities and affectional relationships and the ways they collided with Spanish colonization, the roles of passing men and women in the Gold Rush era, and subsequent anti-cross-dressing laws. For early US history, taught in the fifth grade, the report urges discussion about the diversity of two-spirit peoples among Indigenous Americans and how Anglo colonizers generally condemned them in the context of other perceived gender transgressions of work, relationships, and social roles (11–14, 16–17).

In middle school, *Making the Framework FAIR's* recommendations facilitate numerous ways for teachers and students to think about trans history. The chapter on grade eight invites a discussion of the challenges and opportunities frontier life afforded women alongside “myriad reasons” why some people “lived lives across gender lines throughout the American West.” The chapter specifically highlights stagecoach driver Charley Parkhurst and Mrs. Nash, the “male-to-female Mexican woman who worked as a laundress for the famed Seventh Calvary.” It calls for student exploration of how late nineteenth-century policies toward Native Americans such as land reallocation and Indian boarding schools further damaged two-spirit traditions (23–25).

The report has by far the most extensive and substantive suggested revisions in eleventh-grade modern US history. Given the breadth and depth of changes proposed, the editors had to give some important issues, such as the rise of sexology, only passing reference. However, trans history is highlighted in revisions related to the Harlem Renaissance and, through Christine Jorgenson, post-World War II gender tensions. Transgender Americans are also mentioned as part of the 1960s–1970s movements for social justice (including Stonewall) and in more recent civil rights struggles for transgender people (28–29, 32, 35–37).

During informal conversations between *Making the Framework FAIR* advocates and Department of Education representatives from December 2013 through the summer of 2014, it became clear that, while they appreciated the scholarly rigor of our report, they were overwhelmed by its breadth, depth, and scope. We had hoped that the IQC would incorporate many of our report's recommendations into its initial draft of the California Department of Education's revised K–12 History–Social Science Framework, which the IQC released for public comment in September 2014. This did not happen. To address the FAIR Education Act, the IQC's proposed new framework merely added one mention of Harvey Milk to fourth-grade California history and, in eleventh-grade modern

US history, a reference to the mid-century Lavender Scare (a government-driven systematic persecution and purging of those suspected of being homosexual), Harvey Milk (again!) and his colleague Cleve Jones, and “gay marriage” (California Department of Education Instructional Quality Commission 2014a: 4, 7). While it made liberal use of “LGBT” throughout its general guidelines, the *T* fell silent in its grade-by-grade narrative history sections.

Given the many months that IQC representatives had access to our draft report ahead of their proposed new framework and the disparity between what they and we saw as necessary FAIR Education Act–related changes, it became clear that our work, far from over, had just begun. The process of educating California’s Department of Education became, out of necessity, more political. At the same time that the IQC issued its initial revised framework proposal, the Committee on LGBT History publicly released its *Making the Framework FAIR* report, in part to underscore the stark contrast between the two approaches to LGBT inclusion.

Feedback from K–12 educators and historians so far to *Making the Framework FAIR* has been overwhelmingly positive. What teachers have really appreciated about it is that rather than just jamming more facts into an already loaded framework, it calls for a transformative approach. Such a framing suggests gender and sexuality (as well as race and class) as analytical lenses through which to understand and interpret the past. Many education scholars believe that issues of diversity should not be taught in K–12 curricula by adding token representations of “women” or “black people” or “gay people,” or “transgender people.” Rather, giving students the tools and information to interpret changing social meanings of gender and sexuality in the past can empower them to become more active and aware citizens in the present.

During the IQC’s public comment period from September to November 2014, the Committee on LGBT History teamed up with Our Family Coalition and Equality California. We mobilized scholars, educators, school board members, parents, students, and teachers unions. Organizations from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Transgender Law Center to the American Historical Association and Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits sent letters of support. Collectively, hundreds of individuals and groups called upon the California Department of Education to embrace substantial and transformative LGBT inclusion in the framework across elementary, middle, and high school history.

Those giving comments also made sure the Department of Education understood that “LGBT” wasn’t just a synonym for “white gay man” (or “Harvey Milk”) in the FAIR Education Act. They argued that the IQC was required by law to represent, at a minimum, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, *and* transgender people in history—and that the *Making the Framework FAIR* revisions did that in historically rigorous ways following the best scholarship and practices of professional historians.

The IQC received over seventeen hundred comments and suggested revisions to the framework, which was apparently many more than they are used to receiving. In addition to LGBT advocates, it heard from Sikh Americans, Polish Americans, Persian Americans, Hindus, Korean Americans, Armenian Americans, disability advocates, and environmental advocates, as well as people making minor technical suggestions. Two hundred—12 percent—were about the FAIR Education Act. High school teacher Gerald O'Connor wrote that the IQC's proposed revisions were "incredibly limited" and insisted that a "more well-rounded approach" would necessarily include "representations of lesbians, bisexuals, transgender people, and LGBT people of color." Mona Twocats-Romero, "a great grandmother" with "many grandchildren throughout the school system," wrote that she wants children "to understand [that] the contributions of LGBT individuals and those who have disabilities will no longer be excluded from social science," adding that "our schools will be contributing to the reduction of prejudice and promoting tolerance in today's diverse world." Only thirteen were anti-LGBT (California Department of Education Instructional Quality Commission 2014b). Perhaps this was because the law makes inclusion a foregone conclusion. The question now is how much and when.

At the IQC's December 18 public hearing, leaders from the Committee on LGBT History, Our Family Coalition, and Equality California testified again about the merits of our recommendations. My impression from that hearing was that the California Department of Education was likely to embrace at least some LGBT-related revisions in all the grades proposed in *Making the Framework FAIR*. I am confident that transgender representation will occur to some extent in elementary, middle, and high school history. We will not know, though, until the IQC responds to public comment with a revised framework, which will undergo a second round of public comment and revision before final publication, possibly by fall 2016.

Whatever revisions California's Department of Education ultimately approves will make the state's K–12 History–Social Science Framework the most LGBT inclusive in the nation. This will lead to new textbooks and curricular materials for the huge California market, and these materials will inevitably be adopted by other school districts and states. Beyond California's framework, the *Making the Framework FAIR* report can serve as a template for best practices for LGBT-inclusive K–12 US history revisions for teachers, school districts, and states around the country. The process, however, is haltingly slow. My daughter is now in fourth grade. Perhaps by the time she is in eighth grade, the new framework will see implementation, and we will see transgender history being taught across the state.

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Notes

1. Contributors included Peter Boag, Michael Bronski, Rebecca L. Davis, John D'Emilio, Estelle Freedman, Stephanie Gilmore, Richard Godbeer, Kwame Holmes, Daniel Hurwitz, David K. Johnson, Priya Kandaswamy, Louise W. Knight, Mark Rifkin, Daniel Rivers, Clare Sears, Marc Stein, and Timothy Stewart-Winter.
2. For examples of extant LGBT history materials accessible to California educators, see GSA Network (2012) and Our Family Coalition (2012).

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Not Exceptional or Punished

*A Review of Five Picture Books
That Celebrate Gender Diversity*

J WALLACE SKELTON

Made by Raffi

Craig Pomranz

London: Francis Lincoln Children's Books, 2014. 32 pp.

I Am Jazz

Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings

New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2014. 23 pp.

Knit Your Bit

Deborah Hopkinson

New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2013. 30 pp.

Backwards Day

S. Bear Bergman

Toronto: Flamingo Rampant, 2012. 34 pp.

Rough, Tough Charlie

Verla Kay

Toronto: Tricycle Press, 2007. 30 pp.

There exist two ugly tropes in picture books with gender-independent or trans protagonists. Either the main character is bullied repeatedly, often by peers and adults, or the main character has to do something truly exceptional (such as save their parent from death, save a species from existence, or win a public talent contest) in order to be accepted. Neither narrative offers a story driven by the trans or gender-independent protagonist; still more troubling is that the message

tends to be either “you’ll be punished” or, alternatively, “if you do something truly spectacular we might overlook your gender and consider you normal.” Sometimes, for good measure, the books do both with pages upon pages of bullying before the character is revealed as exceptional and on that basis subsequently accepted by others.

In looking for books to use with the Gender Independent Group I facilitate as part of my role as Student Equity Program Advisor for the Gender Based Violence Prevention Office at the Toronto District School Board, neither narrative is one I want to further expose young people to. Broadly, these books set up children who break gendered expectations to expect upset and misery, and they also teach their peers how to go about bullying them. The following five books, ones I recommend, step away from the tropes of punishment and exceptionality.

Made by Raffi

Raffi feels different from other boys. He’s quieter, has longer hair, and doesn’t like noise or rough play. One day, at recess, one of his teachers teaches Raffi to knit, and he’s hooked. He loves the colors of wool and knits gifts for both his parents. Still, he’s aware of being different and he asks his mum, “Am I strange or weird? Why do I like to sing and draw and knit? Do you think I’m . . . girly?” His mum wisely answers, “No Raffi, I think you are very . . . Raffi.” The book is a tender story about a quiet young boy becoming more comfortable with who and how he is in the world. He’s supported by his parents, he’s supported by his teachers. There is mention on one page of his being teased, but it’s done without giving any detail and in passing; overall it’s Raffi’s story, as he and those around him celebrate who he is.

I Am Jazz

I Am Jazz is exceptional in that it is the first professionally published book by and about a trans young person. This is exciting because what trans people want and understand about their own lives differs even from the understandings and desires of even our closest allies. Jazz is very much talking about herself and her experience as a transgender child. This is an explaining book—Jazz explains what transgender is, and what it was like to have to pretend to be a boy as a young child, but the focus is on who she is now and what she enjoys. The pictures are warm and celebratory, the images soft and full of Jazz, Jazz’s friends, and the things she likes. Jazz’s parents model acceptance, and while she discusses barriers at school, they are overcome in a straightforward way, and Jazz expresses what a relief this is to her.

Knit Your Bit

I would not have expected knitting to be such a signifier for breaking gender expectations, but there are a number of books about boys who knit who either question their masculinity or have their masculinity questioned by others. Set

during the First World War, Mickey's sister and female classmates are knitting things for the soldiers for the war effort, but Mickey is resistant, as he's a boy and "Boy's don't knit!" One of the girls in his class challenges that he's just afraid to learn. Mickey rises to the challenge and learns to knit along with other boys. They join in a giant knitting contest, and while they don't win, they do successfully contribute.

Backwards Day

While many books about gender-independent and trans children are written by parents advocating for their children, S. Bear Bergman is a trans person. *Backwards Day* is also unusual in that it's a story about a young person who changes their identity; but it's not an explaining book, it's a story with its own internal logic and narrative. *Backwards Day* happens on the imaginary planet of Tenalp, where once a year backwards day makes boys girls and girls boys (people who were in between already still look pretty similar). A girl named Andy wakes up on backwards day, her favorite day, and is deeply disappointed to discover she has not changed; however, the day after, Andy becomes a boy. This is exciting for Andy, but surprising to everyone else, and his parents take him to a backwardsologist, who affirms that this is "the miracle of backwards day" and congratulates Andy. Andy promptly gets on with the business of being a happy kid.

Rough, Tough Charlie

Rough Tough Charlie is the simplest of the books I've included here. Based on the true story of Charlie Parkhurst (1812–79), it describes in simple rhyme Charlie's life. Charlie is a man of adventure, a stagecoach driver who swears and spits but always gets his stagecoach there on time. He retires to run a stage stop, engages in a local men's lodge, and votes. After his death his body is understood as female, although the book does not let this undo his identity. The text on the closing page of the book is "Charlie did though—As she would. Drove and voted, Cause 'he' could."

* * *

Readers who pay attention to this genre of literature may complain that I am missing the three books that have been recently published that center on boys who wear dresses: *Roland Humphrey Is Wearing a WHAT?* (Kiernan-Johnson 2012), *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* (Baldacchino 2014), and *Jacob's New Dress* (Hoffman and Hoffman 2014). These books are not included, as while they do feature boys who wear dresses, they all focus on the bullying and harassment the title characters experience. It's not enough just to picture a boy in a dress.

In *Roland Humphrey Is Wearing a WHAT?*, there are twenty-eight pages of Roland being told what not to wear, feeling bad, and reporting his bullying before we get eight pages of his deciding to defend his fashion choices—a tactic that

makes the bullies unrealistically immediately apologize and appreciate him. In *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*, we get a day-by-day account of a week of Morris's being bullied for wearing the tangerine dress, culminating with his pretending to have a tummy ache to stay home on Friday. While his mother is supportive, and his weekend is positive, of the eight days described in the book, four are all about the harassment he faces, one is feigning illness to avoid the harassment, two are supportive days at home, and one is a return to school and the dress, where he again faces exclusion, which ends because he creates a more interesting imaginary play world than the other children. Again, there is more bullying than anything else, this time with the added problem that Morris escapes the bullying only by being better than the other children. Finally, in *Jacob's New Dress*, there are fifteen pages detailing either the bullying or Jacob reporting on the bullying, and four more in which Jacob's choices are either publicly questioned, or Jacob feels anxiety about his dress, out of a total of twenty-nine pages. These books do exist, and individual boy children who wear dresses and who face judgement and bullying may feel solace and support reading them, but I find myself unable to recommend them for classroom use—in all of them, the stories spend too much time on the bullying behavior. It's not enough to have gender-independent and trans children in books; we need to celebrate such children and give them narratives of their own.

And it's not like it can't be done. *Jesse's Dream Skirt*, (Mack 1979) is an early entry into the genre of picture books featuring boys in what's assumed to be feminine attire that does far better. The first thirteen pages are Jesse dreaming of his skirt, his mum helping him make his skirt, and his daycare teacher appreciating his skirt. There are four pages of bullying, and then the teacher leads ten pages of classroom discussion in which the children talk about what they have learned about skirts and dresses. Jesse leaves the conversation feeling good, and the class then engages in an activity of creating their own costumes and parading in them. *Jesse's Dream Skirt* is not only far more positive than the other three—it's also the only one that's out of print.

We all need books, and the ever-growing number of children who are asserting and being believed in their trans and gender-independent identities need books. Their peers need books. Ideally, the ones we are using avoid the tropes of requiring exceptionality or punishing and get on with letting kids be kids.

j wallace skelton is an MEd candidate in social justice education at the University of Toronto. j is interested in using principles of universal accessibility to make schools welcoming to children of all gender identities/expressions. j has chapters in *Trans Activism in Canada*, *Chasing Rainbows*, and *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation*.

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Without *She* or *He*, in Pictures

J WALLACE SKELTON

No Matter What

Debbi Gilori

San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1999. 24 pp.

What Makes a Baby

Cory Silverberg

Toronto: Triangle Square, 2013. 34 pp.

Toof and That Blanket

Jody Ny Warner

Toronto: COPA, Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions, 2014. 21 pp.

Pom and Pim

Lena Landstrom and Olof Landstrom

Wellington, NZ: Gecko Press, 2014. 26 pp.

In my role with the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Office of the Toronto District School Board, I'm often asked for recommendations of books that celebrate gender diversity. Increasingly, though there are picture books and young adult novels that I can suggest—there continues to be a lack of such books for readers in middle grades. One of the challenges in suggesting books is that teachers are often looking for one book that they can read aloud to address an issue that is happening in their class or for one book that they can add to their classroom selection, so they can feel that they have this diversity issue addressed. The thing about diversity is that it is never a one-book problem, and there is never a one-book solution. Diversity involves showing a range, and that means multiple books, celebrating multiple gender identities and expressions.

Increasingly, the requests I get from primary classrooms are for books that show children who identify outside the gender binary. Often the children identify as “neither” or “both,” but some have created their own words to express their genders.

Gender is already a known problem in North American picture books. Since at least 1972, repeated studies have documented that children’s literature features more boys, both in their titles and as main characters than they do girls (see, for example, McCabe 2011; Weitzman et al. 1972). So, buying, reading, and sharing books that center on girls already feels like a step toward celebrating gender diversity. But what about central characters who are either never identified by gender or are left open to interpretation? There are no large studies that identify such characters, but here are four books that I like and use in schools, and which are currently in print.

No Matter What

Comes in board-book and paperback form and is the story of Large putting Small to bed. Small is feeling “grim and grumpy” and doubts Large’s love. In rhyming couplets, through every step of their bedtime routine, Large details that Large will always love Small “No Matter What.” Small and Large are foxes, depicted in a soft cartoon style. As an added bonus, neither character is gendered in this book, or assigned a familiar role. Nonparental caregivers and fathers are pictured far less often than mothers in children’s books, and Large could be any one of these roles.

What Makes a Baby

What Makes a Baby is a tour of human reproduction told without sex or gender. It describes that some bodies have sperm in them, some bodies have eggs in them, and some bodies have a uterus, and that you need all three to make a baby. It asks questions of the child reader such as “Who was waiting for you to be born?” All of Fiona Smyth’s images are bright and in a cartoon style. While the people are all in people shapes, they are shown in bright nonhuman colors (like orange, purple, blue, and green).

Toof and That Blanket

This is part of a series of three books by COPA, Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions published last year. In all three, the main characters face some form of bullying, harassment, or negative behavior at school and talk about what they are experiencing with a supportive parent/caregiver who helps them strategize solutions that the children can put in place. Unlike most other children’s books that include bullying, the bullying is never the focus of the story, strategizing and implementing a solution is. All the characters in all three books are brightly colored blobs.

Toof is a small blue blob who lives with and is cared for by Sage. When Toof was small, Sage knit Toof a security blanket. When Toof starts school, of course, the blanket comes too. One student makes fun of Toof and rallies the others. The teacher intervenes and makes sure the children know this is not appropriate, but Toof still does not feel good. At home, Toof tells Sage, and they strategize together. Toof then brings the blanket to school in concealed ways, until the day the kids need a flag for their snow fort. Toof remembers Sage saying that “sometimes it takes being strong to be yourself” and mounts the blanket as a flag. The teaser tries to start a chant of “Baby, baby, baby” but is silenced by other kids and the blanket flies high.

Pom and Pim

Pom is a small pink child with red hair. Pim is Pom’s toy bunny. In this simple and clear text, Pom and Pim go on an adventure and experience bad luck and good luck, finding that often, with a little creativity, even things that are bad luck can be turned into good. This book is a translation from the original Swedish.

All four books allow children to draft their own understandings of gender on the characters, allowing even children with nonbinary identities to see themselves reflected. If the norm in children’s publishing were nonbinary characters, I would worry that this would mean an absence of femme characters, but when the selection is so small, I simply delight that they exist at all.

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Teaching Trans for Children, Youth, and Adults Who Care for Them

*A Review of Children's Picture Books
and Young Adult Memoirs*

AMY McNALLY

In the following set of brief reviews, librarian Amy McNally draws attention to three 2014 children's picture books and two 2014 memoirs authored by trans youth. As a librarian, McNally considers these new works to be resources not simply for children and young adults but also for adults who are or may be involved with young people as parents, teachers, friends, and librarians. Above all, we are invited to understand the critical functions of books such as this. Just as feminists in the 1970s started publishing companies to publish children's books that challenged conventional gender roles, the new wave of gender-creative children's books (and there are many, not to mention a publisher devoted to such works) aims to affirm children's gender creativity by providing children stories they can relate to, and also by providing adults with a vision of the value of gender creativity. We see as well the first young adult trans books written by young adults themselves—in this case, memoirs of two transgender youth who became media celebrities while in high school. In addition to sharing stories and insights about growing up transgender and transitioning in high school, this pair of memoirs also invite us to consider the impacts of mainstream media hungry for tokenizing and humanizing stories of trans lives; both authors write about navigating the distorting narrative interests of the news shows on which they appeared, as well as the value of educating large audiences about the existence and needs of trans youth. Taken together, these five books offer an important set of resources for librarians, teachers, parents, and all adults who seek to know and support kids, serving a critical educational as well as artistic purpose. Children, youth, and adults all could use some reassurance that gender-creative and trans kids can have a beautiful present and a possible future.

—A. Finn Enke, Book Review Editor

Picture Books*Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*

Christine Baldacchino

Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2014. 32 pp.

Jacob's New Dress

Sarah Hoffman and Ian Hoffman

Chicago: Albert Whitman and Company, 2014. 32 pp.

I Am Jazz!

Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings

New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2014. 32 pp.

Three picture books published in 2014 focus on gender expression in very young children. In *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*, the main character (Morris) enjoys donning a tangerine-colored dress at school: “Morris likes the color of the dress. It reminds him of tigers, the sun and his mother’s hair. He likes the noises the dress makes—swish, swish, swish when he walks and crinkle, crinkle, crinkle when he sits down.” Morris is ridiculed by the other children and pretends to be sick to stay home from school. He dreams of riding an elephant on a space safari and paints a picture of himself atop an elephant in the tangerine dress. He returns to school on Monday with his painting and slips on the dress. When his classmates won’t let them play, Morris creates his own adventure, and soon the other children are drawn in. “By the time they returned to Earth, Eli and Henry had decided that it didn’t matter if astronauts wore dresses or not. The best astronauts were the ones who knew where all the good adventures were hiding.” This gentle story about a creative child who does not conform to gender expectations would be a wonderful addition to the preschool or kindergarten class library.

In *Jacob’s New Dress*, Jacob chooses to be the princess during dress-up time, putting on a pink dress and a crown. One of the boys in his class, Christopher, becomes upset. When he complains, the teacher, Ms. Wilson, says, “The dress-up corner is where we come to use our imaginations.” After school, Jacob asks his mother if he can wear a witch’s dress to school. “I don’t think so,” she said. “That’s for dress-up at home.” Jacob rather ingeniously fashions a dress out of a towel (calling it a “dress-thing”) the next day and insists on wearing it to school. His parents acquiesce, telling him he can wear it if he puts shorts and a shirt underneath the towel. But at school, Christopher pulls the towel off Jacob. When Jacob comes home from school, he asks his mother to help him make a real dress to wear to school. She eventually says yes, and the two make a dress together. The next day in school, Jacob proudly shares the new dress at circle time. When Christopher asks why Jacob wears dresses, Ms. Wilson responds, “I think Jacob

wears what he's comfortable in. Just like you do. Not very long ago little girls couldn't wear pants. Can you imagine that?" Later on the playground, Christopher teases Jacob once again. But this time, "Jacob felt his dress surrounding him. Like armor. Soft, cottony, magic armor." This book provides some wonderful language for teachers to use when addressing gender-expression-based bullying in the preschool or kindergarten classroom.

In *I Am Jazz*, Jessica Herthel shares the story of Jazz Jennings, a transgender teen, when she was young. Jazz likes the color pink, "dancing, singing, back flips, drawing, soccer, swimming, makeup, and pretending I'm a pop star." Jazz talks about her best friends but adds, "But I'm not exactly like Samantha and Casey. I have a girl brain but a boy body. This is called transgender. I was born this way!" Jazz tells the reader how this was at first confusing for her parents and siblings, who at first insisted that Jazz wear "boy clothes" when leaving the house. Eventually, though, Jazz's parents bring her to a new doctor, who "spoke to my parents and I heard the word 'transgender' for the very first time." Later in the evening, Jazz's parents tell her, "We understand now. Be who you are. We love you no matter what." At first the teachers at school want Jazz to use the boys' bathroom and play on the boys' team in gym, but eventually they change their minds. While Jazz still faces teasing, she says, "I don't mind being different. Different is special! I think what matters most is what a person is like inside." This book could be useful in teaching about transgender in the elementary classroom.

Young Adult Memoirs

Some Assembly Required: The Not-So-Secret Life of a Transgender Teen

Arin Andrews

New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014. 288 pp.

Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition

Katie Rain Hill

New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014. 288 pp.

Arin Andrews and Katie Rain Hill gained national attention in 2012 after a segment aired on *20/20* featuring the young transgender couple, and their story subsequently went viral, appearing in the *Huffington Post* as well as other online news sources. Andrews, then age 17, and Hill, then age 18, had been dating for a year at the time, having met in a transgender support group in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Each published a memoir in 2014, sharing their stories of dysphoria, coming out, transitioning, falling in love, and, eventually, ending their relationship with each other. Read together, the memoirs feel at times parallel, each author recounting many of the same events in their relationship. Parallel, too, are the experiences each had growing up transgender in "the buckle of the bible belt," small-town

Oklahoma, where gender roles and expression are highly defined and constricted. Each author, however, has a unique perspective and personality, and each book a unique tone. Readers may enjoy hearing about the same events, especially related to the authors' relationship with each other, recounted at times quite differently. One can't help but think that Simon and Schuster, who published both memoirs, expects the "he said/she said" interplay will help to sell books.

Some Assembly Required opens with the author, Arin Andrews, "getting dumped at prom," not by Katie Hill, but by a date named Jessica. Andrews's tone is light and earnest as he recounts the evening, which sounds like a typical teenage prom heartbreak story—boy fumbling with corsage, arguments about the after-party, the two going their separate ways by the end of the evening. Andrews keeps this easy, laid-back style of writing for the course of the book, even as he recounts a difficult childhood.

From early on, Andrews's mother insisted on his participation in dance class and pageants, dressing him in frilly dresses and hair ribbons. Unable to convince his mother to cut his hair and allow him to wear pants, Andrews sneaked clothes from a male cousin, and he even fashioned a funnel-type device in order to pee standing up outside. His mother, perhaps sensing his unease around his peers, tried desperately to line up play dates and slumber parties, which only increased Andrews's feelings of isolation as he failed to fit in with the girls from school and dance class.

Once puberty hit, it became more difficult for Andrews to cope with the gender dysphoria that he was experiencing. Menstruation was traumatic, and his developing breasts felt like a betrayal. Andrews soon began to experience attraction toward a fellow dance student, Darian. The two teenagers began sneaking off to spend time together, and they soon became very close. But while Andrews enjoyed exploring his sexuality with Darian, he still felt unease about his gender and had no language to identify the feelings of dysphoria he was experiencing. One day, he began to search on the internet for LGBT websites, and he stumbled on the video blog posted by a transgender man, recounting his experience on testosterone. Andrews immediately recognized the feelings and experiences of the blogger as his own and was thrilled to finally have a word to describe what he felt.

Andrews came out to his mother, who initially refused to accept that she was the parent of a transgender son. But eventually, realizing that Andrews was experiencing depression and was feeling suicidal, she agreed to help him to transition. She helped him to decide on a new name—Arin, which was a masculinized version of his former middle name—and made appointments with a doctor who could help him to begin taking testosterone. She began driving him to Tulsa to meet with a transgender support group. It was at this point that Arin first met Katie Hill, whom he had first seen in a magazine article.

Rethinking Normal opens as author Katie Hill is beginning college at the University of Tulsa, happy to be experiencing life as a typical college freshman: “Three years before, I had been a gangly teenage boy, braces and glasses, face hidden underneath a black hoodie, horrified by the thought of anyone looking at me. I was teased every day, spat on, and called ‘fag.’ Now I was Katie, an attractive woman with long, shiny dark brown hair, high cheekbones, boobs, and a butt that fit into my new feminine clothes perfectly.”

Hill’s childhood was marked by dark periods of depression, even from a young age. Beginning at age seven she began expressing suicidal thoughts to her parents, who brought her to a number of psychiatrists. By the time she was nine, she had been prescribed Zoloft, Cymbalta, Adderall, Xanax, and Prozac. The medications did not help, and she eventually confessed to one psychiatrist that she felt trapped in a boy’s body, only to have her statement ignored. Frustrated with the lack of response, Hill set out to fool her therapist into thinking she had recovered, acting cheerier at each visit, until finally the therapist declared to her parents that she was perfectly happy and well-adjusted. Hill was far from happy, though, and she made numerous attempts at suicide, deciding to cut her wrists at age eight and attempting to drown herself in the pool at age nine.

By the time she entered middle school, Katie was clearly not fitting in as a boy at school. While she had some close friends, she endured much bullying from classmates. She tried to explain to her mother that she was a girl trapped in a boy’s body, but each time, her mother quickly changed the subject. Finally, at age fifteen, Katie read an article online about a transgender girl named Jazz, and she shared it with her mother. Katie’s mother could finally make sense of what her child had been trying to tell her, and she agreed to help her transition.

While Katie’s mother quickly became an advocate for her daughter, life at school became unbearable during her transition. Katie lost friends, endured ridicule from classmates, and received little support from teachers and administration. Katie’s high school principal even asked Katie’s mother to remove her from the high school, on the grounds that the school did not have restrooms that would accommodate a transgender student. Katie’s mother brought photocopies of court cases and legislation to the school, insisting that the school would be breaking the law if they refused her daughter an education.

Bright and articulate, Hill became an advocate for transgender youth, interviewing first with CNN and then with *Tulsa World*. She began to enjoy sharing her story with others and was happy to accept opportunities for speaking engagements at high schools, colleges, and youth centers. Her newfound notoriety brought financial support as well: an anonymous donor arranged to pay for Katie’s gender reassignment surgery as well as helped to pay her college tuition.

It is at about this time in the story that Katie Hill meets and begins a relationship with Arin Andrews. The two become close very quickly, sharing a profound connection through their shared experiences. When Hill mentioned Andrews in an interview, the two are offered an opportunity to interview together, thus pulling them into the national spotlight. While Hill's account varies in some details from Andrews's, one can simply conclude from both memoirs that the two endured much pressure to remain a couple, but, in the end, they grew apart from each other. In the end, this reviewer finds that the relationship between the two teens is, while novel, the least interesting part of each memoir. More intriguing is the manner in which each author serves to overcome the challenges of growing up transgender in small-town Oklahoma.

And, while parallel memoirs and a book tour have merged their stories again, each author has contributed to a growing body of literature by and for transgender youth with a unique voice.

Amy McNally is a senior librarian at Hennepin County Library in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is on the leadership board of Transforming Families, a Minnesota-based peer support group serving transgender and gender-nonconforming youth and their families.

What Makes a Teaching Anthology in Minority Literature?

AARON RAZ LINK

The Collection: Short Fiction from the Transgender Vanguard

Tom Leger and Riley MacLeod, eds.

New York: Topside Press, 2012. 319 pp.

With its ambitious title, short-fiction anthology format, and clear introductory definition of trans fiction, *The Collection* seems designed for a minority-literature niche: the Norton anthology of trans writing we don't have yet. We still don't have it: *The Collection* has a different role.

Recently I was asked to write a literary essay on a trans subject. It was sent back six times with the requirement I cite yet more proof that trans people actually face discrimination, not my main theme. (The revision cycle might have continued indefinitely, but I ran out of patience.) There were major rewrites by other hands, and proof "corrections" of the sort that make you laugh, and then wince. In the end it was no longer a literary essay. I had to choose whether to withdraw work from a national venue or publish a piece I would not have chosen to write, shaped by stereotypes about how trans writers approach trans subjects. Luckily, I've had excellent experiences with editors and publishers; this was my first encounter with such problems in a professional publishing venue. But I cannot imagine emerging trans writers facing this kind of drain on their time and energy without losing their power to write freely and their faith in the submission process. *The Collection* comes from a new press devoted exclusively to supporting emerging trans and genderqueer writers; it is a collection of their short fiction, representing the attitudes and experiences of the particular community that produced it.

Like any minority literature, trans writing faces a challenge: to recover our freedom as writers, we must be rigorous about craft. To recover our faith in

diverse voices, we must look beyond the ghettos we have built for ourselves. This second challenge is larger than *The Collection* can face. It is making a start toward the first. It offers some excellent stories. No anthology of only new short fiction by emerging writers can be a “best of” book, and this one represents a particular subculture, so the book fulfills neither the craft nor the diversity requirements for a core anthology of trans literature. But it is doing a different job.

Society has given trans people a new stereotype, as a sort of political radical eco-feminist auxiliary youth brigade (PREFAYB). (One of the writers here was recently asked in a friendly interview to agree that trans literature is a subset of women’s literature. She had to gently point out that trans women’s literature is a subset of women’s literature.) This anthology will do little to dispel the PREFAYB myth. PrettyQueer.com appears repeatedly in the contributors’ list, and the stories betray a certain uniformity of attitude in which male sexuality wears a black cloak and a slender moustache; if it is not draped in a corner sighing helplessly, it is almost certainly tying a victim to the railroad tracks. Tropes that offer no positive idea of adult male sexuality have always required unfortunate limits. Women who have sex with men must be victims or manipulators, men who desire women must be rapists or dupes, and men cannot have adult relations with each other. A less obvious result of the script is that if you wish to be liberal, the characters have to be white. Both the helpless boy and the male sexual predator show different faces when you make them “ethnic” or darken their color; this reveals ugly things about the antebellum engines still driving political platforms bright with the bunting of radical promise. A perennial problem in the history of feminism is that this is a very easy thing for white people not to notice, no matter how many novels featuring androgynous Asian characters or women of color suffering sexual abuse by men are admitted to the canon.

The overall sensibility of the book resembles the preliberation gay male culture of *The Boys in the Band*. There are more and more varied women here, though; they are hanging out with the book’s boys but are mostly less naïve and more ironic, and they are smart enough to know not to wait for a ring. Like *The Boys in the Band*, *The Collection* reflects its own world. Whether this is a landslide of truths, a terrible step backward, or a sideways shuffle depends very much on the individual story and on your point of view about what else is possible.

But giving new writers a home in print is an important goal. It’s as important as creating a diverse core anthology of trans literature; it’s simply a different goal than the title suggests. And while the anthology does not represent the range of trans experience, half its contributors and protagonists are trans women, a welcome change from past feminist politics. Another welcome change is an anthology that offers some genderqueer themes and characters but refuses to make transsexual men and women into villains. Much current politics in the

book's target audience pits these groups against each other. It is a fine thing to see emerging editors uncoupling their work from that engine of Victorian moralizing and focusing not on the abstraction of trans identities but on the material of trans lives. An annual series from the editors' press might be a good way to meet the book's goals.

The stories in *The Collection* are largely focused on the lives of androgynous young Anglo-Americans in or just after transition. Most are about the trans characters' gender and sexuality. Two-thirds are written in the first person. Most are informed by the cultural politics of queer feminism. A trans character is always the protagonist, and readers are usually told they are trans in the opening sentences.

The stories that violate the latter convention (Imogene Binney's "I Met a Girl Named Bat Who Met Jeffrey Palmer," Carter Seckel's "Saving") are among the most accomplished. These two stories set the book's tone. The first is an ironic exploration, in a trans woman's voice, of self-centeredness, youth culture, and the erasure of history. The editors nicely chose to open with it, framing the anthology with self-awareness. "Saving," which follows, is a tragedy in subtle prose; a trans man is slowly left by the women he loves and concludes that being a man rather than a woman is bad for the world.

The elephant in *The Collection* is that trans people who think men are the enemy often discover they have met the enemy, and he is them (or they love him, or both). There is much tension over this issue in queer feminist community, as feminisms focused on the evils of maleness and heterosexuality meet lesbian feminists in transition to male bodies and women who enjoy sex with men. Trans people from different cultures face questions of hating and loving men in different ways, but these are not represented here. There are few protagonists or narrative arcs that do not fit the current concerns of queer/pansexual feminism. Trans people whose sexualities are gay, lesbian, or straight are rendered as victims or closet cases in denial about their "true" desires and identities. This is a troubling editorial effect, as some of these stories are—individually—nuanced accounts of individuals and moments. A couple of characters do decide that adult lives in larger communities are possible, but the stories (Everett Maroon's "Cursed" and Calvin Gimpelevich's "Runaways") immediately end, so trans lives beyond the isolated ghetto remain invisible. Only Elliot Levine's "Dean and Teddy" challenges this global frame for trans experience, touching on its homophobia and group-think. It would be nice to be able to say that this story's example of a trans support system is an unrealistic exaggeration, as it is run by a clueless college student to encourage kids sporting skinhead, Jamaican dread, and Eminem styles to bond over their oppressed queer feminist right to bash anyone who isn't man enough to have a girlfriend.

Similarly, it would be nice to see an anthology of trans literature that included no pieces whose only purpose is to police other people's sexualities.

The stories here tend to unfold in pocket universes of young queer women and trans men, where family and community don't matter. (Stories featuring characters who are not white are much more concerned with family and community.) Female, male, and what one story calls "non-binary transgendered" protagonists are all represented, though the focus is intentionally on transsexual characters. Few characters have any responsibility to anyone younger. Many seem to have no visible means of support or adult responsibilities. Many are students or recent dropouts. The few older people are nontrans, seen briefly to establish that the trans protagonists and their friends are young, and older people do not understand trans experience. (Imogene Binney's narrator is the notable exception; she remains pointedly offscreen.) Nontrans women are developed characters in many stories and interact with trans characters in nuanced, varied ways. Nontrans men appear very rarely and sketchily, often as rapists (the notable exception is Seckel's "Saving," which also features a protagonist dealing with problems of aging and family).

A book can only be as good as its submissions, and *The Collection* suffers from a contemporary editor's conundrum: online submission calls won't break a book's budget, but online communities are much more socially uniform than their real-life counterparts. The challenge facing anthologists in the Internet era of few dollars and many options is how to engage writers, publishers, and audiences in bucking the trend for only hanging out with people just like you. The editors here have responded to the challenge of engaging publishers in trans literature by starting their own press, which widens the field in some ways and narrows it in others. Wading through a slush pile to find great new writing is a heroic literary effort. But the editors' afterword suggests that their goal for *The Collection* was more concerned with good politics than good writing. In this case, a community call for a political anthology seems more appropriate. And yet, the book itself is not fully in agreement with its afterword. There are stories here that seem to exist only or largely to express ideology, even as there are other stories here that exist to be stories, examples of the difficult practice of a writer's craft, which is the illumination of moments too complex to be reduced to anything else.

The inclusion of political rhetoric thinly disguised as fiction (why, oh why, not write a rhetorical essay?) means that as a writing teacher, I can't offer such a book to students as a primary text. A teaching anthology exists to give students inspiration to push their craft further and models for technical ways to do so. This is why every story in a literary anthology needs to be better than good student writing; it's an absolute commitment to the most diverse possible range of options for great form and style. For the sake of the writers we are and the writers we teach,

the primary goal of any creative writing anthology should be good writing. Setting the bar lower for trans writers suggests we do not deserve consideration as authors, only as subjects. Since some of the stories here do meet the bar for inspiring, original, and highly skilled craft, it would be sad for writers and writing students if the book becomes merely a textbook for an intellectual field. And that is not necessarily appropriate; the book is fiction. Respecting the power of literary imagination and the craft of fiction means knowing that trans fiction is not trans scholarship, politics, analysis, rhetoric, nonfiction, or fact. So *The Collection* is a fine book for interested general readers, but not the teaching anthology in either fiction or trans studies it seems packaged to be.

This is a good time for all of us who care about diverse good writing, or about the inclusion of trans voices in discourse, to be thinking and talking about how and why we write, place, and respond to calls for contributions.

Some fine stories here, such as Alice Doyle's skillful "Two Girls," Casey Plett's grim "Other Women," and Terrence Diamond's pastiche "Tomboy of the Western World," suffer from the company of too many other pieces featuring bad sex. Other stories gain from context. Sherilyn Connelly's "Malediction and Pee Play" shares Binney's ironic humor, and Ryka Aoki's "To the New World" offers a different cultural vision of oppression and acceptance in a faux-naïve voice that gains humor and snap in this setting. M. Robin Cook's "Birthrights" looks directly at the gender wars without political polemic, keeping a writer's focus on depth and craft.

For all the skill of the best stories in *The Collection*, few of them, particularly those about trans men, have moved on to other topics than a trans person's own gender and sexuality. A funny revelation comes in "Cursed," in which the worst insult to hurl at a trans man is to say he'll never be a boy. To paraphrase Quentin Crisp, there is no crime like being a man.

The Collection represents an intermediate step between an Internet community and a model of excellence from minority artists. Its editors are dealing with the recent popularity of trans characters as both sexual fetishes and symbols standing for the lives of nontrans women. Much of the anthology covers parallel territory for similar audiences, but from trans perspectives. It is successful at this task, which it accomplishes by fully including trans women to represent women's lives, as well as by a focus on romantic stories of trans men with trans men, or men whose trans status is unspecified. If these earnest romances, isolated from both sexual contact and the outside world, might make readers who remember the bad old days of longing looks and Judy Garland records itch for the tartness of a John Preston or a Quentin Crisp, then their poignancy is a wish for a world where we might exist as sexual beings rather than sexual fetishes, and where (at least some) people might have the right to (at least some) desires of their own. Everyone here

but the men largely seems to have given up on the sexual front, but their stories are more varied. If this is the wave of the future, then it is sobering to consider with Imogene Binney how much it looks just like the past.

The most notable feature of this book is the editors' definition of trans fiction: stories with a trans protagonist. This definition has major virtues: it is clear and specific, and it defines the work according to the work's identity rather than the writer's. The idea of defining a literature by its protagonist is clearly a response to the way minority characters appear as sidekicks or love interests in too many stories whose only real interest is in the fate of the hero, who represents the demographics of a majority writer and target audience. But such stories are only one way of shaping narrative. Locking a story's purpose to its protagonist links trans writing to a structure that's often unskilled and unwise. Defining trans characters only as protagonists limits their functional roles in a text. Here, the result is many similarly structured stories that are about a sexually conflicted protagonist focusing on their own transness.

Italo Calvino defined lightness as one of the six necessities for great art. Actors know the romantic lead in a play is rarely the best role, and the best stories in *The Collection* know it too. They give trans characters some opportunities for outside perspectives, and so the stories can have more air.

Whatever claims we can make for a trans literature come from what trans people can see about the world that is obscured from nontrans points of view. To create that literature, we need to show what diverse trans characters see when they look into the world beyond the self. This is why Kenny Fries named his pioneering anthology of writing on disability *Staring Back*. The editors' focus on the transness of trans protagonists may leave readers feeling that such a vision of trans fiction might be as voyeuristic as the one it works to replace. But by acknowledging that trans experience is not itself identical to queer or feminist experience, and therefore noticing minority literature's complex relationship with its audiences, the book invites further efforts. Where the politics of trans writing is often valued more than its craft, this is an important step.

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Trans-Pedagogy

Generosity and Challenge

CRIS MAYO

My New Gender Workbook

Kate Bornstein

New York: Routledge, 2013. xiii + 290 pp.

The word *pedagogy* is derived from the Greek word for the slave who brings the student to school. In her new edition (a comprehensive reworking of the 1997 version), Kate Bornstein examines the same play of power between the social/political compulsion to conform to the gender binary and the emergent possibilities in all critical learners to explore and create beyond binaries. Her update, too, seeks to expand its attention to race, class, and other aspects of identity as they intersect with gender and trans identities and energetically delves more into how sexuality relates to trans identity—and how critical, conscious practice of all of the above can help to challenge political inequalities and unjust restrictions. Bornstein's attentive care and evident joy at encountering diverse audiences is reflected in her frequent encouragement to those in the audience already critically thinking gender and sexuality as well as those who are perhaps reading this in the midst of a course or at the behest of a friend. Indeed it is this hospitable approach to pedagogy that propels her project—she is an educator who facilitates change and a coexperiencer who is herself working and playing with gender/sex identity. Her pedagogy is dialectical, dialogical (as much as a text can be), and well aware of the importance of meeting all readers/students where they are and encouraging them to move beyond into new possibilities. In short, this is a workbook in the best tradition of workbooks—a riff on the stultifying standardized tests structuring public schooling and one that takes issue with the operations of normative regimes in their attempts to regularize an answer or regularize an identity.

The invitational pedagogy is reflected through the vastness of its forms of welcome. Seriousness and whimsy sit side by side; there are pirates, robots, cartoons, and quotes from online chats and creative writers reflecting the broad variety of perspectives on new gender/sexual formations. Above all, there are ample opportunities for readers to see what they might take for granted about gender, sex, and sexuality, to reengage ideas they may have repressed, and to critically examine how their practices of gender, sex, and sexuality have also helped to, purposely or inadvertently, create oppressive conditions for themselves and others. Like any welcoming party, class, or discussion, there are multiple ways into the conversations, each of which is facilitated by the generosity of the author.

In recent months there have been a number of blog posts and articles indicating trans “issue fatigue.” As understandable as it is for any marginalized group to be tired of educating those in the majority, Bornstein has a seemingly unending energy for such work, and her kind approach to the many levels of education about transgender lives and experiences, identities, and communities recognizes how diversely ignorant readers may be and also how deeply experienced and knowledgeable they already are. Her acknowledgment of and care about the common discomforts of those in the as-yet-uninterrogated normative positions give readers, whatever their identity, a meta-lesson in how to live, work, and teach in diverse contexts. With an easy-going manner about difficult issues related to key concepts in gender identity, sexual activities, and gender politics, Bornstein’s work can be read at multiple levels and from divergent perspectives, all of which can take away that “Auntie Kate,” as she occasionally refers to herself, really does care about how they think, play, and work their genders. The text includes discussions about the various aspects of gender identity, community, and process from individual to political. The book also pushes against its own boundedness, with opportunities to write in the margins, and invitations to rethink what is already written and to challenge one’s own thinking by examining the various potential answers to quizzes or excerpts from online discussions on trans issues. Each chapter shows many answers and ways of being; this is the point, and if we can manage to be kind to one another and advocate for just systems, all diversity is just fine. The juxtaposition of this pedagogy of generosity and her ability to make sure that all areas are explored, no matter how potentially jolting or surprising to the uninitiated (or as yet unacknowledged but interested or even disinterested but willing to become more interested, whatever), sets a tone in which it is easily imaginable that Bornstein will be willing to be a resource in a learner’s exploration.

Not for nothing was Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* interested in schooling, given the long history of institutionalization of bodily and other conformities associated with school. Bornstein stands the historical relationship

between domination and schooling on its head, taking the practices of negotiating around and through power into her pedagogical mode. She urges readers to move into what they desire and to push themselves into further discomfort in their considerations of gender identity—but always careful to ensure that their critical play stays safe but acknowledging, too, the dangers of such play for one’s attachment to conformist gender/sexuality. Like Martin Rochlin’s “Heterosexual Questionnaire” (1972) but in a way that opens the category of trans to all critical thinkers, Bornstein demonstrates the continual and often disjointed way in which gender is negotiated through the day, the process of understanding identity, and the political context in which identities are recognized, evaded, and reworked. Going further than the somewhat passive aggressive approach to education taken by the “Heterosexual Questionnaire,” Bornstein assures all her students that she wants the best for them and that between fun and challenge, new possibilities will emerge from their consideration and practice. This is serious fun, and as she puts it, changing one’s approach to gender “will be the death of you” (187). As such her work stands in a long tradition of challenging forms of learning. Education is a process of difficult change, from the pain of Meno’s experience of Socrates’s (n.d.) sting to Jacques Ranciere’s (1991) critique of the stultifying process of following the teacher—Bornstein may painfully provoke, yes, but then opens space for readers to make the workbook and the work of gender their own and to recognize where they have already been gender outlaws and think further.

The new edition goes into more detail about other forms of exclusion and community building, especially in one particular chapter, though there are references to intersectionality throughout. Attention to racialized genders and sexualities is still on the light side, and if I would want to change anything in the book it would be to have the different forms of identity/community distinguished a bit more in terms of those social and political categories. The new version, even more than the first, develops a robust incorporation of sexuality that strongly pushes back against notions that trans identity/theory/politics is disinterested in the implications of gender for sexuality. As to the cover’s claim, “now with more high theory,” perhaps not so much. The occasional apparent exhaustion with theory and her turn to the practice and habits of gender and sexuality may mark a turn to pragmatism. Indeed, engaging this theoretical move in more detail, pushing either against the uses of *trans* in theories or the agonistic rather than invitational uses of theory, would have at least explained why theory seems irksome to Bornstein. Or perhaps more material analysis, for instance, Vivianne Namaste’s (2009) critique of some theory’s apparent interest in trans identities without adequately attending to a grounded examination of the economic disparities experienced by trans women in particular, would add to the urgency about which gender identity is taught and learned. The way into this book is

largely through a critical reexamination of subjectivity in relation to desires and practices; while the social grid remains present, the whimsical invitation sometimes moves so strongly to the foreground that those productive/constraining social contexts recede. But, to be clear, a materialist analysis is not the project of this book, and its absence or underplayed presence, in the midst of this energetic and kaleidoscopic discussion of what sex and gender can be, may be only an invitation to read this in concert with another kind of text. And by no means does the approach of this book indicate that it is the last word: its strength is that it opens the reader to continue onward.

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Fashion-ing Pedagogies

FRANCISCO J. GALARTE

I grew up in a small segregated town along the US/Mexico border. I remember doing my homework every afternoon to the hum of my abuela's sewing machine. Monday through Friday, she welcomed clientele to consult with them on the garments they wished to commission her to design and sew. I remember laughter emanating from her bedroom-cum-sewing room, as the process of designing and fitting a garment invited intimacy, conviviality, and friendship. The 1950s and 1960s were the height of her custom work. She made custom gowns for Mexican-American brides, beauty pageant contestants, and *quinceañeras*; church wear for African American women; cheerleading outfits for the town's high school; and the latest teenage fashions for my mother and her friends. In her one hundred years, my abuela never learned to read or write, but she had an elegantly developed sartorial literacy. She was an expert in proportion, fit, and silhouette and was sought after for her ability to reinterpret "trend" styles for various body types. I cannot help but wonder what has become of the unique garments she designed as a seamstress for thirty years. I begin with my grandmother's story because this is one of my "style memories," an autobiographical narration related to clothing and style. It highlights the affective and the material nature of fashion and garments as sites of produced knowledge and recorded memory. I have come to think about the crafting, construction, and fashioning of a garment as a critical literacy of styles, and the body.

This issue marks the inauguration of the "Fashion" section in *TSQ*. As its fashion editor, I think it is critical to sketch out the utility of featuring short academic essays, interviews, curatorial op-eds, and fashion reviews. This reoccurring section seeks contributors whose writing and artistic practice treats fashion as a site for analysis where knowledge by and about transgender phenomena and communities is produced. Fashion is conceived here as a general phenomenon, not restricted to clothing but also concerned with literature, painting, and music as well as style, production, consumption, textiles, and beauty regimes

(Barthes 2013: 81; Tulloch 2010: 279). Fashion is understood here as a discursive site where its interpretation is rooted in the materials from which garments are made and in the mass media forms through which fashion is disseminated and proliferated (Parkins 2008: 73).

Sartorial Inscriptions

The wrinkles in the elbows of a jacket or a sleeve were called “memories.” Those wrinkles recorded the body that had inhabited the garment. They memorized the interaction, the mutual construction, of person and thing.

—Peter Stallybrass, “Marx’s Coat”

The mutual construction of subject and garment described by Stallybrass highlights the tension between the material and the discursive: whiskering on denim jeans, a well-developed patina on leather shoes and bags, and patches of mended wool on old trousers, jackets, and sweaters. While the garment loses material value or becomes threadbare as it is worn, it may also accumulate affective value. The garment and its materiality—the cloth, fabric—is “both a currency and a means of incorporation. . . . As it changes hands, it binds people in networks of obligation. The particular power of cloth to effect these networks is closely associated with two almost contradictory aspects of its materiality: its ability to be permeated and transformed by maker and wearer alike; its ability to endure” (Stallybrass 1993: 38). Fashion then is linked to embodiment, a crafting or self-fashioning that is not abstracted from the bodies that wear, look at, handle, and construct garments.

The cover art for “Trans*formational Pedagogies” is an embroidered portrait by artist L. J. Roberts that highlights the function of handmade craft. As Jean Vaccaro notes, “handmade objects are not uniform, not exactly reproducible. Connecting transgender corporealities to labor and the politics of the handmade is a way to explore alternate modes of identity production, and to resist . . . institutionally sanctioned gender formation” (2010: 254). The hand-stitched embroidered portrait features an individual posing with a sign expressing solidarity with a wrongfully incarcerated transwoman, Cece McDonald. This handcrafted embroidery relies on needle and thread to capture a snapshot of a salient representation of trans- politics, protest, and solidarity. The textured portrait, not readily reproducible, makes use of various fibers to depict an instructive moment; it is a “textured and fibrous imprint of bodily difference” (253). The image and form of the embroidered portraiture highlights Vaccaro’s incisive observation that the *handmade* “configures utopic relations between bodies and objects, materializing alternative modes of affective economies and networks of relationality” (257). Alongside this essay, we feature an interview with artist L. J. Roberts, who offers their own “style memory” and the relation of their artistic practice to fashion.

Conclusion: Looking (Fashion) Forward

Fashion is much steadier, much more precise contact with the coming thing. Each season brings, in its newest creations, various secret signals of things to come. Whoever understands how to read these semaphores would know in advance not only about new currents in the arts but also about new legal codes, wars, and revolutions.

—Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

As noted by Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, fashion is a complex system of codes and signals that at once represent a manifestation of commodity culture as well as “the manifestation of a long-repressed utopian desire, to be reenergized at a moment of historical awakening” (Wollen 2003: 131). The gesture to utopianism and the possibility of fashion as a means of resistance, transgression, and creativity—especially in queer and transgender communities—is a perfect conclusion here. To return to the notion of fashion-ing pedagogy is to invoke fashion as a site and mode of praxis, a methodology of resistance. I take cues from the role of clothing in social movements in the 1960s, the role of fashion in New York ballroom culture, the use of fashion and textiles in diasporic communities, as well as the use of the zoot suit among Mexican-American, Filipino-American, Japanese-American, and African American youth. As the editor of this section, I welcome essays that hold fashion as *ephemeral* and that look (fashion) forward, seizing on *emergent* possibilities.

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Style Memories and Aesthetics as Resistance

Interview with Artist L. J. Roberts

FRANCISCO J. GALARTE

Francisco Galarte: *Can you offer our readers a “style memory,” a short autobiographical anecdote that tells us about the importance of clothing or style to you and its relationship to your artistic practice?*

L. J. Roberts: In 1996, when I was sixteen years old I was kidnapped and taken to a “therapeutic boarding school,” located on a mountaintop, forty-five minutes outside the city of Redding in northern California. It was a depository for wealthy families to turn their misfit and/or outsider teenagers into “good kids,” normal kids. An integral part of entering the school was being stripped of “your image.” Nose rings were taken off the faces of punks, goth kids were forced to forfeit their black apparel and eyeliner, slutty girls’ thongs were confiscated, and so on. The staff of the school rifled through my suitcases: cargo pants, boys t-shirts, and cologne were separated from items deemed “in agreement.” I wasn’t left with much to wear that was my own clothing. Soon after, I was ordered to adhere to a specialized “feminine program,” created just for me. I was to shave, wear my hair up, put on dresses for dinner, to not walk like “a trucker,” and to have “appointments” or scheduled hang-outs with male students.

It’s easy, when I think of my time at the school, to dive into trauma. During dark times, it’s a convenient black hole. One of the tools I’ve used to dig myself out is to think about small acts of resistance that I and other students activated to reclaim a piece of ourselves and ultimately to stay alive. For me it was wearing hiking boots when I could—they were butch to me then, as was a pair of cargo shorts I had managed to hang onto. After being strip-searched that first day, and given a garbage bag of my belongings that were deemed “acceptable,” I dug out a bar of “CK ONE” soap from the sack. Produced by Calvin Klein, CK ONE was advertised

as the first “androgynous” scent and miraculously, it was skipped over during the comb through of my belongings. I made this single bar of soap last almost the whole time I was at there. I would dab just a smidge of it on my body as an act of knowing. I was enacting my gender—even if it was only in the shower, which lasted a rigid maximum of ten minutes. Other people practiced covert hacks to reclaim part of their identities too. Our aesthetics are resistance.

FG: *Why do you use embroidery as part of your artistic practice? What does this form allow you to capture?*

LJR: My creative practice, thus far, hasn’t included making garments. However, I can remember clearly, using a needle and thread to patch up what seemed like a never ending stream of holes that would appear in my favorite pants, baggy corduroys that felt butch to me. I wore them every day and slept in them for a summer. Those pants, obtained probably when I was around fourteen years old, held the first glimpse of my gender expression. And so, I kept them alive, stitched hole by stitched hole, to keep me going forward in a world where my preference for “men’s clothing” was ridiculed and forbidden to the point where I was institutionalized.

I keep a needle and thread on me at all times. I literally never leave my home without these tools. They’ve come in handy to mend holes for myself and others, or to repair someone’s boots before a hot night out, and one time to do a guerilla hem job on the pants of my sweetie on the corner of Forty-Ninth Street and Second Avenue in Manhattan during rush hour. Of course I carry them with me so I can always work on my art as well. I started stitching small-embroidered portraits when I couldn’t afford a studio in Brooklyn. Making small work enabled me to explore the city, sewing everywhere from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to Veselka during sleepless nights, to the queer corner of Riis Beach while avoiding the sun in a beach tent and admiring the many fashion conscious swimsuit changes of queens parading down the sand and into the surf. These portraits also serve another purpose—they allow me to take friends with me wherever I go, or at least images of them. In all of the portraits, agency and power is expressed in either subtle or upfront ways by people who deeply inspire me in their creativity, activism, and existence. This is reassuring to me, especially when walking the streets of the city where someone seems to offer an opinion on my gender daily.

FG: *Finally, tell us a bit more about the portrait on the cover of this issue.*

LJR: The image of the cover of this issue of *TSQ* was taken on my cell phone during the New York City Drag March of 2012. People gather in Tompkins Square Park and help each other put on costumes and drag and makeup and fake lashes

and all of the accoutrements that they desire to perform their campy gender fuckery. Everyone then marches west to Stonewall, one of the sites that sparked gay liberation. One mantra that you hear over and over is that the “Drag March is not a parade, it’s a protest.” The image on the cover of this issue of *TSQ* is of Jackie Mautner carrying a sign expressing her solidarity with Cece McDonald. Jackie was wearing a painted-on mustache and a bra over her shirt holding the sign high and grinning. Jackie, with her sign, calling Cece’s presence into the march invoked what I like to think is a key component of the drag march—always resisting while being our most fierce and hard-to-read selves. It’s really important to me that if the work is in a gallery that it also reach the people it depicts; postcard prints were made of the embroidery and given to Cece’s campaign for freedom and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project to sell with all proceeds going directly to them.

L. J. Roberts is an artist and writer whose creative practice incorporates a wide range of textile techniques, writing, and recently filmmaking. Their work has been shown nationally and internationally in such venues as the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Vox Populi, La Mama Gallery, the Miller Gallery at Carnegie Mellon University, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, Oakville Galleries, the Bag Factory, and A.I.R. Gallery. Their work was included in the nationally touring exhibition *Alien She* curated by Astria Suparak and Ceci Moss and in the exhibition *Disobedient Objects*, which originated at the Victoria and Albert Museum and is currently touring internationally. L. J.’s work will be included in upcoming shows at the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives at the University of Southern California and the Bowdoin College Museum of Art.

Francisco J. Galarte is an assistant professor of gender and women’s studies at the University of Arizona, where he teaches Chicana/Latina studies and transgender studies.

Introduction to “Translation”

SUSAN STRYKER

Welcome to the “Translation” section of *TSQ*. This recurring feature is intended to broaden the field of transgender studies beyond its Anglophone roots, by highlighting texts originating in languages other than English and by making visible the work of translation necessary to bring to English-reading audiences the work of researchers, writers, thinkers, and activists from around the world. The “Translation” section will feature both historical documents as well as contemporary voices that simultaneously challenge the Anglocentric bias of the transgender studies field while expanding the field’s breadth and reach. This first “Translation” section features work by Fabian Alfie, who translates a passage describing cross-dressing in a fourteenth-century Italian text by Giovanni Sercambi, and by S. P. F. Dale, who translates an article by present-day Japanese author and transfeminist activist Ray Tanaka. We welcome future submissions of translated fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and research texts of approximately one thousand words, not including a brief translator’s note. Translations will appear in roughly every other issue of *TSQ*.

Susan Stryker is associate professor of gender and women’s studies and director of the Institute for LGBT Studies at the University of Arizona and general coeditor of *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*.

Queers and the Issue of “Priority”

RAY TANAKA

Translated by S. P. F. DALE

Abstract This article examines the issue of priority that is implicit in discussions of domestic violence in Japan. Inspired by the author’s experience at a feminist symposium, this article discusses the implicit prioritization of heterosexual women that occurs in feminist discussions of domestic violence. Making use of their own experiences, the author argues that domestic violence is an issue that all individuals may face, including queer individuals. Heterosexuality as a social default must be questioned, and the author remains hopeful that feminists of all sexualities and genders may be able to work together and prevent social exclusion.

Keywords transgender, feminism, queer, academia, domestic violence

Translator’s Note

Ray Tanaka is a gender queer individual, survivor of domestic violence, freelance writer, and queer activist. In 2003, Tanaka had a stroke but was refused admission to several rehabilitation hospitals because the hospitals did not know how to handle transgender patients. It took quite an effort to find a good hospital where rehabilitation and recovery could happen. Tanaka wrote a collection of essays (*Toransujendā feminizumu* [*Transgender Feminism*]) about this and other experiences. But one issue that was not mentioned in previous writings was Tanaka’s experience as a survivor of domestic violence and stalking. Tanaka is working on a book in English so that the world can know about the situation facing transgender individuals in Japan.

In 2007, Tanaka was invited to speak at the Women’s Studies Association of Japan’s annual symposium, where the theme was “Queering the Backlash: A Critical Perspective on the Binary Sex/Gender System.”¹ The backlash in question refers to the government and media backlash toward attempts by feminists to bring about gender equality in education and other social spheres. For more information, see, for example, Yamaguchi 2014. This article was originally published in Japanese in a special edition of the journal *Joseigaku* (*Women’s Studies*), which was about the symposium (Tanaka 2007).

Queers and the Issue of "Priority"

As the author of *Transgender Feminism* (2006), I was invited on this occasion to act as a commentator for the symposium entitled "Queering the Backlash." When I spoke about my experience of being a survivor of domestic violence, a member of the Women's Studies Association made a comment [in regard to my presentation] that "the order of priority is different." I presume she meant that heterosexual women are to be prioritized over queer individuals. Even if one were to assume that this individual's "order of priority" came about because she could think only about women because she was a survivor herself and no one helped her in her time of need, in this category of "women" there are, even if a minority, lesbian and bisexual women, as well as transgender women. However, upon hearing her statement, no one at the symposium said a word, no one challenged her. What on earth does that mean? Doesn't saying that heterosexual women are the top priority implicitly imply that a woman who does not feel discomfort with her body (i.e., who is not transgender or transsexual), who is heterosexual, able-bodied, and Japanese should be prioritized over a queer, disabled, or non-Japanese one?

It is not uncommon for the class of people with power or people who are in a position to discriminate against others to draw a line between themselves and the class of discriminated "others." This doesn't only apply to women, but also to individuals who may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex; who may be sex workers, HIV positive, or have physical, psychological, or mental disabilities; who are *buraku*,² foreigner, homeless. . . . There exist also of course overlaps between these categories, and there are needless to say individuals who can be considered double or triple minorities. Given this, is there any meaning in establishing an "order of priority"?

There are many individuals who have been tragically killed because of domestic violence. These incidents occur in private, and there are cases in which the perpetrator appears to be a good person, and it is difficult to be aware of what is happening. From my own experience, I have been doubly hurt by friends who just didn't understand the situation.

When I talk about my past experience of being a survivor of domestic violence, I have received various responses from people I know. An acquaintance who knew both me and the perpetrator (i.e., my former partner) told me, "Huh? If you were the one doing it then I'd understand." Someone who knew only me and not the perpetrator even said that they "understand how the perpetrator felt" after hearing my story. Both these individuals call themselves feminists. Because of these experiences, I don't expect someone to understand my situation just because they call themselves a feminist. In addition, a friend who is a Buddhist nun even sent me an e-mail saying, "You chose that person, you loved that person, so what do you think about having continued your relationship with that person?"

What happened is karma.” Can you understand the utter sense of despair and hopelessness that I felt, that I just couldn’t put into words? Having had these experiences, I’m fine being told about the “order of priority,” but to have been told so at a place that calls itself the Japan Women’s Studies Association and for a statement like that to have gone unchallenged—the reality of the situation made me feel faint.

Just because I am “not a woman” but a transgender man, does that make it acceptable for me to be killed, for my body to be harmed to the point of physical disability, for me to be raped? After having been on the receiving side of domestic violence for a year and a half, four years ago I experienced a subarachnoid hemorrhage and stroke, which simultaneously led to hydrocephalus.³ I was on the verge of death. Additionally, when I was looking for a rehabilitation hospital, many places refused to receive me, the given reason being that there were “no precedent cases of transgender individuals.”

I don’t harbor ill feelings toward heterosexual women because of their sexual preferences. Although among them there are some whom I get on with, there are others who are stubborn and refuse to cooperate, who have no understanding of differences in gender and sexuality, and who discriminate against people who are queer.

I’d like you to think about what it meant for me to come out as a survivor at this symposium with the theme “Queering the Backlash,” a place that I thought would be more understanding of these issues than other places. Having heard my story, there might have been people who became aware of new problems, who might have experienced flashbacks or PTSD, who might have felt pity, or who might have felt revulsion. However, how many people had imagined that it would be I, a transgender man who passes as male and not a heterosexual woman who has never experienced discomfort with her sex, who would be the victim of domestic violence?

You might not know this, but there are many survivors who are queer. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex . . . being victimized has absolutely nothing to do with gender or sexuality. Being abused by one’s parents as a child, having had experiences of sexual violence, raped by one’s lover, raped by a friend, raped by a stranger, sexually harassed by a friend, molested by a stranger, being a victim of domestic abuse perpetrated by one’s domestic partner. . . . And of course, heterosexual men can also be victims.

I have no intention of making my experience something special or exceptional. A little bit of imagination will allow you to see that anyone runs the risk of being victimized. When considering the order of priority, it is impossible for one person’s order of priority to match that of another’s. To the heterosexual woman who brought up “order of priority” during the symposium: Did you ever

think about the possibility of being excluded from someone's order of priority? There is nothing more tragic than discriminating against someone because of their identity or how they live.

Looking at the home page for the Cabinet Office, you can find the following explanation for domestic violence:

The Japanese term for domestic violence comes from the English "domestic violence" and is also abbreviated as "DV." There is no precise definition as to what "domestic violence" amounts to, but it is generally used to denote violence that occurs between individuals in an intimate relationship or violence a man perpetrates against a woman. In some instances it also includes violence committed in a parent-child relationship. Because of the possibility that individuals may have different understandings of "domestic violence (DV)," we do not use it in formal contexts and instead use the phrasing "violence perpetrated by one's spouse." (Gender Equality Bureau 2014)

Here, the "seriousness of the problem" is based on the fact that "the violent acts committed by a spouse against a woman violate human rights and is a grave problem. There are not only a minority of individuals who are victims, but many." With regard to the "reality of spousal violence," the Gender Equality Bureau continues:

As for the reasons for this violence, there are structural reasons that make it difficult to label this as a personal problem, such as the social belief that it is unavoidable for a husband not to be violent to an extent toward his wife, the many instances in which the wife has no income and there is a financial gap between the partners. In order for men and women to be equal partners in this society and to work together, it is a prerequisite that there is absolutely no violence against women. (Gender Equality Bureau 2014)

The image of the victim that comes forth here is solely that of the heterosexual woman. Although the law for DV prevention (Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims) includes, strictly speaking, male spouses or couples in domestic partnerships, the victim is generally imagined as a heterosexual woman who experiences no discomfort toward her sex who is married with a man. Furthermore, the perpetrator is imagined to be a cisgender heterosexual man. The feminists (most of them heterosexual) who worked toward establishing this law succeeded in getting structural violence against women socially recognized. However, even if they knew about queer survivors, one can't help but think that we are an afterthought. This despite the fact that, no matter

who it is committed by or against, an act of violence is without doubt an act of violence.

The person who abused me used to be a bisexual woman, but when I started to transition, they started to attack me for some reason, and they made me introduce them to a clinic. So, the perpetrator is now a transgender man. In other words, the “same sex” as me. Of course, our incomes were about the same, and there was no issue of financial dependence between us. It might be thought that domestic violence between two transgender men is a rare case, but in reality there are many cases of this also happening between lesbian couples and gay couples.

I thought that it would be worthwhile for me to speak about my experiences at a symposium entitled “Queering the Backlash,” but was that a mistake on my part? Up until now, I had thought that I would be able to build new bonds with many heterosexual feminist women. We are not supposed to be each other’s enemy. No matter how large or small the category we belong to may be, or what that category may be, the current heterosexist, misogynist society that believes in the sex binary is one that continues to oppress us all. Although there are many things that we share and we may try to work together, the hurdles between us are still too high, and the problems plenty. In order to understand each other we have to, from here on out, talk to each other and create a dialogue and build up our relationship from there.

What I would like is for heterosexual women to think about their heterosexuality. It is unacceptable that it is only us queer folks who have to think about our “queerness” all the time. If they can do this, then it may be possible for us to come together. Something may start from there. This symposium may be the starting point for what is to come next.

Ray Tanaka is a gender queer individual, survivor of domestic violence, freelance writer, queer activist, and the author of *Toransujendā feminizumu (Transgender Feminism)*.

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Acknowledgments

The translator wishes to give special thanks to Stephan L’Heureux and the anonymous reviewers for comments and corrections.

Notes

1. The term *queer* (*kuia*) in Japanese is a loan word and a direct transliteration of the English *queer*. The term is mostly used in academic, activist, or cultural contexts, and in the case of this symposium in particular, it is linked to the tradition of queer studies.

2. *Buraku* refers to a social group that has historically been heavily discriminated against in Japan. Such systemized legal discrimination against people who were labeled an "undesirable" class has been eradicated, but social and cultural discrimination persists.
3. In some cases, colloquially known as "water on the brain." This refers to a condition in which fluid builds up in the skull and causes the brain to swell, potentially leading to brain damage.

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Giovanni Sercambi

Story 31

Translated by FABIAN ALFIE

Abstract Although references to male same-sex practices are rare in medieval Italy, discussion of female same-sex desire is virtually nonexistent. One exception to that rule is a story in the collection of narratives by Giovanni Sercambi (1348–1424). A bawdy tale, it relates how an abbess initiated novices by having sex with them, but her plans are disrupted when a young man disguises himself and enters the convent. It cannot be taken as historical documentation of actual practices, as it undoubtedly represents a fantasy composed for humorous effect. Nonetheless, through all its distortions, Sercambi's story evokes the possibility of female same-sex practices at a time when discourse on such matters was negligible.

Keywords medieval Italy, lesbian, Giovanni Sercambi

Translator's Introduction:

Regarding the Lust of the Abbess of the Convent of Olmo d'Arezzo

Understanding the meaning or significance of practices that look, to contemporary readers of premodern texts, like instances of homosexuality or of transgender practices is complicated by the fact that the very concepts of gender and sexuality, to the extent that we understand them to be norm-governed expressions of a person's nature, are themselves of quite modern origin.

The documentation of male same-sex desire in medieval Italy is scant but not wholly unavailable. Starting with the theologian Peter Damian (ca. 1007–72), the culture of the Middle Ages became preoccupied with “sodomy” not as a type of lust but as the more severe “crime against nature” (Jordan 1997: 29). Confessional tracts, religious literature, laws, and historical records provide glimpses into the sexual practices between men (Goodich 1979: 83–85). Dante's *Inferno*, for example, has a portion of hell dedicated to sodomy (it is a subset of violence: violence against nature). Furthermore, there was a literature of male same-sex desire composed in Latin (Boswell 1980: 208), and later, in the vernacular languages; in Italy, poets such as Niccola Muscia (thirteenth century), Marino Ceccoli (fourteenth century), and

Cecco Nuccoli (fourteenth century; see Botterill 2004: 684–85) wrote about their passionate feelings toward other men (Alfie 2007: 193–211).

Conversely, documentation about female same-sex desire in Italy during the Middle Ages is virtually nonexistent. Undoubtedly there are many reasons for this gap in information. The inequities of education between males and females resulted in fewer opportunities for first-person declarations. Further, the cultural preoccupation with sodomy stemmed, in part, from the concern with the wasting of semen, which the humorological sciences defined as a purified, or “white,” blood (Jacquart and Thomasset 1988: 55–56); nonprocreative sex involving men was viewed as a type of “spilling of blood,” with all the connotations thereof, but no such concerns were attached to sexual activity among women, which was a result of the lesser sin of lust. The cultural anxiety about sodomy, in short, means that there simply was more documentation about it. And the sheer loss of materials over seven centuries should never be discounted. There is, in short, a silence about sexual desire between women in the Italian Middle Ages that lasts for several centuries.

One text in particular addresses female same-sex practices, but it is problematic in this regard. The Lucchese author Giovanni Sercambi (1348–1424) composed a collection of short stories called simply *Novelle* (*Tales*, Sercambi [ca. 1368] 1997). Comprising 155 narratives, the collection was written in the wake of Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (ca. 1351) and shares with it Boccaccio’s ideology of female sexual agency. As in Boccaccio’s collection, there is a frame narrative about people fleeing the plague; they consist of a group of individuals who travel from town to town listening to a single storyteller who relates all the narratives. At times Sercambi depicts women as having sexual desires and possessing the wherewithal to get them met. In the tale under discussion, Sercambi portrays an abbess who initiates novices by having sex with them; the nuns have constructed a prosthetic penis that they strap on to satisfy one another’s urges.¹ Thus, in the economy of the narrative the nuns have crafted a viable alternative to traditional heterosexuality in a context of an all-female environment.

Sercambi’s tale also involves male cross-dressing, presented in a comic manner. A beautiful young man named Agnolo Bostoli, in love with a novice named Rosa, disguises himself as a woman to gain access to the convent, straps on the prosthetic device to engage in sexual activity with the abbess while being initiated, but then has intercourse with Rosa, using his penis, while dressed as a novice himself. His identity being discovered, Bostoli continues to reside at the convent in female garb for a fortnight, having penile intercourse with many nuns.

For centuries, authors of the Middle Ages wrote narratives satirizing wayward nuns (Daichman 1986), and Sercambi’s tale needs to be viewed in part by the light of that tradition. For instance, Boccaccio famously wrote a story about

nuns experimenting with sex with a handsome young gardener whose muteness guaranteed that word of their activities would not spread (but, as it turned out, he had feigned his muteness in order to be employed at the convent). Frequently, satires of nuns emphasized their sexual misdeeds, betraying an anxiety on the part of male writers about the relevancy of men in an environment populated only by women. At the same time, the literary satires of the nuns shared with the more general anticlerical tradition the impulse to highlight the hypocrisy of the religious by contrasting their Christian teachings to their un-Christian behaviors (Bayless 1997: 212; see also Szitta 1986, ix). As a humorous tale, therefore, Sercambi's story cannot necessarily be taken as historically accurate, because whatever real-world same-sex and cross-dressing practices it might depict—if any—they are filtered through an anxious male perspective and cast in a comical mold. At the same time, they should not necessarily be discounted; by humorously imagining sexual escapades at a nunnery, Sercambi evokes the possibility of a female sexual desire directed toward other women, a concept not otherwise expressed in any extant texts, as well as complexly gendered erotic activities. His text therefore offers an intriguing and unparalleled view of sexuality and gender in medieval Italy, however distorted that view might be.

Unlike Boccaccio's *Decameron*, to date Giovanni Sercambi's *Novelle* has not been translated into English. In this translation, the language reflects the original as much as possible. Sercambi switches between spelling the name of the character "Angelo" with "Agnelo" and "Agnolo," and these variants are reflected in the translation. Word repetitions have been retained, as have the euphemisms which then become employed as the actual signifiers for sexual organs (e.g., "shepherd's crook," "purse," "tool bag"). Interestingly, in contrast to the modern English-language convention of referring to a person known to be of one sex, even when cross-dressing, by the gendered pronouns typically associated with that sex, Sercambi at times refers to the cross-dressed Bostoli in the feminine or as "she." In the translation below, I follow the modern English convention of referring to Bostoli in the masculine and as "he" throughout, but I offer in the footnotes a literal translation of Sercambi's gendering of Bostoli while cross-dressed.

Regarding Lust: About the Convent of Olmo d'Arezzo and Its Abbess

There was an abbess in the Convent of Olmo d'Arezzo named Madonna Bergina, very beautiful and vain, and quite hot-blooded; and to not give up her vow of chastity, despite having a strong desire to be with a man, she thought up a good and honest way to satisfy some of her appetite.

So that she couldn't be blamed with what she had designed, and since she had many young nuns whom she thought still dreamed of being with men, she ordered a silk pouch filled with millet seed to be made in the shape of the

well-endowed “shepherd’s crook” of a man. And when the abbess wanted to drive off her fury, she had one of the nuns tie on that shepherd’s crook and mount her body as if she were a man, and with that crook she fulfilled her desires. And the other nuns behaved similarly. Beyond this, she had the habit that whenever a novice entered the convent, she needed to sleep with the abbess on the first night, and in that way they all learned the use of the shepherd’s crook. And so it ended up that all the nuns spent one night with the novice, and then the novices who enjoyed it the most continued to follow the custom.

Since things can’t be done so secretly that news of them doesn’t eventually spread, there was an old woman of the Convent who, one day, was asked by a most handsome, beardless, young man eighteen years old named Angelo Bostoli, who was taken with love for a nun in the Convent named Sister Rosa; he asked her: “How can it be that the young nuns—and the abbess too, who is young—aren’t overcome with that desire? And when the desire comes, how do they satisfy it, for certainly it is a great penitence on top of the other sins they commit?” The old nun, who knew the ways of the abbess and the other nuns, told Agnolo all about it, saying that every time a novice came into the Convent, “The abbess and the other nuns drive off their fury with a shepherd’s crook filled with millet seeds.” Angelo, who heard all about the ways of the abbess, thought of a way to get into that Convent.

And when he left from the old nun, he found a procuress who had served him many times, and he told her, “Go to that Convent and tell the abbess that you have a young daughter, fourteen years old, whom you want to put in there,” with the agreement that if the residence there is pleasing, you’ll leave her there. And she went to the abbess and said all that. The abbess said, “Bring her, and let’s see if she wants to be a nun.” With the old nun exhorting the procuress to bring her, the procuress said that it would be done. And when she returned to Agnolo, she told him everything.

Agnolo, who had immediately dressed himself as a young woman, humbly went to the Convent with the old procuress. She had the abbess summoned, and when the abbess came, she led Angelo in. When the abbess and other nuns saw Angelo, believing him to be a woman, they said, “She is the most beautiful and greatest young woman in Arezzo.” And they told the old procuress that it would be a shame to shut off such a lovely rose to such penance, and especially for her never to be with a man. And then the abbess said to herself, “I’m happy she’s here because she’ll mount me many times, and with the shepherd’s crook of millet seeds she’ll satisfy my appetite.” And she immediately said to the old procuress, “Leave her here, and either we’ll think of how to make her happy, in the name of God, or she’ll make us happy.”

When the old procuress had departed and had left Angelo the nun, the abbess stayed behind kissing him and sometimes touching his cheek with her hand, and said, “God would have done well to make you a man.” Angelo the nun acted reverent and feigned shamefulness such that both his cheeks seemed like vermilion roses.²

When the evening had come, the abbess said, “Tonight you’ll sleep with me, and tomorrow I want you to sleep with Rosa—that’s how I want you to repose.” Angelo said that he would willingly obey her. When the abbess had stripped herself nude and had made the young nun undress down to his undershirt, she told him how to tie the knot of the shepherd’s crook of millet on his rear-end, with the crook in the front, showing him how by first tying it on herself. Agnolo the nun said that he had come there to serve, and he would do everything, but first he begged the abbess to climb into the bed before him and he would take care of her as she had instructed.³ The abbess entered the bed.

Rosa, who had her bed beside the abbess’s with only a curtain separating them, heard all the abbess’s statements and the novice’s responses, feeling great pleasure that she would find herself in his arms the following night. Angelo, who desired Rosa, pretended to not see anything. The abbess, whatever else she was, was young [note: a line of text is missing from the manuscript] nor that he also had to lie down with her, tied on the millet shepherd’s crook, and tucked his own fleshly one between his thighs.

And when he had undressed, he entered the bed beside the abbess. The abbess, touching his flesh, said, “Mount me and put the shepherd’s crook in the ‘purse’ that I have between my thighs.” Angelo climbed atop her and he put the shepherd’s crook in the purse that she had below. And when he had provided what she wanted, he did that act twice before the abbess wanted him to climb off her, and then she said, “Let’s sleep, for before we get up I’ll want you to mount me again one more time.” And thus, before they arose the next morning, twice the abbess kicked off the coverlets.

That day they ate well, and that evening the novice lay down with Rosa. The abbess said, “Oh Rosa, you’ll take pleasure from the novice since she gave me a good evening last night.” Rosa said, “And so I will.”

And when she’d undressed and Angelo was in her bed, Angelo, who was getting what he wanted, slid the millet crook onto his rear-end and put his own flesh in her “tool bag” when he’d climbed atop her. Rosa was heated, and Angelo, who felt great desire, with pleasure immediately cast his white blood into her tool bag. Rosa, who felt it fall into her tool bag and feared that the millet crook had broken, said, “Oh no! The millet is spilling out!” The abbess got up and said, “What’s the matter, Rosa?” “The millet’s spilled out!” Rosa said, “I felt it pouring into my tool bag.”

The abbess immediately grabbed a candle and uncovered Rosa and the novice, and it was now the second time that he'd put his fleshy crook into Rosa's tool bag, and he was giving it to her.⁴ The abbess, when she saw the millet crook behind him, grabbed it with her hand and said, "Oh Rosa, why are you saying that the millet's pouring out?" "Now I feel it spilling out again." And when Rosa had moved out from under the novice, the abbess saw the novice had a crook of flesh, and she said, "Oh Rosa, you've had something other than millet! But I— alas!—only had millet when you didn't!" And the abbess wanted to see and hear everything, and wanted him to give her some water from the pail that he'd also given to Rosa!

And thus the abbess and the other nuns learned that the novice was Angelo Bostoli, and why he had come in such a disguise; and they were happy, taking as much pleasure from him as they could for fifteen days. Afterwards he departed from the Convent, leaving some of them pregnant and returning later at his pleasure.

And in this way the abbess and the nuns abandoned the millet crook, and adhered instead to the fleshy one.

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Acknowledgments

This translation began as a public talk entitled "Mother Superior, You're Trying to Seduce Me!": A Possible Reference to Lesbian Activity in a Medieval Italian Tale of Ribaldry," which was part of the University of Arizona's Institute of LGBT Studies' Deep Dish Lunchtime Lecture Series held on February 20, 2014. I would like to acknowledge all the participants for their participation and feedback.

Notes

1. The term *dildo* is avoided throughout this discussion because it is anachronistic for Sercambi's time. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word first appeared in 1598 in English, as part of the translation of the Italian phrase *pastinaca muranese* (the turnip of Murano [i.e., made of glass from Murano]). The word *dildo* itself might have been derived from the nonsensical refrain of a bawdy song (see *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "dildo, n.¹," accessed April 24, 2015, www.oed.com). Along with Sercambi's tale, other Italian literary texts describe female masturbatory devices, but no extant work uses the word *dildo* or *pastinaca muranese*. For a complete discussion of the history of the word *dildo*, see Simon 2010: 77–91.

2. Sercambi uses the feminine form of the adjective (“vergognosa”) in reference to Angelo the nun, rather than the masculine.
3. In this sentence, all the references to Angelo the nun are in the feminine. Thus, a literal rendering of the sentence is “Agnolo the nun said that she had come there to serve, and she would do everything, but first she begged the abess to climb into the bed before her and she would take care of her as she had instructed.”
4. Sercambi uses the feminine subject pronoun (“ella”) in reference to Angelo. Thus, the phrase literally reads, “it was now the second time that she’d put the fleshy crook into Rosa’s tool bag.”

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