ACCOUNTING FOR *TRANSGENDER* IN PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Schools are cis/heteronormative institutions with histories, buildings, curricula, and personnel entrenched in static binary gender. Educators' lifetimes of gendered socialization, training, and experiences shape choices about curriculum and classroom management.[1] Classroom dynamics reflect the assumption that girls and boys are essentially and naturally different, and teachers engage with students according to implicit and explicit gender-based assumptions.[2] When a transgender student is present these assumptions are disrupted, and educators may experience emotional responses including anxiety, fear, and feelings of incompetence.[3] These emotions are rooted in misunderstanding or knowledge gaps about gender diversity[4] and are compounded by school districts' general failure to account for non-binary genders in policy and facilities, and (potential) local aversion to transgender-inclusive changes to school operations. Pre-service and in-service education can address educators' knowledge gaps about gender diversity and, therefore, better equip educators to navigate implicit bias, inadequate institutional support, or community resistance in the interest of affirming transgender and gender non-conforming students.

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[1] Elizabethe Payne and Melissa Smith. "The Big Freak Out: Educator Fear in Response to the Presence of Transgender Elementary School Students." *Journal of Homosexuality* 61, no. 3 (2014); Christine Skelton and Barbara Read. "Male and Female Teachers' Evaluative Responses to Gender and the Implications of These for the Learning Environments of Primary Age Pupils." *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 16, no. 2 (2006); Melissa J. Smith "It's a Balancing Act: The Good Teacher and Ally Identity." *Educational Studies* 51, no. 3 (2015.

[2] Kathleen E. Rands. "Considering Transgender People in Education: A Gender-Complex Approach." *Journal of Teacher Education* 60, no. 4 (2009); Skelton and Read, "Male and Female Teachers."

[3] Melissa J. Smith and Elizabethe Payne. "Binaries and Biology: Conversations with Elementary Education Professionals after Professional Development on Supporting Transgender Students," *The Educational Rorum*, 80, no. 1, (2016).

[4] Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out."

In this chapter, we critically review research about pre-service and in-service education designed to support teachers learning to work with transgender and/or gender non-conforming (TGNC) students and create classroom cultures that welcome the full spectrum of human gender diversity. Scholarship on pre-service teacher education and professional development learning has tended to collapse sexual and gender diversity under the LGBTQ+ acronym, presenting a challenge for reviews of this kind.[5] In LGBTQ+ educational research, authors often claim to address sexuality *and* gender diversity but focus data collection and analysis exclusively on sexual orientation, or do not collect sufficient data to make reasonable claims about TGNC students and educators. Because transgender-spectrum K-12 students and teachers face barriers distinct from those experienced by cisgender school peers, we prioritize findings and argumentation specific to gender diversity. The pre-service literature features a balance of empirical research on (a) program content, (b) teacher candidate (TC) readiness to support TGNC students, and (c) the pre-service experiences of TGNC TCs; argumentation in favor of preparing new teachers in this area; and teacher educator writings on their own practice. The professional development literature—which generally focuses on LGBTQ+ issues more broadly—contributes insight about correlations between increased teacher knowledge and positive shifts in teacher attitudes and school climate indicators.[6] We have positioned this "LGBTQ+" approach to research on professional development in conversation with the few

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[5] Lee Airton and Austen Koecher. "How to Hit a Moving Target: 35 Years of Gender and Sexual Diversity in Teacher Education." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 80 (2019); Elizabethe Payne and Melissa Smith. "Reduction of Stigma in Schools: An Evaluation of the First Three Years." *Issues in Teacher Education* 19, no. 2 (2010); Elizabethe C. Payne and Melissa Smith. "The Reduction of Stigma in Schools: A New Professional Development Model for Empowering Educators to Support LGBTQ Students." *Journal of LGBT Youth* 8, no. 2 (2011); Elizabethe C. Payne and Melissa J. Smith. "Safety, Celebration, and Risk: Educator Responses to LGBTQ Professional Development." *Teaching Education* 23, no. 3 (2012).

[6] Brad W. Kose "The Principal's Role in Professional Development for Social Justice: An Empirically-based Transformative Framework." *Urban Education* 44, no. 6 (2009); Payne and Smith, "An Evaluation"; Laura A. Szalacha. "Educating Teachers on LGBTQ issues: A Review of Research and Program Evaluations." *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education* 1, no. 4 (2004).

journal articles specifically addressing K-12 educator professional development on transgender issues. The chapter concludes with questions to guide continued inquiry into educator learning about gender diversity across career phases, and the types of learning that have the potential to transform teachers' practice.

PRESERVICE AND PRACTICING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSGENDER INCLUSION

Preservice Teachers and Transgender Students

Pre-service teachers are likely entering their programs with increasing exposure to transgender-spectrum people and issues, including peers, as the transgender umbrella is strikingly young.[7] A younger adult cisgender pre-service teacher, by virtue of exposure alone, likely holds more trans-affirming views[8] than older adults, and emerging research[9] suggests the former have greater fluency with the gender-neutral singular *they/them* as a personal pronoun. TCs – cisgender and transgender – advocate for transgender peers and students, whether in their teacher education coursework or their practicum placements; during practicum, this advocacy may occur in ways that educate their mentor teacher or even conflict with the mentor's practices.[10] Changes to pre-service programs to make them more welcoming of gender and

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[7] For example, Greta Bauer, Michelle Boyce, Todd Coleman, Matthias Kaay, Kyle Scanlon, and Robb Travers, "Who Are Trans People in Ontario?" (2010), accessed February 1 2021, http://transpulseproject.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/E1English.pdf.

[8] Lara A. Barbir, Anna W. Vandevender, and Tracy J. Cohn, "Friendship, Attitudes, and Behavioral Intentions of Cisgender Heterosexuals Toward Transgender Individuals," *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health* 21, no. 2 (2017); Yasuko Kanamori and Yonghong J. Xu, "Factors Associated with Transphobia: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach," *Journal of Homosexuality* (2020).

[9] For example, Lauren Ackerman, Nick Riches, and Joel Wallenberg, "Coreference Dependency Formation is Modulated by Experience with Variation of Human Gender" (paper presented at the 92nd Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America. Salt Lake City, UT, 2018); Kirby Conrod, "Changes in Singular They" (paper presented at the Cascadia Workshop in Sociolinguistics, Reed College, Portland, OR, 2018); Kirby Conrod, "Pronouns Raising and Emerging." Ph.D. diss., (University of Washington, 2019).

[10] Olivia Jo Murray, *"Outing" Queer Issues in Teacher Preparation Programs: How Pre-Service Teachers Experience Sexual and Gender Diversity in Their Field Placements* (PhD diss., Portland State University, 2011); Jason M. Silveira, "Perspectives of a Transgender Music Education Student," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 66, no. 4 (2019); Donald M. Taylor, "LGBTQ Music Educators: External Mentoring Between Student Teachers and In-Service Teachers," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 216 (2018).

sexual diversity have come in response to TC demands.[11] The generational renewal of the profession through pre-service programs bodes well for gender diversity in schools, but also poses a considerable challenge for programs that are staffed by older adults without the same degree of exposure to transgender peers.

While scholars are increasingly finding evidence of positive *attitudes* toward transgender students from teachers,[12] pre-service teachers are generally in need of much more complex preparation for gender-expansive *practice*.[13] Cisgender TCs may carry incorrect conceptual knowledge of transgender people and issues[14] and lack specific understanding about affirming gender diversity in schools.[15] Straight cisgender TCs may better understand and be more comfortable with sexual diversity (e.g., LBQ issues and identities) over gender diversity;[16] this comfort gap may explain an observed tendency of cisgender TCs to distance themselves from (hypothetical) transgender students by describing them as wholly unknowable or unimaginable,[17] or by positioning these students as the Other via hero or victim binary narratives.[18] TCs may also

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[11] Greg Curran, Michael Crowhurst, Margarita Breed, Julie Faulkner, Mary Hanrahan, Narelle Lemon, Jude Ocean, and Geoff Shacklock, "SPACE: Queer Allies Network: An Approach to Actively Support Gender and Sexual Diversity at RMIT University's School of Education," *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* 4, no. 2 (2007); Jerry Rosiek, Alison Schmitke, and Julie Heffernan, "Queering Teacher Education Curriculum: A Case Study of Lessons Learned in the Transformation of a Teacher Education Program," *Curriculum & Teaching Dialogue* 19 (2017).

[12] e.g., Clare Bartholomaeus, Damien W. Riggs, and Yarrow Andrew, "The Capacity of South Australian Primary School Teachers and Pre-Service Teachers to Work with Trans and Gender Diverse Students," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 65 (2017).

[13] See Wayne Martino, and Wendy Cumming-Potvin, "Transgender and Gender Expansive Education Research, Policy and Practice: Reflecting on Epistemological and Ontological Possibilities Of Bodily Becoming," *Gender and Education* 30, no. 6 (2018).

[14] Cathy A. R. Brant, "How Do I Understand the Term Queer? Preservice Teachers, LGBTQ Knowledge, and LGBTQ Self-Efficacy," *The Educational Forum*, vol. 81, no. 1 (2017); William Milburn, and John Palladino, "Preservice Teachers' Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions of LGBTQ Bullying Intervention," *The American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences Journal* 16 (2012).

[15] Milburn and Palladino, 2012, "Preservice Teachers' Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions"

[16] Brant, "How Do I Understand the Term Queer?"

[17] Heather Killelea McEntarfer, *Navigating Gender and Sexuality in The Classroom: Narrative Insights from Students and Educators* (New York, Routledge, 2016).

[18] Elizabeth E. Blair, and Sherry L. Deckman, ""We Cannot Imagine": US Preservice Teachers' Othering of Trans and Gender Creative Student Experiences," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 86 (2019).

articulate moral, ethical or faith-based objections to transgender people in particular.[19] TCs who misunderstand gender non-conformity and gender expression[20] tend to claim these concepts are irrelevant for cisgender people.[21]

In addition to these general findings, two studies demonstrated a significant association between being a TC who is a cisgender man and one's capacity to support transgender students.[22] TCs who are cisgender men are more likely to express transphobic attitudes,[23] or to report less comfort with the idea of teaching transgender students.[24] For these reasons, Scandurra et al. recommend educational interventions precisely for TCs who are cisgender men, a suggestion which is, to our knowledge, completely untried (and potentially against the law in some jurisdictions).[25]

Practicing Teachers and Transgender Students

Multiple studies have indicated that in-service educators feel unprepared to meet the needs of transgender and/or gender non-conforming students.[26] A study on elementary school

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[19] Victoria L. Kintner-Duffy, Rosemarie Vardell, Joanna K. Lower, and Deborah J. Cassidy, ""The Changers and the Changed": Preparing Early Childhood Teachers to Work with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Families," *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* 33, no. 3 (2012).

[20] Brant, "How do I understand the term queer?"; Milburn and Palladino, 2012, "Preservice Teachers' Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions".

[21] There is considerable evidence to the contrary; e.g., Cary L. Klemmer, Joshua Rusow, Jeremy Goldbach, Shanna K. Kattari, and Eric Rice, "Socially Assigned Gender Nonconformity and School Violence Experience Among Transgender and Cisgender Adolescents," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2019): accessed February 1, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0886260519844781; Wayne Martino, Jenny Kassen, and Kenan Omercajic, "Supporting Transgender Students in Schools: Beyond an Individualist Approach to Trans Inclusion in the Education System," *Educational Review* (2020), accessed February 1, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2020.1829559.

[22] Bartholomaeus et al., "The Capacity of South Australian Primary School Teachers"; Cristiano Scandurra, Simona Picariello, Paolo Valerio, and Anna Lisa Amodeo, "Sexism, Homophobia and Transphobia in a Sample of Italian Pre-Service Teachers: The Role of Socio-Demographic Features," *Journal of Education* for Teaching 43, no. 2 (2017): 245-261.

[23] Scandurra et al., "Sexism, Homophobia and Transphobia."

[24] Bartholomaeus et al., "The Capacity of South Australian Primary School Teachers."

[25] Scandurra et al., "Sexism, Homophobia and Transphobia."

[26] Blair and Deckman, "We Cannot Imagine"; Luecke, Julie C. "The Gender Facilitative School: Advocating Authenticity For Gender Expansive Children In Pre-Adolescence." *Improving Schools* 21, no. 3 (2018); Mollie T. McQuillan, and Jennifer Leininger. "Supporting gender-inclusive schools: educators' beliefs about gender diversity

educators' responses to transgender students found a lack of preparation visible in educators'

emotional responses such as fear and confusion, and in their reluctance to intervene in gender-

based harassment or to challenge the policing of gender binaries in peer groups and curriculum.[27]

In a 2012 study with over 1,000 elementary school teachers, only 41% stated that they would feel

comfortable addressing questions from their students about transgender people.[28] Teachers also

express unease over the possibility of discussing transgender people with parents or others in the

broader school community.[29] Educators' emotions can limit willingness to learn about

marginalized groups, and teacher discomfort with gender diversities can make schools

uncomfortable places for transgender students.[30] Furthermore, educator thinking may be limited

by binary notions of transition from one gender to another gender, reproducing rigid gender

categories even when they try to support transgender students.[31]

When school personnel are faced with the responsibility to provide inclusive education

for transgender and/or gender non-conforming students, their understanding of what that means

is often constrained by assimilationist strategies for helping "different" students get along in the

school environment. Jackie Ullman found that "NYC public school educators' rationale for their

school's trans/gender diversity initiatives most often rested on adherence to institutional policy

rather than inclusion and embrace of gender diverse students as valuable members of the school

community."[32] Their interventions were both "reductive" and "manageable," framed as responses

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training and implementation plans." *Professional Development in Education* (2020); Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out."

[27] Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out."

[28] Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, and Harris Interactive. "Playgrounds and prejudice study: Elementary school climate study in the United States." *New York, NY.* (2012)

[29] Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out."

[30] Blair and Deckman, "We cannot imagine."

[31] Luecke, "Gender Facilitative School."

[32] Jacqueline Ullman "Breaking Out of the (Anti) Bullying 'Box': NYC Educators Discuss Trans/Gender Diversity-Inclusive Policies and Curriculum." *Sex Education* 18, no. 5 (2018), 9.

to individual student problems as they arose. Participants neither acknowledged nor addressed the role of the school in creating environments that are punitive toward gender difference. Similarly, Payne and Smith found that without clear policy to guide them, educators made decisions about transgender inclusion from positions of uncertainty and fear and their choices aligned with the broad frameworks of school safety and individualized student accommodations; this kept school professionals within what they judged to be professionally "safe" territory.[33] Educators also tend to view bullying from other students as the primary barrier to transgender student success and limit their own responsibility to intervention in student-driven violence, failing to acknowledge the potential for institutional violences and adult complicity in harming transgender students[34]

Supportive relationships with teachers and school personnel are one of the best predictors of school success for transgender students.[35] However, there are few opportunities for educators to receive professional development on gender diversity.[36] Where trainings are offered, they are rarely mandatory and there may be resistance to attending.[37] Perhaps most worryingly, if there are no known transgender students in the school, providing professional development is often understood to be unnecessary.[38]

ACCOUNTING FOR *TRANSGENDER* IN PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE EDUCATION

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[33] Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out."

[34] Frohard-Dourlent, Hélène. "'I don't care what's under your clothes': the discursive positioning of educators working with trans and gender-nonconforming students." *Sex education* 16, no. 1 (2016); Mayo and McQuillan, forthcoming).

[35] Jenifer K. McGuire, and Meredith Conover-Williams. "Creating spaces to support transgender youth." *The Prevention Researcher* 17, no. 4 (2010).

[36] Clare Bartholomaeus and Damien W. Riggs. "Cisgender administrators and educators." *Transgender People and Education*. Springer, 2017; Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out."

[37] Bartholomaeus and Riggs, *Transgender People*

[38] Elizabethe C. Payne and Melissa J. Smith. "Refusing Relevance: School Administrator Resistance to Offering Professional Development Addressing LGBTQ Issues in Schools." *Educational Administration Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2018); Ullman, "Breaking Out."

Pre-service

Gender Diversity Content in Pre-service Programs

Studies of pre-service "LGBTQ" curriculum and pedagogy have yielded some specific

findings about gender diversity across[39] and within[40] teacher education programs. That said, the

majority of the literature on pre-service curriculum and pedagogy sees teacher educators arguing

for the importance of gender diversity integration in pre-service curricula,[41] and/or reporting on

their own practices for integrating gender diversity into their own courses.[42]

Studies offering a broad view or "state of the field" account of gender and sexual

diversity in pre-service teacher education curricula unsurprisingly reveal that (US) educational

foundations textbooks and courses are generally wanting in relation to transness. Ian K.

Macgillivray and Todd Jennings conducted a content analysis of educational foundations syllabi

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[39] Paul C. Gorski, Shannon N. Davis, and Abigail Reiter, "An Examination of the (In) Visibility of Sexual Orientation, Heterosexism, Homophobia, and Other LGBTQ Concerns in US Multicultural Teacher Education Coursework," *Journal of LGBT Youth* 10, no. 3 (2013); Stacey S. Horn, Pamela Konkol, Kathleen McInerney, Erica R. Meiners, Connie North, Isabel Nuñez, Therese Quinn, and Shannon Sullivan, "Visibility Matters: Policy Work as Activism in Teacher Education," *Issues in Teacher Education* 19, no. 2 (2010); Ian K. Macgillivray, and Todd Jennings, "A Content Analysis Exploring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Topics in Foundations of Education Textbooks," *Journal of Teacher Tducation* 59, no. 2 (2008); Nancy Samar Shedlock, "Teaching Teachers on the Topic of GLBT Issues: The Current Conditions of Teacher Education Programs," PhD diss. (Alfred University, 2013).

[40] Bartholomaeus et al., "The Capacity of South Australian Primary School Teachers"; Blair and Deckman, "We cannot imagine"; Laura-Lee Kearns, Jennifer Mitton-Kükner, and Joanne Tompkins, "Transphobia and Cisgender Privilege: Pre-Service Teachers Recognizing and Challenging Gender Rigidity in Schools," *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation* 40, no. 1 (2017).

[41] Rands, "Considering Transgender People in Education"; Therese Quinn, and Erica R. Meiners, "Teacher Education, Struggles for Social Justice, and the Historical Erasure of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Lives," in *Studying diversity in teacher education*, ed. Arnetha F. Ball and Cynthia A. Tyson (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 135-151.

[42] Carol Brochin, "Queering Bilingual Teaching in Elementary Schools and in Bilingual Teacher Education," *Theory into Practice* 58, no. 1 (2019); Kearns et al., "Transphobia and Cisgender Privilege"; Catherine McGregor, "Troubling Gender Through Mail Art," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 19, no. 12 (2015); Connie E. North, "Threading Stitches to Approach Gender Identity, Sexual Identity, and Difference," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 43, no. 3 (2010); Michael O'Malley, Mei Hoyt, and Patrick Slattery, "Teaching Gender and Sexuality Diversity in Foundations of Education Courses in the US," *Teaching Education* 20, no. 2 (2009); Rands, "Considering Transgender People in Education"; Rosiek et al., "Queering Teacher Education Curriculum"; Miles Turnbull, and Tom Hilton, "Infusing Some Queer into Teacher Education," *Education Canada* 50, no. 5 (2010); Jon M. Wargo, "Lights! Cameras! Genders? Interrupting Hate through Classroom Tinkering, Digital Media Production and [Q]ulturally Sustaining Arts-Based Inquiry," *Theory into Practice* 58, no. 1 (2019).

and found that "none of the texts defined gender identity, transgender, or heteronormativity".[43] In

a quantitative content analysis of multicultural education course syllabi in US pre-service

programs, Paul C. Gorski and colleagues found that, in the average course, "gender (including

sexism, gender identity, transgender identity, feminist theory, etc.)" occupied only 7.16% of

class time, while "sexual orientation (including heterosexism, homophobia, LGBTQ identities,

queer theory, etc.)" occupied merely 3.76% of class time.[44] Pre-service research may be hindered

in taking stock of gender diversity-specific curriculum coverage by a collapse of transness with

queerness, or with non-heterosexuality. Gorski and colleagues highlight this problem:

> We included transgender identity, oppression, and resistance within the LGBTQ frame,
> understanding that, identity-wise, it might have made more sense to include it in the
> gender frame, because the few syllabi that incorporated transgender identity in any way
> incorporated it into sexual orientation. *This, of course, raises a host of other questions
> about multicultural teacher educators' understandings of the relationships between
> gender and sexual orientation.*[45]

We take Gorski et al.'s findings and categorization to suggest that *transgender* is generally

included through a sexual orientation lens. Eli Kean used interviews and syllabi analysis to study

US teacher educators' inclusion of transgender issues, and their participants identified

heteronormativity as the primary source of the oppression faced by transgender people.[46] This

may explain a trend across the preservice literature: naming *gender* as a problem to be engaged

in teacher education curricula, but only naming *sexual minority* youth as affected by this problem

in schools.[47] Some cisgender non-heterosexual teacher educators commendably acknowledge

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[43] Macgillivray and Jennings, "A Content Analysis Exploring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Topics in Foundations of Education Textbooks," 181.

[44] Gorski et al., "An Examination of the (In) Visibility," 233.

[45] Ibid., 232 (added emphasis).

[46] Eli Kean, "Locating Transgender Within the Language of Queer in Teacher Education," *Multicultural Perspectives* 22, no. 2 (2020).

[47] For example, Alison Happel-Parkins, and Jennifer Esposito, "Using Popular Culture Texts in the Classroom to Interrogate Issues of Gender Transgression Related Bullying," *Educational Studies* 51, no. 1 (2015); McGregor, "Troubling Gender Through Mail Art."

how a sexual orientation lens in their teaching has obscured the specificity of transgender

peoples' experiences in education, and explicitly link this to their own sexual orientation bias.[48]

Gorski and colleagues' question about *teacher educator* understanding is also answered

in the reviewed literature. Nancy Shedlock interviewed twenty directors of pre-service teacher

education programs, and the findings further substantiate concerns about teacher educator

familiarity with transgender lives and issues: "only one participant made a clear reference to

gender identity in response to one question", and this happened despite Shedlock defining each

acronym term (including the T) at the beginning of the interview and consistently including the

dyad 'sexual orientation and gender identity' in questions.[49] Echoing Gorksi and colleagues,

Shedlock's syllabi analysis (including syllabi shared by interviewees) found that "the term

gender identity was only mentioned in one syllabus as a possible topic to focus on for two

assignments, and the term *transgender* was not mentioned at all."[50] Stacey Horn and colleagues

surveyed faculty in 57 Illinois teacher education programs "to examine their inclusion of

LGBTQ-related course content, attitudes toward gender identity and sexual orientation, and their

ability to teach about LGBTQ lives and communities";[51] the teacher educator respondents often

expressed anxiety about a lack of 'official terminology' and 'best practices.' Unsurprisingly, "the

majority of respondents "felt that they had no expertise in gender identity-related topics".[52]

Overall, a lack of preparedness on the part of pre-service faculty is reflected in the extant

literature.

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[48] For example, McEntarfer, *Navigating Gender and Sexuality in The Classroom;* McGregor, "Troubling Gender Through Mail Art"; see also Elizabeth J. Meyer, Anika Tilland-Stafford, and Lee Airton, "Transgender and Gender-Creative Students in PK-12 Schools: What We Can Learn from Their Teachers," *Teachers College Record* 118, no. 8 (2016).

[49] Shedlock, "Teaching Teachers on the Topic of GLBT Issues," 78.

[50] Ibid., original emphasis.

[51] Horn et al., "Visibility Matters: Policy Work as Activism in Teacher Education," 70.

[52] Ibid.

Teacher Educators Reporting on Their Own Gender Diversity Pedagogies

Scholarship on gender and sexual diversity in pre-service[53] is dominated by teacher educator self-reports. In the only study to yield themes across multiple teacher educators' reported gender diversity pedagogies, Kean found that "establishing class norms of vulnerability and openness, utilizing guest speakers, and providing a space for their students to explore their own gender identity were crucial elements in teaching trans".[54] Both Kean's findings and the reports synthesized below pick up a trend from the literature on TC readiness: that *learning to situate one's self – even if one is cisgender –* in relation to gender norms, categories and expectations is critical in preparing TCs to support transgender students in schools. Future empirical studies should explore this further.

Some teacher educators use literature and pop culture to sensitize TCs to gender norms as well as prepare them to do the same with their own students.[55] Jon M. Wargo's children's and young adult literature course included TCs deconstructing popular texts like Munsch's *Paperbag Princess* as well as texts about transgender children and youth, while creating their own children's books on gender identity and gender expression.[56] Wargo reports that some TCs replicated these pedagogies with their own students in practicum. While Wargo's approach does potentially collapse transness and queerness by centering gender transgression, this approach may be appropriate to elementary teacher education given the importance of spaces for childhood gender exploration.

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[53] See Airton and Koecher, "How to Hit a Moving Target."

[54] Kean, Locating Transgender Within the Language of Queer," 123.

[55] Wargo, "Lights! Cameras! Genders?"; North, "Threading Stitches"; Linda T. Parsons, "Learning from Preservice Teachers' Responses to Trans-Themed Young Adult Literature: Improving Personal Practice in Teacher Education," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 37, no. 6 (2016).

[56] Wargo, "Lights! Cameras! Genders?"

Connie North incorporated *Stitches*,[57] a novel about a gender non-conforming youth (Travis) into her pre-service social studies methods courses, in which she centers Travis' gender expression.[58] The article is inspired by one TC's assumption that Travis is gay, not just 'girlie.' That the reader cannot know Travis' sexual orientation guides North's pedagogy, with the goal of moving the "preservice teachers and myself toward addressing our own investments in narrow understandings of gender and sexual identities".[59] Taking the reader through the lesson and its impact on TCs, North suggests inviting TCs to hold space for Travis (and other similar youth) *not* having to be intelligible to them as 'gay' in order to take action on gender conformity-related harassment. Alison Happel-Parkins and Jennifer Esposito take a similar approach to leading TCs in analyzing an *Ugly Betty* episode, in which an effeminate high school student with a never-named sexual orientation is targeted for what the authors term "gender transgression-related bullying."[60] Happel-Parkins and Esposito do not focus their pedagogy on the student (Justin) – for whom TCs generally have sympathy – but rather on how a gender non-conforming student's experience can be an indication of a school's gender culture. In the end, it is not that Justin is or may be gay, but that his punishment for a non-conforming gender expression reveals more about the school culture than about Justin himself, which TCs can take as a starting place for acting within their own future schools. In sum, the literature suggests that teacher education should support TCs in cultivating an 'orientation' of not needing to know about a particular student's gender identity or sexual orientation in order to act on gender expression-related harassment.

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[57] Glen Huser, *Stitches* (Toronto, Groundwood, 2003).
[58] North, "Threading Stitches."
[59] Ibid., 380.
[60] Happel-Parkins and Esposito, "Using Popular Culture Texts."

Michael O'Malley and colleagues address the question of how to scaffold gender and sexual diversity for a TC population that is religiously and politically conservative.[61] They describe and rationalize a sequence for teaching about gender and sexual diversity in a pre-service diversity course: from "biological sex, to gender/sexual identity, to gender role, to sexual behavior, and finally to sexual orientation".[62] The authors begin with content on intersex lives because they claimed at the time that "seldom is there any religious or political dimension" given the newness of the topic to most students.[63] Foregrounding gender diversity with a discussion of intersex lives may confuse issues of gender and sex, as there is no simple overlap between the experiences of transgender and intersex people; that said, O'Malley and colleagues find that a documentary on an intersex woman athlete, whose treatment (at the time of writing) is seen by TCs as so transparently unfair that "students are now better prepared to accept the fact that gender diversity does exist" and is worthy of protection.[64] Next, O'Malley et al. report opening up the topic of gender roles to the students in a third lecture, encouraging students to find "the ways that gender and sexuality bias have deformed each of us", and the final lecture on sexual orientation – final because most contentious, in that context – begins with students' elicited reflections on norms related to heterosexual marriage, dating and courtship.[65]

Teacher educators report using arts-based pedagogies in relation to gender diversity. J. Scott Baker and colleagues give TCs "an opportunity to write reflective poetry, responding to class discussions, art pieces, and readings" with purposely vague instructions and no length

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[61] O'Malley et al., "Teaching Gender and Sexuality Diversity."
[62] Ibid., 97.
[63] Ibid., 98.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 108.

limits.[66] They argue that this is effective in bringing TCs engagement with gender diversity (etc.)

out of the genre of "regulated, usually restrictive writings" they produce in most pre-service

coursework.[67] The authors argue that this pedagogy allows TCs to think and feel their way, with

honesty, through their own limitations as they prepare to support transgender and/or gender non-

conforming students. Catherine McGregor, noticing a pattern of uncomfortable silences when

she engaged gender and sexual diversity topics with TCs, experimented with autoethnography

and Mail Art pedagogies to "create a dialogic learning space for problematizing normative issues

of gender and gender expression" with TCs.[68] The author invited artists from around the world to

submit art via mail on this theme, and used a blog to share her own responses to the images as

well as invite comments from her students and others. McGregor argues that it is necessary to

"openly engage with and model for pre-service teachers the ways I continue to explore my own

gender-based beliefs and values, and illustrate how to deconstruct their operation within

professional discourses and teaching practices".[69] In a narrative study of one pre-service course

on gender and sexuality in education, Heather McEntarfer used a pedagogy of ongoing reflexive

writing. Analysis of classroom talk and student writing revealed that TCs, when self-positioning

as teachers, "expressed clear commitment to supporting transgender youth in schools"; however,

"when they positioned themselves as readers, students, and especially as potential partners of

transgender individuals, their positioning became more complicated".[70] She argues that "students

who want to support transgender youth also need the time to work through some of these

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[66] J. Scott Baker, Mirm Hurula, Alaina Goodreau, and Benjamin Johnson, "Poetic Explorations of Cisgender Privilege: How Teacher Candidates Learn to Advocate for Gender Non-Conforming Youth," *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* 15, no. 3 (2018), 314.

[67] Ibid.

[68] McGregor, "Troubling Gender Through Mail Art," 1310.

[69] Ibid., 1312.

[70] McEntarfer, *Navigating Gender and Sexuality in The Classroom*, 67.

assumptions themselves", such as transgender children and youth being 'too young' to know who they are, or posing a risk to cisgender students in washrooms.[71] All of the reviewed sources in this section apply a familiar theme of broader anti-oppression pedagogies[72] to gender diversity: supporting TCs in learning to tolerate their own uncertainty as to who their students are, and coping with the feelings of vulnerability brought on by this uncertainty.[73] Arts-based and free-form reflexive writing are reportedly providing TCs with a space to cultivate this disposition toward uncertainty.

Some authors are pinpointing discipline-specific issues that arise when teacher candidates have gender diversity knowledge gaps. When preparing TCs for bilingual (English-Spanish) schools, Carol Brochin has found that they "lack education in basic terminology; how to translate terms such as transgender, gay, lesbian, and gender queer into Spanish; and how to find resources to address these issues with bilingual families".[74] Brochin argues that the intersections of race, culture and language with gender identity and sex – e.g., the binary gender of nouns and lack of common gender-neutral pronouns in Spanish – mean that teacher educators in bilingual programs have two hard jobs. They must be explicitly prepared to work against TCs' racist assumptions about Latinx communities: "How can they [teachers] disrupt notions that Latinx children are more macho or sexist"?[75] TCs must also be explicitly instructed in teaching about "positive gender expression and LGBTQ issues" in a culturally-relevant way, despite the binary

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[71] Ibid., 187.

[72] Kevin K. Kumashiro, "Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education," *Review of Educational research* 70, no. 1 (2000).

[73] See also Elizabeth J. Meyer, and Bethy Leonardi, "Teachers' Professional Learning to Affirm Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender-Creative Youth: Experiences and Recommendations from The Field," *Sex Education* 18, no. 4 (2018).

[74] Brochin, "Queering Bilingual Teaching in Elementary Schools", 81.

[75] Ibid., 85.

grammar of Spanish.[76] Brochin notes that, at the time of writing, her task was made more

complicated by the fact that there were no gender and sexual diversity-inclusive children's books

published in Spanish. The pre-service education of music teachers also carries particular

implications for gender diversity,.[77] Instruments are frequently gender-stereotyped (e.g., flute for

girls, trumpet for boys), as are choral roles and ensembles. Much like Kathleen Rands,[78] Palkki

and Sauerland call for a gender complex (music) teacher education; this looks like incorporating

gender-complex pedagogies and providing explicit tools to support TCs in observing gender

norms and their impact during field placements in the music room.

Practicum is as important as coursework for teacher candidates' gender diversity

learning. For example, during practicum Jon Wargo's TCs completed a research project in which

they appraised administrator and teacher comfort with student 'gender creativity,' and

inventoried school libraries for texts about the same. Finding much discomfort among teachers,

the TCs reportedly "left the course encouraged to engage in issues of genders and sexualities in

more explicit ways."[79] Rands offered TCs sensitizing concepts (e.g., gender expression, gender

expectations, etc.) prior to practicum and took the time to explicitly debrief their gendered

observations of students and teachers as well as unpack TCs' reflections on their own gender

expectations of school life.[80] Laura-Lee Kearns and colleagues found that embedded Positive

Space trainings in each year of a teacher education program enabled TCs to notice and critically

reflect on the ways in which individual, institutional and systemic power combine to

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[76] Ibid., 81.

[77] Joshua Palkki, and William Sauerland. "Considering gender complexity in music teacher education." *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 28, no. 3 (2019).

[78] Rands, "Considering Transgender People in Education"

[79] Wargo, "Lights! Cameras! Genders?", 25.

[80] Rands, "Considering Transgender People in Education."

disadvantage transgender and/or gender non-conforming students.[81] Using multiple case study methods, Olivia Murray studied how six TCs made sense of "an event, situation, and/or experience involving gender or sexual diversity" in their practicum placements.[82] Each TC, sensitized by their participation in the study, chronicled their growing awareness of rigid binary gender in everyday conversations, curricula and school structures, and of a need to be gender-conforming in order to be accepted by teachers in their practicum schools. However, "most followed in the footsteps of their cooperating teachers and decided not to address the matter in an explicit way for fear of upsetting or defying their cooperating teachers, or 'outing' themselves in some way" if they were queer or transgender.[83] Nevertheless, Murray asserts that "pre-service teachers who are encouraged (and given some tools) to identify and make sense of queer issues in the field begin to voice a professional responsibility to address, if not outright counter-teach, issues that arise in schools which are homophobic and/or transphobic".[84]

An area of *informal* 'curriculum' in pre-service programs may stem from the increased enrollment of transgender-spectrum people, in terms of what knowledge and skills cisgender TCs may take away from their teacher education. For example, Murray's six participants included Jack, a trans man. Jack outed himself to his TC peers and cohort leaders early on in the program, and reportedly felt supported by them. Jack also initially came out to his practicum associate teacher Mrs. Turner; however, regardless of experiencing noticeable physiological changes due to his medical transition, "Jack decided not to come out to his students or the greater school; he said he "passed" more easily as a female. He also feared parent/community backlash and

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[81] Kearns et al., "Transphobia and Cisgender Privilege."
[82] Murray, *"Outing" Queer Issues in Teacher Preparation Programs",* 11.
[83] Ibid., 118.
[84] Ibid., 135.

questioned the stance [the teacher education program] would take on his behalf".[85] When Murray

asked about this decision, Jack conveyed that Murray was indeed supportive, but she was his

sole faculty support, and moreover she was not his practicum mentor teacher. Jack's relationship

with his practicum mentor teacher, Mrs. Turner, was reportedly strained after an initially positive

response to him coming out, and some of Jack's encounters with gender diversity were directly

related to Mrs. Turner's and other teachers' enactments of rigid gender binary logic. Jack's own

voice is required in order to convey the impact of not being out during practicum:

> I really have to psych myself up every night before I go in there...like it's okay, I'm
> gonna do this and it's going to be great! It's about the kids um but it's really hard and so I
> like go in there and I feel like I would have so much more energy to bring if I could just
> be myself.[86]

While this one data point highlights the incredibly fraught nature of practicum for transgender

TCs, it is arguably also a locus of curriculum for Jack's peers. His feeling that he could not be

out as transgender on practicum was viewed as an acute injustice by fellow TCs who strongly

accepted him. Their experiences of solidarity with a transgender peer and colleague led them "to

acknowledge schools as heterosexist and transphobic institutions".[87] This aligns with findings

that pre-service (and in-service) teachers with a transgender and/or gender non-conforming

friend report higher levels of confidence in supporting transgender students.[88] As K-12 schooling

experiences continue to improve for some transgender students, we can expect more and more

transgender people to enter pre-service programs; for this reason, as well as the afore-mentioned

generational changes in attitudes toward transgender people, we anticipate that transness will

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[85] Ibid., 68.

[86] Ibid., 68-69.

[87] Ibid., 111.

[88] Bartholomaeus et al., "The Capacity of South Australian Primary School Teachers."

exceed many program's taught curricula, as well as engender TC backlash to curricula that have not been duly updated. This backlash may come from transgender TCs, but also from cisgender TCs whose life worlds include transgender-spectrum peers such that these students are expected in their future classrooms. That said, teacher education programs cannot rely on the increased presence of TGNC TCs to diversify the lived curriculum of their programs in relation to gender diversity; that this is taking place, and can be thought as curriculum, does not diminish the responsibility of programs to attend to what is taught.

As the literature on classroom practices is in development, and largely consists of teacher educators reporting on their own practices, our discussion here has been descriptive rather than analytical. There is a notable emphasis in the reviewed literature on cultivating (presumed cisgender) TCs' positive *disposition* toward gender diversity instead of preparing TCs for *nuts-and-bolts advocacy* for transgender students in schools. One exception is McEntarfer, whose study led her to devote substantially more time to deconstructing anti-trans arguments with TCs, particularly when these invoke 'risk' posed to cisgender students (e.g., with regard to washrooms) in order to prepare them for doing the same when these arguments arise in schools. Another exception is Rands, who recommends Forum Theatre and other role-playing strategies to help TCs prepare for situations where they themselves experience gender category oppression, but also for addressing anti-trans behavior or arguments from parents, administrators and even mentor teachers:

> For example, what possibilities are open to a teacher if transphobic parents demand that their children be moved into a different class when they find out that one of the students is transgender? What might a teacher do if an administrator says that a transgender student is not allowed to use the bathroom with which the student feels most comfortable? What could a student teacher do if a cooperating teacher refused to call a transgender student by his or her or hir preferred pronoun or name?[89]

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[89] Rands, "Considering Transgender People in Education", 429.

Dispositional changes are key, but there are many concrete ways school structures and systems do violence to transgender-spectrum people with them.[90] When they take up such topics at all, pre-service programs may overly-emphasize dispositional change at the expense of advocacy-related skill development and vetted policies.

Experiences of Transgender and/or Gender Non-Conforming TCs

Arguably, the majority of the pre-service curriculum and pedagogy literature imagines a *cisgender* TC who is learning about gender diversity. However, there is quite simply no such thing as 'transgender-inclusive' initial teacher education if *transgender* people are not well-served by pre-service programs. While this is an emerging literature in which reflection and (largely informal) case studies predominate, transgender and/or gender non-conforming teacher candidates reportedly encounter innumerable obstacles and stressors as they learn to participate in a profession that has actively excluded gender non-conforming teachers in its long history.[91] If, as above, teacher educators whose courses engage gender diversity teach that gender non-conforming students' experiences are a proxy for a school's gender climate, transgender and/or gender non-conforming TCs' experiences can also be taken as a proxy for teacher education program climate. Even at this early stage in the literature's development, there are signs that this climate is unlikely to be positive.

Lee Iskander's in-depth interview study with six nonbinary pre-service teachers, conducted by a researcher who is themself non-binary, is a landmark.[92] Participants report

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[90] See also Dean Spade, *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

[91] Jackie M. Blount, "Spinsters, Bachelors, and Other Gender Transgressors in School Employment, 1850-1990," *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 1 (2000).

[92] Lee Iskander, Non-Binary Beginning Teachers as Willful Subjects: Gender, Power, and Professionalism in Teacher Education, forthcoming.

experiencing 'gatekeeping' behavior from program faculty and teachers in practicum schools, which produced gender non-conformity as a hazard to their success in the program components and in the broader career. However, participants also report that these anxieties were not echoed by parents and students in their practicum placements, even as parents and students were often identified by participants' pre-service programs as the 'reason' for their gatekeeping: that parents and students would somehow object to having a non-binary teacher. This suggests a striking mismatch between teacher educators' understandings of transgender and/or non-binary teachers' lives in schools, and what their experiences might actually entail.

Through 15 weekly interviews, Jason Silveira worked with one transgender TC – Joseph – to produce a narrative of his experiences with gender transition while completing a music teacher education program, also drawing on participant journals and artifacts. Joseph's experiences surface familiar issues in post-secondary institutions (e.g., instructor misgendering, deadnaming in official records),[93] and some bright spots, such as peers correcting instructor misgendering, and some accommodations due to the effects of his transition, such as vocal range shifts and breath issues from binding. That said, his narrative also suggests a lack of support as a transgender person, as though his developing sense of himself as a music teacher was supported while his transness was not spoken about by faculty. Unsurprisingly, Joseph like many other "sacrificial lambs"[94] became an advocate within his teacher education program, regardless of whether this is what he might have wanted.

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[93] See Abbie E. Goldberg, and Katherine A. Kuvalanka, "Navigating Identity Development and Community Belonging When "There are Only Two Boxes to Check": An Exploratory Study of Nonbinary Trans College Students," *Journal of LGBT Youth* 15, no. 2 (2018); Z. Nicolazzo, *Trans* in College: Transgender Students' Strategies for Navigating Campus Life and the Institutional Politics of Inclusion* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2016).

[94] See Meyer et al., "Transgender and Gender-Creative Students in PK-12 Schools"; Meyer and Leonardi, "Teachers' Professional Learning to Affirm Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender-Creative Youth."

Harper Keenan introduces the language of *drag* to describe how under-represented TCs (and teacher educators) prepare to participate in teaching, identifying rigid expectations for TC gender expression that are rooted in whiteness and middle-classness. As a trans teacher and now teacher educator, Keenan writes that his own "ability to shift into this performance of bourgeois White masculinity is not something that I was born knowing how to do", but is required due to how K-12 schools desire gender-conforming teachers.[95] Keenan argues that pre-service programs must understand how professional norms of dress, grooming and embodiment are barriers to transgender and queer candidates, but not only them: "when we teach teachers that their bodies are only professionally acceptable if they conform to a particular expectation, we reinforce broader societal messages that encourage people to evaluate bodies based on how they look, and we model that this is an acceptable practice for teachers".[96]

Didi Khayatt and Lee Iskander reflect on an experience of attending a panel of 'LGBTQ' teachers that included no transgender teachers and was organized within the pre-service program at their institution. Iskander, at the time a non-binary TC, reports that organizers stated "they could not find a transgender teacher who would agree to participate",[97] which Iskander interpreted to mean that "it would be impossible to be an openly transgender teacher in the classroom".[98] Prior to teacher education, Iskander was a nationally-recognized student activist and was instrumental in changing provincial law to mandate GSAs in publicly-funded Ontario

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[95] Harper B. Keenan, "Khaki Drag: Race, Gender and the Performance of Professionalism in Teacher Education," In *Confronting racism in teacher education: Counternarratives of critical practice*, edited by Bree Picower and Rita Kohli (New York: Routledge, 2017), 98.

[96] Ibid., 100.

[97] Didi Khayatt, and Lee Iskander, "Reflecting on 'Coming Out' in the Classroom," *Teaching Education* 31, no. 1 (2020), 9.

[98] Ibid.

Catholic schools.[99] Teacher education, however, would prompt Iskander to decide against continuing into the classroom after graduation: "something about the process of becoming a teacher made me feel like my queerness and transness were out of place: these marked me as suspicious, attracted questions and stares, and meant that I didn't and couldn't look like a teacher".[100] Approaches like identity-matching with practicing teacher mentors may support transgender and/or gender non-conforming TCs to incorporate their authentic gender expression into their teaching by providing examples of role models who do this, and excel in their positions.[101]

Pre-service programs rely on partner schools for practicum placements, and school administrators and mentor teachers are gatekeepers of new teacher induction via formal references or informal conversation with others in a district. Walter H. Hart and Laura Hart point out that, while many LGBQ teachers may be able to hide their sexual orientation on the job market, this may not always be true for transgender pre-service teachers and recent graduates. "Even for transgender candidates who can 'pass,' outing by background check remains a possibility, especially if a name change has occurred".[102] The authors interviewed 14 officials (HR directors and principals) with responsibility for placing TCs and hiring new teachers in the greater Charlotte, NC metropolitan region. Participants were aware "that their approach in placing transgender candidates in their schools would potentially demand a different path than placement of a traditional student teacher",[103] such as arranging a placement in a school known

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[99] Lee Iskander, and Abigail Shabtay, "Who Runs the Schools? LGBTQ Youth Activism and Ontario's Bill 13," *Journal of LGBT Youth* 15, no. 4 (2018).

[100] Khayatt and Iskander, "Reflecting on 'Coming Out' in the Classroom," 8.

[101] Taylor, "LGBTQ Music Educators."

[102] Walter H. Hart, and Laura Hart, "When Johnny Becomes Janie: An Investigation of the Attitudes of School Leaders on the Placement and Hiring of Transgender Teacher Candidates," *Journal of School Leadership* 28, no. 1 (2018), 113.

[103] Ibid., 122.

for having a positive gender climate, but also suggested that they do not seek any detailed

information and do not undertake any person-specific process to place TCs in practicum schools.

That said, principal participants made very detailed claims about the potential success of a

transgender TC in their school, based on their assumptions about community values and whether

a school served an urban, suburban or rural community. Most distressingly, participants tended

to believe that transgender TCs or new teachers would (and should) be able to keep information

about their gender private as a matter of 'professionalism.' This assumption is patently incorrect,

as Keenan and others have shown, and privileges TCs who are gender-conforming (and arguably

white, middle-class) transgender men and women, as long as their transness is not disclosed.

Transgender and/or gender non-conforming TCs' experiences sharply contrast with the

advent of gender identity and gender expression human rights protections in many jurisdictions

represented in this literature.[104] This mismatch between what transgender and/or gender non-

conforming people can legally expect and their actual experiences in pre-service programs ought

to prompt considerable concern in pre-service programs. This concern speaks to another finding

of our pre-service review, previously highlighted and echoed in this section: that *teacher*

educators are typically unprepared to support transgender and/or gender non-conforming TCs,

and to lead all TCs in becoming teachers – and colleagues – who can welcome gender diversity.

Prescient in 2008, Kimberly Cosier anticipated what may happen when a then-approaching wave

of transgender and/or gender non-conforming young people entered pre-service programs, and

advised teacher educators as follows:

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[104] See Lee Airton, Kyle Kirkup, Allison McMillan, and Jacob DesRochers, "What Is" Gender Expression"? How a New and Nebulous Human Rights Construct Is Taking Shape in Ontario School Board Policy Documents," *Canadian Journal of Education* 42, no. 4 (2019); Elizabeth J. Meyer, and Harper Keenan, "Can Policies Help Schools Affirm Gender Diversity? A Policy Archaeology of Transgender-Inclusive Policies in California Schools," *Gender and Education* 30, no. 6 (2018).

> Teacher educators must prepare themselves to guide students with strategies that will help sustain a balance between integration and separation of public and private identities. Coursework on professional identity development needs to honor the tensions that arise among identities in order to prepare this "post-gender" generation to successfully enter the teaching profession and move schools toward an ever more tolerant and inclusive future for all.[105]

While the literature on transgender and/or gender non-conforming TCs' experiences in pre-service programs is indeed nascent, we observe that Cosier's prediction and its implications have not been heeded.

Professional Development

Trans Implications from "LGBTQ" PD Research

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in the role of high-quality professional development (PD) and how teacher learning through PD opportunities influences their engagement with students and curriculum, but there is still much we do not know about teacher responses to and benefits from PD experiences focused on better understanding, teaching, and affirming traditionally marginalized student populations.[106] This is particularly true of professional development focused on preparing in-service teachers and school leaders to work with LGBTQ students.[107] There is little agreement on what constitutes high quality professional development for educators, what types of professional development should be offered to educators, and what types of experiences should count toward professional learning requirements.[108] Understanding what educators feel they need in professional development is critical to making professional learning meaningful; however, individual awareness of a need for

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[105] Kimberly Cosier, "Gender, Queers and Teaching Identity: The Private and Public Lives of Adrienne/Leo and the Photographic Journey of Rebecca Schmidt Kupietz." *Journal of LGBT Youth* 5, no. 3 (2008), 10.

[106] Valerie Kinlock and Kerry Dixon. "Professional Development as Publicly Engaged Scholarship in Urban Schools: Implications for Educational Justice, Equity, and Humanization." *English Education* 50, no. 2 (2018).

[107] Payne and Smith, "A New Professional:" Payne and Smith, "Safety, Celebration."

[108] Kinloch and Dixon, "Publicly Engaged."

professional development addressing LGBTQ-identified students and families, as well as broader

gender and sexuality issues in schools, may not arise until faced with a situation novel to the

educator, such as the school enrollment of a student with same-gender parents or a transgender

student.[109] While we know that teachers are unsure how to work toward affirming gender

diversity and are sometimes afraid of making mistakes, we know little about how best to provide

them professional learning addressing transgender issues.[110]

Most professional development addressing the experiences of transgender and/or gender

non-conforming students has been part of broader LGBTQ sessions. In-service educators who

attend are more likely to report engagement in supporting LGBTQ students than those who have

not received training, and training has been associated with more positive attitudes toward

LGBTQ students as well as improved school climate.[111] Payne and Smith found that educators

who had attended LGBTQ training noted a change in their understanding of gender and

sexuality, and information they received about the gender binary had stayed with them.[112] They

also found that many educators perceived addressing LGBTQ issues in schools as controversial,

and the topic produced feelings of anxiety or uncertainty for some educators. PD participants'

most prevalent take away was a commitment to the safety discourse and to addressing bias-based

speech.[113] Marx, Roberts, and Nixon conducted a qualitative evaluation of training "designed to

provide personnel with deeper knowledge and skills and particularly to cultivate active allies

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[109] Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out."

[110] Luecke, "Gender Facilitative"; Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out."

[111] Kose, "Principal's Role;" Emily A. Greytak and Joseph G. Kosciw. *Year One Evaluation of the New York City Department of Education" Respect for All" Training Program*. Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), 2010; Katie Swanson and Maribeth Gettinger. "Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Supportive Behaviors Toward LGBT Students: Relationship to Gay-Straight Alliances, Antibullying policy, and Teacher Training." *Journal of LGBT youth* 13, no. 4 (2016); Szalacha, "Educating Teachers."

[112] Payne and Smith, "An Evaluation."

[113] Payne and Smith, "Safety, Celebration."

who undo heterosexist and cissexist practices present in the school environment."[114] The training was transgender-inclusive but not transgender-focused. The frequency with which participants asked questions and introduced transgender issues into conversation afterward highlighted increased educator awareness and cultural focus on transgender student experiences. They found that educators came away from the training with a commitment to protecting transgender students while also maintaining them as Other or as "strange," evaluating transgender people through ideas of cisgender acceptability, and embracing support of transgender students through their responsibility to treat all students equally.[115] In early 2020, Payne and Smith piloted a new LGBTQ professional development model that includes substantial transgender specific content and a focus on schools as cis/heteronormative institutions.[116] The session includes extensive discussion on the regulation of gender in the day-to-day life of schools. Educators indicated that learning about vocabulary and the experiences of transgender and/or gender non-conforming students was some of most appreciated content, and the majority of participants indicated an intention to actively support transgender and/or gender non-conforming students. The post-workshop questionnaire included the prompt "What information do you think teachers need about transgender students to feel confident in supporting them?" Patterns in the responses included: concern for student safety and privacy; a focus on teacher personal discomfort; centering pronoun and name usage as the primary difficulty; a focus on the individual student's needs; calls for respect; and a reliance on 'support all students' discourses. Less frequent but

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[114] Robert A. Marx, Leah Marion Roberts, and Carol T. Nixon. "When Care and Concern are Not enough: School Personnel's Development as Allies for Trans and Gender Non-conforming Students." *Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2017), 5.

[115] Marx, Roberts, and Nixon, "Care and Concern," 7.

[116] Payne, E. & Smith, M. (n/d). Teacher Engagement in LGBTQ Professional Development.

encouraging responses called for opportunities to learn to proactively teach students to challenge

gender stereotypes and establishing a classroom community that welcomes "gender questioning."

Thinking about Gender Diverse Professional Development

Several studies, while not presenting professional development design or evaluation data,

have aimed to provide research that informs the creation of meaningful professional development

specific to transgender inclusion (i.e., not generic 'LGTBQ inclusion'). For instance, Luecke

describes the skill set of teachers effectively operating within a "gender facilitative" framework

and contrasts this with a gender restrictive model.[117] Educators in gender facilitative schools

were able to directly respond to student gender-based aggressions with a focus on educating not

punishing; held an expansive understanding of gender labels and terms from across the gender

spectrum, including transgender, cisgender, gender expansive, gender fluid, gender questioning

and were able to use these terms in their communications and teaching; were able to facilitate a

narrative of transition; recognized there may be transgender children in the school who are

unknown to them; were able to self-reflect and resist policing masculinity and femininity in the

classroom; had the pedagogical and content knowledge to create teachable moments in the

curriculum that challenge gender policing and messages that gender diversity is not valuable;

were comfortable delivering lessons on gender vocabularies and use of personal pronouns; and

were able to explore "the schemas that shape our interpretations and put parameters around

gender" with students.[118] While professional development was one component of the gender

facilitative approach, it is unclear to what extent skills observed in gender-facilitative educators'

practice were introduced and developed through professional development. Luecke reports that

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[117] Luecke, "Gender Facilitative", 269.
[118] Luecke, "Gender Facilitative," 277.

the professional development was intended to provide educators with: an in-depth understanding of gender nondiscrimination policy; a developmental understanding of gender diverse children; facilitative ways to communicate with gender diverse children and their families; and strategies for creating positive school climates and inclusive curriculum materials.

Payne and Smith conducted a study to better understand the range of fears elementary educators report experiencing related to educating a (known) transgender child for the first time.[119] Their aim was to use their findings to create professional development opportunities that would address these educator experiences and better prepare them to support transgender and/or gender non-conforming students. Educators in this study had no prior professional experience with or training on gender diversity and felt their education programs and lack of district professional development opportunities had left them without the knowledge they needed to proceed in what was, to them, a novel situation. Educators feared that without clear school or district policy guidelines and no professional knowledge, they would make decisions that could be seen as inappropriate by the larger school community. They were also concerned about maintaining transgender students' confidentiality. This concern was often less about the transgender student than it was the fear of needing to discuss the transgender student's identity with classmates and parents. Educators' personal investment in the gender binary led them to question the gender identity of transgender students and to calculate the risk a transgender student posed to cisgender peers in various possible scenarios, such as sleepovers. Though all participants felt a commitment to the privacy and safety of a transgender student, they also felt a commitment to the safety of cisgender students and some saw these commitments as at odds. Educators also feared that they would be seen as "promoting it" or "exposing [children to]

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[119] Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out."

transgenderism," or that they would "get in trouble for accepting it."[120] Their statements implied

that they saw support for transgender students as an inappropriately political act, or feared others

would see it as such, rather than as the upholding of professional responsibility. The authors

conclude that without knowledge and clear policy, educators in the study had their sense of

professional competence shaken which created fear and anxiety. They offer that educators need

not only professional development on transgender and/or gender non-conforming students, but

also on gender broadly, to better understand schools as gendered environments and rigid gender

norms as limiting to all students. Research tells us that educators are most effective in supporting

transgender and/or gender non-conforming students when they are able to recognize and resist

the "everyday practices that reinscribe gender oppression" and publicly practice that

resistance.[121]

Bartholomaeus and Riggs surveyed practicing primary school teachers and preservice

teachers on what kind of professional development training they would need to feel confident

and prepared to work with transgender and gender diverse students.[122] They found no significant

difference between the two groups other than age, and thus did not report the findings separately.

Participants identified six areas of necessary information for professional development: 1) how

to support transgender students and gender diverse students; 2) knowledge about the need and

experiences of transgender students; 3) information to increase their personal understanding of

transgender identities and issues, including appropriate language use and terminology; 4) content

for classroom inclusion and for how to approach discussions of transgender people in the

classroom; 5) strategies for dealing with bullying and harassment; and 6) how to address the

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[120] Payne and Smith, "Big Freak Out," 413.
[121] Blair and Deckman, "We cannot imagine," 2.
[122] Bartholomaeus and Riggs, "Cisgender Administrators."

broader school and parent community, including navigating negative responses. The responses to the survey indicated a high level of educator interest in supporting gender diverse students as well as in increasing their own knowledge and working toward more inclusive classroom practices. The authors caution, however, that there may be a "significant gap between the goodwill and actual action aimed at proactively" including transgender people in schools.[123]

In sum, professional development can influence teacher beliefs, change behaviors, and provide tools to enable teachers to meet their professional obligation to gender diverse students.[124] Without training on transgender topics, educators may rely on their own "constructs of gender based on their own experiences and socialization" in making decisions about their engagement with gender diversity.[125] Swanson and Gettinger argue that professional development "may contribute to an overall positive school climate, in part because teachers themselves become more aware of the various roles they can assume to support students on a day-to-day basis."[126] Professional learning experiences that help teachers not only to address basic accommodations for transgender and/or gender non-conforming students but to understand the ways in which gender and sexuality are already part of school culture, curriculum, and pedagogy can help to open the door to inclusive schools for people of all genders.[127]

Reviewing K-12 Transgender Professional Development Research

There is little research on educator LGBTQ professional development and even less on PD that is transgender specific. For this review, we were able to identify four articles that report,

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[123] Bartholomaeus and Riggs, "Cisgender Administrators," 141.

[124] Mollie T. McQuillan and Jennifer Leininger. "Supporting Gender-inclusive Schools: Educators' Beliefs about Gender Diversity Training and Implementation Plans." *Professional Development in Education* (2020).

[125] McQuillan and Leininger, "Supporting Gender-inclusive." 4.

[126] Swanson and Gettinger, "Teachers' Knowledge," 342.

[127] Melissa J. Smith and Elizabethe Payne. "Binaries and Biology: Conversations with Elementary Education Professionals after Professional Development on Supporting Transgender Students." *The Educational Forum*, vol. 80, no. 1, (2016).

in varied ways, on the design and/or evaluation of transgender-specific professional development for K-12 educators. There were three criteria for inclusion: 1) the professional development was designed for and delivered to K-12 educators; 2) the professional development was transgender-specific; 3) the article was published in an academic journal. The four articles represent three approaches to scholarship on professional development: quantitative program evaluation, an interview-based study on responses to PD experiences, and PD providers' self-reported strategies for facilitating educators' learning about transgender youth. All research was conducted in the US and no international studies were located.

McQuillan and Leninger conducted a program evaluation of a transgender-specific training that was offered through a children's hospital system and delivered in a variety of school settings.[128] The study reports on post-training survey data gathered from 1425 attendees at the end of sessions in 80 schools. The training sessions varied in length and attendance type (compulsory or personal choice). The facilitators for the training: 1) provided definitions of terms; 2) presented strategies for engaging gender diverse students; 3) provided examples of model school policies for gender support and inclusion; and 4) offered ways to discuss gender diversity with students, parents, and the other members of the school community. Educators were also encouraged to reflect on their gender identity and beliefs about gender. Response to the training was positive with over 90% reporting that the training was useful. Educators' intended implementation plans after training included: being more self-aware, seeking new classroom resources, pursuing policy changes, and adjusting teaching practices and language. Notably, administrators found the training less useful than did classroom teachers, and the authors found significant differences in the reported usefulness of the training across schools. They attributed

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[128] McQuillan and Leninger, "Supporting Gender-inclusive."

the latter to the varied length of the trainings, with shorter trainings delivering a less productive experience. They also note that the reception and perceived usefulness of the training is impacted by contextual factors such as the "political and social leanings of the community, the number of gender-expansive students in the school, and the number of related trainings in the district."[129]

Smith and Payne conducted an interview study with elementary educators who attended transgender professional development in the central region of New York State.[130] The training was framed by sociology of education and piloted at the Philadelphia Transgender Health Conference. It was an hour long and: 1) introduced trans-specific vocabulary; 2) explained sex, gender, sexuality; 3) provided research on elementary schools as gendered spaces; 4) provided research on teacher perceptions of gender and reliance on gendered assumptions in pedagogy and classroom management; and 5) offered recommendations for more inclusive policies and practices for transgender and/or gender non-conforming students. The training was designed with three objectives: lessen educator anxiety about supporting transgender students; help educators understand the ways gender regulation is present in the day-to-day life of schools; and encourage educators to envision pedagogical practices that challenge cis/heteronormative assumptions about student identities. All participants reported that the training was helpful and many expressed surprise over what they learned, not only about transgender and/or gender non-conforming students, but about the unexamined role of gender in their teaching practices. Educators reported significant learning related to vocabulary and the foundational discussions of sex, gender, sexuality; and they reported increased confidence in working with transgender students.[131] However, the strategies they narrated for integrating transgender students into their

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[129] McQuillan and Leninger, Supporting Gender-inclusive," 14.

[130] Smith and Payne, "Binaries and Biology."

[131] Deborah Youdell. "Sex–Gender–Sexuality: How Sex, Gender and Sexuality Constellations are Constituted in Secondary Schools." *Gender and education* 17, no. 3 (2005).

schools were attempts to fit them into existing cis/heteronormative structures. Training

participants were committed to the safety and learning of individual transgender students in their

school, but resisted changes to pedagogy and practice. To help educators understand their

responsibility to transgender youth as including the address of school culture, the authors

conclude that "educators need increased access to high quality professional development that

challenges them to consider skills and knowledge for affirming gender diversity and disrupting

gender bias."[132]

Case and Meier reported on training they designed for health professionals and for K-12

educators.[133] Trainings were focused on risk reduction and drew heavily from the work of

Stephanie Brill at Gender Spectrum[134]. The training included an opening plenary from a

transgender mental health professional, developed vocabulary, reviewed typical and atypical

gender development, reviewed literature on transgender youth and gender dysphoria, and

provided quantitative data on verbal and physical violence toward transgender students. Authors

report they try to always have "trans models" in their professional development sessions to

"teach participants that one cannot necessarily tell if someone is transgender."[135] Participants

reported they acquired new knowledge or skills as result of attending the session.

Parker and Bach designed professional development as a book group for teachers.[136]

They assert that reading literature about an experience is one way to reach teachers who might

not otherwise have access to that experience. The sessions began with an overview of gender

identity and expression. Participants were given a packet of resources with frequently asked

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[132] Smith and Payne, Binaries and Biology," 46.

[133] Kim A. Case, and S. Colton Meier. "Developing Allies to Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Youth: Training for Counselors and Educators." *Journal of LGBT Youth* 11, no. 1 (2014).

[134] Gender Spectrum. https://genderspectrum.org/

[135] Case and Meier, "Developing Allies," 70.

[136] Parker and Bach (2009)

questions, a glossary of terms, news articles, and information from the GLSEN school climate

survey. They chose two texts for the book group: *Parrotfish* and *Luna*, both about transgender

young people. The group leaders worked to create an environment of trust in the book group and

felt they successfully created space for dialogue on transgender issues in schools. Though the

authors believe the success of the book group rested on their shared expertise, one an expert on

transgender content and one an expert on young adult literature, they also believe it is a

replicable model that could be useful in both preservice and in-service introduction to

transgender issues.

Bartholomaeus and Riggs found that previous teacher experience working with

transgender and gender diverse students did not predict teacher confidence, but educators who

had participated in transgender specific professional development did report higher confidence

levels.[137] Understanding what teachers feel they need and what beliefs they hold about gender-

inclusivity training is important as districts increasingly move to address transgender issues.[138]

Such trainings can not only increase educator confidence in addressing transgender issues in

schools, but provide strategies to engage all students in gender conversations and work toward

addressing school culture. However, it is unclear the degree to which a single professional

development experience can help educators move beyond safety discourses and a commitment to

individual transgender students. "Supporting individual students is different from challenging the

inherent cisgenderism within the schools, which is needed for lasting change."[139] All four studies

reported that educators appreciated the professional development and found the information

useful, but the training models represented in this research are so varied that it is difficult to draw

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[137] Bartholomaeus and Riggs, "Cisgender Administrators."
[138] McQuillan and Leininger, "Supporting Gender-inclusive."
[139] Bartholomaeus and Riggs, "Cisgender Administrations, 141.

conclusions about the different approaches to transgender-specific professional development or teacher needs and experiences related to this type of professional learning. The one commonality across the PD models is provision of definitions of vocabulary relevant to gender identity and gender diversity, which is a critical inclusion given widespread misunderstanding and misinformation in the United States about transgender identity. The positive feedback reported in each of the transgender PD studies suggests that many educators are eager for this type of learning and that a wide variety of strategies may be successful for engaging educators in thinking about gender diversity, but at this time much more research is needed to draw any substantive conclusions about what approaches best support meaningful changes in educator professional practice. A critical question in this work will be how to design PD that both informs educators about how to manage the *practical and logistical* concerns that arise when working with TGNC students (i.e. name changes, bathrooms) and push educators to reckon with their personal and institutional investments in binary gender categories.

CONCLUSION

To conclude the chapter, we draw together three common themes from our reviewed pre-service and in-service teacher education literature on supporting transgender-spectrum students and fostering classrooms where gender diversities of all kinds can thrive. These themes are: a relative lack of gender diversity-specific research coupled with a collapse of sexual and gender diversity under the LGBTQ+ acronym; a tension between focusing teacher education on the needs of transgender students versus on how gender itself organizes life in K-12 schools and the teaching profession; and, lastly, a pattern of episodic and one-off approaches as opposed to integration in pre-service curricula and the professional routines of educators.

Given the rarity of pre-service and in-service education on gender diversity, it is unsurprising that there is a parallel dearth of research. We have found and reviewed what exists, but this amounts to a scant few dozen sources. Methods for researching LGBTQ+ and transgender professional development are primarily limited to participant evaluation surveys collected after a training. These research tools are able to capture educators' self-reported learning, points of resistance, and their future intentions. They do little to help us understand the effectiveness of professional development experiences in challenging entrenched cultural biases and shifting towards more gender-inclusive classroom practices. While self-reports of teacher educator practice are valid and valuable, the contextual specificity of gender diversity demands more and also comparative research.

We also note that many researchers claiming to address "LGBTQ+" issues in teacher education and professional development do not describe the specifics of transgender-focused content or educator responses, so we know little about if and how transgender issues are actually addressed in the activities under study. While a universalizing pedagogy is preferable to a minoritizing pedagogy[140] in order to draw attention to gender rigidity as the primary problem of practice (and not the presence of transgender students themselves), we see value in retaining the specificity of transness as an area of teacher knowledge and competency. We suggest that transgender specificity in teacher education can be expressed in in-service and pre-service as a focus on the *practical* – how to advocate for transgender students' rights, how to actually change classroom talk and routines that force students to choose one binary side, how to provide safe washrooms for trans students – and not as a focus on the intricacies of transgender peoples' identities.

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[140] Hil Malatino, "Pedagogies of Becoming: Trans Inclusivity and the Crafting of Being." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (2015).

Teacher candidates may show ever-increasing acceptance of transgender and/or gender non-conforming people, but may lack pedagogical and other relevant knowledge for how to respond to challenges and provide a climate where transgender-spectrum students (out or not) can thrive. Pre-service curricula, when they address gender diversity at all, tend to prioritize empathy for and exposure to transgender-spectrum people, and less so practical tools for advocating within schools and education systems (e.g., access to washrooms, speaking back to anti-trans colleagues or parents/guardians, using pronouns correctly). After in-service transgender professional development, educators who attend training feel a responsibility to their transgender students, but these commitments are focused on the safety and well-being of students who are immediately—and temporarily—in their care. In-service educators' definitions of *trans ally* do not necessarily encompass "acts to dismantle the structure that allows the continued oppression of trans students."[141] Furthermore, in-service training often occurs in response to new anti-bullying policies or to known safety problems in the school system, which may skew the content and participant perceptions of the training towards individualized models for transgender student support. Research about "effectiveness" of transgender professional development and pre-service education needs to pursue questions about relationships between transgender-focused content choices, instructional choices, and participants' ability to focus their change efforts on institutional structures and not the well-being of a particular transgender student (although this is important, and a beginning).

This focus on individual students is mirrored by the structure of gender diversity education in pre-service and in-service: as a hiving-off from as opposed to integration across programs or areas of teacher daily practice. Gender is endemic to education, conceivably

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[141] Marx, Roberts, and Nixon, "Care and Concern," 14.

relevant across all subjects and in approaches to classroom management. However, pre-service

curricula content and in-service professional development addressing LGBTQ+ issues tend to be

provided as one-time events such as dedicated workshops or units. The pre-service literature

suggests that gender diversity is relegated to 'the diversity course' or literature courses. And

while one-time professional development does have an impact,[142] a one-hour in-service

professional development experience may not provide time for participants to process new

information in ways that will disrupt exclusionary professional practices or ways of thinking. In-

service educators may try to add new information or strategies to their professional practices

immediately following the learning experience, but over time they tend to forget the session and

revert to old habits and practices.[143] Pre-service educators may struggle to integrate what they

learn about gender diversity in 'the diversity course' with what they are learning in other courses.

Educators at all levels need opportunities to reflect on the ways "the mundane and day-to-day

processes" of schools are implicated in the privileging of cis/heteronormativity and rigid gender

expectations.[144] Ongoing dialogue and additional opportunities to revisit this content and think

through the application of the information to their daily practice are needed but unlikely to be

provided, given the 'one-off' pattern.

Our final observation across the reviewed literature situates pre-service teacher education

as a challenge for in-service professional development: the latter is almost wholly student-

focused, not colleague-focused. We came across no indication that in-service professional

development addresses being a mentor teacher to a transgender TC, or ally to a colleague who is

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[142] Greytak and Kosciw, "Year One Evaluation."

[143] Payne and Smith, "An Evaluation."

[144] Deborah Youdell. *Impossible bodies, impossible selves: Exclusions and student subjectivities*. Vol. 3. Springer Science & Business Media, 2006.

transgender and/or gender non-conforming. Findings about in-service educators' lack of

readiness to support transgender students may double as findings about a lack of readiness to

welcome transgender and/or gender non-conforming TCs into the profession. The extant

literature suggests processes of professionalization for the teacher job market are at best

unprepared to support transgender and/or gender non-conforming teacher candidates, and that

practicum is a site of considerable risk for these TCs. Transgender TCs' well-being and

induction into the career – as well as the well-being of transgender people who are currently

employed as teachers – must become an additional justification for pre-service and in-service

education about gender diversity.

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