

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Publications and Research

Lehman College

2020

“Distressing” situations and differentiated interventions: Preservice teachers’ imagined futures with trans and gender creative students

Elizabeth E. Blair

University of Wisconsin – Whitewater

Sherry L. Deckman

CUNY Lehman College

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/le_pubs/311

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).

Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

“Distressing” situations and differentiated interventions:

Preservice teachers' imagined futures with trans and gender creative students

Elizabeth E. Blair

University of Wisconsin – Whitewater

Sherry L. Deckman

Lehman College, City University of New York

Elizabeth E. Blair, blaire@uww.edu, (262) 472-5433 (office), Department of Educational Foundations, University of Wisconsin – Whitewater, 6049 Winther Hall, 800 W. Main Street, Whitewater, WI 53190

Biographical Information: Elizabeth E. Blair is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater, where she teaches courses on child development, educational equity, and educational theory and practice to preservice teachers. Dr. Blair's research agenda focuses on exploring teaching and learning relationships, identity, and educational equity in elementary through post-secondary contexts, with a special focus on gender identity and equity. Her selected publications include “Undergraduate STEM Instructors' Teacher Identities and Discourses on Student Gender Expression and Equity” (*Journal of Engineering Education*, 2017) and “Partners for Success?: Undergraduate Women's Post-Feminist Constructions of Intimate Relationships” (*Gender and Education*, 2017).

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Sherry L. Deckman, sherry.deckman@lehman.cuny.edu, (718) 960-8701 (office), Lehman College, Department of Middle and High School Education, 250 Bedford Park Blvd. West, Bronx, NY 10468

Biographical Information: Sherry L. Deckman is an assistant professor of education at Lehman College, the City University of New York. Her current research explores how educators are formally prepared to work with students from diverse race and gender backgrounds and how educators address issues of race, class, and gender inequity in schools. Dr. Deckman's selected publications include "Managing Race and Race-ing Management: Teachers' Stories of Race and Classroom Conflict" (*Teachers College Record*, 2018) and, "Dangerous Black Professor: Challenging the Ghettoization of Race in Higher Education through Life Texts Pedagogy" (co-author, *RIP Jim Crow: Fighting Racism through Higher Education Policy, Curriculum, and Cultural Interventions*, Peter Lang, 2016).

Description of the article: This article explores how preservice teachers understand their responsibilities as future educators to include and support trans and gender creative students, through a qualitative online discourse analysis of 549 preservice teacher-authored posts. Findings suggest the pressing need for innovative teacher education on gender identity and fluidity.

“Distressing” situations and differentiated interventions:

Preservice teachers' imagined futures with trans and gender creative students

Context: Teachers can help ensure trans and gender creative students' opportunity and equal access to education, yet the field of educational research has just begun to explore how teachers understand trans and gender creative students' experiences and negotiate their responsibilities to protect these students' rights.

Purpose/Research Question: This paper aims to address this essential gap by exploring preservice teachers (PSTs') understandings of, and preparation for, creating supportive educational contexts for trans and gender creative students by exploring the following research question: How do PSTs construct their responsibilities as future teachers to support trans and gender creative students? Ultimately, this study aims to inform the development of effective teacher education curricula and related policy on trans and gender creative identities.

Participants: Participants included 183 undergraduate preservice teachers enrolled in ten sections of an educational equity course.

Research Design: We conducted a qualitative, inductive, thematic online discourse analysis. Utilizing a queer, social justice teacher education framework, we qualitatively analyzed 549 online PST-authored posts.

Findings: Three themes emerged: 1) PSTs voiced discomfort negotiating conflicting values and roles in supporting trans and gender creative students, and PSTs suggested 2) individualized, differentiated interventions, and 3) community education approaches to promote comfort for trans and gender creative students, strategies which may reinscribe normative, institutionalized views of gender identity.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Recommendations: Findings suggest the pressing need for innovative teacher education on gender identity and fluidity: PSTs need more opportunities to learn about supporting trans and gender creative students, to critically consider constructs of gender and sexuality, and to explore how systemic gender oppression intersects with other forms of oppression through schooling practices.

Keywords: gender identity, transgender, LGBTQ, teacher education, social justice

Executive Summary

The experiences of trans and gender creative students have recently captured public attention through political debates, enactment of divisive legislation, and legal challenges, including contradictory claims made by federal authorities about trans students' rights to equal access in schools. At the same time, many schools have no policies for transgender or gender nonconforming students, and a majority of transgender students report that they feel unsafe and experience verbal harassment in school. Teachers can help ensure trans and gender creative students' opportunity and equal access to education, though the field of educational research has just begun to explore how teachers understand trans and gender creative students' experiences and negotiate their responsibilities to protect these students' rights. Thus, this study aimed to explore how preservice teachers (PSTs) understand and construct their responsibilities as future teachers to include and support trans and gender creative students with the ultimate aim of informing the development of effective teacher education curricula and related policy on trans and gender creative identities.

The data for this study are comprised of 549 online discussion posts and responses authored by 183 undergraduate PSTs enrolled in ten sections of an educational equity course.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

This research employed an inductive, thematic online discourse analysis and utilized queer, feminist, and social justice education frameworks to investigate PSTs' articulated understandings and intended practices for working with trans and gender creative students.

Findings suggest that many PSTs described confusion and conflict about their responsibilities and future actions as they imagined teaching trans and gender creative students. This sense of distress consequently informed the two approaches to practice PSTs embraced in framing their responsibilities: first, we found that PSTs primarily espoused individualized, differentiated interventions for trans and gender creative students and second, suggested community education to promote the comfort and tolerance of trans and gender creative students.

We find that PSTs imagined struggles working with trans and gender creative students: many expressed conflicting values about their responsibility and ability to effectively address the needs of trans and gender creative students. Often when PSTs articulated imagined future conflicts in teaching trans and gender creative students, emotions of fear, discomfort, and anticipation of backlash emerged, mitigating what they described as reasonable expectations for teacher responsibility. Many PSTs described feeling trapped by moral and political debates around gender identity, because they believed advocating for trans and gender creative students could threaten their employment or authority. Further, this concern also informed PSTs' most prevalent approaches to practice around trans and gender creative issues: focusing on access through individual accommodation and promoting community tolerance through education.

The first approach to supporting trans and gender creative students that participants articulated was providing *individual* accommodations. In this approach, participants suggested that they could provide—often private—individual assistance to accommodate trans and gender creative students, who were frequently positioned as making a “choice” about how to identify,

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

while maintaining standard—normative, dominant—school practices more broadly. Across this approach, PSTs constructed an obligation to maintain freedom of choice for their students. For some participants, this right to choice had limits—and ended at the disruption of normative school practices and policies, reflecting a conservative, assimilationist approach to multicultural education. Others utilized a liberal multicultural frame, suggesting that ensuring educational opportunity for trans and gender creative students was an individual “problem” that could be solved through appreciation for differences, a theme that continues in the next finding.

In contrast to the individual accommodation approach, the second approach to practice that PSTs took up was grounded in the idea that school communities and classrooms needed to be engaged in education about trans and gender creative identities to effectively support these students. Many PSTs suggested that this more comprehensive educational approach would be the only way to effectively promote acceptance of trans and gender creative students. Within this construction, PSTs shifted ownership of the “problem” of including trans and gender creative students, essentially, from an individual child’s problem, towards recognition of the problem of peers’ bias against trans and gender creative students, an important step.

Overall, rarely in our study did PSTs connect the experiences of trans and gender creative students to the broader systemic policing of gender expression in schools, or consider the advantages of more broadly addressing gender restrictions and bias for *all* students. Ideas expressed by PSTs mainly aimed to support trans and gender creative students. These findings indicate that PSTs were poorly equipped to engage in discussions of deep change on issues of gender identity and equity in schools.

Our findings suggest that throughout their teacher education programs PSTs need more opportunities to learn about supporting trans and gender creative students, to consider constructs

PSTs' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

of gender and sexuality, and to explore the systemic nature of gender oppression enforced through schooling, and the ways gender and sexuality oppression intersects with, and is magnified by, other forms of systemic oppression. Few participants moved beyond an individual lens to consider treatment of trans and gender creative students, and their own reactions, from a systemic perspective. Scholars and practitioners suggest that in the highly individualistic culture of the U.S., a systemic perspective can be challenging to comprehend for many undergraduate PSTs. This challenge is exacerbated by powerful sociocultural factors that persist in rendering heteronormativity and differential treatment by gender invisible in the everyday practices of schooling. The continued commonsense power of gender difference in our society contributes to PSTs' discomfort and confusion as they consider supporting trans and gender creative students. We suggest two central avenues for scaffolding PSTs to develop their understandings: 1) increasing learning opportunities about trans and gender creative identities in teacher education, and 2) embedding these discussions within teacher education curricula that integrate questions of oppression and systemic inequality across coursework and practice teaching.

Introduction

The experiences of trans and gender creative¹ students have recently captured public attention through political debates, enactment of divisive legislation, and legal challenges, including contradictory claims made by federal authorities about trans students' rights to equal access in schools (e.g., Green, Benner & Pear, 2018). For instance, in 2016 the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education advised schools of their responsibility under Title IX to "provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment" for transgender students by providing "equal access to educational programs and activities" by treating students consistent with their gender identity, preventing harassment, and protecting their privacy (p. 2). This advice was rescinded in early

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

2017 with the change in political administration, though numerous states and local districts reaffirmed their protection of trans students' rights (e.g. Babay & Albert, 2017). Given these ongoing policy shifts, many trans and gender creative students lack comprehensive policy protection and feel unsafe and unsupported at school. Indeed, in one national survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students, the majority reported that their school had no policies for transgender or gender nonconforming students, and among transgender students, 75% reported feeling unsafe, 64.5% reported experiencing verbal harassment, and 24.9% reported experiencing physical harassment in school (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016).

Teachers play an important role in ensuring trans and gender creative students' equal access to education, yet the field of educational research has just begun to explore how teachers understand trans and gender creative students' experiences and negotiate their responsibilities to protect these students' rights. Research also suggests that teachers are often reluctant to interrogate or disrupt everyday gendering processes in schools (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016; Payne & Smith, 2014) and may lack preparation to effectively meet the needs of trans students. Despite the commitment of many teacher education programs to social justice approaches and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) expectation that a focus on "diversity," including gender identity, will infuse teacher education (CAEP, 2015), rarely is material on trans and gender creative identities or the responsibilities of teachers to uphold educational access of trans and gender creative students explicitly included in teacher preparation curricula (Gorski, Davis, & Reiter, 2013; Jennings & Sherwin, 2008; Smith & Payne, 2016). While some studies have explored educators' beliefs and understandings of LGBTQ students broadly (e.g., Allan, Atkinson, Brace, DePalma, & Hemingway, 2008; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012;

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Payne & Smith, 2012), and a handful have investigated educators' experiences working with trans and gender creative students (e.g., Luecke, 2011; Meyer, Tilland-Stafford, & Airton, 2016; Payne & Smith, 2014; Smith & Payne, 2016), few studies have specifically explored what preservice teachers (PSTs) understand about the experiences of trans and gender creative students and how they make meaning of their responsibilities to educate and provide equal access to these students.

This paper aims to address this essential gap by exploring PSTs' understandings of, and preparation for, creating supportive educational contexts for trans and gender creative students by exploring the following research question: How do PSTs construct their responsibilities as future teachers to support trans and gender creative students? Ultimately, this study aims to inform the development of effective teacher education curricula and related policy on trans and gender creative identities.

Literature Review

Here we present the extant literature on how trans and gender creative students experience school and how teachers respond—or largely fail to respond—to the needs of trans and gender creative students in schools, including literature on 1) trans and gender creative student experiences, 2) in-service teachers' lack of intervention on behalf of, and support for, trans and gender creative students, and 3) the absence of coverage of trans and gender creative identities in teacher preparation coursework. Below we highlight studies that both focus on trans and gender creative subjects, and given this relatively limited literature, we also explore studies that include trans topics while investigating LGBTQ issues more broadly.

Trans and Gender Creative Student Experiences

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Educational research on LGBTQ issues is expanding, but scholars note the need for increased investigation, particularly on transgender students and gender expression in schools (Wimberly, 2015). Existing research has largely focused on documenting the experiences and mental health outcomes of transgender students (Wimberly, 2015). Research suggests trans and gender creative students face frequent harassment and violence within schools, feel unsafe and unsupported, and struggle with school failure (Boskey, 2014; Case & Meier, 2014; Grossman et al., 2009; Higa et al., 2014; Kosciw et al., 2016; Robinson & Espelage, 2011; Sausa, 2005; Travers, 2014) and that students exploring or undergoing gender transition, and their peers, benefit from networks of support that include teachers and school staff (Luecke, 2011; Nealy, 2017).

Indeed, studies find high levels of transphobia, physical and sexual violence, and pervasive harassment against trans and gender creative students in schools (D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006; McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2010; Meyer et al., 2016; Sausa, 2005; Wyss, 2004). Lack of safety can begin early: One study found that gender nonconforming and sexual minority youth experienced verbal harassment beginning at age six (D'Augelli et al., 2006). This vulnerability leads many trans and gender creative students to avoid and distance themselves from school, resulting in high levels of school absences and academic failure (Grossman et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2016).

Teachers and Trans and Gender Creative Students

Overall, research suggests that teachers often resist disrupting everyday gendering processes in schools and are broadly failing to meet trans and gender creative students' educational and safety needs (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016; Kosciw et al., 2016; Payne & Smith, 2014). Unfortunately, scholarship suggests that teachers and school staff regularly perpetuate

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

school-based harassment and violence (Gutierrez, 2004; McGuire et al., 2010; Sausa, 2005).

Teachers repeatedly fail to intervene when trans and gender creative youth are harassed by peers, sometimes blaming trans and gender creative youth rather than perpetrators, or even initiating harassment, ultimately contributing to a hostile school environment (Gutierrez, 2004; Higa et al., 2014; McGuire, et al., 2010; Pascoe, 2007; Payne & Smith, 2011; Sausa, 2005).

Fear in addressing trans and gender creative students' needs. Educators often report reluctance and a lack of preparation to address LGBTQ issues or intervene in gendered harassment including sexist, homophobic, and transphobic language and behaviors (Blair & Deckman, 2019; Kintner-Duffy, Vardell, Lower, & Cassidy, 2012; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Meyer, 2008). Research further suggests that educators lack knowledge about trans and gender creative identities and struggle to understand and navigate the support of trans and gender creative students without preparation and training (Luecke, 2011; Meyer et al., 2016). Resultant confusion and reticence can undermine efforts to improve school climate and support for trans and gender creative students (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Luecke, 2011; Meyer et al., 2016). Resistance to addressing the needs of trans and gender creative students in schools is sometimes grounded in adult hesitancy to acknowledge or discuss gender identity and sexuality in school, for example, imagining, elementary students as “innocent” or unaware of gender and sexuality (Allan et al., 2008, p. 315; Payne & Smith, 2014).

Impact of supportive teachers and administrators. While school staff have a long way to go in promoting safe and equitable school climates for trans and gender creative students, research suggests that supportive teachers and administrators can have a significant and powerful impact on trans and gender creative students' experiences and outcomes (Greytak, Kosciw, & Boesen, 2013; Jones et al., 2016; Higa et al., 2014; Luecke, 2011; McGuire et al., 2010) and that

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

training of school staff in appropriate, supportive language and practice for trans and gender diverse students could have an important protective effect (Jones et al., 2016). Transgender youth report the key role teachers can play in improving school climate, by effectively intervening when they experienced harassment in school, and by not participating in the harassment (McGuire et al., 2010). One study found that transgender students who identified one or more supportive teachers (as well as those in schools with gay-straight alliances and LGBT-inclusive curricula) reported significantly lower levels of victimization in school compared to transgender students without support (Greytak et al., 2013). In Australia, researchers found that trans and gender diverse students with supportive school staff report higher persistence in school, social engagement, and decreased risk of various types of harassment and abuse, and higher educational outcomes (Jones et al., 2016). Finally, some scholars suggest that school staff are most effective when they go beyond tolerance for trans and gender creative students—they must publically support these students and resist everyday practices that reinscribe gender oppression (Dykstra, 2005; Luecke, 2011; Rands, 2009).

Teacher Education: Missing Trans and Gender Creative Identities

Research suggests that teacher education programs rarely prepare PSTs to deeply engage LGBTQ perspectives or to identify and resist heteronormativity or heterosexism in schools, with trans and gender creative topics infrequently substantively included (Bishop & Atlas, 2015; Gorski et al., 2013; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Lee & Carpenter, 2015; Macgillvray & Jennings, 2008; Martino, 2013; Milburn & Palladino, 2012; Payne & Smith, 2012; Sherwin & Jennings, 2006; Vavrus, 2009). In a content analysis of syllabi from multicultural teacher education courses, Gorski, Davis, and Reiter (2013) found that 41% of the syllabi did not include LGBTQ content. They explain, “LGBTQ concerns often are invisible in multicultural teacher education

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

coursework in the United States and that, when these concerns are covered, they generally are addressed in decontextualized ways that mask heteronormativity” (Gorski et al., 2013, p. 224).

The systemic nature of heteronormativity and binary and reductive gender norms are rarely explored in teacher preparation (Gorski et al., 2013; Payne & Smith, 2012). Both teacher education programs and school-based professional development and anti-bias training are likelier to emphasize other aspects of diversity (e.g. race and ethnicity) than LGBTQ issues (Bishop & Atlas, 2015; Sherwin & Jennings, 2006). According to Payne and Smith (2011), teacher education on LGBTQ issues also lacks policy support: Unlike other diversity requirements, no states require LGBTQ multicultural competence for licensure.

A handful of studies have begun to specifically explore the absence of trans and gender creative issues in teacher education. Scholars have found that teachers, school support staff, and youth workers need more preparation to support trans and gender creative youth (Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2015; Sansfaçon, Dumais-Michaud, Robichaud, 2014; Smith & Payne, 2016). Overall, scholars advocate for expanded inclusion of LGBTQ issues in multicultural teacher education and teacher professional development (Case & Meier, 2014; Dykes, 2010; Gorski et al., 2013; Hansen, 2015; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Payne & Smith, 2010, 2011, 2012). Few studies have specifically focused on how PSTs understand trans and gender creative identities (Blair & Deckman, 2019; Parsons, 2016). This study aims to contribute to this nascent field by specifically exploring how PSTs understand their role in supporting trans and gender creative students in their future classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

We begin by broadly describing the queer, feminist, poststructural approach we take up to theorize gender identity in our work and then shift to conceptualizing teacher preparation for social

justice, highlighting how these perspectives join in the promotion of teacher education approaches that scaffold PSTs to explore issues of justice by integrating individual and systemic lenses.

Constructing Trans and Gender Creative Identities

Utilizing a feminist, queer, discursive framework, we draw on Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity to understand how gender is negotiated in school contexts. Poststructural feminists and queer theorists suggest that while gender may appear "natural," it is actually produced as people negotiate social and cultural discursive scripts and everyday practices (Butler, 1990; Davies, 1989). Indeed, Francis and Paechter (2015) unpack Butler's queer analytic perspective explaining, both "sex and gender are socially constructed: brought into being via binary gender discourses that inscribe bodies according to a (mythical) duality. This position therefore also 'queers' the heterosexist assumptions underpinning dualistic notions of the sex/gender binary" (p. 778). Queer and poststructural feminist scholars suggest that gender categories are not naturally produced, but rather are constantly negotiated within particular sociohistorical and cultural contexts (Glasser, 2012; Pascoe, 2007). For example, notions of femininity—from conventions of embodiment (expectations for dress shifting from corsets to athleisure attire, to changing beliefs about physical activities safe for the female body), to ideas about women's intellectual and professional capabilities—have been constantly in motion over the past one hundred years (Turbin, 2003; Verbrugge, 2012). Yet, current gender and sexual arrangements are often viewed as a timeless, natural truth (Pascoe, 2007). Many feminist and queer theorists aim to raise questions, resist silencing and social control, and open possibilities for thinking and being that have been rendered invisible (Glasser, 2012). Indeed, we echo Meyer and colleagues' (2016) incisive explanation: "our focus is never on the identities of the students or what transgender and gender creativity mean. Rather, we focus on understanding the

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

institutional processes that keep gender-creativity and transgender subjectivities in the margins identifying supports that have helped all students to thrive” (p. 5).

Schools often have a central role in enforcing and reproducing normative gender identities and sexualities (e.g. McQueen, 2006; Meyer, 2009; Pascoe, 2007). Through everyday practices such as asking students to line up in differentiated boys’ and girls’ lines, to sanctioning children to engage in gender exclusionary play at recess, to having gender-specific dress codes, to separating older students by gender for classes on reproductive health, schools institutionalize normative practices of gender and (hetero)sexuality and play a central role in stabilizing current gendered social arrangements (Mayo, 2016; Pascoe, 2007; Thorne, 1993). Gender is secured through the interactional repudiation of “unrecognizably and unacceptably gendered selves” (Pascoe, 2007, p. 14). Central to the production of gender then is the way the social contexts of schools may allow for the social exclusion and shaming of children who fall outside of normative gender identities or expressions (Davies, 2011; Ringrose & Renold, 2010).

Social Justice Practice in Education

In this paper, we take up Cochran-Smith’s (2004) definition of teaching for social justice as pedagogical practice “aimed at the transformation of society’s fundamental inequities” (p. 65), which “make[s] inequity, power, and activism explicit parts of the curriculum” (p. 77). Scholars suggest that exclusionary processes that produce normative gender and sexuality in schools are linked to the production of systemic oppression of a range of other marginalized social identities, such as race, class, and ability (e.g., Banks, 2006; Sleeter & Grant, 1991). We draw on Sensoy and DiAngelo’s (2017) articulation of critical social justice, which names the intersecting processes and dynamics that create various kinds of inequity and seeks systemic change to end oppression.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

This conceptualization of teaching for social justice is applied in Gorski, Davis, and Reiter's (2013) analysis of the ways that LGBTQ topics are explored in teacher education. These scholars identify three central modes to teaching LGBTQ content, drawn from Gorski (2009) and McLaren's (1995) typologies of multicultural teacher education: 1) a conservative approach centered on sexual orientation and gender identity, promoting educational equity and inclusion through assimilation of dominant culture, with little attention to individual and systemic oppression, 2) a liberal approach focused on both identity and discrimination such as homophobia and heterosexism, centered on appreciating difference, with little attention to power, privilege, and control in broader sociopolitical contexts, and 3) a critical approach, concentrating on sexual orientation and gender identity, oppression, and a critique of broader sociopolitical forces that contribute to individual, institutional, and systemic dynamics. Mirroring broader findings in multicultural teacher education, these scholars find that when covered in teacher education, LGBTQ topics are largely engaged through a superficial, conservative approach. Teacher educators rarely include explorations of intersectionality—the way that marginalized identities are co-constructed through interlocking systems of oppression (Collins, 1990; Shields, 2008)—in relation to gender identity and sexuality, and rarely integrate critical feminist and queer theory lenses to support PSTs' critique of broader sociopolitical forces that contribute to the individual struggles of LGBTQ youth, components central to these scholars' formulation of a critical, social justice approach (Gorski et al., 2013).

Scholars maintain the importance of supporting PSTs to explore inequity and oppression at individual and systemic levels if teacher educators aim to move the profession substantively towards educational equity (see Pollock, Deckman, Mira, & Shalaby, 2010; Gorski, 2009). Thus, we utilize queer, feminist, and social justice approaches to analyze PSTs' understandings and

PSTs' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

intended practices, and to further explore the opportunities for PSTs' growth of more nuanced understandings of gender and sexuality and approaches to challenging inequity.

Research Design and Methodology

Participants were primarily teacher education candidates in a required course on the social and cultural foundations of education in one of ten different course sections across four semesters at a relatively small, comprehensive residential college in the rural northeast, named as "LGBT-friendly" by a national organization. The course in which the PSTs were enrolled addressed topics related to the history of U.S. education, education policy, and educational equity related to race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and language (see Appendix A). Primary data included 549 online discussion posts authored by PSTs in one online course session discussion, responding to course materials on gender identity and children (see Appendix A). Secondary data sources included additional student reflections and feedback from the course, along with ethnographic fieldnotes.

Participants (N=183) were second-semester, first-year students through seniors, and one non-degree student. Participant demographics mirrored the backgrounds of the U.S. teaching force at large, which is predominantly White and female (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckery, 2014; see Table 1 for select participant demographics).

<<INSERT TABLE 1>>

PSTs were informed that their de-identified class contributions could be used for research and were invited to opt out of participation in person or via email. Institutional Review Boards at our universities approved research methods and data use.

We conducted an inductive, thematic online discourse analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; see also Deckman, 2017 for a discussion of the affordances of analyzing online teacher reflective

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

discourse). Following precedent of methodologically similar research, our process of analysis entailed, “(a) repeated readings of the texts while making theoretical and analytical memos throughout; (b) selection, organization, and identification of discursive patterns; (c) generation of explanations linked to the overarching patterns; and (d) reflexive and transparent documentation of our claims” (Gabriel & Lester, 2013, p. 11). After reading all the data, we began the first coding cycle, both engaging a process of open, descriptive coding of posts from the same three randomly chosen course sections, and memo-ed about emerging patterns (see Appendix B for an example of our coding progression). We collaboratively used these open codes to identify and connect codes, and refine our analysis to create an array of focused codes, which we used to code an additional subsample of our data (Boyatzis, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Maxwell, 2005).

Next, we both memo-ed about how these codes responded to our research questions and collaboratively grouped and connected focused codes into final axial codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). We created a codebook (see Table 2) and systematically coded all 549 posts, both coding a subset of posts to ensure coding accuracy and continuity (Boyatzis, 1998). Throughout the coding process we met to discuss emerging patterns, documented the process, and confirmed the dependability of the codes by engaging processes of constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To further ensure trustworthiness, we triangulated our findings with student reflections from across the course and ethnographic fieldnotes and received feedback from our interpretive community of scholars (Luttrell, 2010; Maxwell, 2005). We also consulted the literature during our analysis process to extend our interpretations (Maxwell, 2005).

<<INSERT TABLE 2>>

As qualitative researchers, we acknowledge our role as the instrument of our analysis: our subjectivities, experiences, and curiosities influenced the path of investigation, so we aim here to

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

make our positionality as researchers transparent (Luttrell, 2010). We both teach courses on diversity and social justice to PSTs that include exploration of trans and gender creative identities: Sherry was the course instructor for all sections from which the study data is drawn; Liz has no connection to the study site or participants. Presently, we are both middle-class, Liz is White and Sherry is bi-racial (Black/White), and both cisgender, heterosexual women (yet at the same time we acknowledge the limitations of these binary categories in capturing the complexities of embodied, culturally-grounded experiences and desires, see Allen, 2010; Enke, 2013). In our teaching and research analysis we were mindful both of the ways that our intersectional identities confer privilege and that we lack the first-person perspective of navigating schooling, and the world, as a trans or gender creative person.

Findings

We explore three central ways PSTs described their responsibilities as future teachers to support trans and gender creative students. First, many PSTs described confusion and conflict about their responsibilities and future actions as they imagined teaching trans and gender creative students. This sense of distress consequently informed the two approaches to practice PSTs embraced in framing their responsibilities: We found that PSTs primarily espoused individualized, differentiated interventions for trans and gender creative students, along with community education to promote the comfort and tolerance of trans and gender creative students.

“Distressing” Situations and Imagined Struggles

Many PSTs expressed conflicting values about their responsibility and ability to effectively address the needs of trans and gender creative students. For some, the idea of addressing the needs of these students presented a central challenge to their practice or their understanding of the responsibilities of becoming a teacher, which they noted in their posts.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Illustrating PSTs' focus on the challenges of supporting trans students, one PST pondered: "I just wonder what kind of struggles having transgender children in my classroom in the future will give me." This PST focused on her own perspective and needs in this framing, emphasizing the burden of "struggling" with transgender children. Similarly, another PST expressed confusion, and perhaps an underlying resistance, to addressing issues of gender and sexuality in the classroom:

So how you do talk to children about such delicate issues[?] They may feel one way on Monday and the opposite on Wednesday. I think that adults have to be careful with how they talk to children about gender and sexuality because such conversations could be confusing or *distressing* for young kids. (emphasis added)

The use of words like "delicate" and "careful" showed the discomfort of this PST in imagining having to negotiate conversations around (non-normative) gender with his future students. This PST assumed that the very act of speaking about gender in the classroom could be problematic for children, implicitly neglecting the ways that normative gender and sexuality are woven throughout the everyday practices of schooling. This PST also proposed that the fluidity of a child's understanding of gender—potentially shifting from day to day—makes discussing gender with young children complicated, suggesting the PST's commitment to understanding gender as a stable, permanent identity (Enke, 2013).

Another PST, considering challenges of supporting trans and gender creative students, suggested that children cannot be trusted to know about trans identities because of their imagined potential for cruelty. Ambivalence emerged here as she articulated fears about the negative consequences naming gender identity might have for the social acceptance of young children:

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

I agree that children at the younger age would be hard to talk to about gender and sexuality because they are not mature. They would find it funny or want nothing to do with the transgender child. Also, once they find out that they are transgender they would tell everyone and bully them. We need to educate our children or students to accept the way people are.

For this PST, children require “maturity,” defined here as the ability to resist victimizing children who are transgender, before it is safe to discuss trans identities. She both emphasized the importance of education for acceptance, and resisted responsibility to teach young children about issues of gender and sexuality.

Often when PSTs articulated imagined future conflicts in teaching trans and gender creative students, emotions of fear, discomfort, and anticipation of backlash emerged (Payne & Smith, 2014), mitigating what they described as reasonable expectations for teacher responsibility. For example, one PST alluded to the complexity of protecting her students (and her own authority as a teacher):

I want to just be able to tell my students that they can identify as any gender they want, but how would that play out in reality? What resistance might I experience from administrators or parents? Would the backlash from parents actually be doing my students more harm than good?

This PST wondered whether hiding trans identities might be more beneficial to the students or her own professional position. Given divisive media coverage and high-profile political battles in many local communities, it is not surprising that this PST fears the controversy in taking a public position on accepting a range of gender expression. The most visible examples of trans and gender creative students in schools often center on controversy, yet this lens obscures everyday moments of acceptance or support that do not lead to public controversy.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Indeed, some participants expressed resentment that the bias of others makes supporting students a burden, “As a teacher, I [would be] mortified to have an LGBT student. It is such a predicament: the struggle between the student, other students, parents, administrators, etc. I shouldn’t have to be caught in the middle. I should just be able to care for each student and their need/identity. Other people make it hard.” This PST ties the proximity to the struggle of an LGBT student, and the heightened teacher visibility it might produce, to a sense of shame and entrapment. Indeed, society’s strong social, emotional, and psychological investment in a precarious dichotomous gender system has the potential to render any expression outside of this system deeply dangerous (Butler, 1990; Francis & Paechter, 2015). In this comment, the PST also put her own perspective and discomfort with controversy, rather than her potentially vulnerable students’ needs, at the center of her future work. This perspective shows how public discord and perceived threats to job security of supportive teachers may complicate trans and gender creative students’ ability to find support in school.

Notably, this focus on struggle, couched in emotionally fraught language, framed many, but not all, of the participants’ understandings about their future roles. Some PSTs reversed these assumptions of children’s need for protection from trans and gender creative identities, suggesting that children are already knowledgeable about gender, so teachers have a responsibility to engage with issues of gender in the classroom. One PST explained:

We should emphasize gender as a spectrum because I feel that ignoring students’ gender does not allow for individual expression. Even if a teacher chooses to ignore students’ gender in her classroom, the students are still aware of gender.

In this quotation, the PST took up the students’ perspective and the relatively rare position among our participants that teachers who ignore gender expression force students’ knowledge

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

underground. Through this acknowledgement of the way gender organizes everyday practices and interactions in classrooms, this PST claimed the importance of teachers recognizing the range of students' gender expression.

Across our data many PSTs described feeling trapped by the moral and political debate around gender identity, because they believed advocating for trans and gender creative students could threaten their employment or authority. Fear and constraint echoed across PSTs' understandings of trans and gender creative students' imagined struggles (Blair & Deckman, 2019) and their own future positions as teachers working with such students. Further, this concern also informed PSTs' most prevalent approaches to practice around trans and gender creative issues: focusing on access through individual accommodation and promoting community tolerance through education.

Access through Individual Accommodation

The first approach to supporting trans and gender creative students that participants articulated was through the lens of providing *individual* accommodations. In this approach, participants suggested that they could provide—often private—individual assistance to accommodate trans and gender creative students, who were frequently positioned as making a “choice” about how to identify, while maintaining standard—normative, dominant—school practices more broadly. For example, one participant suggested, “I think it is important for schools to acknowledge transgender teens and make accommodations for them.” In this construction, teachers can name the “Other” status of a trans and gender creative student and adjust school routines in particular ways to “accommodate” these “Others’” needs. Drawing on dominant language for supporting students with disabilities, this PST echoed historical patterns

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

by framing the expression of gender creativity as a pathological condition that must be managed by school staff (Baines, 2014).

Another PST similarly took up the language of differentiated instruction, an approach that originated in serving students with disabilities. She explained:

There is a conflict between the teacher's role to keep the classroom running as smoothly as possible while also meeting the individual needs of each student....I think in sensitive situations such as one involving transgender issues, it would be very beneficial for the teacher to have a private conversation with the students to further explain questions they may have on the topic.

Here the participant emphasized the private, individual nature of the accommodations that could be provided to trans and gender creative students. This PST implicitly positioned trans and gender creative students as a distraction to the "smooth" (perhaps normative) "running" of her class. As such, individual accommodation of student difference can best be addressed (and contained) through private discussion. Similarly, another participant advocated for freedom of expression, but resisted broader changes to policy or practice, stating, "It is important for the teacher to let the student express themselves [in a way] that is consistent to their identity. However, this might have restrictions and limits." This participant went on to suggest that a student who identified as a girl could not use a preferred bathroom "just because physically he is a boy," placing limits on the idea of individual freedom and reifying the notion that physical anatomy *naturally* requires the students' separation.

Often these ways of understanding emphasized maximizing trans and gender creative students' autonomy and freedom of choice, while also circumscribing this choice when it influenced the context for other children. One participant explained, "We don't necessarily have

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

to make a student make that choice [to decide whether to identify with a gender not assigned at birth] and then go along with what they pick, but we do need to allow them the space and freedom to consider the question in a safe space.” In this construction, children must be given the liberty to explore their own identities, whether or not adults choose to accept their espoused identities. Another PST suggested that teachers must create the opportunity for choice:

Teachers do need to take a stand in letting their students know that they need to be supportive of everyone and not judge people based on what they wear or the things they do. It is important to let children figure out gender norms for themselves but it is also equally important to teach the children to be accepting of the students that may identify themselves as different from the others.

In this arrangement, teachers were responsible to create a context in which children can do their own “figuring” and create space for difference. Likewise, another PST advocated for tolerance, as a precondition for this kind of liberty, “I think all we can do as future educators is make that child [who is transgender] feel like he or she is in a safe environment where no one will make fun of them by teaching tolerance and acceptance.” Again, in this construction a teacher’s role is to create a space where children can decide for themselves who they want to be without feeling unsafe. Yet, the dominance of existing gender norms and conditions that produce these norms are rarely questioned.

In a somewhat rare and more extreme example of how PSTs were constructing the idea of individual choice and accommodation within limits, one PST wrote:

Teachers have the ability to ease the change for students....When it comes to gender roles or identity [the trans student] should get the respect they deserve just as long as they respect the role of society. Basically, what I’m saying is know your

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

role and stay in your lane as a person then everyone will get along. To confirm, a straight man wouldn't want a gay man to hit on them because he or she would feel very offended. However, I believe it's a person's responsibility to give the people the respect they want just as long as the person who gets the respect [doesn't do] unethical things.

Underneath the homophobic overtones and complex use of pronouns in this comment, the limits of individual choice and free expression become strikingly apparent. Harkening back to the era of "don't ask, don't tell," this PST framed gender identity and expression as a kind of sexualized threat to other children. Therefore, shifts in gender expression are only acceptable until they "offend" others or become "unethical." In this way trans and gender creative identities are acceptable only in a benign form, without threatening the broader gendered social order. As long as trans and gender creative students "know their lane," they should be tolerated in the classroom.

This individualistic view was further illustrated by a series of exchanges, involving an initial post in which a PST explained how college had helped him learn "to accept and support people [who] identify as Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual...but it was the Transgender aspect that took me much more time to process." This PST went on to describe his view, "Transgender individuals are merely people born with physical restraints, and it is sad to know that young children ... who are just trying to be themselves, are seen as socially unacceptable and forced to deal with judgment, bullying, and loss of friendships." This post prompted several PSTs to respond in kind, advocating for individual accommodation as a consolation for the lack of choice one has in determining the body one is born into. As another PST explained:

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Nature puts you in a body that may not work for you the way you want it to, and that's not your fault. Everyone experiences insecurities with their bodies at some point in their lives, and I think transgenderism [sic] is like that only on a deeper, more complicated level. No one should be subject to bullying, loss of friendships, etc. just because of insecurities with their bodies and/or identities. Like you said, no matter what, we're all humans with unique stories. It's about time that everyone starts treating each other as such more in society.

This PST universalized and humanized the experience of trans and gender creative students by noting connections with others' struggles with "insecurities" and bullying (perhaps complicating the ways trans identities are delineated, see Enke, 2013). Simultaneously, this statement placed being trans within a narrative of an individual, "unique" struggle, a bodily "insecurity" to overcome.

Across this approach, PSTs constructed an obligation to maintain freedom of choice for their students. For some participants, this right to choice had limits—and ended at the disruption of normative school practices and policies, reflecting a conservative, assimilationist approach to multicultural education (Gorski et al., 2013). Others utilized a liberal multicultural frame, suggesting that ensuring educational opportunity for trans and gender creative students was an individual "problem" that could be solved through appreciation for differences (Gorski et al., 2013), a theme that continues in the next finding.

Education for Comfort and Tolerance

In contrast to the individual accommodation approach, the second approach to practice that PSTs took up was grounded in the idea that school communities and classrooms needed to be engaged in education about trans and gender creative identities to effectively support these

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

students. Many PSTs suggested that this more comprehensive educational approach would be the only way to effectively promote acceptance of trans and gender creative students. Within this construction, PSTs shifted ownership of the “problem” of including trans and gender creative students, essentially, from an individual child’s problem, towards recognition of the problem of peers’ bias against trans and gender creative students, an important step.

One approach emphasized the need for early intervention to stop children’s development of biases against trans and gender creative students. For example, one participant explained, “If kids had more exposure towards what is considered to be ‘different,’ they will probably grow up to be more understanding and more open minded about such differences and maybe see them as normal.” Here the notion of “normalcy” goes unchallenged, instead this PST advocated for open-mindedness and training in tolerance for students. Indeed, building tolerance through “exposure,” “comfort,” and “acceptance” were key ideas in this theme.

A primary focus for PSTs who advocated for community education was on *talking* about difference to increase everyone’s “comfort” and to lay the groundwork for acceptance for future trans and gender creative students. One participant explained:

I feel like it all has to do with accepting everyone for who they are (which teachers should be educating their students about anyways)...I believe there is a way to teach students about tough issues, like transgender students, just by talking on their level and with them not to them. I think opening discussion up would help everyone feel more comfortable with the subject and hopefully create a more open and accepting environment for future students.

This PST maintained that teaching about “tough issues” like trans identities, is an important step and will promote the comfort of trans and gender creative students and their peers. In this

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

construction, trans and gender creative students must be accepted, and more broadly the school community has a role in promoting tolerance, rather than focusing solely on individual accommodation of difference. Another PST shared, “Teachers have to get a more behind the scenes look at what is going on and talking their students through the process. It is better to start integrating this information into students because they are being exposed to it and forming their own opinions on what is going on.” Here the PST argued that teachers need to think more critically about how students understand trans and gender creative identities and interrogated how teachers’ silences tacitly affirm potentially intolerant “opinions” of their students. This PST suggested that teachers have a responsibility to scaffold students’ growing understanding by providing more accurate information about gender identities.

Participants emphasized the importance of education on trans and gender creative issues and argued that these discussions needed to begin early to promote acceptance. One PST suggested that when children do not “assimilate” to the expected “norm,” the kids respond by trying to coach their peers into being what they expect them to be.” He continued, “maybe by engaging children in these discussions at an early age, we can create more allies, and a more accepting society, hopefully alleviating some of the pain these children experience as they grow through life, into adolescence and adulthood.” This PST emphasized how early intervention to change individuals’ understandings would create a protective environment for trans and gender creative children. His statement implied that ally peers would accept trans and gender creative students, rather than cause them pain. One might argue that this construction relies on a “passive” ally model, in which an offensive action is preempted, rather than advocating for a more active reshaping of the gendered system of schooling (see Clark, 2010; Grzanka, Adler, & Blazer, 2015). Relying on a similar model, another participant explained:

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

It is almost more important to begin having these conversations about sex/gender roles in our society early on in children's lives. Some students that are our age are *still* uncomfortable speaking about these topics...we, as teachers have the power to open up the topic even more. If we have these conversations at a young age, then it won't seem so taboo or strange to discuss once we are older. I have a theory that there will be a lot more happiness in this world if we engage children in these more mature discussions sooner. People will not feel as restricted by their labels, and will feel free to discuss these topics without judgment, if they grow up doing so.

This PST linked the taboo and discomfort in discussing issues of gender and sexuality to lack of experience engaging these topics in discussion. In both of these cases, PSTs framed "discussions" as the lever to change, that talking to young children about gender would precipitate acceptance.

For other PSTs, the focus on community education was about inculcating students to both talk about and evade gender. As one wrote,

Due to the difficulties gender brings up for children in school I think it is very important for it to be talked about. Not only can this help the children in the class, but also for the teachers to be educated as well. If the teachers know how to deal with [trans and gender creative students], they can make all the children accept and not focus on gender roles. People can be judgmental or uncomfortable with the idea of a boy wanting to be a girl or vice versa.

Here, the PST importantly recognized that both teachers and children are implicated in lack of knowledge, acceptance, and negative judgment of trans and gender creative students. This participant also paradoxically suggested the reason for "talk[ing]" about gender is so that it can

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

be “not focus[ed] on.” This approach creates room for trans and gender creative students to be part of the school community without being “judged” by silencing negative speech, but falls short of advocating for children to explore, and perhaps resist, normative gender expectations.

Echoing the emphasis placed on student choice in the previous section, another PST explained:

I don't believe that anyone should be confined by a 'norm' and that everyone should feel free to be whoever they want to be and know that they can be accepted by others. Perhaps if we taught younger kids to break free from the norms and stopped using the terms so much in our language [then] kids wouldn't have to worry about it as much.

For this PST, freedom of individual choice and equity is secured through building a culture that evades acknowledging gender (Blair, Miller, Ong & Zastavker, 2017). This liberal approach assumes that limiting gendered language and the expression of gendered norms will promote individual freedom, freeing children from worry (Gorski et al., 2013). Across these examples, participants suggested that an educational approach focused on tolerance was required to protect and advocate for trans and gender creative students. These PSTs implied that the bullying and victimization experienced by trans and gender creative students would only be reduced when fewer of their peers held biases against them.

In contrast, a few of the PSTs linked education around gender identity to larger critical social justice-informed teaching approaches, connecting oppression based on gender identity to oppression based on race and ethnicity (Gorski et al., 2013). For instance, one PST wrote:

I personally believe gender and sexuality education are important topics and should be part of practicing Culturally Responsive Teaching....I believe that teaching these topics at a young age will increase the possibility to resolve some important issues.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

For example, if these topics are taught I believe it is likely that less bullying will occur, children might feel more accepted, and maybe gender norms would diminish.

This quotation echoed many of the themes discussed above, emphasizing education for acceptance and reduction of bullying, but also explicitly linked this work on issues of gender and sexuality to the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching and advocacy for marginalized students.

Finally, some PSTs suggested that community education should aim to go beyond teaching tolerance or acceptance. For a few participants, the rationale for focusing on talking with young people was to bring critical awareness to the role of schools in asserting gender norms:

People don't realize things until they have a reason to think about them, so it is important to start these conversations young and create students who think critically about these kind of topics such as gender, race, and culture. This is the only way in which change will take place...The classroom is the battleground for change and social reproduction. If we want to change the system, we need to fight in our classrooms to change the social norms by starting the conversation with our students early, so that they can develop their own critical lens.

Notably, for this PST, the purpose of conversing with children about gender identity was about promoting critical awareness, and he explicitly links understanding and acceptance as a first step in broader systemic change. Indeed, this participant constructed the school as a "battleground" between social change and reproduction of social structures. This critical lens, which rarely appeared in our data, acknowledged the role that schools as institutions play in reproducing systems of power and oppression through valuing particular social identities (Gorski et al.,

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

2013). Unlike comments from other PSTs, which emphasized the role of education and tolerance in changing individual interactions so that trans and gender creative students can be more comfortable in a school, this participant took up a more complex understanding of why trans and gender creative identities are vilified and emphasized the importance using education to move beyond tolerance to support students' critical understandings to promote systemic change (Gorski et al., 2013; Rands, 2009).

Discussion

In this study, we aimed to address a key gap by building an understanding of how PSTs imagine supporting trans and gender creative students in the classroom, with implications for socially just teacher education and policy. We found that many PSTs expressed confusion and distress about their future responsibilities as teachers of trans and gender creative students. When imagining future actions in the classroom, PSTs largely described creating individualized, differentiated interventions for trans and gender creative students and some moved a step further, promoting broader community education approaches to advance peers' tolerance and acceptance of trans and gender creative students. Rarely did PSTs connect the experiences of trans and gender creative students to the broader systemic policing of gender expression in schools or consider the advantages of more broadly addressing gender restrictions and bias for *all* students. Overall, ideas expressed by PSTs mainly aimed to support trans and gender creative students. At the same time, these findings suggest that PSTs were poorly equipped to engage in discussions of deep change on issues of gender identity and equity in schools. Below we discuss and interpret each of these findings.

First, PSTs' responses highlighted deep discomfort and fears related to addressing trans and gender creative students' needs in school. PSTs' emotional responses to the reflective

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

prompt (see Appendix A) stood out in comparison to similar activities on other course topics, and mirrors emotionally loaded popular discourse around trans students in schools. Scholars suggest that emotion work is a central aspect of teacher identity formation (Zembylas, 2005) and that teacher emotions can have a key role in the maintenance of oppressive educational structures (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008). In this study, many PSTs evoked ambivalence when imagining embracing or supporting trans and gender creative students or challenging inequities these students face. PSTs fearfully envisioned the backlash they may experience from administrators, parents, or community members and sometimes seemed to resent trans and gender creative students for potentially creating complicated ethical conflicts in the classroom. Notably, PSTs rarely linked trans and gender creative students' struggles in school to their own experiences with gendered harassment or bullying (a pattern that was present when these PSTs talked about gender and racial equity more broadly; see Blair & Deckman, 2019; Deckman & Montilla, 2015), and some PSTs evidenced "withholding particular emotional responses (such as grief, remorse, compassion, and caring) toward certain groups of people deemed *other*," in this case, trans and gender creative students, when imagining how to support or educate their students (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008, p. 307). This discomfort and fear of backlash is likely tied to current cultural and political conflict around trans issues, and shows how emotional reactions may reify the circulation of power through the existing binary gender system. Such responses suggest that PSTs need more tools and guidance and support from teacher educators to navigate these complex professional situations.

Our findings also show that PSTs largely focused on providing individualized accommodations for trans and gender creative students or education efforts to promote tolerance of trans and gender creative students in school communities. When the participants described

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

individualized accommodations, they did so within a conservative multicultural teaching approach—emphasizing their willingness to acknowledge students' declared identities as long as normative school operations and activities were not disrupted (Gorski et al., 2013). This approach acknowledged trans and gender creative students' right to participate in school, but resisted trans and gender creative students' challenging of the everyday gendering processes—the “smooth running”—of schools.

Other PSTs evoked a liberal multicultural approach (Gorski et al., 2013) by describing the need for acceptance of trans and gender creative students or emphasizing the necessity of educating school communities to promote understanding and tolerance. In this approach, PSTs aimed to limit the discriminatory effects on individual trans and gender creative students, such as bullying, by promoting tolerance and a “passive” ally model (Clark, 2010; Grzanka et al., 2015). Some PSTs emphasized the need to evade gender, or minimize potentially difficult discussions of difference and injustice, by first discussing gender as a location of tolerance and acceptance, then silencing the language of gender normativity in schools to create more space for trans and gender creative students' individual identity expression. While many PSTs imagined developing concrete interventions to support trans and gender creative students and promote acceptance, an important step, these frames largely constructed trans and gender creative students as “problems” to be solved, rather than interrogating how both the sociopolitical/educational system and the regulatory effect of the gender binary system make trans and gender creative students into “problems.”

Social justice teacher educators emphasize the importance of scaffolding PSTs' systemic understandings of social inequities (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gorski, 2009; Gorski et al., 2013; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Yet, as our data show, most of the PSTs in our study persistently

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

discussed the experiences of trans and gender creative students and their responsibilities as educators in a way much more in line with a conservative or liberal multicultural approaches, while attending to systemic oppression and teachers' role in challenging or perpetuating it was rare (Gorski et al., 2013). This finding is notable, particularly given that the institutional context of the study site is generally seen as progressive and LGBTQ friendly, and that the teacher education program in which these students were enrolled explicitly claims a social justice approach and aims to include social justice perspectives across the curriculum. In a less accepting university context, we imagine that PSTs would be less likely to take up a liberal tolerance frame.

Delving more deeply into the course context, this lack of systemic lens and connection to gender oppression more broadly is concerning because the course was designed to support PSTs in developing systemic understandings (Enke, 2013; Gorski et al., 2013). PSTs learned about critical lenses for examining social inequality in multiple ways across the semester (see Deckman & Montilla, 2015). The discussion data we analyzed from a unit towards the end of the semester related to trans and gender creative students was embedded in a course unit exploring gender and sexuality, which emphasized systemic perspectives and aimed to support PSTs to make connections between systems of oppression and their own lives (see Appendix A for details). Our findings suggest that even when current promising practices are utilized across multiple class sessions, PSTs may need additional and more intensive support across teacher preparation to develop critical perspectives as they prepare to work with students who are particularly marginalized or popularly dehumanized, as in the current public debate around trans and gender creative students. Researchers have documented a similar pattern with in-service teachers working with transgender students in professional development (Smith & Payne, 2016).

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

More broadly, scholars investigating race and social justice in teacher education have found similar struggles among PSTs to simultaneously consider practices aimed at supporting individuals and those aimed at broader, systemic transformation (e.g. Pollock, Deckman, Mira, & Shalaby, 2010).

Implications: Expanding and Integrating Teacher Preparation for Diversity

Overall, our findings suggest that throughout their teacher education programs PSTs need more opportunities to learn about supporting trans and gender creative students, to consider constructs of gender and sexuality, and to explore the systemic nature of gender oppression enforced through schooling, and the ways gender and sexuality oppression intersects with, and is magnified by, other forms of systemic oppression. In our research, few participants moved beyond an individual lens to consider treatment of trans and gender creative students and their own reactions, from a systemic perspective. Scholars and practitioners suggest that in the highly individualistic culture of the U.S., a systemic perspective can be unfamiliar and challenging to comprehend for many undergraduate PSTs (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). This challenge is exacerbated by powerful sociocultural factors that persist in rendering heteronormativity and differential treatment by gender invisible in the everyday practices of schooling (Mayo, 2016; Thorne, 1993). Indeed, we frequently have students who share their shock as they realize the ways that they group or hold different expectations for boys and girls in their teaching practice. The continued commonsense power of gender difference in our society contributes to PSTs' discomfort and confusion as they consider supporting trans and gender creative students. We suggest two central avenues for scaffolding PSTs to develop their understandings: 1) increasing learning opportunities about trans and gender creative identities in teacher education, and 2)

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

embedding these discussions within teacher education curricula that integrate questions of oppression and systemic inequality across coursework and practice teaching.

First, drawing from the limited literature on intervention approaches to support PSTs in developing nuanced and systemic understandings of gender identity, we describe several avenues below for future exploration in teacher education. Many scholars have advocated for broader inclusion of LGBTQ issues in multicultural education coursework and across teacher education (Case & Meier, 2014; Dykes, 2010; Gorski et al., 2013; Hansen, 2015; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Payne & Smith, 2010, 2011, 2012). Trans and gender creative identities must be meaningfully included in this work: as Martino (2013) argues, teacher educators, “must more deeply consider ways of integrating transgender studies, theories, and perspectives into our own courses. The ‘T’ in LGBTQ studies cannot be treated as an ‘add-on’ or as if it is a sexual orientation, like the other identities in the acronym” (p. 171). Ingrey (2014) describes three specific approaches to teaching PSTs about transgender issues: a pedantic approach focused on helping PSTs understand terminology and untangle the conflation of gender and sexual identity, a narrative approach utilizing case study for PSTs to apply a critical lens and consider how to shift school policy and practices to disrupt discourses of trans and gender creative students as “Other,” and a diagnostic approach, in which PSTs anonymously submit questions that the teacher educator uses to scaffold nuanced and complex understandings of gender identity and expression. As described, our teaching approach utilized a variety of these practices, but given study findings we believe effective approaches must be broader in scope.

Echoing Ingrey (2014), we argue that beyond integrating trans and gender creative content into multicultural teacher education courses, we need to give PSTs the tools to interrogate normative practices in schools related to gender and sexuality on the whole, as the

PSTs' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

everyday production of “normal” gender and sexual expression constructs and polices the boundaries of identities and practices sanctioned in schools (Mayo, 2016). Rands (2009) argues that as schools play a central role in reproducing gender oppression, teacher education needs to go beyond gender-blind or gender-sensitive (tolerance) approaches to promote “gender-complex education.” In a gender-complex approach, PSTs are supported to identify the ways gender is produced and policed in schools, work through their own resistance towards dismantling the naturalness of the gender binary, and support their future students to analyze how gender is produced through the everyday practices of schooling (Rands, 2009). This method can expand PSTs’ capacities to critically reflect on their own practice and provide opportunities and supports for all students in their future classrooms.

Multicultural teacher educators also have the opportunity to support PSTs to develop a richer intersectional approach to understanding oppression that includes exploration of trans and gender creative identities in schools (Gorski et al., 2013; Payne & Smith, 2012). Scholars suggest that providing decontextualized information about LGBTQ identities without connecting struggles to intersectional oppression can reify deficit-focused discourses (Gorski et al., 2013; Macgillvray & Jennings, 2008). Therefore, teacher educators need to build opportunities for PSTs to relate the systemic oppression of trans and gender creative students to other forms of systemic oppression promoted through schooling practices that are more often explored in multicultural education classes, such as racism, ethnocentrism, classism, and ableism. PSTs need consistent support to develop a systemic lens across their teacher education coursework, to consider how multiple forms of oppression can intersect in the lives of students, and to develop approaches to practice that can challenge and resist oppression. The tools of queer theory can make important contributions to the critical multicultural approaches utilized by many social

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

justice teacher educators by deconstructing and disrupting the cultural intelligibility not only of gender and sexual binaries, but of social identity categories generally (Beasley, 2005; Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004). As Payne and Smith (2012) note, multicultural teacher education that fails to critically address issues of oppression may instead reify difference and maintain hegemonic norms. These various models provide ideas for first steps in integrating gender and sexuality into teacher education curriculum. Further research investigating how these approaches influence PSTs' understandings and future work with students will be vital in promoting context-driven, efficacious practice.

Moving beyond bounded multicultural teacher education coursework, we believe that teacher educators across disciplines and programs need to come together to ensure that issues of systemic inequity, including oppression based on gender and sexuality, are a central focus across each stage of teacher preparation curricula. Our findings suggest that teacher educators need to listen to PSTs and engage with PSTs' entrenched beliefs, rather than assume that PSTs will be ready to embrace social justice approaches. We call teacher educators to expand their knowledge and work together to develop integrated curricula and new and innovative practices to ensure that teachers value and advocate for all students, particularly students whose voices are silenced and shouted over on the margins. Given the deeply emotional ways trans identities are being publically debated today, we also support the call for teacher educators to consider the central role of emotions in socially just teaching and to scaffold "critical emotional praxis" to help PSTs unpack how emotions are involved in upholding or resisting inequitable social structures (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008).

Finally, we believe that many teacher education programs have the opportunity advocate for changes in state teacher preparation policy and licensure standards to ensure that future

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

teachers are prepared to work with trans and gender creative students and develop intersectional, systemic understandings of diversity across their teacher education coursework and practice. As we conclude this analysis in the current moment of political discord, increased visibility of gender inequity and racial hatred, and increased spotlight on the use of violence, sexual harassment, and assault as tools of domination, we believe that teacher educators have a vital responsibility to support teachers in developing complex ways of understanding links between identity and systemic disenfranchisement playing out today in classrooms across our nation.

Endnote

(1) We acknowledge that terminology is dynamic, complex, and political. We use the terms trans and gender creative here to include children who express their gender in a wide range of ways, with the intention of broadly including transgender, agender, gender complex, gender creative, gender fluid, genderqueer, intersex, nonbinary, and other folks who resist or complicate normative gender identities and expressions, while recognizing that each term has its own history and relationship to the gender system (Ehrensaft, 2016; Enke, 2013; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2018). We also suggest that students must be empowered to choose the language (and expression) that best fits them. Note that when referencing prior research, we use the terminology from the given study, except when discussing study findings in aggregate.

References

- Allan, A., Atkinson, E., Brace, E., DePalma, R., & Hemingway, J. (2008). Speaking the unspeakable in forbidden places: Addressing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality in the primary school. *Sex Education*, 8(3), 315-328.
- Allen, L. (2010). Queer(y)ing the straight researcher: The relationship(?) between researcher identity and anti-normative knowledge. *Feminism & Psychology*, 20(2), 147–165.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

- Banks, J. A. (2006). *Race, culture, and education: The selected works of James A. Banks*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Baines, A. D. (2014). *(Un)Learning disability: Recognizing and changing restrictive views of student ability*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bishop, C. M. & Atlas, J. G. (2015). School curriculum, policies, and practices regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender families. *Education and Urban Society*, 47(7) 766–784.
- Babay, E. & Albert, A. (2017, February 23). Trump's transgender directive unlikely to reverse policies in Pa., NJ schools. Philly.com. Retrieved from <http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/real-time/Trump-transgender-bathroom-decision-Pa-NJ-schools.html>
- Beasley, C. (2005) *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*. London: SAGE.
- Blair, E. E. & Deckman, S. L. (2019). “We cannot imagine”: Preservice teachers’ Othering of trans and gender creative student experiences. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Blair, E. E., Miller, R. B., Ong, M. & Zastavker, Y. V. (2017). Undergraduate STEM instructors' teacher identities and discourses on student gender expression and equity. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 106(1), 14-43.
- Boskey, E. R. (2014). Understanding transgender identity development in childhood and adolescence. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 9, 445-63.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

- CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation). (2015). CAEP accreditation standards. Retrieved from <http://www.caepnet.org/standards/introduction>
- Case, K. A. & Meier, S. C. (2014). Developing allies to transgender and gender-nonconforming youth: Training for counselors and educators. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 11*, 62–82.
- Chubbuck, S. M. & Zembylas, M. (2008). The emotional ambivalence of socially just teaching: A case study of a novice urban schoolteacher. *American Educational Research Journal, 45*(2), 274-318.
- Clark, C. T. (2010). Preparing LGBTQ-allies and combating homophobia in a U.S. teacher education program. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*, 704-713.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). *Walking the road: Race, diversity, and social justice in teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Collins, P.H. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- D'Augelli, A.R., Grossman, A. H., & Starks, T. S. (2006). Childhood gender atypicality, victimization, and PTSD among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21*(11), 1462-1482.
- Davies, B. (1989). The discursive production of the male/female dualism in school settings. *Oxford Review of Education, 15*(3), 229-241.
- Davies, B. (2011). Bullies as guardians of the moral order or an ethic of truths? *Children & Society, 25*, 278-286.
- Deckman, S. L. (2017). Managing race and race-ing management: Teachers' stories of race and

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

- classroom conflict. *Teachers College Record*, 119(110306), 1-40.
- Deckman, S. L., & Montilla, B. (2015). Being tall isn't exactly the same thing as being Black. In J. Martin (Ed.), *Racial Battle Fatigue: Insights from the Front Lines of Social Justice Advocacy*. Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers.
- Dykes, F. (2010). Transcending rainbow flags and pride parades: Preparing special education preservice educators to work with gay and lesbian youth. *SRATE Journal*, 19(2), 36-43.
- Dykstra, L. A. (2005). Trans-friendly preschool. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, 3(1), 7-13.
- Ehrensaft, D. (2016). *The gender creative child*. New York, NY: Experiment.
- Enke, A. F. (2013). The education of little cis: Cisgender and the discipline of opposing bodies. In S. Stryker & A.Z. Aizura (Eds.), *Transgender studies reader*, 2nd edition (pp. 234-247). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Francis, B. & Paechter, C. (2015). The problem of gender categorisation: addressing dilemmas past and present in gender and education research. *Gender and Education*, 27(7), 776-790.
- Frohard-Dourlent, H. (2016). 'I don't care what's under your clothes': the discursive positioning of educators working with trans and gender-nonconforming students. *Sex Education*, 16(1), 63-76.
- Gabriel, R., & Lester, J. N. (2013). The romance quest of education reform: A discourse analysis of the *Los Angeles Times*' reports on value-added measurement teacher effectiveness. *Teachers College Record*, 115(120307), 1-32.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Glasser, H. M. (2012). Hierarchical deficiencies: Constructed differences between adolescent boys and girls in a public school single-sex program in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 27*(3), 377-400.

Gorski, P. C. (2009). What we're teaching teachers: An analysis of multicultural teacher education coursework syllabi. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(2009), 309-318.

Gorski, P. C., Davis, S. N., & Reiter, A. (2013). An examination of the (in)visibility of sexual orientation, heterosexism, homophobia, and other LGBTQ concerns in U.S. multicultural teacher education coursework. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 10*(3), 224-248.

Grossman, A.H., Haney, A.P., Edwards, P., Alessi, E.J., Ardon, M., & Jarrett Howell, T. (2009). Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth talk about experiencing and coping with school violence: A qualitative study. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 6*, 24-46.

Grzanka, P., Adler, J., & Blazer, J. (2015). Making up allies: The identity choreography of straight LGBT activism. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy, 12*(1), 165-181.

Gutierrez, N. (2004). Resisting fragmentation, living whole. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 16*(3-4), 69-79.

Green, E. L., Benner, K. & Pear, R. (Oct. 21, 2018). 'Transgender' could be defined out of existence under Trump. New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/21/us/politics/transgender-trump-administration-sex-definition.html>

Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G., & Boesen, M. J. (2013). Putting the "T" in "resource": The benefits of LGBT-related school resources for transgender youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 10*, 45-63.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

- Hansen, L. E. (2015). Encouraging pre-service teachers to address issues of sexual orientation in their classrooms: Walking the walk & talking the talk. *Multicultural Education*, Winter 2015, 51-55.
- Higa, D., Hoppe, M.J., Lindhorst, T., Mincer, S., Beadnell, B., Morrison, D. M., Wells, E. A., Todd, A. & Mountz, S. (2014). Negative and positive factors associated with the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. *Youth & Society*, 46(5) 663–687.
- Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckery, D. (2014). Seven trends: the transformation of the teaching force, updated April 2014 *CPRE Report (#RR-80)*. Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.
- Ingrey, J. C. (2014). The limitations and possibilities for teaching transgender issues in education to preservice teachers. In E. J. Meyer & A. P Sansfaçon, (Eds.), *Supporting transgender & gender creative youth: Schools, families, and communities in action* (pp. 97-110). New York: Peter Lang.
- Jennings, T. & Sherwin, G. (2008). Sexual orientation topics in elementary teacher preparation programs in the USA. *Teaching Education*, 19(4), 261-278.
- Jones, T., Smith, E., Ward, R., Dixon, J., Hillier, L., & Mitchell, A. (2016). School experiences of transgender and gender diverse students in Australia. *Sex Education*, 16(2), 156–171.
- Katch, H., & Katch, J. (2010). When boys won't be boys: Discussing gender with young children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 80(3), 379-390.
- Kintner-Duffy, V. L., Vardell, R., Lower, J. K., & Cassidy, D. J. (2012). “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, 208–223.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

- Kitchen, J. & Bellini, C. (2012). Addressing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues in teacher education: Teacher candidates' perceptions. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 58(3), 444-460.
- Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Giga, N. M., Villenas, C. & Danischewski, D. J. (2016). *The 2015 national school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.
- Lee, D. & Carpenter, V. M. (2015). "What would you like me to do? Lie to you?" Teacher education responsibilities to LGBTI students. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(2), 169-180. d
- Loutzenheiser, L. W. & MacIntosh, L. B. (2004). Citizenships, sexualities, and education. *Theory into Practice*, 43(2), 151-158.
- Luecke, J. C. (2011). Working with transgender children and their classmates in pre-adolescence: Just be supportive. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 8, 116-156.
- Luttrell, W. (2010). Introduction: The promise of qualitative research in education. In W. Luttrell (Ed.), *Qualitative educational research: Readings in reflexive methodology and transformative practice* (pp.1-17). New York: Routledge.
- Macgillvray, I. K., & Jennings, T. (2008). A content analysis exploring lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender topics in foundations of education textbooks. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59, 170–188.
- Martino, W. (2013). An invaluable resource for supporting transgender, transsexual, and gender-nonconforming students in school communities: A review of supporting transgender and transsexual students in K–12 schools. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 10, 169–172.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

- Martino, W. & Cumming-Potvin, W. (2018). Transgender and gender expansive education research, policy and practice: Reflecting on epistemological and ontological possibilities of bodily becoming. *Gender and Education, 30*(6), 687-694.
- Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. London: Sage Publications.
- Mayo, J. B., Jr. (2016). Adults' complicity in limiting students' understanding of sex, gender and sexuality at school. *Sex Education, 16*(1), 105–110.
- McGuire, J. K., Anderson, C. R., Toomey, R. B., Russell, S.T. (2010). School climate for transgender youth: A mixed method investigation of student experiences and school responses. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39*, 1175–1188.
- McLaren, P. (1995). White terror and oppositional agency: Towards a critical multiculturalism. In C. E. Sleeter & P. L. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 33–70). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- McQueen, K. S. (2006). Breaking the gender dichotomy: The case for transgender education in school curriculum. *Teachers College Record*, August 14, 2006.
- Meyer, E. J. (2008). Gendered harassment in secondary schools: Understanding teachers' (non)interventions. *Gender and Education, 20*(6), 1–16.
- Meyer, E. J. (2009). *Gender, bullying, and harassment: Strategies to end sexism and homophobia in schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Meyer, E. J., Tilland-Stafford, A., & Airton, L. (2016). Transgender and gender-creative students in PK–12 schools: What we can learn from their teachers. *Teachers College Record, 118*, 1-50.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

- Milburn, W. & Palladino, J. (2012). Preservice teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions of LGBTQ bullying intervention. *The American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences Journal*, 16, 86-100.
- Nealy, E. C. (2017). *Transgender children and youth: Cultivating pride and joy with families in transition*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Parsons, L. T. (2016). 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(6), 933–947.
- Pascoe, C. J. (2007). *Dude, you're a fag: Masculinity and sexuality in high school*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Payne, E. C. & Smith, M. (2011). The Reduction of Stigma in Schools: A New Professional Development Model for Empowering Educators to Support LGBTQ Students. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 8, 174–200.
- Payne, E. C. & Smith, M. J. (2012). Safety, celebration, and risk: educator responses to LGBTQ professional development. *Teaching Education*, 23(3), 265–285.
- Payne, E. & Smith, M. (2014). The big freak out: Educator fear in response to the presence of transgender elementary school students. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 61(3), 399-418.
- Pollock, M., Deckman, S. L., Mira, M., & Shalaby, C. (2010). "But what can I do?": Three necessary tensions in teaching teachers about race. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61, 211-222.
- Rands, K. E. (2009). Considering transgender people in education: A gender-complex approach. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(4), 419-431.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

- Riggs, D. W. & Bartholomaeus, C. (2015). The role of school counsellors and psychologists in supporting transgender people. *The Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 32(2), 158–170.
- Ringrose, J. & Renold, E. (2010). Normative cruelties and gender deviants: The performative effects of bully discourses for girls and boys in school. *British Educational Research Journal*, 36(4), 573–596.
- Robinson, J., & Espelage, D. (2011). Inequities in educational and psychological outcomes between LGBTQ and straight students in middle and high school. *Educational Researcher*, 40 (7), 315–330.
- Sansfaçon, A. P., Dumais-Michaud, A., & Robichaud, M. (2014). Transforming challenges into action: Researching the experiences of parents of gender-created children through social action and self-directed group work. In E. J. Meyer & A. P Sansfaçon, (Eds.), *Supporting transgender & gender creative youth: Schools, families, and communities in action* (pp. 159-173). New York: Peter Lang.
- Sausa, L. A. (2005). Translating research into practice: Trans youth recommendations for improving school systems. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education*, 3, 15–28.
- Sensoy, O., & DiAngelo, R. J. (2017). *Is everyone really equal? An introduction to key concepts in social justice education* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shields, S.A. (2008). Gender: An intersectionality perspective. *Sex Roles*, 59, 301-311.
- Sherwin, G., & Jennings, T. (2006). Feared, forgotten, or forbidden: Sexual orientation topics in secondary teacher preparation programs in the USA. *Teaching Education*, 17(3), 207–223.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

- Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (1991). Race, class, gender, and disability in current textbooks. In M. W. Apple & L. K. Christian-Smith (Eds.), *The politics of the textbook* (pp. 78-110). New York: Routledge.
- Smith, M. & Payne, E. (2016). Binaries and biology: Conversations with elementary education professionals after professional development on supporting transgender students. *The Educational Forum*, 80, 34-47.
- This American Life. (2009). Act two: Tom girls. *Episode 374: Somewhere out there*. Chicago Public Radio.
- Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Travers, A. (2014). Transformative gender justice as a framework for normalizing gender variance among children and youth. In E. J. Meyer & A. P. Sansfaçon, Ed.s, *Supporting transgender & gender creative youth: Schools, families, and communities in action* (pp.54-68). New York: Peter Lang.
- Turbin, C. (2003) Refashioning the concept of public/private: Lessons from dress studies. *Journal of Women's History*, 15(1), 43-51.
- U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Dear colleague letter on transgender students*, 1-8. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201605-title-ix-transgender.pdf>
- Vavrus, M. (2009). Sexuality, schooling, and teacher identity formation: A critical pedagogy for teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 383–390.

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Verbrugge, M. H. (2012). *Active bodies: A history of women's physical education in twentieth-century America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wimberly, G. L. (2015). Conclusion and recommendations for further research. In G.L. Wimberly, Ed., *LGBTQ issues in education: Advancing a research agenda* (pp. 237-251). Washington, D.C.: AERA.

Wyss, S. E. (2004). "This was my hell": the violence experienced by gender non-conforming youth in US high schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 17(5), 709-730.

Zembylas, M. (2005). Discursive practices, genealogies, and emotional rules: A poststructuralist view on emotion and identity in teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 935–948.

Appendix A

Participants in this study engaged course content that used critical lenses for examining social inequality (Gorski et al., 2013). PSTs were given multiple opportunities to describe, explore, and analyze their intersectional identities throughout the course, including their gender identities and sexualities. Preceding the session for which they wrote the posts analyzed here, PSTs engaged in course sessions with related topics and guiding questions (see Table A1 below).

<<INSERT TABLE A1>>

Additionally, prior to the session of focus, PSTs completed two assignments that required them to apply critical, intersectional lenses to their own lives: 1) documenting the "hidden curriculum" of gender and/or sexuality at play in their own college experience by recording moments where gender and sexuality norms were enforced or communicated either tacitly or explicitly—they were also encouraged to consider intersections with race; and 2) taking an implicit association

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

test (see <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>) related to gender or sexuality, which reveals latent biases related to any number of specified identities.

For the focal course discussion, PSTs were assigned materials on gender identity including Katch and Katch's (2010) dialogue about meeting the needs of a gender creative child and learning about gender with children in a kindergarten classroom, and an audio segment from *This American Life* (2009) sharing the stories of two trans children navigating elementary school and family life. For online posts, PSTs were asked to, "reflect on your reactions to any/all of the materials you engaged with thus far for the week... You might...consider an argument presented by any of the authors/people presented and agree or disagree with it or note what resonated with you or make personal connections. Alternatively, you might want to write about if/how your view on gender and children/heteronormativity has changed as a result of doing the different readings/exercises," and to comment on two classmates' posts.

Appendix B

Below is an example of our data coding process from open coding by each author (EB= Elizabeth Blair, SD= Sherry Deckman), to focused coding, to final axial coding (regular text=data, bold=codes).

Data Excerpt: Its really hard for me to keep my cynical outlook on life from getting worse the further we go in this class. I'm just sitting in my room [reviewing the assigned materials], and I get sickened by how awful human beings can be to one another. **(EB: emotional reaction-disgust, "awful," SD: negative emotions → Focused: disgust → Axial: PST's emotional expression)**...I am just trying to put myself in the role of what the teacher of that class had to be. I think all we can do as future educators is make that child feel like he or she is in a safe environment where no one will make fun of them by teaching tolerance and acceptance. **(EB:**

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

teacher- safety, teaching tolerance, SD: teacher role→ Focused: teachers protect/foster resilience→ Axial: Teacher response- individual accommodations). Unfortunately, we can't make a transgender child's life perfect. We can't. We can try to be there for that child, and we can try to keep the child from being bullied, but we won't be able to end the emotional stress that that child will endure for the rest of their lives. **(EB: emotional support, bully prevention, emotional stress for trans students; SD: presumed negative emotional environment & bullying→Focused: teachers protect/foster resilience; disability/deficit frame→Axial: Teacher response- individual accommodations)** Society has a lot to do with it, but I think parenting is a big culprit here **(EB: blames society, parents; SD: society, parents at fault→Focused: Families as cruel/threatening; gender identity as socially constructed→Axial: trans and gender creative students acceptance as systemic issue).** I was also saddened by the [Katch & Katch, 2010] article. Again the student got made fun of in class for being transgender **(EB: sad, bullying, SD: bullying→Focused: "Heartbreaking"→ Axial: PST's emotional expression).** However I was impressed by the teacher's self-reflective skills and her ability to adapt to the situation. I think that no matter what issue of diversity we are faced with as teachers, we need to have the same self-evaluating skills that teacher had **(EB: teacher self-reflection, teacher adaptation, SD: reflective practice→ Focused: teacher growth→ Axial: teacher response- other).**

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Table 1
*Participant Demographics**

Demographic	Category	Number of Participants (N=183)
Gender	Women	122
	Men	61
	Other / No Identification	0
Race	White	154
	People of Color **	25
	Other / No Identification	4

* All demographic information is self-identified. None of the PSTs identified as trans, with many actively identifying as cisgender. Some PSTs did self-identify as lesbian/gay/bisexual at different points during the course, but students were not asked to officially identify their sexuality for research purposes.

** Includes Black, Latinx, Asian, Asian American, Native American, and mixed race.

Table A1
Related Class Topic Sequence and Guiding Questions

Becoming Boys and Girls in School: How do schools circumscribe appropriate ways to be boys and girls? What gender biases have been documented in schools? How does gender impact students' educational opportunity and outcomes?

Producing Normal: Gender + Sexuality in Schools: What is heteronormative bias? How does it play out in schools? How does it impact LGBT youth as well as straight-identified youth?

The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsive Heterosexuality in Schools: How do schools shape perceptions about (appropriate) sexuality and gender identity expression? What happens when young people defy prescribed norms? What are teachers' rights and responsibilities?

When Boys Won't Be Boys (*Session of focus*): How useful is it to think in terms of "boys" and "girls" in our work as educators? What are the implications of instances where young people defy dualistic gender categories? What role do students play in revealing/shaping their own gender identities?

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

Table 2
Codebook

Focused Code Examples	Axial Code	Axial Code Definition	Axial Code Examples
freedom of expression of individual children; “just be yourself”	trans and gender creative students acceptance as individual issue	Emphasizes the importance of individual liberty, individual rights, or individual choice of trans and gender creative students to make decisions about their gender identity and expression	“I think that us as future educators should ‘believe’ a student when they say that they have a preferred gender once they have thought it through and played around with the idea for awhile” and “I think we need to make the kids who tend to not fit gender stereotypes more comfortable in the classroom environment. Encourage them to do what they are drawn to regardless of whether it fits the stereotype.”
gender norms delineated by systems; gender identity as socially constructed (adults, peers, media)	trans and gender creative students acceptance as systemic issue	Emphasizes the role of institutions, policies, social norms, or society broadly in enforcing gender normativities or in promoting acceptance of trans and gender creative students’ identities and expressions	“We simply need to change society’s perception of how boys and girls should act, and perhaps then people can truly understand what makes us human” and “The idea of a gender binary in schools is rigidly adhered to and perpetuated by all involved, parents, students, and educators alike. From dress up corners to the use of pronouns based on outward appearances, there are clearly established rules to adhere to.”
“heartbreaking;” empathy/care; surprise; disgust; fear	PST’s emotional expression	PST uses emotional or evocative language to describe a reaction to trans and gender creative students or their experiences	“I think that it brings some scary things to light. We are facing something right now that hasn’t every really been dealt with before” and “I felt very sad to hear this girl struggling to find a place where she can thrive and not be bullied by those who fear transgender individuals.”
changing views; internal conflict or struggle; “shocking”/lack of	teacher response-unsure/confused/conflicted	Expresses a lack of clarity, confusion, or internal conflict about how to address trans and gender creative issues as a	“I would not have known exactly how to approach the topic or what to say in response...Is it a teacher’s place to tell a student what gender he/she is? Or to teach students to be open-minded about gender?” and “Is it possible to know

PSTS' IMAGINED FUTURES WITH TRANS STUDENTS

knowledge		teacher.	what gender you want to identify with at such a tender and very young age? And if so, how should it be handled in schools? (in terms of explaining it to other students)”
family as authority; families as cruel/threatening	teacher response-fear of parents	Highlights the potential conflict between parents and teachers if they disagree about how to address trans and gender creative students’ gender identities and expressions in school (often emotion of fear or intimidation is evoked).	“This [discussing gender norms] is a particularly difficult conversation because not all parents would agree that it is necessary for their child to be informed about the realities of gender roles in our society” and “My main issue is that some of these cross the line from responsibilities of a teacher to responsibilities of a parent. How do I deal with a situation where I don’t think the child’s best interests are being met? Parent-teacher conferences?”
disability/deficit frame; hidden curriculum of gender problematic for trans only; teachers protect/foster resilience	teacher response-individual accommodations	Articulates the need to make individual allowances or changes in school practices to address the needs of a trans or gender creative child, often mirrors language of accommodation frequently used when arranging practice to meet the needs of students with disabilities.	“I think it is important for schools to acknowledge transgender teens and make accommodations for them.” and “It is important for the teacher to let the student express themselves that is consistent to their identity. However, this might have restrictions and limits.”
teachers need to teach about gender identities; teachers as advocates; hidden curriculum of gender problematic for all	teacher response-broad education/school-wide change	Focuses on in the importance of education for all students on gender identity, supports broader school policy change, or emphasizes the importance of building an accepting school community.	“I feel it is important for those of us who are educated and aware of issues facing children who happen to be LGBTQI, to work towards enacting changes and policies in our schools that support these kids” and “It is almost more important to begin having these conversations about sex/gender roles in our society early on in children’s lives....we, as teachers have the power to open up the topic even more. If we have these conversations at a young age, then it won’t seem so taboo or strange to discuss once we are older.”

