

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Doctor of Education Dissertations

College of Education

Fall 2022

Education and the Gender Spectrum: Addressing Gender Identity Needs in the High School Environment

Donna Eason

Gardner-Webb University, deason1@gardner-webb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/education-dissertations>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Secondary Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Eason, Donna, "Education and the Gender Spectrum: Addressing Gender Identity Needs in the High School Environment" (2022). *Doctor of Education Dissertations*. 113.

<https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/education-dissertations/113>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Education at Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Education Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. For more information, please see [Copyright and Publishing Info](#).

EDUCATION AND THE GENDER SPECTRUM: ADDRESSING GENDER
IDENTITY NEEDS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

By
Donna N. Eason

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University
2022

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Donna N. Eason under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

Jennifer Putnam, EdD
Committee Chair

Date

Thommi Lawson, PhD
Methodologist

Date

Ken Shell, PhD
Content Specialist

Date

Jennifer Putnam, EdD
College of Education Representative

Date

Prince Bull, PhD
Dean of the College of Education

Date

Acknowledgements

This whole process has been a journey of patience, commitment, support, and love. I have so many people to acknowledge and thank, starting with the person who told me about this wonderful program and never stopped encouraging me and inspiring me – Dr. Thommi Lawson. I must give a loud shoutout to the best graduate school cohort that a person could ever have. We really went through this journey together. I would also like to acknowledge the wonderful women in The Crew who have supported me throughout all my endeavors over the years and always share love and sisterhood.

There are more friends than I can even name, and such is also the case with my family. I have been blessed to be born into a large family as well as marry into an even larger one. To all the Easons, thank you for being the best in-laws a person could ever know. To Mark, Joey, Lanier, Jon, Lauren, Lenox, Joe, Ashley, and Marche, I hope you are as proud of me as I am of all of you. To Regina, Angela, Pam, Mackie, and Michael, there are not enough words to describe how much I feel honored to just be a part of our pack. There is no me without all of you.

To my father, I know you have a big grin on your face and are talking up a storm with everyone in heaven about Ms. D. I love you, Daddy!

To my mother, you have been the best cheerleader and support a daughter could ever have. My direction toward education and love for learning have been greatly influenced and nurtured by you. I love you, Ma!

And lastly, to my love – Allen Eason. As always, you are my rock, my hero, and my best friend. I could not have done this without you. I love you forever and ever.

Abstract

EDUCATION AND THE GENDER SPECTRUM: ADDRESSING GENDER IDENTITY NEEDS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT. Eason, Donna N., 2022: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

This phenomenological study explored the experiences of teachers and administrators in addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. Because most current research focuses mostly on the experiences of students, this study specifically investigated the beliefs, behaviors, challenges, and successes of educators. By analyzing the data provided by the participants, teachers and administrators could be made aware of how best to create and maintain inclusive school environments. The qualitative methodology included interviews with teachers and administrators from a charter school and a private school and focused on their thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding interactions with students who identify as transgender and nonbinary. Participants were asked open-ended questions describing their past and current experiences in education. Then, participants' answers were coded into categories and grouped by emerging themes. Results of the study revealed that the participants realized that transgender and nonbinary students experience more difficulties academically, emotionally, physically, and socially than students who do not identify as transgender and nonbinary. Also, the participants expressed a strong desire to engage in inclusive school environments for all their students and recognized that they should address their students' needs in and out of the classroom. The study revealed that educators felt a strong need to promote an inclusive climate at their schools and be supported by their administration and surrounding community for optimal success.

Keywords: gender identity, transgender, nonbinary, high school, LGBTQ students, inclusive environments

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Creating an LGBTQ-Inclusive Classroom: The Teachers.....	5
Creating an LGBTQ-Inclusive School: The Administration	6
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	8
Overview of Methodology	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
Significance of the Study	12
Limitations and Delimitations.....	12
Conclusion	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review	15
Overview	15
Government Regulations Regarding LGBTQ Rights	15
Conditions of LGBTQ Students in High School	21
Social Identity, Queer, and Ecological Systems: Theoretical Framework	29
Experiences of Teachers – Curriculum Development and Student Support.....	38
Experiences of Administrators – Policies and Procedures	39
Public Schools Versus Charter Schools Versus Private Schools.....	42
Conclusion	45
Chapter 3: Methodology	46
Research Questions	46
Selected Methodology	46
Research Design.....	47
Phenomenology as Qualitative Approach.....	48
Target Population.....	49
Teachers	50
Administration and Staff.....	50
Procedures	51
Data Collection and Data Analysis	53
Limitations	57
Delimitations.....	58
Chapter 4: Results	60
Overview	60
Data Collection Process	60
Connections to Research Questions.....	65
Summary of Findings of Research Question 1	66
Summary of Findings of Research Question 2	83
Themes	93
Overall Results.....	93
Chapter 5: Discussion	96
Introduction.....	96
Methodology	97
Interpretation and Discussion of Results	97

Theme 1: Students’ Struggles	98
Theme 2: Making Mistakes	101
Theme 3: Changes Over Time and Place.....	104
Theme 4: Representation Matters	108
Theme 5: Minimizing Impact of Behavior	111
Implications.....	114
Delimitations.....	114
Limitations	115
Summary of Findings.....	116
Significance of Study.....	117
References	118
Appendices	
A Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2018	135
B Dear Colleague Letter – Transgender Students	139
C Dear Colleague Letter Withdrawing and Rescinding Previous Documents Supporting Transgender Students’ Protection	146
D Executive Order 14021	149
E Email Request to Participants	153
F Informed Consent Form.....	155
G Interview Script.....	159
H Qualitative Questions.....	161
Tables	
1 Interview Data Collection Table	54
2 Charter and Private School Participants’ Demographics.....	63
Figures	
1 Development of Identity Into Distinct Groups	31
2 Example of Historical Emergence of Queer Theories	33
3 Example of Bronfenbrenner’s Four Original Ecological Systems	37
4 Nondiscrimination Practices Per State.....	43
5 Interviewing Process for Data Collection	55
6 Example of MAXQDA Visual Tools	56

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2016, House Bill 2 was passed in North Carolina. This bill forced people to use public bathrooms in congruence with their biological sex (House Bill, 2016). With this bill, discrimination became legalized. This example is just one of the many ways transgender people have experienced oppressive treatment, ranging from unacceptance to shunning, to bullying because of their gender identity (Human Rights Watch, 2016). This treatment is not directed solely at adults; high school students have received similar treatment in society and the educational milieu (Sadowski, 2020). In a place where children should feel safe and encouraged, some schools are hostile to the transgender and nonbinary population (Gordon et al., 2018). In fact, one high school student in Pennsylvania described school as “walking through a hailstorm” (Human Rights Watch, 2016, p. 17).

To alleviate the treatment of this population and address the needs of students of all gender identities and sexual orientations, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) was founded in 1990 by a group of teachers who were dedicated to improving the educational and social experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students who suffered from bullying, discrimination, and academic failure. It has now grown into an organization that provides resources for schools; works with students, parents, faculty, and administration to empower them as change agents; and conducts surveys and research to determine current conditions and measure improvement. The need for such an organization developed because LGBTQ students faced (and are still facing) hardships exponentially greater than their peers, including bullying, assault, and discrimination (Long, n.d.).

In addition to GLSEN, the Williams Institute also supports the needs of the LGBTQ community. This research center emerged from UCLA's School of Law and focuses on sexual orientation, gender identity law, and public policy. Created in 2006, the institute's research is a major contributor to aiding stakeholders to create awareness, policies, and laws protecting the LGBTQ community. Among its research are reports of the experiences of transgender and nonbinary high school students in different states. According to a report focusing on youth in California, 10.3% of middle and high school students identify as LGBTQ (Choi et al., 2017). Because of a lack of inclusive and supportive policies and practices for LGBTQ students, they often are victims of bullying, discrimination, and violence. These harmful acts perpetrated on youth put them in mental, emotional, and physical danger as well as academic risk of failure (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

President Nixon signed Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which stated that no person in the United States who participates in a public education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance in the United States should be discriminated against based on sex (Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, 2015). Although there has not been a change to this amendment, there have been advancements made in the work sector. In 2020, in a case that addressed a man who was fired from his employment because he was gay, the Supreme Court upheld Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects all employees against discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity (*Bostock v. Clayton County*, 2020). As for the Education Amendments of 1972, two later versions, the Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2015 and the Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2018, were reintroduced to the House of

Representatives. These versions were designed to protect public school students from discrimination based on their actual or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation (Polis, 2018). A copy of this act is found in Appendix A. It has yet to be passed; nevertheless, schools in individual states have taken action to provide more inclusive, safe spaces for LGBTQ youth and adolescents. Senate Bill 48 (2011) passed by the California State Legislature, requires schools to include the contributions of LGBTQ people in the social sciences. Furthermore, even more schools are reaching out to groups that have created curricula that support the inclusion of LGBTQ people and best practices for teachers and administrators (Collins & Ehrenhalt, 2018). Nevertheless, there is much more work that needs to be done for students who identify as transgender or nonbinary to feel safe and welcomed in schools (Mayo, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

The GLSEN National School Climate Survey's report suggested that although conditions in schools for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students have improved, victimization has become worse for transgender and nonbinary youth (GLSEN and the National Center for Transgender Equality, 2018). As a result, transgender teens are at a higher risk of violence committed against them and suicide compared to their peers (Jenco, 2019). Furthermore, they are more apt to earn lower grades, have a lack of interest in school, drop out, or fail to pursue higher education (Page, 2017).

As for curriculum development in public schools, eight states have laws that restrict teachers from including subject matter related to the LGBTQ community in the classroom (Stoltzfus, 2016). Indeed, the negative outcomes for transgender and nonbinary students are in part because the curriculum does not include people and

experiences that reflect their own (Prescott, 2018). Although many teachers want to support LGBTQ students, they feel as if they do not have the support or training to do so (Minero, 2018). Moreover, many teachers feel a sense of fear in discussing LGBTQ-centered topics because of the perceived responses of parents (Page, 2017).

Because there are no protections enacted by Congress based on sexual orientation (and often, gender identity is incorrectly included in the idea of sexual orientation), private schools are not required to admit LGBTQ students (Petrilli, 2017). In other words, private schools that receive money from the federal government are not allowed to discriminate based on race, national origin, or disability; yet gender and sexual identity are not included in some federal anti-discrimination laws (Gjelten, 2015).

Transgender and nonbinary students must feel safe, valued, and respected in schools in order to have healthy, happy, and productive academic experiences (Collins & Ehrenhalt, 2018); thus, schools must foster an inclusive environment through faculty and administration's dedicated participation as change agents (Sadowski, 2020). A classroom that supports transgender and nonbinary students can be accomplished by including a curriculum with LGBTQ-related subject matter, an acknowledgment and consistent use of students' names and pronouns, and programs and activities that are not gender binary or that do not rely heavily on traditional gender roles (Page, 2017). For administration, an inclusive school means changing policies and practices, such as bathroom and locker room designations, among others (Collins & Ehrenhalt, 2018). Creating a safe and welcoming environment for transgender and nonbinary students also includes the relationships between the adults and students in the school. For instance, according to Greyerbiehl et al. (2015), when students share their sexual orientation or gender identity

with adults, the responses of those adults can have a profound effect on the well-being of the students.

In addition, a school with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum allows LGBTQ students to experience those years feeling safer and more connected to the community (McGarry, 2013).

Creating an LGBTQ-Inclusive Classroom: The Teachers

To increase LGBTQ-inclusive classrooms, specifically classrooms that address the needs of transgender and nonbinary students, teachers must first confront their own heteronormative beliefs (Pennell, 2017). Some teachers are not aware that their practices and lessons do not represent students who are transgender and nonbinary. Traditional activities that divide students into male/female and narratives that feature parents consisting of a mother and father do not represent all students. Furthermore, teachers may have difficulty in creating an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum as there may be a lack of material, or if the material exists, it may not have been organized in a manner that adheres to state standards (Prescott, 2018). In addition, some school districts in the public school system as well as individual private schools may have policies that explicitly forbid the inclusion of LGBTQ-focused materials and practices (Petrilli, 2017).

Although using correct pronouns and names when addressing students is of utmost importance to the transgender and nonbinary population (Reilly, 2019), some teachers have expressed resistance to using gender-neutral pronouns or pronouns representing students' sexual identity because of personal beliefs regarding sexual identity that does not conform to a heteronormative model (Sorto, 2019). Others find it difficult to use the pronoun "they" as a singular pronoun (Fagell, 2019).

Creating an LGBTQ-Inclusive School: The Administration

According to Mangin (2018), it is important for administrators to develop policies that address the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. When principals and other administrators create a climate of inclusion, this culture permeates throughout the school. Policies should address the rights of students and the expectations of educators. Furthermore, by researching and partnering with nonprofit organizations, such as Gender Spectrum, an organization that works with transgender and nonbinary youth and their families; educational institutions to create inclusive environments and experiences; and GLSEN, administrators are able to provide the support and materials everyone needs to create an inclusive environment (Mangin, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

Throughout the years at my current school, I have had the opportunity to teach several students who identified as nonbinary. Initially, interacting with my nonbinary students wrought some difficulty, especially addressing them by preferred pronouns. Although the students had told me what pronouns they preferred, I would find myself falling into the habit of addressing them by pronouns that I felt they resembled physically. Each time, I would be so upset with myself for failing my students at such a fundamental level and would vow to not repeat this faux pas. Nevertheless, the misgendering happened over and over. In conversing with other teachers about my struggles, I would find that they also had difficulties with using correct pronouns for their students. Some of them did not even know which pronouns their students preferred; they just assumed the pronouns were the same as what they perceived their gender identity to be. I would often hear the frustration in teachers' voices, and several of them just gave up

on even attempting to remember to address their students correctly. This left a profound effect on me and drove me to want to learn more about the experiences of teachers with transgender and nonbinary students and how we could create better environments for both educators and students.

Thus, this study focused on the experiences and perceptions of teachers and administrators who address the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. Using the phenomenology methodology, this study examined the feelings and understandings of the participants, not merely the practices conducted by them. The literature abounds with facts about the treatment and feelings of LGBTQ students (GLSEN, 2018; Gordon et al., 2018; Stewart, 2016) and the resources and tools needed to create more gender-inclusive schools (Collins & Ehrenhalt, 2018; Mayo, 2014; Sadowski, 2020). However, there is very little material related to the experiences of teachers and administrators before, during, and after applying practices and policies. Therefore, this study used interviews to capture the narratives of faculty and staff in both a public (charter) school and private school to foster a better understanding of their journeys. It is not meant to judge practices in schools but to observe any successes as well as challenges in the process of addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students the faculty and staff face. The sites were not specifically chosen because they were in the process of creating a more gender-inclusive environment. Instead, they were selected through convenience because they were of similar size and location. It is hoped that comparisons will be more easily made based on their similarities. An important note: This study focused on gender identity, not sexual orientation. Gender identity is defined as how a person views themselves as it relates to male, female, both sexes, or neither; sexual orientation is defined as to whom a person

is romantically, sexually, or emotionally attracted (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2020).

Research Questions

The following research questions focus this study:

1. How do teachers describe their experiences with transgender and nonbinary students?
2. How do administrators and staff describe their experiences with transgender and nonbinary students?

Overview of Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology, specifically that of a phenomenological study. Its purpose is to explore an issue in a specific setting through the lens of specific people. It relies on the thick descriptions and presentations of the participants rather than on quantitative measures; thus, the population is small and focused (Creswell, 2012). Because I wanted to focus on the lived experiences of individuals as it relates to a particular phenomenon (i.e., addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students), phenomenology was most appropriate.

Phenomenology is “the essence of something as it is described and...how it functions in the lived experience and how it shows itself in consciousness as an object of reflection” (Peoples, 2020, p. 28).

I interviewed participants individually so they felt a sense of freedom to express themselves fully. In March 2020, schools in North Carolina were closed to students and adults as a result of COVID-19, which affected all areas of the United States and other parts of the world economically, socially, and physically (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020a). As a result of its highly contagious nature, people were

urged by their state and national governments to participate in social distancing by teleworking from home and remaining separated from others who were not a part of their household (CDC, 2020b). Because of social distancing during the pandemic, these interviews were conducted via the teleconferencing tool Zoom, which allowed participants to see and communicate with each other through their computers.

Definition of Terms

Most of the following terms come from the Gender Spectrum website; however, their definitions appear in other publications of organizations focused on supporting the LGBTQ community. For the purpose of this study, I only listed words related to gender identity that are used in this document.

In describing people who do not use a binary gender identity (male or female), I selected the term “nonbinary.” Initially, I had chosen to use the term “gender nonconforming,” as that was a term that appeared more prevalent in my readings and one with which I was most familiar. Upon interviewing several participants, however, they commented that they found that term offensive in that it signified that people who do not use binary designations are outside of what is considered normal and/or conforming to the mainstream rules of society. Furthermore, after I asked members of the transgender community about word choice, they also agreed that although there are several terms to describe a person who does not use a binary designation, the term nonbinary was acceptable and not viewed as offensive.

Cisgender

One’s gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth (Gender Spectrum, n.d.).

Gender Binary

Presenting gender according to two categories: boy/man and girl/woman.

Cisgender and transgender people can have a gender identity that is binary (Gender Spectrum, n.d.).

Gender Expression

How one presents their gender to the world and how the outside world perceives and interacts with one's gender (Gender Spectrum, n.d.).

Gender Identity

One's internal sense of self as masculine, feminine, both, neither, or something else. Sexual identity means the same thing and is often used interchangeably (Gender Spectrum, n.d.).

Gender Nonconforming

A person who does not view oneself as adhering to the traditional roles of a binary gender system. It can also mean that a person does not identify as male or female (GLSEN and the National Center for Transgender Equality, 2018).

Gender Role

How a person is expected to behave based on cisgender assignments (Gender Spectrum, n.d.).

Heteronormativity

The belief that the default state of a person is to be heterosexual and cisgendered. This is how "normal" people are expected to be (Russo, n.d.).

LGBTQ

Stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. Sometimes, the Q stands

for questioning (Gender Spectrum, n.d.)

Nonbinary

Means the same as gender nonconforming; however, unlike gender nonconforming, it seems to adhere more to queer theory and normalizing a nonbinary identification.

Queer

Historically has been used as a derogatory slur to describe people whose sexual orientation and sexual identity have been other than heterosexual and cisgendered. Many people in the LGBTQ community have reclaimed this term to describe members of this community (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2020).

Sex

The label assigned to a person (either male or female) upon one's birth. It is determined by a person's external genitalia and internal reproductive organs (Gender Spectrum, n.d.)

Sexual Orientation

Who a person is physically, emotionally, and/or romantically attracted to (Gender Spectrum, n.d.).

Sexually Fluid

Describes the notion that one's sexual orientation is not fixed and instead exists on a spectrum. Gender fluidity has a similar definition in that one's sense of identity can change and is not always defined by specific terms (Lampen, 2018).

Transgender

Used to describe a person whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex

(Gender Spectrum, n.d.).

Transphobia

The fear, dislike of, and/or prejudice against transgender people (Gender Spectrum, n.d.).

Significance of the Study

This study explored the experiences of teachers and administrators in a public (charter) school and private school setting as they address the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. A lack of research exists on the mental and emotional states of teachers and administrations who address the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. Most of the material accessible to me focused on the experiences of the students and the ways in which schools could and did improve their communities through applicable means. It is my hope that shining a light on the experiences of the teachers and administrators will allow educators, students, and parents to have a deeper sense of awareness and understanding of the importance of creating inclusive environments.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are situations of concern that are outside of the researcher's control, whereas delimitations are limitations that are set by the researcher (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The limitations and delimitations are challenges the researcher must be aware of and try to minimize to create the most valid and thorough study possible.

Limitations

In this study, the COVID-19 pandemic is a situation over which the researcher has no control. In March 2020, the United States was placed on a social distancing mandate that greatly reduced people's access to their work environments (CDC, 2020b). As a

result, educators were only able to teach through video conferencing and online resources and did not have face-to-face interactions with their colleagues and students. For interviews conducted in this study, participants were not interviewed in their schools but in their homes via teleconferencing; thus, I was limited by participants' environments.

Other limitations included those directly related to the interview process. I had some participants who provided limited responses. Likewise, some responders possibly shaped their answers because of a desire to appear in a certain manner (Weiss, 1994). Likewise, the study topic itself was a limitation because the conversation of gender identity can be uncomfortable to some educators due to their own beliefs (Minero, 2018). Furthermore, because I am an employee at a private school, participants from their private school may have felt a sense of hesitancy or reluctance to share their experiences due to a sense of competition. Hopefully, by fostering an environment of trust and openness, this did not impact the interviews.

Delimitations

Delimitations included the choice of schools and educators for the interview process. I chose one public (charter) school and one private school, with approximately eight people per school being interviewed. This number may have been too small to achieve saturation for data analysis. Another delimitation was the decision to choose only schools in the Raleigh, North Carolina region. By only using this area, both schools are under the influence of laws and regulations governing their region. Other regions were not chosen because of convenience and timeliness in interviewing participants in close proximity. The participants were all comfortable with the topic and eager to engage in the interview process. If I had chosen participants with various degrees of comfort with the

topic, there may have been more variety in responses. The choice of theoretical framework (queer theory, social identity, and ecological systems theory) might have affected my observations and interpretation of the data. Furthermore, in a standardized, open-ended interview (which I used), the lack of flexibility might have limited the naturalness of responses (Patton, 2014). Lastly, my own inherent biases might have influenced data collection and analysis.

Conclusion

This dissertation focused on the experiences of teachers and administrators in addressing the concerns of transgender and nonbinary students. Chapter 1 outlined the problem and the purpose of the study. Chapter 2, the Literature Review, explores queer theory, social identity theory, and ecological systems theory as lenses through which to understand the experiences of transgender and nonbinary people. It presents the experiences of LGBTQ students in high schools and looks at how teachers and administrators are or are not meeting the needs of the students. Furthermore, Chapter 2 explains different legislation related to public (charter) schools and the governance of private schools. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used in the study and the process undertaken in order to obtain rich and nuanced data fitting for a phenomenological study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

This literature review looks at a brief history of governmental policies regarding the rights of members of the LGBTQ community. It presents the experiences of LGBTQ students as well as teachers' and administrators' practices in addressing these issues. This chapter also looks at social identity theory, queer theory, and ecological systems theory as lenses to accurately present the experiences of these students and the importance of addressing the concerns of transgender and nonbinary students. Lastly, this chapter explores the similarities and differences between public and private education and how they impact teachers and administrators.

Government Regulations Regarding LGBTQ Rights

The rights of LGBTQ people, specifically transgender people, have been denied and recognized throughout governmental history. Transgender people have been subject to discrimination in the sectors of employment, health care, and day-to-day life experiences. Most of the discriminatory acts have been proposed and passed through state government. In the last 5 years, there has been more federal government activity than in previous years (Howard University, 2018).

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

One of the major determinants of gender inclusion in schools is federal and state legislation. This determines the "rules" of society in particular areas and gives schools a guide for what they can do and what would be discouraged. Title IX is a federal law that "prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity" (Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, 2015, Sec. 1681). Its primary

objective is to forbid the use of federal funds to institutions that promote sex discrimination and provide protection for those who are disadvantaged by those practices. It was signed on June 23, 1972, by President Richard Nixon. This law specifically protects citizens from sex discrimination, but it does not address gender identity; thus, transgender and nonbinary people are not protected under this act.

On May 13, 2016, Catherine E. Lhamon, the Assistant Secretary of the United States for Civil Rights, and Vanita Gupta, the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney for Civil Rights, drafted a Dear Colleague letter (a letter sent to members of a legislative body by a colleague seeking support for a new bill or issue) requesting the same protection under Title IX for transgender students. The letter stated that because U.S. Departments “[treated] a student’s gender identity as the student’s sex for purposes of Title IX and its implementing regulations...a school must not treat a transgender student differently from the way it treats other students of the same gender identity” (Lhamon & Gupta, 2016, p. 2). Furthermore, the letter urged that “nondiscrimination on the basis of sex requires schools to provide transgender students equal access to educational programs and activities even in circumstances in which other students, parents, or community members raise objections or concerns” (Lhamon & Gupta, 2016, p. 2). The letter outlined the different ways in which Title IX must support transgender students, focusing on safe environments, identification documents and use of names and pronouns, activities and facilities, social organizations, housing and overnight lodging, and privacy. See Appendix B for the letter in its entirety.

As a result of the Dear Colleague Letter on Transgender Students and a letter to Emily Prince from James A. Ferg-Cadima, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy,

the departments of education and justice submitted a two-page Dear Colleague letter rescinding the policies outlined in the previous documents (Gold et al., 2017). See Appendix C for the two-page Dear Colleague letter.

Updates to Title IX Under Biden Administration

In June 2022, the Biden administration proposed an expansion of Title IX to protect students and educators in any educational institution or program from discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. This move is the first time transgender youth, adolescents, and adults have been included in protections under Title IX (Gallegos, 2022). Not only are members of the LGBTQ community provided this protection, but so are their parents and guardians, who have the right to support their LGBTQ children. The expansion urges schools to make visible and public their policies on nondiscrimination to all members of the educational community (Gallegos, 2022).

The commencement of reviewing and making changes to Title IX began in March 2021 as Executive Order 14021 (2021). It specifically stated,

It is the policy of my Administration that all students should be guaranteed an educational environment free from discrimination on the basis of sex, including discrimination in the form of sexual harassment, which encompasses sexual violence, and including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. For students attending schools and other educational institutions that receive Federal financial assistance, this guarantee is codified, in part, in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq., which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance. (Section 1)

The complete executive order can be found in Appendix D.

Fair Education Act

The basis of the Fair Education Act is a study by the California Safe Schools Coalition that shows that when the LGBTQ community is included in the instructional materials in a classroom, all students, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, feel increased safety. In addition, there is a decrease in bullying. Furthermore, when the contributions of LGBTQ people are part of the curriculum, LGBTQ students are more likely to participate academically in a positive manner (Los Angeles County Department of Education, 2011); thus, this act, signed into law on July 14, 2011, requires California schools to include contributions by and representation of the LGBTQ community in public school history and social science texts. This was a ground-breaking move towards inclusion and equity.

Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2018

The Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2018 was introduced to Congress on March 21, 2018, by Rep. Jared Polis. It focused on discrimination in public schools based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Its purposes were to ensure that all students have access to public education in a safe environment free from discrimination and harassment based on perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity and that there are laws in place to combat any discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (Polis, 2018). This bill has not been passed by Congress yet.

House Bill 755 – NC Parents’ Bill of Rights

On May 25, 2021, House Bill 755, also called the Parents’ Bill of Rights, was proposed by North Carolina Republicans in the 2021-2022 session. This bill would

restrict any teaching of sexual orientation and gender identity to students in kindergarten to third grade. It also stated that parents would be notified if their child wanted to change their name or pronoun (Parents' Bill of Rights, 2021). Opponents of this bill felt the harm that “outing” students to their parents would be tremendous, possibly resulting in suicide (Lee & Morris, 2022). The bill passed the N.C. Senate on June 1, 2022.

Bills Regarding Medical Treatment of Transgender Youth

Youth Health Protection Act. In April 2021, Republicans proposed S.B. 514 to the North Carolina General Assembly which would prevent people under the age of 21 from access to medical procedures and treatments regarding gender reassignment. The bill includes hormone therapy and surgical procedures (Youth Health Protection Act, 2021). It is viewed as unlikely that this bill would become a law because of low support and the extreme nature of the treatment of transgender youth (Killian, 2021). However, there have been high emotions related to offering medical treatment to youth on both sides of the debate. In favor of restricting medical treatment to transgender youth is Idaho Representative Bruce Skaug. In March 2022, when speaking about House Bill 675, he referred to medical treatment for transgender youth as “sterilizing and mutilating children” (Russell, 2022, para. 3).

States With Bills Being Considered. In 2021, Arkansas passed House Bill 1570, which prohibited medical treatment for transgender youth (SAFE Act, 2021). According to Cox (2021), as of 2021, the following states have proposed bills that restrict, prohibit, and/or criminalize any medical treatment, including hormone therapy and medical surgeries, for transgender minors:

- **Alabama** HB 1, SB 10: "Vulnerable Child Compassion and Protection Act"

prohibits gender confirmation therapy for minors and medical treatment without parental consent.

- **Florida** HB 935: "Vulnerable Child Protection Act" criminalizes transgender surgical procedures and medical treatments.
- **Georgia** HB 401: "Vulnerable Child Protection Act" prevents health care professionals from performing transgender medical procedures on minors.
- **Kansas** SB 214: "Making it a crime for a physician to perform gender reassignment surgery or hormone replacement therapy on certain children" criminalizes providing transgender medical treatment to minors.
- **Kentucky** HB 477: "An Act relating to parental consent for transgender healthcare services" prohibits transgender health care services for minors without parental consent.
- **Louisiana** SB 104: "Provides relative to gender therapy and minors" prohibits consent of minors to receive gender therapy and requires parental consent under certain circumstances.
- **Missouri** SB 442: "Modifies provisions relating to gender reassignment treatment for children" prohibits transgender medical treatment to anyone younger than 18.
- **Montana** HB 427: "An Act Providing for Youth Health Protection Laws" prohibits health care providers from performing gender confirmation procedures on minors.
- **New Hampshire** HB 68: "Relative to the definition of child abuse" adds gender confirmation treatments and surgery to the definition of child abuse.

- **Oklahoma** SB 676: "An Act relating to crime and punishment; making certain medical treatment unlawful; providing definition; providing for certain penalty; providing for codification; and providing an effective date" prohibits transgender medical procedures for anyone younger than 21 years old.
- **South Carolina** H4047: "SC Minor Child Compassion and Protection Act" criminalizes transgender medical treatments for minors with some exceptions.
- **Tennessee** HB 0578: Acts to amend prior bills prohibiting gender confirmation therapy without parental consent to prepubescent minors and minors who have entered puberty.
- **Texas** HB 4014, SB 1646, HB 2693, HB 1399, HB 68: Prohibits gender confirmation procedures for minors; classifies transgender medical procedures as child abuse.
- **Utah** HB 92: "Medical Practice Amendments" prohibits medical professionals from performing transgender procedures on a minor. (para. 5)

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and PowerSchool

In March 2021, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction announced that the student information system that all North Carolina public schools are required to use, PowerSchool, will not display students' preferred names and will not list students' gender publicly. This action was initiated by a letter sent by the Campaign for Southern Equality and signed by more than 300 educators, mental health providers, community activists, parents, and students (Polaski, 2021).

Conditions of LGBTQ Students in High Schools

In June 2016, the National Education Association, the United States' largest

professional organization of and for educators from preschool to university graduate programs, created the Legal Guidance on Transgender Students' Rights, a document that outlines transgender and nonbinary students' rights in the public school system. These rights include the right not to be treated differently than other students, especially as it relates to discipline; the right to be called by preferred names and pronouns and the ability to express their transgendered identity (for instance, through dress); the right to have medical and personal records be considered private and not disclosed without the transgender student's consent; the right to be treated with respect and not subjected to bullying and harassment; the right to have equal educational opportunities; and the right to use facilities consistent with their gender identity (National Education Association, 2016). The document further explains the conditions that transgender and nonbinary students have experienced and what schools can do to create environments that allow for inclusivity and safety for these students.

For students to thrive in schools, it is important for them to feel safe and appreciated. That has not been the experience for all students, however. Students who are perceived to be members of the LGBTQ community, whether they identify or not, often are the victims of bullying, harassment, and victimization (Human Rights Watch, 2016). As a result, some of these students are unable to achieve high academic goals and suffer from poor physical and mental health (Sadowski, 2020). Transgender and nonbinary students are particularly at a disadvantage in schools. Although lesbian, gay, and bisexual students have shown an increase in feelings of security in high school, transgender and nonbinary students' experiences have gotten worse since previous GLSEN surveys (GLSEN, 2018). In other words, the needs of LGB students over time have become more

understood and addressed; however, the policies and practices designed to protect LGB students have not translated into protections for students based on gender identity (McGuire et al., 2010).

In order for transgender and nonbinary students' experiences to improve, it is important for schools to create a gender-inclusive environment (Sadowski, 2020). This process involves creating inclusive curricula in the classroom, practicing correct pronoun and name usage for transgender and nonbinary students, and creating policies that celebrate all students (Mayo, 2014). Furthermore, students feel that if adults would intervene more in cases of bullying and harassment, schools would develop a more inclusive climate (McGuire et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, for some teachers and schools, this has been met with difficulty (Stoltzfus, 2016). In some cases, policies have not been put into place to guide the practices of the school community. Transgender students are restricted in their extracurricular opportunities (Critchfield, 2021). Furthermore, prejudice and beliefs among students, parents, faculty, and administration foster an exclusive and hostile environment for transgender and nonbinary students (Reilly, 2019).

Advocacy organizations, such as Gender Spectrum, Teaching Tolerance, and GLSEN, among others, have been supportive in providing resources for elementary, middle, and high schools (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018). They also hold conferences and further education opportunities for faculty and administration (Gender Spectrum, 2019). These organizations are only as successful, however, as the school climate allows them to be. Therefore, it is important that for any school to create a climate that allows all students and adults to thrive healthily and productively, there must

be an understanding of a school's culture (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

National School Climate Survey

In 1999, GLSEN conducted its first National School Climate Survey to provide data responding to the concerns of LGBTQ students in public schools. This survey, administered biennially, examined several factors regarding the experiences of LGBTQ students, including students' level of safety; students' victimization from harassment and discrimination; students' experiences with faculty and staff; school policies and practices; and schools' support systems. The 2017 National School Climate Survey is GLSEN's latest report on the state of public schools as it relates to the LGBTQ community. The sample population of students surveyed was 23,001 between the ages of 13 and 21 and in Grades 6-12. They were from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and five U.S. territories. One-third were students of color. There is no indication of the number of students who were transgender or who were nonbinary youth and adolescents; however, an effort was made to reach out to organizations that worked predominately with these groups (Kosciw et al., 2018b). Therefore, although the focus of the study is the transgender and nonbinary population, information from the GLSEN report includes all students in the LGBTQ community.

The results of the GLSEN report were that LGBTQ students felt unsafe in their schools. Specifically, the majority of the students felt they were victims of bullying, harassment, and assault from students. Additionally, students felt targeted by both their sexual orientation and gender identity. More disturbingly, they indicated that they did not feel supported by teachers and administrators (GLSEN, 2018).

Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is given out of the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System to identify the leading causes of disability, illness, and death of youth and young adults. It uses a sample of students at the national, state, and local levels, and in 2017, the survey used data collected from 39 states and 21 large urban school districts.

The survey is not population specific – meaning that it is not only focused on LGBTQ youth. Nevertheless, the 2017 survey was the second year the LGBTQ community was highlighted. For this particular year, 10 states – Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin – and nine urban school districts – Boston, Broward County, Cleveland, Detroit, D.C., Los Angeles, New York City, San Diego, and San Francisco – tested questions that focused on the experiences of transgender youth. The data studied violence, substance abuse, suicide risk, and sexual risk behaviors (Johns et al., 2019).

The results of the YRBS indicated that LGBTQ students felt more at risk for violence from their counterparts. They also experienced more substance abuse, suicide risk, and risky sexual and unhealthy behaviors (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Adolescent and School Health, 2017).

Bullying, Harassment, and Assault

Per the GLSEN report, LGBTQ students expressed a high level of feeling unsafe in their schools. Transgender students and nonbinary students especially felt school was a dangerous place, with 44.6% feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression and 35% feeling unsafe at school because of their gender. In addition to feeling unsafe at

school in general, more than four in 10 students avoided semi-secluded and gender-segregated spaces in school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (Kosciw et al., 2018a). The YRBS showed that 27% of students felt unsafe at or going to or from school, and 35% were bullied at school (Johns et al., 2019).

With a lack of faculty involvement and observation, LGBTQ students felt they were at the mercy of other students who participated in bullying behavior. Oftentimes, these students were harassed and bullied in places that were hidden from teachers. Nevertheless, in some incidences, malicious treatment from others occurred in more open areas, such as gym class or the cafeteria (Kosciw et al., 2018a).

At times, behavior directed towards LGBTQ students became dangerous. LGBTQ students experienced verbal harassment based on gender expression and gender. LGBTQ students were physically assaulted in the past year based on gender expression and gender. Few students did not have at least some incidences of verbal harassment. In fact, the percentages for “Frequently” and “Often” combined were greater than “Sometimes” and more so than “Rarely” (Kosciw et al., 2018a).

In addition to verbal harassment, transgender and nonbinary students were subject to physical harassment. Unfortunately, the percentage of students who “rarely” experienced any form of physical harassment based on their gender expression was lower than those who had at least “sometimes” experienced it (Kosciw et al., 2018a).

More violent, physical assault was also a reality for many transgender and nonbinary students. In this case, the percentage of students who had experienced some sort of physical assault was almost equal to those who rarely experienced it (Kosciw et al., 2018a). Interestingly, in this survey, there was no category “Never.” It suggested that

harassment and assault were constant realities for transgender and nonbinary students. Furthermore, according to Human Rights Watch (2016), transgender students were twice as likely to be physically attacked, verbally harassed, and excluded by other students at school. According to a report by the New York Civil Liberties Union, over half of the transgender students who suffered verbal harassment or physical or sexual assault or were expelled due to their gender identity attempted suicide (Bekiempis, 2015).

Faculty and Staff Treatment of Students

GLSEN's report presented that although students were victims of violent attacks, oftentimes they did not report these incidences to faculty or administration. Over half of LGBTQ students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff, mostly because they doubted that effective intervention would occur or feared the situation could become worse if reported. More than 60% of the students who did report an incident said that school staff did nothing in response or told the student to ignore it. Overwhelmingly, students did not report such behavior to school staff or family members. For those who did report the incidents, in some cases, nothing was done (Kosciw et al., 2018a).

LGBTQ students had a variety of reasons as to why they did not report incidents of harassment or assault to the school staff. They ranged from not thinking the staff would do anything about it to not wanting to be "outed" to others (Kosciw et al., 2018a). Students' beliefs that staff would not do anything about the ill-treatment of LGBTQ students were greatly reflected in the report. Because of prior experiences and observations, LGBTQ students also expressed that they were uncomfortable approaching staff because they feared they would be treated as perpetrators or, at the least, deserving

of their treatment. Students also felt that the staff had negative perceptions of LGBTQ students (Kosciw et al., 2018a). Indeed, in some cases, students were blamed for the treatment they received because they were too “open” about their gender identity or sexuality (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Perhaps the most disturbing reason was that the school staff were part of the harassment (Kosciw et al., 2018a). In some cases, teachers would even laugh at the harassment (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

In addition, in some cases, teachers will purposefully refuse to use a student’s preferred name and/or pronouns (Reilly, 2019). Teachers would feel that their rights are being violated because religiously, they do not agree with the idea of transgender and nonbinary people. In New York, some teachers and administrators misgender students or refuse to call them by their chosen name rather than their birth name, and some of these teachers even ignore harassment that they may witness (Bekiempis, 2015).

Anti-LGBTQ Remarks at School

Students reported that remarks by other students and faculty/staff tended to be derogatory and harmful. Ninety-four percent of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks about gender expression, with 62.2% hearing these remarks often or frequently; 87.4% of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people, and 45.6% heard them often or frequently. Negative remarks were not delivered just by other students; 71% of students reported hearing negative remarks about gender expression from teachers or other school staff. Students heard remarks about gender expression more often than not, with transgender students being subjected to derogatory slurs. With gender expression, students who did not conform to cisgender standards were criticized for not acting in a manner that is considered *normal*. Interestingly, students who were considered

biologically male by others but did not conform to “masculine” standards expressed hearing comments about not acting “masculine enough” more than students who are considered biologically female heard comments about not acting “feminine enough” (Kosciw et al., 2018a).

Discriminatory School Policies and Practices

One issue preventing LGBTQ students from feeling welcomed and included in their schools is the behavior of faculty and administration, particularly as it relates to school policies and practices. LGBTQ students are treated differently, oftentimes in egregious ways, from their non-LGBTQ peers. According to the GLSEN report, 31.3% of LGBTQ students stated that they were disciplined for public displays of affection that their peers were not; 22.6% of LGBTQ students were prevented from wearing clothes considered “inappropriate” based on their legal sex (Kosciw et al., 2018a).

The GLSEN report illustrated that work is needed to create inclusive schools where LGBTQ students feel welcome and respected, and this work begins with the faculty and staff. School communities must understand that changes within the culture will be a slow process; not everyone will grasp the importance and knowledge of creating a gender-inclusive environment (Hall & Hord, 2014). However, school leaders must be at the forefront of guiding their faculty and staff through this process to ensure the best school culture for all (Fullan, 2001).

Social Identity, Queer, and Ecological Systems: Theoretical Framework

In exploring the conditions of transgender and nonbinary students and the experiences of faculty, administration, and staff, this study used a triple theoretical framework. Social identity theory looks at the process in which people determine their

personal and community identities through their interactions with others. Queer theory explores the perception of members of the LGBTQ community and others outside of that community and their effects. Lastly, ecological systems theory examines how a person's surroundings, such as their location, shape their norms, values, beliefs, and practices.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was constructed in the 1960s to address ideas related to the field of social psychology. It adheres to the belief that one's personal identity is tied to membership in a particular group or groups. Henri Tajfel, one of the developers of social identity theory, explained,

Social and personal identity are conceptualized as hypothetical cognitive structures that together make up most of the self-concept, each component is in turn made up of more restricted cognitive elements such as particular social categorizations of sex, nationality, political affiliation, religion, and personal characteristics such as bodily attributes, and personal tastes. The sum total of the social group identifications used by an individual to define him or herself creates their social identity. (Halldorson, 2009, p. 5)

Important concepts within social identity theory are *in-group* and *out-group*. A person's in-group is the group with which they identify, and the out-group is one with which they do not claim membership. This idea of in-groups and out-groups can foster the mentality of "us" versus "them." Three processes lend to the creation of this mentality: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison (David, 2015). With social categorization, people within and without particular groups label themselves according to those groups. People typically belong to several groups at a time. Through social

categorization, people develop an understanding of themselves and others. In fact, the identity of a person is formed through self-categorization (Stets & Burke, 2000). Figure 1 represents the creation of social groups and its relationship to categorization.

Figure 1

Development of Identity Into Distinct Groups

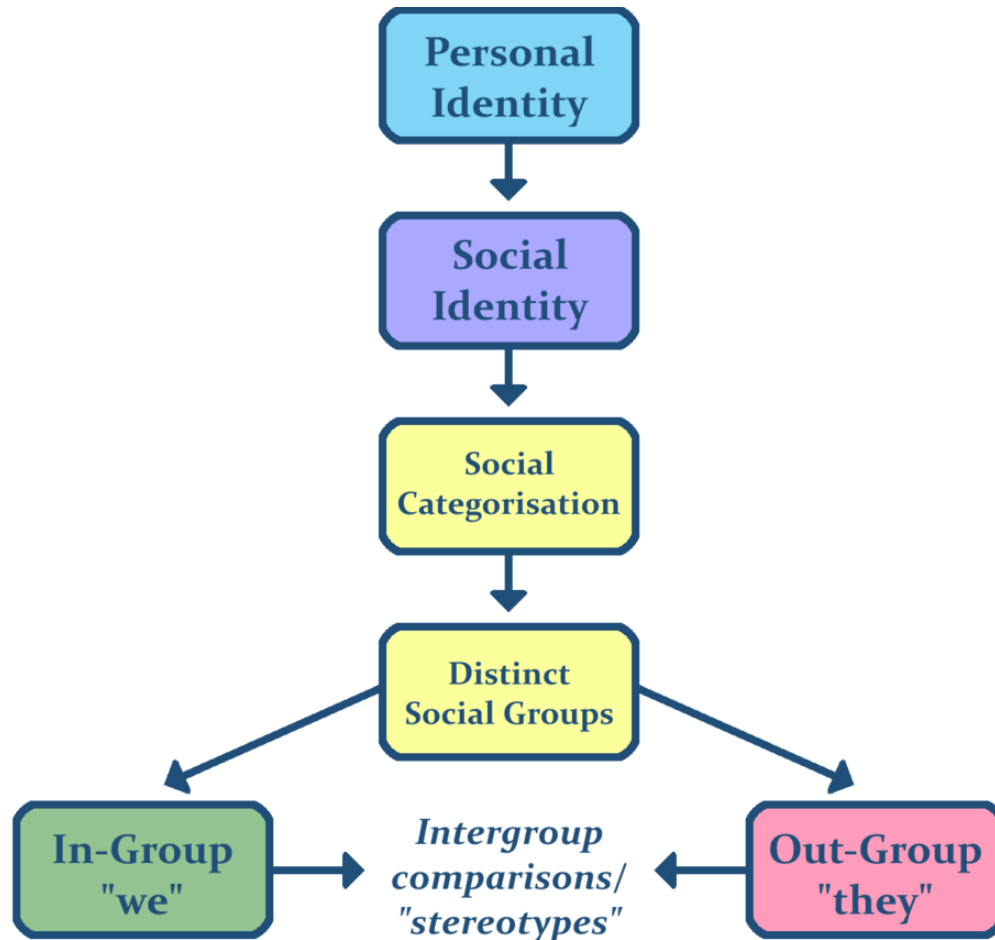


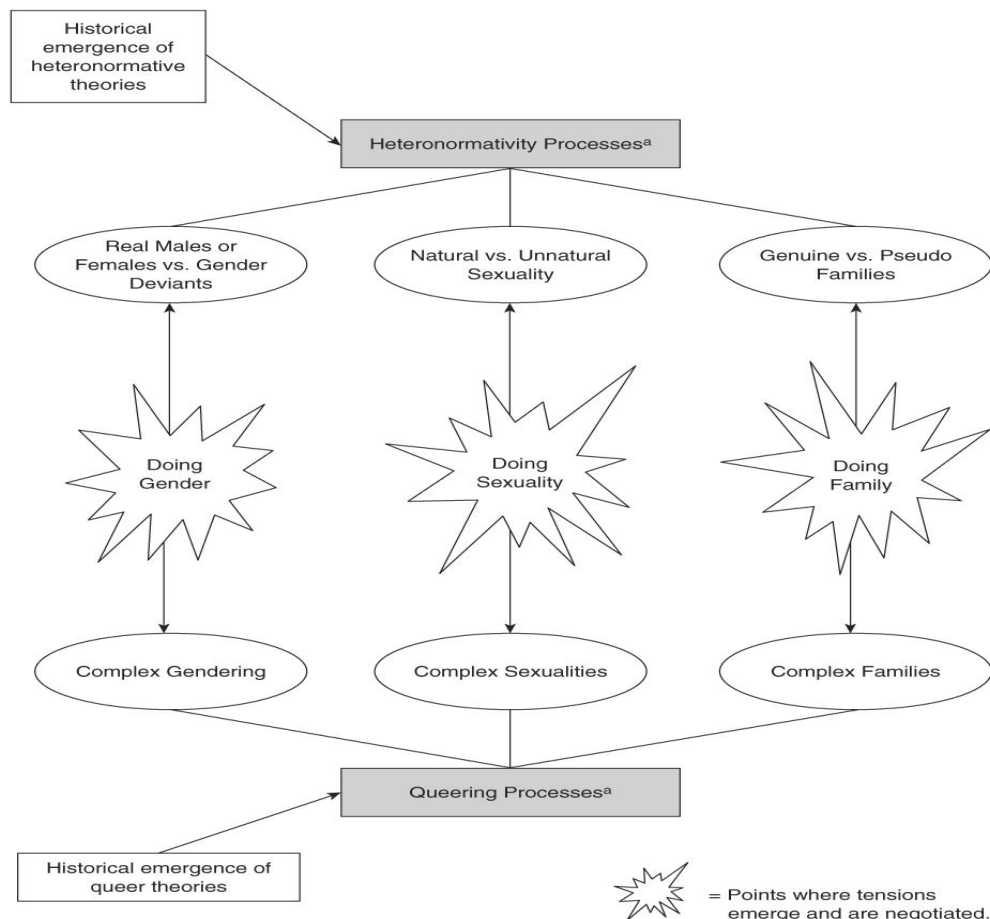
Figure 1 reflects that a person's personal identity is connected to the social groups in which they consider themselves (Baxter, 2016). Social identification lends itself to perceived and expected behaviors of groups from those within and without the groups (Terry et al., 1999). Members of the group take on the beliefs and behaviors of that group (Stets & Burke, 2000). In this way, members become emotionally and mentally invested.

Lastly, social comparison focuses on members within and without measuring themselves against each other (Hogg, 2000). At this point, prejudice, discrimination, and feelings of supremacy can become apparent. Social theory relates to the field of education in that educators may be influenced by their personal concepts of identity in their behavior and beliefs toward transgender and nonbinary students.

In developing questions for my interviews, I considered how students develop an understanding and acceptance of their identities throughout their high school experiences. Many of my questions were about how educators felt they impacted this significant student development.

Queer Theory

Queer theory emerged out of the fields of feminist and queer studies (Klages, 1997). Coined by critical theorist Teresa de Lauretis in the 1990s, it focuses on viewing the concept of queerness as it interrelates with rejecting the idea of heteronormativity, questioning the belief that gay and lesbian studies are homogenous, and accepting how race plays a part in sexual orientation and gender identities (Jagose, 2005). It challenges the notion that there is such a thing as a set “normal” and views sexuality and gender expression as existing on a continuum (Smith, 1998). See Figure 2 for an example of the development of queer theory.

Figure 2*Example of Historical Emergence of Queer Theories*

a. The level of analysis may be individual, relational, institutional, historical, or some other level.

Figure 2 is from “Decentering Heteronormativity: A Model for Family Studies” (Oswald et al., 2005, p. 147). According to Plummer (2011), queer theory makes the assertions that “both the heterosexual/homosexual binary and the sex/gender split are challenged [and] all sexual categories are open, fluid, and non-fixed” (p. 201). This idea includes the spectrum designation for gender so that it includes transgender and nonbinary individuals.

Queer theory as a political basis reveals the idea of gender rights, which rises out

of two previous movements: feminist rights and gay rights (Wilchins, 2014). However, gender rights development was not without struggle from both of these movements. In academia and society, there had been a trend in some corners of feminism to be resistant toward transgender people, claiming them to have innate wrongness (Wilchins, 2014). In addition, there had been the feeling that the lesbian community was not accepting of transgender people because they felt they were unwilling to accept the changes in their communities. Wilchins (2014) stated that a lesbian friend told her, “‘I’m not a man...and I don’t want to be around women who were men’” (p. 15). Another woman stated, “‘we used to have a whole butch community here and now...a whole generation of butches is lost’” (Wilchins, 2014, p. 15). In the 1970s and 1980s, while advocates would speak on the rights of gay people, they distanced themselves from “gender-queerness” (Wilchins, 2014, p. 20). Because of this, transgender rights became a separate entity from women’s and gay rights. In the 1990s, transgender people began to see themselves as a social and political minority (Wilchins, 2014); thus, like many theories, queer theory was rooted in politics.

Some of the major proponents and developers of queer theory are the works of Michel Foucault, Gayle Rubin, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Michel Foucault was a French historian and philosopher who later in life became more politically motivated, championing for people in marginalized groups. His connection to queer theory arose from his interest in sexuality as it related to a person’s own sense of identity (Gutting & Oksala, 2019). Indeed, one of Foucault’s (1978) most prominent works, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, speaks on the importance of exploring and discussing sex in a way to understand ourselves.

Gayle Rubin is an American cultural anthropologist whose essay “Thinking Sex” laid the groundwork for queer theory (Zavala, 2022). She shared many of Foucault’s beliefs in the societal beliefs that different sexual expressions affected the individual as well as society’s definitions and values placed on those expressions (Zavala, 2022). Part of the feminist movement in the 1970s, Rubin contributed to the discussion of gender. She even coined the term sex/gender system to describe how biological sex is transformed into ways of acting based on societal constraints and beliefs (Marcus, 1987). In “Thinking Sex,” Rubin (2011) explored the demonization of sexual orientations and gender identities viewed as abnormal by society and the harm perpetrated by the police force and politicians towards people considered part of the LGBTQ spectrum:

It is impossible to think with any clarity about the politics of race or gender as long as these are thought of as biological entities rather than social constructs...Once sex is understood in terms of social analysis and historical understanding, a more realistic politics of sex becomes possible. (p. 147)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick was an American academic scholar who helped develop queer theory at the University of California at Berkeley and Duke University. She used the theory as a way of analyzing literary texts. Sedgwick viewed queer theory similarly to Foucault, as a basis for understanding sexuality as a spectrum, with sexual definition being fluid (Smith, 1998). Opponents of queer theory question the notion that the theory insists society is repressive and that societal rules that govern people’s behavior, particularly their sexual behavior, are oppressive. The journalist Gabriel Rotello, a critic of the theory, stated, “Queer theory seeks to overturn society’s traditional views of sex and sexuality. [It suggests that] no one would be stigmatized, no matter what they do”

(Smith, 1998, p. 9). However, Sedgwick claimed, “I think it’s ridiculous to say ‘queer theory’ is not about ethical responsibility. There is an ethical urgency about queer theory that is directed at the damage that sexual prohibitions and discriminations do to people” (Smith, 1998, p. 9).

Queer theory is particularly relevant in developing relationships and creating an inclusive environment for LGBTQ students in that it can direct the attitude educators have toward their students and toward classroom materials and activities that invite the discussion of LGBTQ-community-related topics (Davis, 2012). In high school, students are often exploring their identities as it relates to a host of factors – race, religion, interests, sexual orientation, and gender identity. At times, a high school student's understanding of themselves may change several times (Shipman, 2019). Queer theory promotes an understanding of the fluid nature of gender identity (Smith, 1998).

In preparing for the interviews, I considered the fluidity of gender identity and shaped questions that focused on how educators addressed students’ changing names and pronouns throughout their time in high school.

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological systems theory was proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979. A Russian-born American psychologist, Bronfenbrenner focused his studies on the development of children within systems. His theory evolved between 1979 and 2005 to include the changes that occur within and without individuals (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). He understood people as developing not in isolation but within a system of relationships (Gilstrap & Zierten, 2020). In his theory, Bronfenbrenner viewed an individual’s environment as four nested and interrelated relationships: microsystem, mesosystem,

exosystem, and macrosystem. He later added the chronosystem, which consisted of the changes that take place within a person over a period of time (Eriksson et al., 2018). See Figure 3 for an example of ecological systems.

Figure 3

Example of Bronfenbrenner's Four Original Ecological Systems

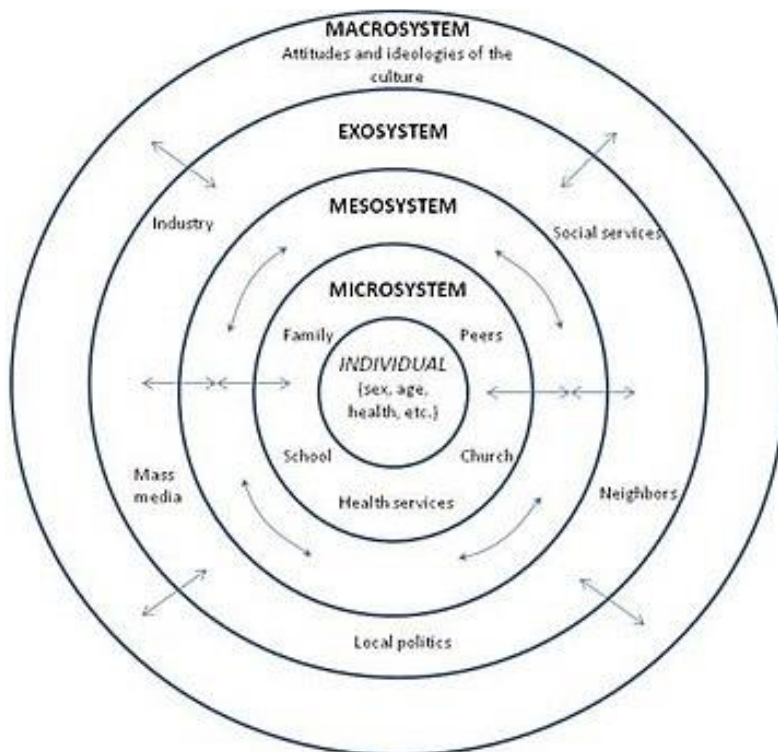


Figure 3 is derived from Bronfenbrenner's five ecological systems but excludes the chronosystem ("Ecological Systems Theory," 2020). In Bronfenbrenner's studies of children, and of particular importance to my study, are the microsystem – the closest environment and interaction of a child: family, peers, and school setting – and the macrosystem: the final level of systems that include the cultural values, economic conditions, and resources of society (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). My study did not focus on the child as the center but on the adults who interact with children in their environments; thus, although Bronfenbrenner's theory focused on children, the same

theoretical ideas can be applied to anyone who exists in these systems. In other words, all people behave in manners that are impacted by their environments. Even their day-to-day interactions with others are influenced by the values, norms, and beliefs of the societies in which they dwell (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Because of the ever-changing laws and policies in local, state, and federal agencies, educators in the public sector have to adhere to the mandates of their environments. This affects what policies and practices can occur at a given period of time. In preparing for my interviews, I asked participants about their experiences at different schools in different locations throughout their time as educators.

Experiences of Teachers – Curriculum Development and Student Support

Although advocacy groups such as Gender Spectrum and Teaching Tolerance.org maintain resources available for teachers in a variety of fields, many teachers state that finding such material is difficult, and some teachers feel hesitant in implementing resources into their curriculum (Page, 2017). According to McGarry (2013), although schools have expectations to analyze their curriculum in order to make sure people of various races and ethnic groups are represented, this does not extend to people of various gender identities or sexual orientations.

In other cases, depending on the legislation of the particular state, teachers feel that teaching LGBTQ material may lead to backlash, so they progress cautiously (Stoltzfus, 2016). Teachers and administrators who want to create a safer, more inclusive environment for LGBTQ students may have problems with other teachers and administrators, possibly even the school community at large (Mayo, 2014). In some states, teachers fear losing their jobs because it is highly discouraged to discuss LGBTQ

issues (Thoreson, 2016). In a study conducted by Michelle Page (2017) of the University of Minnesota, English teachers indicated that they felt comfortable featuring LGBT characters and storylines in their curriculum, but they feared backlash from the community in doing so; thus, lack of support from legislation affects the entire school system – from superintendents to administration, and finally to the teachers themselves.

Another obstacle in providing a gender-inclusive curriculum is the attitude of the teachers themselves. Teachers have their own beliefs and biases, and some refuse to practice gender inclusion. Resistance may be because the teacher does not understand the use of “they” as a singular pronoun and refuse to use it (Fagell, 2019), or the teacher may not agree with the concept of gender fluidity because of religious reasons (Reilly, 2019). According to Prescott (2018), “Teachers must be willing and able to adapt lesson plans...and schools must be located in jurisdictions with legal protections that allow teachers to cover LGBTQ identities in the classroom” (p. 1).

Furthermore, students must be supported outside of the classroom by faculty. For some students and faculty, this means creating groups within the school that act as safe spaces for LGBTQ students, such as GSA (Gay/Straight Alliance or Gender Spectrum Alliance; Sadowski, 2020). Depending on the culture of the school, creating such organizations could prove difficult. Teachers may feel hesitant to support these spaces because it may cause other members of the community to view them in a negative light (Stoltzfus, 2016).

Experiences of Administrators – Policies and Procedures

Administrators also find difficulty in creating gender-inclusive environments. Several factors must be considered that involve practices as well as facility design.

Athletics is a major obstacle for transgender students. Several states have enacted or are considering bills that require students to participate in athletics based on their sex assigned at birth (Gerstmann, 2020). There is also the difficulty in coordinating lodging on overnight class trips. In addition, school leaders must consider bathroom and locker room accessibility and safety for all students, including transgender and nonbinary students (Thoreson, 2016).

Principals are the leaders of the school, and they set the tone of the school's climate (Graham & Ferriter, 2009). It is important that they mold and model the school culture and provide professional development for faculty and staff so they will have the knowledge and tools to fulfill the needs of their LGBTQ students (O'Donnell, 2020). Some schools have created policies to foster an inclusive environment for LGBTQ students. In Louisville, Kentucky in 2014, Atherton High School adopted Policy 500, which supported students choosing which bathrooms they felt most comfortable using and being supported by faculty and staff (Ryan, 2014). This policy comes as a result of the principal, Thomas Aberli, allowing a transgender girl to use the girls' bathroom and locker room (Kang, 2014).

On October 6, 2021, the governor of California, Gavin Newsome, signed a bill that allowed students to use their preferred names on their diplomas (Gupta, 2021). This is a massive win for transgender and nonbinary students and one of the biggest hurdles for students who do not want to use their legal names on official documents.

In Phoenix, Arizona in 2022, the Phoenix Union High School District publicly resolved to oppose discrimination against transgender students (Luneau, 2022). By making a visible declaration, the high school district is showing other educational

systems its stance on a no-tolerance policy. Also, the Phoenix Union High School District is illustrating its commitment to transparency in the inclusion of all its members.

In order to aid schools in language when creating policies, GLSEN and the National Center for Transgender Equality (2018) produced the Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students. In a section dedicated to students who are in the process of transitioning, the document stated,

[School Name] shall not discriminate on the use of school space as the basis of gender identity nor gender expression. The school shall accept the gender identity that each student asserts. There is no medical or mental health diagnosis or treatment threshold that students must meet in order to have their gender identity recognized and respected. The assertion may be evidenced by an expressed desire to be consistently recognized by their gender identity. Students ready to socially transition may initiate a process with the school administration to change their name, pronoun, attire, and access to preferred activities and facilities. Each student has a unique process for transitioning. The school shall customize support to optimize each student's integration. (GLSEN and the National Center for Transgender Equality, 2018, p. 7)

Revised in October 2020, GLSEN (2020) presented the Model Local Education Agency Policy on Transgender and Nonbinary Students. This document provided schools from K-12 best practices when addressing the needs of their transgender and nonbinary students. It included topics such as name and pronoun use, sports and extracurricular activities, and professional development.

Public Schools Versus Charter Schools Versus Private Schools

When considering the support teachers and administrators can receive, whether a school is public, charter, or private makes a big difference. Public schools must adhere to federal and state guidelines, whereas private schools have more independence (Chen, 2019). Nevertheless, private schools still must abide by some federal discrimination laws, such as Title IX, if they receive any federal funds (Gjelten, 2015).

Public Schools and Charter Schools

The federal role in the public school system is somewhat limited; the system is guided primarily by state and local policies (Findlaw, 2016); thus, laws and policies vary from state to state. However, there are certain laws that support all students, including transgender and nonbinary students, including the Equal Access Act, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the First Amendment. The Equal Access Act requires all student organizations to have equal treatment, including the GSA (GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, 2010). FERPA protects students' persona; information, such as gender status, that is stored in school records (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The First Amendment is freedom of expression, which includes the right to express oneself according to one's gender identity (Ferriola-Bruckenstein, 2018), yet there are some states that hinder the abilities of transgender and nonbinary students. Currently, New Hampshire, Washington, Georgia, Tennessee, Missouri, and Alabama are seeking legislation that would restrict transgender student-athletes from competing based on their gender identity (Ennis, 2019). Furthermore, according to the Movement Advancement Project (n.d.), only two states (South Dakota and Missouri) have laws preventing schools from adding LGBTQ protections to anti-bullying and

nondiscrimination policies, and three states prohibit transgender students from using facilities that reflect their gender identity. Figure 4 illustrates a map of the United States and a legend of current nondiscrimination practices in public educational institutions.

Figure 4

Nondiscrimination Practices Per State

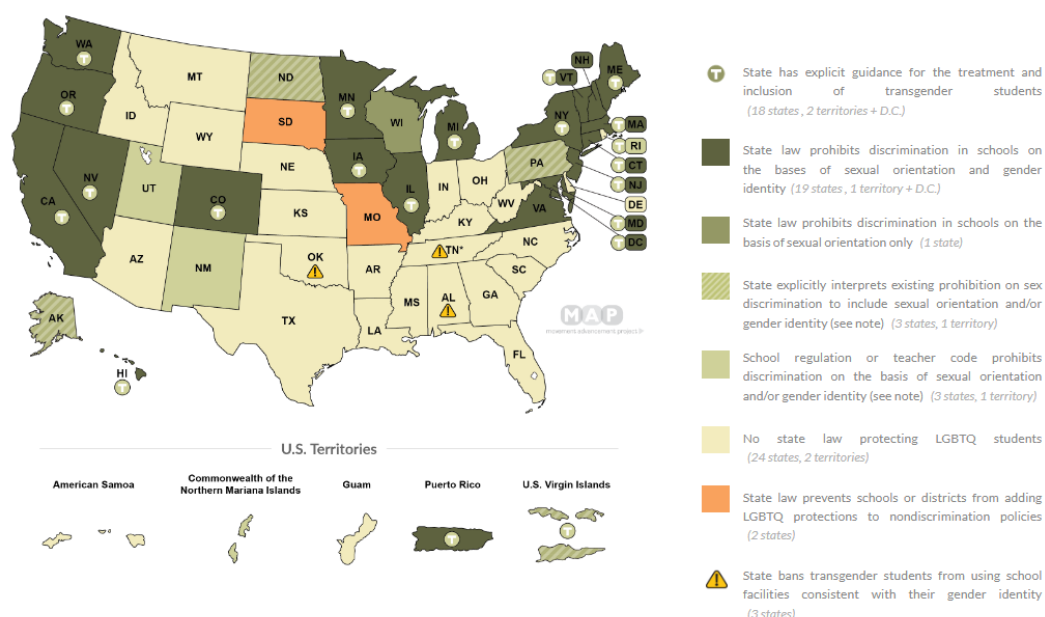


Figure 4 is from the Movement Advancement Project (n.d.) and illustrates that although there have been some advancements in protecting LGBTQ students, there are still 24 states that have no state laws that protect youth identifying as LGBTQ.

Charter School

Charter schools were one of the reforms of the public school system. Considered public education, charter schools deviate from public schools in that they work independently of districts and can establish their own missions and goals. They offer families more flexibility in education choices and are free from some of the regulations governing public schools (Fox & Buchanan, 2017). In most cases, charter schools serve

students affected by poverty and marginalization (Camera, 2015). Charter schools can have a specific focus, such as STEM or fine arts, and most are located in urban environments (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2018). Nevertheless, charter schools are still considered public education and, for the purposes of this study, follow the same rules and regulations concerning discrimination and inclusive practices.

Private School

Private schools are not bound by regulated and legalized rules against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; however, most are bound by Title IX (Petrilli, 2017). Private schools often belong to organizations that set guidelines for a group of schools on regional and national levels. One such entity is the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). In its Principles of Good Practice, NAIS (2020) stated,

NAIS schools value the representation and full engagement of individuals within our communities whose differences include — but are not limited to — age, ethnicity, family makeup, gender identity and expression, learning ability, physical ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. (p. 13)

The association urges school leaders to research and abide by state and federal laws; however, NAIS does not impose standards regarding the treatment of transgender and nonbinary students, merely guidelines.

Private schools also govern themselves based on whether they are secular or religious-based. According to a NAIS Legal Advisory, because Title IX does not apply to educational institutions governed by religious organizations, “The religious exception

allows religious schools to make decisions about students and policies for a variety of reasons, including sexual orientation and gender identity” (Johnson, 2014, p. 11).

Conclusion

Studies show that transgender and nonbinary students undergo harsh experiences in their high school years unequal to those of their cisgender counterparts. Mostly, bullying, harassment, and assault are perpetrated by other students, but in some cases, students feel insecure about the reactions of the adults in the school setting. As for the ability of schools to create and practice gender inclusivity in the classroom and school environment, some public and private schools express difficulties in creating curricula that reflect the LGBTQ community, and some educators admit to a lack of understanding and training in how to address the needs of their transgender and nonbinary populations. There are laws in place, however, that support schools in confronting discrimination and harmful practices.

Chapter 3 explores the methodology of the study, including research questions, research design, procedure, target population, data collection and analysis, limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the methodological approach used to study the challenges and successes of teachers and administrators to create an inclusive environment for transgender and nonbinary students. Using a multi-site phenomenology study allowed me to gather and explore the thoughts and feelings of educators as it relates to the needs of transgender and nonbinary students in a public and private school setting. The components of this chapter include the research questions, selected methodology, study participants, procedures, methods for data collection and analysis, and ethical issues.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the following questions:

1. How do teachers describe their experiences with gender identity in schools?
2. How do administrators and staff describe their experiences with gender identity in schools?

I consciously avoided creating research questions that asked how teachers and administrators address gender identity because such questions implied that teachers and administrators were actively working to address gender identity. I chose to focus on the subjects' experiences, whether active or not.

Selected Methodology

A qualitative approach is more favorable to other methods of research when the research questions address the “how” or “why” of a situation, when there is not much control over the participants' responses, and when the object of study is a current (rather than entirely historical) phenomenon (Yin, 2017). In addition, when wanting to explore a

subject in-depth by observing and interviewing participants, qualitative methodology meets these needs.

Research Design

Qualitative methodology comes in several different approaches, and the choice of approach is determined by the purpose of the study. Furthermore, each approach offers data collection in ways that fit the purpose. Creswell (2012) suggested five different approaches to qualitative exploration: narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, and case study research. Depending on what a researcher is trying to accomplish, each approach has its strengths. Nevertheless, Creswell proposed that all qualitative approaches have several elements in common, such as the natural setting. Researchers prefer to collect data on-site of the participants and the experiences of the study. This allows the researcher to interact with the participants in their natural habitat where they can experience a sense of control and comfort (Weiss, 1994). Qualitative researchers seek to understand how and why a person experiences the world in a particular manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). These experiences are more contextualized. Furthermore, rather than use impersonal tools such as surveys and questionnaires, the researcher directly interacts with the participants and contextualizes the experiences (Creswell, 2012). This way, the researcher not only obtains oral information directly from the source but also is able to observe body language, tone, and other physical cues to include in the interpretation of the data. Instead of prescribing their own meanings to data, researchers can focus on how participants experience the topic of study.

Researchers are not limited to only one or two tools, but they can use a variety of

real-time collection sources, such as interviews, focus groups, and observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Interviewing allows researchers to categorize and interpret data, coding by various themes that arise from these experiences (Patton, 2014), and researchers can work with the themes that arise from the simplistic to the most complex, building upon themselves to create a comprehensive understanding of the narrative that emerges. An advantage of interviews is that it allows researchers to engage with participants by asking initial and follow-up questions, adding to a richer narrative. As the qualitative study progresses, researchers may realize that questions and even the direction of the study may change (Weiss, 1994).

Phenomenology as Qualitative Approach

The purpose of this study was to examine educators' perceptions of transgender and nonbinary students' experiences in school and their own perceptions of their abilities to meet the needs of these students. Because the focus was on the "hows" and "whys" of experience – the feelings of the educators rather than just their actions – this type of questioning lent itself to a phenomenological approach (Peoples, 2020). Furthermore, because I was not assuming a particular outcome and wanted to conduct an in-depth examination of the problem, a phenomenological study offered the ability to develop an emerging narrative through flexibility in questioning and intimacy in interacting with participants (Creswell, 2012). With the interview process itself, interview questions "are limited to experiences and do not ask about opinions, perceptions, [or] perspectives" (Peoples, 2020, p. 4); thus, it was the perfect form of qualitative methodology for my study.

Target Population

The target population consisted of four teachers and four staff/administrators from a charter high school and four teachers and four staff/administrators from a private high school. Both schools are in the same region, and both have roughly the same number of students. A traditional public school was not chosen for this study because, due to schools in North Carolina being either virtual or hybrid due to the coronavirus, school systems in North Carolina did not give me permission to interview their faculty and administration/staff. The Charter School and the Private School were chosen because the schools agreed to be a part of the study. They were not selected because they already have particularly successful programs addressing transgender and nonbinary students; nor were they selected because they have significant problems with the treatment of these subgroups. However, both schools do have students who are transgender and nonbinary.

For this study, schools are referred to as the Charter School and the Private School. I recruited these schools by reaching out to one administrator in each school through email. After the initial contact, I spoke to the administrators via telephone to explain the study in detail and ask if they would be interested in taking part. I also inquired as to whether members of the administrators' respective schools would be interested. The Private School was the easier of the two to receive confirmation that they were interested in participating in the study. For the Charter School, I sent several follow-up emails to an administrator who stated that there were people at her school who were interested in participating. The Charter School administrator sent me a list of interested parties. Upon approval of the proposal, I sent emails to all the teachers and administrators who expressed an interest as well as to the superintendent of the school system to get

individual confirmation that they could participate. See Appendix E for the request email. All participants had the option to not participate.

Both the Charter School and the Private School are located in North Carolina. The Charter School is a high school consisting of approximately 500 students. The Private School contains a lower school, middle school, and high school with approximately 500 students total.

Teachers

The teachers of both schools where I interviewed represented different disciplines – English, science, math, and history. A variety of disciplines was desirous so there would be equal representation from the humanities and STEM. From the lists of teachers that were given to me by administrators from the public and private schools, all the teachers had been at their respective schools for at least 3 years. They each had additional duties beyond teaching, including advising and facilitating clubs. The reason for choosing teachers in different disciplines is that it provided me the opportunity to collect a variety of narratives. A teacher's field determines what type of assignments and processes occur in the classroom and may also contribute to the comfort level of the teacher in supporting transgender and nonbinary students. For example, English teachers may have more opportunities to include transgender and nonbinary narratives in their curricula than math teachers. Also, because English teachers often focus on social issues and the human experience, their comfort level when addressing the needs of the LGBTQ community may be higher (Page, 2017).

Administration and Staff

In addition to teachers, I interviewed the principal, vice principal, and school

counselor in the Charter School. The administrators and staff in the Private School were the head of the upper school, the director of diversity, and the school counselor. Although everyone plays a significant role in the school, the administrators have the power to implement change and support the other members of the school (Hall & Hord, 2014). These members of administration were considered since each person is in a position of authority to make policies that affect the school as a whole. Furthermore, after receiving a list of interested potential participants from administrators from the public and private schools, I included these school members as part of the recruitment list. These individuals received emails to participate upon approval.

Procedures

Prior to interviewing the participants, I piloted interview questions with three members of my current institution. These pilot participants' responses were included in the final results. The purpose of this pilot was to hone questions that would cater to an in-depth discussion. Furthermore, piloting questions was a good way to determine any problem areas and to make sure the questions were not influencing the participants in any way (Ruel et al., 2016).

Once I was assured of the interview questions, I conducted a threefold interview process. In the first stage, I emailed each participant and explained the purpose of the interview and the technical details, such as how long would be allotted for the interview and that the interview would be recorded. This stage was the recruitment stage which allowed me to know how many interviews would be conducted and who would be participating. The threshold number for participants was at least six from each school.

The second stage consisted of the first round of interviews. During this stage, I

sought consent by emailing a consent form. I had the participants complete the informed consent form. Because this study included human subjects, an informed consent was obtained prior to any data collection. This informed consent provided the participants with sufficient information about the study and was clearly written in a manner so the participants understood expectations fully (Hammond, n.d.) A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix F.

Secondly, I developed a contract between the participant and me that had to be agreed upon by both parties. Based on Weiss's (1995) suggestions, the contract addressed the following: The participant and I would work together to produce the desired outcome; I would only ask questions relevant to the study; I would respect the participant's feelings and would understand if the participant was not comfortable with a path of questioning; and I would ensure that the participant remained anonymous during and after the process and would not be harmed in any way. The contract was important in that it established a relationship between the participant and me, and it alleviated any confusion or wariness by informing the participant of the process (Weiss, 1995).

After the consent form was explained and signed and the contract agreed upon, I commenced the first interview. The questions were open-ended because the purpose of the study was to capture the narrative of the participant's experience rather than compare or quantify the data. Although each participant had the same set of questions, each participant's narrative led to additional questions. Because of the closing of schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic, these interviews took place synchronously via Zoom. Both interviews were audio and video recorded. A copy of the interview script is in Appendix G.

In the third stage, I interviewed each participant a second time. Because of the small sample size (approximately 12 to 16 interviews per stage), it was important to conduct interviews to the point of saturation—seeing and hearing redundancy in responses and behavior (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The second round of interviews consisted of questions that resulted from responses to the first round. To know that saturation had been reached, I needed to analyze the data along with collecting them. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explained that data collection and analysis can be done simultaneously. When this step was completed, I narrowed the study, continuously developing analytic questions related to previous observations, suggesting themes to the participants, reviewing the literature while interviewing, considering metaphors and concepts, and using visual devices. The qualitative questions were open-ended, leading to additional clarifying questions. See Appendix H for a list of the questions for faculty and staff.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

In-depth data collection through interviews is determined by the quality of the observation of the researcher. According to Patton (2014), a skilled observer pays attention, writes descriptively, knows how to separate what is important from what is trivial, records notes with detail and discipline, uses systematic methods for validation and triangulation, and understands their strengths and challenges.

Thus, the skilled observer does not only pay attention to words but also to the manner in which the words are delivered, the physicality of the participant, and the participant's environment during the data collection. Furthermore, a researcher must acknowledge ethical fieldwork by having respect for the privacy of the participants, being

sensitive to their vulnerability, and understanding any potential harm the participant may perceive.

For this study, data were collected through recordings of interviews. These recordings were both video and audio; thus, when transcribing the data, I was able to more accurately describe the facial expressions along with tone and inflection. Each participant's entire interview was transcribed. I requested permission to video and audio record. Table 1 shows the tool I used to collect the data.

Table 1

Interview Data Collection Table

Question:	Observations	Notes
-----------	--------------	-------

Follow up:

Follow up:

With this table, I was able to track the conversation for data analysis. In some cases, a richer conversation emerged from the follow-up questions rather than the initial question.

When Data Were Collected and Analyzed

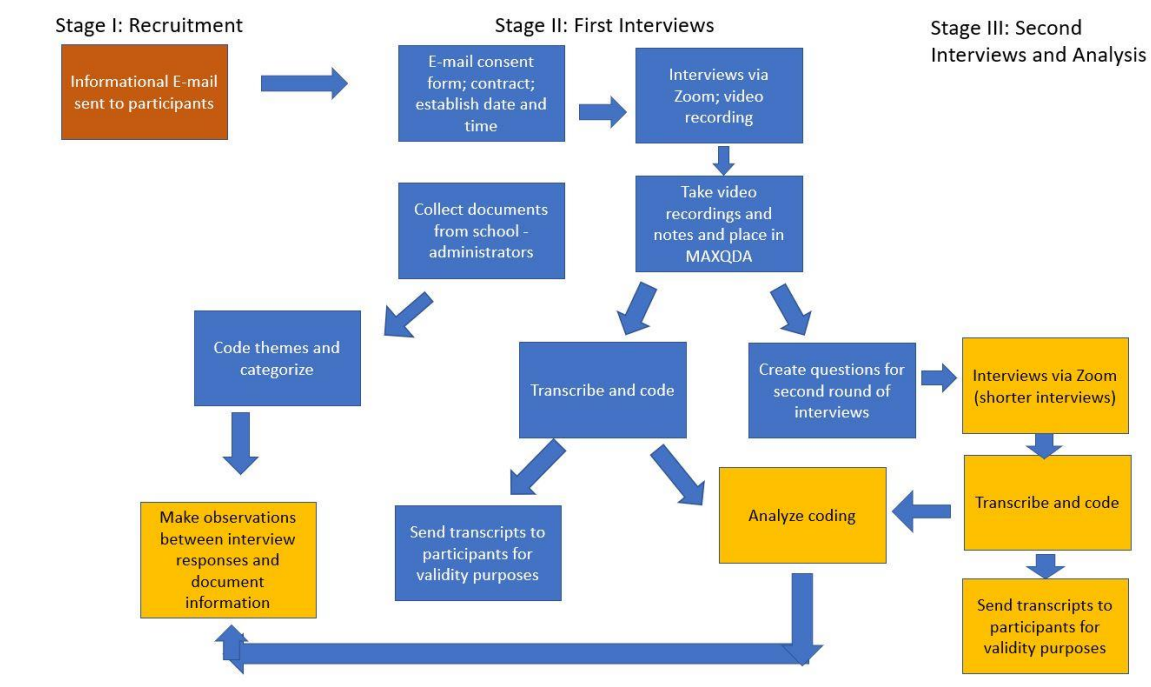
Because the interviews took place via the online video conferencing program, I was able to do more than one interview a day. Although the interviews were recorded, I

still took notes. I collected and analyzed initial data simultaneously; thus, the questioning of the participants varied depending on where the initial questions led.

After each round of interviews, I sent the transcripts to the participants for their review. This benefitted the research in several ways. First, it provided validation of what was said during the interview. Second, it gave the participants a sense of control over how they were represented. Lastly, it fostered a sense of trust and well-being in this process (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Figure 5 illustrates the interviewing process.

Figure 5

Interviewing Process for Data Collection



The data collection process consisted of three stages: Recruitment, First Interviews, and Second Interviews and Analysis.

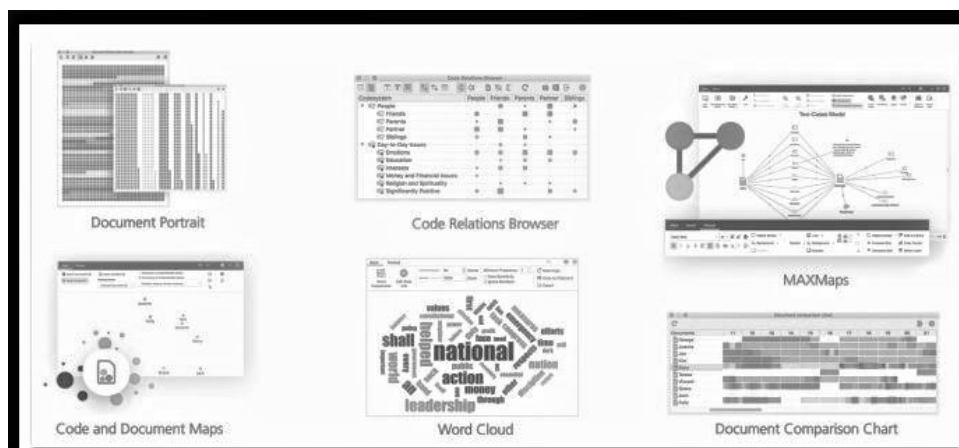
How Data Were Analyzed

Throughout the interview process, many data were processed, including physical descriptions and transcription of words. To make sense of these data, I had to organize

them in a coherent and easily understood manner; thus, I used the program MAXQDA to code the transcripts taken from the interviews. MAXQDA is a qualitative data analysis software that allowed me to create categories, modifying them as themes and patterns emerged. This software analyzed both written and audio/visual data. I imported the data and organized them into folders. Then, I created categories for coding. The software allowed me to highlight portions of the interview and select coding categories. The results of the coding were displayed in a variety of visuals. Figure 6 shows an example of the MAXQDA visual tools.

Figure 6

Example of MAXQDA Visual Tools



The process of using the MAXQDA software was clear and organized. My first step in the process was opening the software and creating a user name. I then chose the option of opening a new project. This was done by clicking on icons in the upper right hand of the project page. The new project, which I named dissertation, acted as a folder to store all data and settings. The software saved all work automatically rather than manually, so I did not lose my information.

Next, I imported my saved interviews, which were in the form of video files, into

the dissertation folder. These interviews were named by school type, position, and a pseudonym, such as Mr. Anderson; each was given the variables type of school, position, and years of experience.

MAXQDA allows the user to code text, audio, images, and video. I opened each interview and as I played my video-recorded transcripts, I clicked on the transcription option and manually transcribed the audio accompanying the video. This allowed me to have a text version along with my video. Once this was done, I selected the edit mode and highlighted the text and audio sections of the interview, and created a code, color, and description for that section. For my first interview, I created initial codes. Subsequent interviews used these created codes. Each coded segment also had an attached memo, in which I described the physical attributes of the interviewee and other details not apparent in the text and audio.

Once coding the segments in the interviews was completed, I organized the codes by combining codes or moving codes to subsection status. This allowed me to group my codes in an organized manner that aided in the analysis and was the basis for my themes. In addition, organizing codes allowed me to acknowledge saturation of a theme. Furthermore, MAXQDA gave me the option to create coding maps that allowed for a more visual display of the codes and data regarding those codes.

The recorded and transcribed interviews will be kept on a hard drive at my home until the completion of the dissertation defense, and then I will delete the recordings from the hard drive and shred any hard copies I have of the transcriptions. I will not have any copies of the recorded interviews on my personal desktop or laptop.

Limitations

Limitations are issues that a study may have that are outside of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). A significant limitation of this study was the inability to physically enter the school building because of social distancing (Exec. Order No. 117., 2020). As a result, interviews could not be conducted in each other's physical presence. I used Zoom as the communication tool to be able to see the face of the participant. However, the ability to discern body language was reduced. Furthermore, I was not able to control the participant's setting. The possibilities of interruption were increased in this regard. Another limitation was the responses of the participants. Some participants were not responsive to all the questions or were very limited in their responses. This is when follow-up questions were essential. Lastly, some responders may have felt that I wanted particular answers and crafted their responses to fit that mold, or they did this in order to be viewed in a particular manner by me (Weiss, 1994).

Delimitations

Delimitations are limitations that are created by the researcher that may affect the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). My choice of participants for the interviews was a delimitation. All the participants expressed a desire to participate in the study and seemed comfortable with the topic. If participants who were not comfortable with the topic had been included, there may have been more variety in responses.

Data saturation is crucial to have a valid study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The number of participants determined if data saturation was reached. Another delimitation was the choice of schools. Both schools are in North Carolina; thus, because of the similar location, it is possible that narratives from different people were similar because locations are affected by local and state laws.

Furthermore, researcher bias is a delimitation that I had to be aware of prior to, during, and after interviews. Awareness and acknowledgment that I possibly possessed my own opinions of the research topic was a first step in combatting any way it might have interfered with me getting the most accurate account from my participants. A way to become aware of my own beliefs was to answer the interview questions myself and to also journal my thoughts about addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. By exploring my own ideas in a physical manner, I recorded them and referred to them when I needed a reminder of my own biases.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 examines the results of the data collected for the phenomenological study. The chapter is divided into the following sections: an overview of the purpose, the data collection process, the categories organizing the data, and the summary of findings.

Overview

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of teachers and administrators when addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. Oftentimes, studies have focused more on the practices of educators and students and the experiences of the students as a result of these practices, some perpetrated by their fellow classmates and some by the educators themselves. By examining the perceptions of the adults who interact with their transgender and nonbinary students, I was able to delve into the following research questions:

1. How do teachers describe their experiences with transgender and nonbinary students?
2. How do administrators and staff describe their experiences with transgender and nonbinary students?

Because this is a phenomenological study, I was interested in the narratives expressed by the participants. Their stories reflected their personal experiences both current and in the past, as well as their desires for the future.

Data Collection Process

Educators participated in two interviews. Their answers were recorded through Zoom and transcribed using the MAXQDA software. After examining their narratives, the quotes from the participants were categorized according to codes and then themes that

surfaced throughout the process.

Interviews

A sample of seven educators from a charter high school and six educators from a private high school were interviewed in two sessions. Each session was conducted via Zoom (a video conferencing platform) and ran for approximately 45 minutes. The participants signed an informed consent prior to the interviewing process. At the beginning of each interview, I explained the process, explaining confidentiality and the purpose of the interview. For the first round of interviews, each participant was asked the following questions, which were developed through the lenses of the theoretical framework of this study:

1. What is your position at your current school?
2. How long have you been in the field of education? How long have you been in your current position?
3. What issues do you think transgender and gender nonconforming students face in society? At your school?
4. Describe your experiences with transgender and gender nonconforming students in the classroom and in school.
5. How has gender identity influenced/affected your teaching as it relates to curriculum development, the tools you use, and classroom management?
6. How are resources and tools for students' use determined in your classroom?
7. How would you describe the climate of your school as it relates to gender identity?
8. How have your interactions been with the parents of transgender and

nonbinary students?

9. What has your experience been like with students who have transitioned before coming to high school and those who transition during high school?
10. How have your interactions with colleagues been as it relates to addressing transgender and nonbinary students' needs?
11. What have been your biggest challenges? Mistakes you've made?
12. What has been your experience in different places and at different times as it relates to gender identity?
13. What has been your experience with professional development?

The questions were purposefully open-ended, and participants were encouraged to offer as little or as much as they would like to their narratives. At times, clarifying questions arose and were used to provoke more detail from the participants. These questions were informed by the theoretical framework: social identity theory, queer theory, and ecological systems theory. These questions became the focus of the second round of prompts, which included the following:

1. Describe your experience with students whose identity changed during their time in high school and those who had transitioned prior to entering high school.
2. How has your experience with transgender and nonbinary students changed over the years you have been an educator?
3. Has your experience with transgender and nonbinary students been different depending on where you were working? In what way?
4. How has the changes in laws and policies affected your experience with

transgender and nonbinary students?

5. How do you interact with transgender and nonbinary students in front of others, such as other students, educators, and parents/guardians?
6. In what areas do you feel a lack in supporting transgender and nonbinary students?
7. What would you need to feel supported in addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students?

I felt that two rounds of interviews were sufficient in reaching saturation of the subject. There appeared to be redundancies in the responses in the series of first and second interviews, leading me to believe that this data saturation was sufficient to conclude the study had validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Interview Participants

Educators from two schools located in close proximity to each other, a charter high school and a private high school, were interviewed for this study. Both schools' curriculum included similar subjects. The Charter School had approximately 580 students and 50 faculty/staff. The Private School had approximately 175 students and 36 faculty/staff. Each school sample included teachers from various disciplines, as well as administrators. Each participant identified as male or female and represented a diversity of races and ethnic groups. All participants had been in the field of education for over 7 years and had been in their current position for at least 2 years. Participants' areas of education, number of years in education, type of school, and gender are showcased in Table 2 and narratives, although the names of the participants and schools were changed for privacy. Table 2 illustrates the demographics of the participants, including their

school, current field, number of years in education, and number of years in their current position.

Table 2

Charter and Private School Participants' Demographics

Pseudonym	Field	School	Years in education	Years in current position
Mr. Alba	Administration	Charter	27	11
Ms. Baker	Administration	Charter	15	4
Mr. Cheek	Art	Charter	15	4
Mr. Dean	History	Charter	10	7
Ms. East	Science	Charter	10	7
Ms. Frank	English	Charter	9	4
Ms. Green	Science	Charter	18	3
Mr. Hicks	Administration	Private	25	2
Ms. Ingram	Administration	Private	16	2
Ms. James	Administration	Private	26	4
Ms. King	Art	Private	22	20
Mr. Lee	English	Private	12	4
Ms. Moon	Health	Private	30	17

Although there was a diversity of fields covered among the participants, the majority of teachers were focused in the humanities, which was considered a delimitation to this study. Nevertheless, there were great similarities in the experiences of all the teachers and the administrators and staff.

For the sake of clarity, I removed the discourse markers and repetitive remarks made by the participants in each narrative. Furthermore, parts of comments were omitted to enable a level of continuity. The narratives of the participants for each category were chosen based on the depth of responses and the level of specificity with which the participants related their experiences.

This chapter presents the different narratives of the participants in the various categories. Not all participants will be a part of each category; however, all participants

provided answers to each question posed by me. In answering each research question, teachers and administrators were asked mostly similar questions. In a few cases, there was a slight variation to the question to support the role of the participant.

Connections to Research Questions

The first research question focused on the experiences of faculty in addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. All the faculty members reported mostly positive experiences in their interactions with students and other faculty members relating to transgender and nonbinary topics and situations. Despite one school being a charter school and the other one being private, experiences were very similar. Faculty expressed that the culture at their respective schools was inclusive and welcoming to all students. The second research question focused on the experiences of administrators in addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. Because their experiences were not necessarily in the classroom, administrators often focused more on policies and the support offered to faculty and students throughout the school. These answers were also mostly positive.

In the next section, the results based on each research question were organized by categories that arose during the coding process of data analysis. Educators whose narratives were featured in each category were those who included more detail and reflection in their answers. Participants are identified by their type of school and subject.

Research Question 1: Faculty Members' Experiences in Addressing the Needs of Transgender and Nonbinary Students

The first research question, with its focus on faculty, led to several interview questions and produced categories that allowed me to organize the data. These categories

included the following:

- understanding the issues transgender and nonbinary students face
- experiences with students' gender acceptance and students' changes in identity
- personal challenges in addressing gender identity and feelings of inadequacy
- adjusting with changes over time
- curriculum development
- experiences with colleagues
- experiences with parents/guardians
- need for professional development

Summary of Findings of Research Question 1

Through the lens of the first research question, I organized the narratives of the participants into eight categories. Faculty members' answers to interview questions were based on their experiences in the past and in their current positions. They included their thoughts and opinions as well as specific experiences with students.

Understanding the Issues Transgender and Nonbinary Students Face

Faculty members were asked about their understanding of the issues transgender and nonbinary students face in and out of the classroom. This step provided me with a basis for teacher awareness of the conditions that transgender and nonbinary students face. Overwhelmingly, teachers understood the hardships that transgender and nonbinary students encounter daily, including being in unsafe surroundings and not being allowed to exist authentically. Also, teachers recognized that students experienced social anxiety. I asked the participants, "What are some of the issues you think transgender and nonbinary students face in society and at school?" Many broadened their answers to transgender and

nonbinary people in general, not just students.

Ms. King is an art teacher at a private school. She has 22 years of experience in education and has been in her current position for 20 years. She felt that for transgender and nonbinary students, “there is violence, displacement, or a lack of place. There is a lack of belonging. Laws have been created to actually oppress and do not include or encourage them to be their authentic selves.”

Ms. Frank responded similarly to Ms. King, noting the negative experiences transgender and nonbinary students face. She is an English teacher at a charter school. She has 9 years of experience in education, and she has been an educator at her current school for 4 years. Ms. Frank felt that transgender and nonbinary students “face a lot of difficulty kind of pushing back against societal expectations. Their ideas are so nascent that I think they’re easily crushed or manipulated by these forces out there. And there’s often not much protection afforded to them.”

Mr. Cheek has been an art teacher at his current charter school for 4 years. He has been in education for 15 years. He expressed the difficulties students have of being treated with respect and dignity:

I think the biggest issue just from my experience is people accepting the way that [transgender and nonbinary people] want to be recognized or identified. I’ve been in schools where advisors refused to put the names [transgender and nonbinary students] want to go by on books and say, “we’re going to put the legal name there.” They also refuse to let students choose in senior pictures whether to use a drape or a tie. There seems to be a problem with [others’] identification or the acceptance of [transgender people]. The inability to understand and respect where

they're coming from and to understand that this is not an easy decision for [transgender and nonbinary students].

Mr. Dean has been an educator for 10 years and has been a history teacher at his current charter school for 7 years. He remarked on the social difficulties transgender and nonbinary students face:

I think all of them seem to have struggled a little bit with kind of like some social awkwardness that goes with the transition. When they decide to switch genders, it seems like there's some kind of stressful period where they're trying to establish this new identity. So, I think they probably have to face a lot of confusion from their peers who are not super aware about these issues. I think this leads to some social anxiety among these guys.

Experiences With Gender Identity Acceptance and Students' Changes in Identity

In exploring the experiences of faculty with addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students, participants were asked to describe their experiences with trying to make all gender identities accepted and equitable. In some cases, participants talked about their experiences in previous schools and/or in prior years. Also, participants were asked to describe their experiences with students who had transitioned before high school and those whose gender identity changed during high school. Teachers overwhelmingly expressed that their current schools are more progressive and supportive in addressing students' needs, but prior schools were not necessarily so. Also, teachers explained that they mostly had no problems when students changed their gender either once or more than once during their time in high school. However, a few teachers admitted that there were some difficulties in keeping up with changes in pronouns and names.

In explaining his experiences in his current school, Mr. Cheek stated, Without a shadow of a doubt, this is the most supportive I've ever been at a school...teaching in an urban public charter school that is as progressive as where I am now, I've never been more supported as a teacher, as a person. It's amazing to feel that way and it's coming from the top down.

He compared his current experiences with those at a prior school: "Some of the students there were very resistant [to gender identity issues]. Some of the teachers and other stakeholders were resistant too."

Ms. Moon has been an educator for approximately 30 years. She has been at her current private school for 17 years in the field of health/PE. She also has a positive experience in her current school:

We are liberal when it comes to gender issues. So, I think part of it is a big old cheat because families that are interested in our school are usually open to more liberal viewpoints when it comes to gender.

When asked about experiences with students' privacy and having equity in the classroom, Ms. King explained how she adjusted so the students' wishes were being met:

When it comes to respecting a student's privacy, the first thing I think of are letters of recommendation for summer programs and college where I've asked [students] what pronouns would they like me to use in the letter. I have had both experiences happen when one has said, "Would you please use my preferred pronouns" and the other wanted me to use the pronouns on the birth certificate. I have to think about what it is like for both students at home. We might honor preferred pronouns while people at home may not be on board.

Personal Challenges in Addressing Gender Identity and Feelings of Inadequacy

In thoroughly exploring the experiences of teachers, it was important to also examine aspects that were not the most positive. When asked about their personal situations where they made a mistake or faced a challenge in addressing the needs of their transgender and nonbinary students, participants shared specific moments and how these moments made them feel. It is important to note that not all the participants who were asked this question had challenges or feelings of inadequacy. Nevertheless, the ones who did spoke mostly about forgetting pronouns and/or names of students.

Ms. Moon shared a moment when she felt that she was not being as supportive of her students as she felt she should have been; nevertheless, the situation became a learning moment for her:

My most challenging moments came when I was an advisor. I had an advisee that came out to me as gay and then later in high school came out as trans. I was close to this student, and this student was going through that transition and discovery and all kinds of great things. A couple of my students really felt like I wasn't honoring who they were and were pretty angry. I had to get up to speed and figure it out.

Ms. Moon also suggested that the anger the students expressed to her may have been because of what she represented, not necessarily what she did:

I think I just represented cis women to them. I felt like I was an easy target because I was going to love them no matter what, and I wasn't Mom or Dad. They felt like they couldn't yell at Mom or Dad, so I was the next target.

Ms. King explained the difficulties she and other colleagues had in misgendering

students and the consequences of that on faculty and students: “I remember when a student was very angry because we misgendered them, and it was a very frustrating experience for them and many teachers because of the intensity of their engagement with everyone around it.” To lessen mistakes, Ms. King claimed,

I found myself asking for help pretty often. I was like, correct me if I’m wrong.

Please help me. And so, I think we built trust in that realm. But because I was around so much, I think I hurt them even more by making mistakes.

Nevertheless, Ms. King expressed her frustration and difficulty when she did make mistakes:

Those moments hurt more because I felt like I was trying so hard. But it also alerted me to how inherently gendered the language I used was and so that’s where I kept trying to reflect back to them that I didn’t mean this as an offense to them. I just said, “I’m so sorry and do you have any more suggestions for me?” They would all offer clear suggestions and even call me out when I was trying to be inclusive in my language. They would tell me sometimes that by even talking about that, I was drawing more attention to it. It was a highly engaging relationship when it came to talking about pronouns and gender identity. So, I ultimately learned a lot. But, I think the part that helps in the long run is when I messed up. Sometimes, I wanted to respond with, “you’re overreacting” or “you don’t have to be so mean about it,” but truly I wasn’t the one who was in the painful situation of trying to exert who they were. It was very, very difficult for everyone but I imagine the most difficult for them.

Ms. Green is currently a science teacher at a charter school, where she has been

for 3 years. She has been in the field of education for 18 years. Ms. Green acknowledged the difficulty in adjusting to the changing of names and pronouns, by both adults and students, and the frustration that comes with trying to meet the needs of her students:

I ran into some issues where I would accidentally use the wrong pronoun, and people would get very offended and, rather than tell me, they would tell another teacher and that teacher would tell me. Sorry, but I'm old and have 139 students. So, you really have to just give me the benefit of the doubt. I tried to be careful about pronouns and names, but sometimes I slip up, and then it's taken as if I'm insulting them or deliberating not calling them by [their name and pronoun]. I know some of my colleagues have accidentally called so and so another name. So, I do think that this is challenging. I had one student who changed their name three years in a row. I was like, what do I say? You start to struggle with how to address people.

Adjusting With Changes Over Time

I asked participants to consider the changes that have occurred over their education careers and to describe what changes they have observed and experienced as it relates to transgender and nonbinary students. Although the incidences they described happened previous to their current situations, these narratives still reflected the experiences of faculty in addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. All the educators agreed that there had been significant changes in society's acceptance of transgender and nonbinary people. Most stated that these changes were positive in nature in that transgender and nonbinary people are perceived as more mainstream than in previous years.

Mr. Dean commented that transgender issues have become much more widespread. He remarked that in his first years as an educator, he could not have named any students who identified as transgender and that the GSA club was not as strong of a presence in the school. Now, however, he claimed,

I'm teaching three students who I know identify as transgender. So, it seems like it has become more mainstream. The thing is, everybody acknowledges it is happening, and I think it is more accepted and understood than it used to be.

Ms. East is a science teacher at a charter school, where she has been for 3 years. She has been in the education field for 10 years. In reflecting on the changes over time in addressing transgender and nonbinary students' needs, her experiences seemed to stem from the demographics of previous schools:

The first school that I taught at was in [New England]. It was a very low-income school. Most of my students were Puerto Rican and West Indian. Now, I teach...at a charter school, and we have probably 50% or more Caucasian students. So, there is a very different financial and racial demographic. There were five years between those two experiences, so time was a factor. But I also feel like the mindsets of those communities were very different. A lot of the students in [New England] were from very religious, fairly socially conservative backgrounds. I feel like a lot of our students [at my current school] are a little bit more accepting and willing to be welcoming to people who aren't necessarily like them. And that could also be a cultural shift as well as a time shift. At my old school, I couldn't identify a kid who was trans, and no one publicly did not identify with one of the two binary genders. [Now], as you know, kids feel a little

more comfortable. It's a little bit more prevalent in society and in popular culture and media. They have been able to kind of put a word or a description to it and are more comfortable voicing their thoughts.

Ms. Ingram also viewed the changes over time through the lens of the demographics and culture of the school:

My previous schools certainly did not have this percentage of transgender and nonbinary students. My last school was a [religious] school in a [northern state]. We had a huge shift. I would say that, over time, there were more staff members who were comfortable with trans students, and they think that made trans students more comfortable coming out as trans. Over time, what people felt comfortable wearing to the prom changed; the students felt more comfortable wearing pants. In the years that I was there, once someone did it, it became okay for other people to do it. I think that it really felt like over time there was more momentum about people feeling more comfortable being fully themselves as they saw other people doing it and being accepted by their peers and teachers.

Ms. Ingram did express that she felt time was not necessarily the significant factor in her current school; however,

I think the school community specifically has an impact...I would not have thought that a school in NC would have the most trans and nonbinary students than any school I've been to...and I think it's a school environment that encourages everyone to be fully themselves that makes the biggest difference.

Curriculum Development and Effects on Teaching

Some of the most impactful moments for faculty and students happen in the

classroom. Participants were asked about their experiences in addressing transgender and nonbinary topics and needs in their curriculum, including the tools they use, information they needed to address these topics and needs, and classroom management. Some classes, specifically the humanities and health, had more opportunities to incorporate transgender and nonbinary topics in their curriculum. Other departments had more challenges.

Because Mr. Cheek is an art teacher, he had several opportunities to incorporate transgender and nonbinary artists and art into his curriculum. He explained,

What I've done to adapt my curriculum is that some of my assessments are based upon famous singers, famous songwriters, and famous directors or actors. I've made sure the selections are not just old, dead, white guys. Black representation, female representation, LGBTQ representation, trans representation – I just added Elliot Page to my assessments. I want to make sure my curriculum is up to date and is representative of my classroom experiences and the diversity that we're going through as a school and as a nation.

He further explained that he had more freedom than

an AP US history or an English where you don't have as many options [as] in art. I have plenty of different ways to adapt and adjust to make my students feel like, wow, he actually put a nonbinary actor in that. We talk about the TV show Star Trek Discovery all the time because they've gotten the first trans and the first nonbinary characters. So that's improvement. Talking about those things as it pertains to my curriculum really diversifies my classroom experiences.

Mr. Lee has been an English teacher at his current private school for 4 years. He has been in the field of education for 12 years. He explained that he always started his

class with the opportunity for students to say how they would like to be addressed.

Moreover, he stated,

As an English teacher, I always want to make sure that I validate, not just trans voices, but enlist and talk about issues people are facing. I always want to make sure we bring up the experiences of trans folks. Danez Smith, the poet, is always a pretty cool jumping off point for talks about trans identity explicitly.

Mr. Lee did acknowledge that there is difficulty in “giving trans identity proper weight” and knowing “what is too little and what is too much.” He exclaimed that he struggles with “striking the right balance.”

Also an English teacher, Ms. Frank recognized that she had changed her curriculum over the years by being “more thoughtful in questions [she] presented to [the class]”:

I know that I do try to be a little more intentional about the questions I ask [so] that there is not an implicit bias in them that might make these students uncomfortable. I start with considering the students in the class. So, when I’m sitting down prepping material for a class, and I do this for more than just transgender, there are a range of kids, but you go through and you look at your questions and then I think about intentionally how this is going to play in this particular class. So, it is an added layer of preparation. I don’t find it to be very difficult or time consuming because it comes out of a place of having developed a relationship.

Ms. Frank also provided opportunities in her class for transgender and nonbinary topics:

We often have debates and circles where we get together and talk. And so, I do this one unit where we study World War I poetry. And I know that in the past, I have been cautious about some of it because it can express ideas that we don't ascribe to or that someone might find offensive and uncomfortable. It's just a simple matter of, well, there's a ton of poems. I'll just go pick something else, even if I'm not sure.

Both Ms. East and Ms. Green, science teachers, had a particular assignment that affected students and brought up issues of gender identity. Although they understood the importance of representing all genders, they both stated that they did not know how to make changes to their population statistics assignment to include transgender and nonbinary people. Ms. East commented on an assignment she often used in class:

There's a lot of times in science where students might not feel comfortable with a discussion in class. I know we had an issue with a student when we were discussing human global populations and country populations. One of the very common metrics that's used to get a big picture of a population and where it is going in the future is a demographic pyramid or a picture diagram. And so, it separates out by males and females. And we've had students feel uncomfortable in that situation. Even though it wasn't singling out anybody, they just felt uncomfortable with it because it brought up issues they were dealing with.

Ms. Green also referred to a similar assignment that dealt with demographics and statistics:

I did have one incident with [a] student where we were talking about city planning and population growth, and I had an exercise where we looked at population age

structure diagrams. Those are actually divided by gender because we use that to predict and read how populations are going to grow or change over time, and that one student was very upset by that lesson. And so that was very interesting. I had no idea that this was something that would be a concern, and I talked about [it] before to other classes and had other transgender students, and it wasn't a thing. I had to call the parents and talk with administrators and tell them that I had no idea. So, that was really interesting, and it led to some discussions. Some people said that we shouldn't do population, structured diagrams, because they're collected by gender and biological sex right now, and that is not trans friendly. I'm like, I know, but it's how the government works and how we try to understand how we're going to have more humans or not. And I don't know how to not teach that or if that is something that students need to know for their city planning. It's actually in the...Earth and Environmental Science curriculum standards to talk about population, I believe.

Experiences With Colleagues

The responses about the participants' experiences with their colleagues were overwhelmingly positive. Often, they tied a sense of transgender and nonbinary acceptability and support to the climate of the school. Participants from both schools professed to be welcoming of all genders. Mr. Lee described his colleagues as "100% on board...I've never heard a transphobic comment from any staff member, and I know my colleagues are almost hyper aware of pronoun choice." Nevertheless, there were a few instances of dissonance, although slight. The sentiment from both schools' participants, however, seemed to be that substitute teachers were more of a problem than full-time

teachers. Ms. Frank stated,

One of our biggest issues is with substitute teachers. They come in and call roll, and they don't know those kids. And Max is sitting over there, but the roll book says Margaret. For him to have to hear that name and respond and say, "Yes, I'm here." That is not him. It hurts me, and I'm not even Max.

Experiences With Parents/Guardians

Educators were asked to describe their experiences with parents/guardians. There was a mix of responses. Faculty at both schools stated that they had both supportive parents and some parents who may not have been on board with their child's exploration of gender identity, but no one replied that they had hostile parents. The overall sentiment seemed to be that families understood, before becoming a part of the school community, the school's philosophies and practices. Ms. Green, a charter school science teacher, remarked,

With one student, I met with her mom and the student in person, a couple of times. This kid's mom was supportive of them but also like pushing them, like, hey I know you have some stuff going on, but that doesn't mean you can't do your schoolwork. I had another student...that child's parent was hot and cold with me and with my administrators, and I couldn't figure that out. The parent was supportive with her child's gender identity, though, but seemed to not understand that issues with gender identity could hurt other areas in the child's life.

Ms. King, a private school art teacher, recalled a situation when not all members of a student's family were in agreement with the student's gender identity and had to balance the understanding of the family and the wishes of the student:

I had a student who only recently started to ask for a different gender identity, and we all know that mom's okay but Grandma's not, so you get to know some of that. It also can be difficult when you know something the parents don't know but you maintain the privacy of the student.

Need for Professional Development

The last area of questioning was related to professional development for faculty. I asked if educators at their schools received professional development related to gender identity and, if so, how did it appear? Also, I asked if participants would like to have professional development in addressing gender identity needs. Most of the current professional development seemed informal in nature, and although most of the participants expressed a desire to have somewhat formal training, there were some who appreciated the informal aspect of their current experiences. Ms. Moon agreed that most of her professional development was her own pursuit: "What I have experienced is probably 80% informal and 20% formal, where I've taken workshops and online classes. But I would say 80% has been my personal research." She admitted that she did not believe there is enough professional development out there, and she would want more:

I wouldn't want a degree in gender studies but definitely more like a conference workshop. I imagine, especially in public school, teachers would need more for their development. That kind of level of formality – the idea of someone coming in with gender studies expertise and saying, this is what's cutting edge. If I could sign up for a gender studies update once a year, I totally would because I know how quickly it's changing, like vocabulary. I'm playing catch up and would really like some experts to share with me.

Mr. Cheek also agreed that he had not experienced organized professional development, but he also remarked that he did not necessarily feel that formal professional development was crucial to supporting transgender and nonbinary students:

We haven't had a class or workshop on identifying trans or nonbinary, but our principal is very, very progressive and sends out emails all the time to us about respecting student wishes. We're such a tight knit faculty. We talk a lot and will say, this happened, or how can we deal with this moving forward? So, we kind of professionally develop ourselves. Is it organized professionally and an organized workshop for professional development? No, but it's more organic, and I think it actually finds better purpose. It means more because it's growing from actual problems. It's not sitting in a chair and listening to a workshop. You're dealing with actual problems or actual rooms for improvement. And teachers can grow, And I like that professional development grows out of our internal intrinsic motivation as a staff to be better for our students.

Mr. Dean commented on his process of professional development and how that has impacted his teaching: "I'm just kind of making it up, based on my understanding of the issue and on stuff I've learned on my own. Just over the years, I've recognized how important this issue was." He also stated that there "seems to be an assumption that we're all going to self-educate on how to handle these issues properly. And I don't know if that's a safe assumption." Lastly, he questioned how professional development regarding LGBTQ issues would be useful to students and if it would have the desired impact:

A lot of times, I feel like...we're kind of just checking a box so we can say we did LGBTQ training. I don't know, maybe at a minimum, we can just have a very

clearly stated policy of how we handle these issues and, regardless of your personal feelings, this is the correct way to handle issues surrounding transgender students. I think that would probably be sufficient.

Overall, teachers responded that they understood the challenges that their transgender and nonbinary students experienced in and out of the classroom. Social identity theory explains that people with similar experiences self-categorize and are categorized by others. As a result, they can experience mistreatment from people who are outside of their group. Teachers in this study had witnessed the abuse of students who identified as transgender and nonbinary. Furthermore, they stated the importance for them as educators to create more inclusive and safe environments for their students. Queer theory suggests that by including queer identities in education, all gender identities can become more normalized. Teachers in this study discussed how they created opportunities in their curriculum to highlight transgender and nonbinary artists, topics, and viewpoints. Nevertheless, some teachers explained the difficulties they faced in making these changes. Lastly, through the lens of ecological systems theory, teachers stated that their awareness of these needs and their abilities to address these needs have become more positive in their current situations than in past years.

Research Question 2: Administrators' and Staff's Experiences in Addressing the Needs of Transgender and Nonbinary Students

The second research question focused on the experiences of different administrator and staff positions in the Charter School and the Private School. These positions ranged from heads of schools to deans to office managers. The participants were asked the same questions as the faculty members, and their answers were

categorized in much of the same manner as the teachers; however, because administrators and staff did not have the current experiences with curriculum, that category was changed to focus on policies and practices.

Summary of Findings of Research Question 2

Through the lens of the second research question, I organized the narratives from the participants into eight themes. Administrators' and staff's answers to interview questions were based on their experiences in the past and in their current positions. They included their thoughts and opinions as well as specific experiences with students.

Understanding the Issues Transgender and Nonbinary Students Face

Mr. Alba has been an educator in different departments for 27 years. He has been in his current position as an administrator at a charter school for 11 years. His sentiment on how people view transgender and nonbinary issues captured the overall opinions of the administrators:

I think that we, that in general and society, we have linked intrinsically gender and sex. I think that because of the way that sex is handled and discussed in our country, which is fairly conservative and often closed, people will take gender identity, and it immediately blurs into questions about sex and sex practices, and that causes outsiders or other people to judge someone who may be transgendered or nonbinary to be seen as some kind of sexual exception...deviant, or something like that.

He further remarked on how he felt transgender and nonbinary people are treated:

They are singled out. They are made uncomfortable by having to conform to traditional binary gender options. Bathrooms can be very stressful, and [it can be]

very difficult to have to behave in a way that is not consistent with your gender identity.

Mr. Hicks has been in education for 25 years. He is an administrator at his current private school in his second year. His comments on the social difficulties transgender and nonbinary students face in “defining for themselves who they are...and then having to negotiate that socially” echoed those of Mr. Alba. He also recognized that students “may not be in a school environment, work environment, or family environment that supports [their] identity.”

Experiences With Gender Identity Acceptance and Students’ Changes in Identity

Administrators and staff remarked on their experiences in their current schools. All felt that they were doing an adequate job in supporting their students, but they acknowledged that there were situations that were beyond their control. Mr. Alba stated that his current school is “more liberal.” “[They] have clubs, and people [are] talking openly. Students feel safe to express themselves.” In describing the freedom his current students feel in expressing themselves, he stated, “I’m very proud to see students in my building who are dressing the way that they feel like dressing, asking to be called by particular pronouns and names.”

As for students who changed identities during their time in high school, Mr. Alba remarked that the school was able to adjust to the changes in identity for one of his students:

We had a student who graduated 2 years ago who began the ninth grade as a biological male and, over the course of the first 2 years, did not choose to openly be referred to by a different gender but was moving in that direction. Then the

student changed their name and wanted to be called by a particular name, which was one step on that process. The next year, they changed their name again to a different name still not their birth name and still reflective of their new identity. Clearly, they've gone through some change. And that name stuck. And that gender identity stuck, and we worked with that for the remaining 2 years the student was with us.

Ms. Baker has held several positions in education over the past 15 years. She is now an administrator at a charter school and has been one for 4 years. She commented on how administration supported students whose current identities were different than their biological genders:

If it were a situation where the preferred name and pronouns were different than the legal name, we make sure we let everybody know – office staff, teachers – anybody who would work with the student know the student's preferred name and preferred pronouns. We make arrangements, such as if they are going to use our non-gendered bathrooms, so that everybody knows. We bring everyone up to speed on who the student is. It's usually just a couple of emails, not a big deal. We do have students who have had their legal names changed. When legal documents are changed, then our office can make changes too.

Some administrators and staff, however, remarked that acceptance of students' identity changes was not as positive or easily implemented as others. For students who identified as nonbinary, Ms. Ingram, an administrator at a private school, stated, "The students at my school who use 'they/them' pronouns have a particularly hard time because of some of the faculty and staff. The educators are not as used to using those

pronouns to describe a student.” She further explained that faculty and staff had an easier time with students who identified as transgender:

I think our students who fully identify as a different gender than the one assigned to them at birth have an easier time because if it is someone who was born male but now identifies as female, we are used to using the pronoun “she.” If she’s changed her name to a name that we identify as being female and she’s using female pronouns, we just sort of accept that.

Nevertheless, Ms. Ingram acknowledged that

there is still so much growth for all of us to do in terms of our consistency in being able to respond to people’s pronouns, especially when they are beyond the sort of gender binary that adults are used to.

Overall, administrators and staff at the Charter School and the Private School felt that their schools were moving in a positive direction in addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. They gave examples of initiatives and practices they offered at their schools to create more inclusive and welcoming environments; however, administrators and staff at both schools explained that there was still more work to be done by all members school, faculty and staff, to meet the needs of all their students.

Personal Challenges in Addressing Gender Identity and Feelings of Inadequacy

Like the faculty, administrators and staff also experienced moments when they made mistakes in addressing students in the manner they preferred. Ms. Ingram spoke about a particular situation where she felt she had failed in acknowledging a student correctly and the distress it caused her:

My worst moment was...Twin Day and Spirit Week, and I was talking with a

student who used “they/them” pronouns. This student had a feminine-sounding name, and so that was sometimes tricky. I spent a lot of time the day before assembly practicing how to address all the students. The next day, I spoke about this student in the assembly, talking about their painting. After the assembly, the student came up to me and said, “Ms. Ingram, I use ‘they/them’ pronouns.” I said, “Yes, I know.” The student then said, “But you used ‘she.’” It totally broke my heart because not only did I know that they used those pronouns, but I had practiced just to be totally sure that I would get it right. And I hadn’t even noticed that I had gotten it wrong. Afterwards, I think I pushed too hard in apologizing and making a big deal of it. I asked the student if they would be comfortable if I wrote an apology to the school for misgendering them. They said yes, and I did it. But you know, I feel like now, I would handle it differently.

Mr. Hicks commented on how even in trying to support a student’s choice in identity, he actually made the student feel very uncomfortable. He admitted that he was “awkward in [his] responses” and felt he had been too assertive in his conversations with the student, who had a shy demeanor.

Adjusting With Changes Over Time

Like the faculty, administrators and staff had also experienced changes in addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. Although time was a factor, the community’s acceptance and the demographics of the school also were of utmost importance. Ms. Ingram stated that her current school had more transgender and nonbinary students than her previous schools, which made a difference in acceptance on the part of faculty and staff. She expressed that the change was mainly “in culture.” She

also commented that as students expressed themselves openly, the educators became more accepting of transgender and nonbinary students:

I would say that, over time, there were more staff members who were comfortable with trans students, and they think that made trans students more comfortable coming out as trans. Over time, what people felt comfortable wearing to the prom changed; the students felt more comfortable wearing pants. In the years that I was there, once someone did it, it became okay for other people to do it. I think that it really felt like over time there was more momentum about people feeling more comfortable being fully themselves as they saw other people doing it and being accepted by their peers and teachers.

Ms. Ingram reflected on the culture at her current school: “I think the school community specifically has an impact...and I think it’s a school environment that encourages everyone to be fully themselves that makes the biggest difference.”

Policies and Practices Development

Because administrators and staff are not necessarily in the classroom with their students, I assigned the theme of Policies and Practices Development for this group.

These policies and practices ranged from referring to students on documents to how common spaces, such as bathrooms, were presented in an inclusive manner.

Administrators and staff admitted that they had created some ways to make transgender and nonbinary students feel more inclusive in terms of documentation, but there were limits to their capabilities.

Ms. James, a staff member in a private school, explained the process of acknowledging students’ preferred identities on school documents:

Across whatever format we're using, we've got the child's legal name and gender from their birth certificate. That is not what they use and not how they identify. We can't change [some formats] legally until there's a legal change. We have had a few students who have had that legal change, and then that's great. We can make adjustments. But we have become able to sure the preferred name is what we print or list. If we're ever going to have to make a printout for somebody who isn't on the faculty, then it's okay, but it's still not good enough in terms of documentation that has all of these different names. And so we've finally changed it. This year, we've changed everything to preferences. We just know that we have to change it back before we print the transcript. So, everything that is an internal document, we use the preferred name. When it comes to running reports and external documents, we just make sure to switch it back.

Ms. James expressed irritation that there is a limit to their abilities in presenting students' preferred identities:

There was no other way we could manage it...we aren't writing the software. It's hard when the child's name is correct everywhere internally, and then they get a report every term that has their dead name on it. Why are we doing this to them?

Mr. Alba admitted that his school does its best to support transgender and nonbinary students, but he also acknowledged that there are some changes that are beyond him and his colleagues:

We do our best to excise dead names from all references in the schools. Some things we can't change. We can't change the state management system without a birth certificate, but everywhere else we can put the student's choice of name.

Administrators and staff at both schools stated that their facilities had gendered and non-gendered bathrooms that all students and adults could use. Also, they had discontinued practices such as prom king and queen and homecoming queen.

Experiences With Colleagues

Administrators and staff expressed that the majority of the faculty and staff were in agreement that transgender and nonbinary students' needs should be met in every instance, especially in referring to students by their preferred names and pronouns. Nevertheless, administrators and staff recognized some faculty and staff did not always adhere to the policies of the school. This practice sometimes happened when an educator's personal beliefs contrasted with the culture of the school.

Mr. Hicks has held several positions over the 25 years he has been in education. Currently, he is in his second year as an administrator at a private school. Mr. Hicks stated that some educators "still feel like, well, there's a right and wrong, and somehow, they have a hard time. They feel like they are not against their students but that gender identity is set and that there are only two genders."

Ms. Baker acknowledged,

We do have a few folks in the building who struggle. Sometimes, it's not blatant, like trying to be disrespectful to a student, but they have a hard time remembering the preferred name or preferred pronouns, which can be hard on the kids.

She recalled a specific educator who is a challenge for her because that educator's personal beliefs affect her performance:

The hardest challenge I've had has been with [full-time employee] who works really closely with a lot of students. [This person] really does not believe in

gender identity as a thing – she feels like if you have girl parts then you are a girl.

She is not really supportive of our students who are struggling with identity, and that's really tough and probably the hardest thing for me to deal with right now.

Like the faculty, administrators also agreed that substitute teachers posed the biggest challenge in supporting transgender and nonbinary students; however, Ms. Baker stated that her school has upgraded their sub training and implemented that substitute teachers must read teacher notes to see if there is a different name and/or pronouns that students prefer.

Experiences With Parents/Guardians

When asked about their experiences with the parents or guardians of transgender and nonbinary students, administrators and staff remarked that most of the time, there were no issues because families understood the culture of the school when they enrolled. Nevertheless, Mr. Alba commented on the fact that many students “come out” at school before they do at home, which can lead to a difficult situation:

A lot of times, you have students who are more willing to begin practicing their identity choices at school versus at home. And so we end up in an uncomfortable place of having to identify a student by name and a pronoun in the classroom or in the school, but we can't use that identification with parents because they are still in flux, so to speak.... Also, most of the tension comes from parents not thinking that [gender identity issues are] something that the school should be engaging in that is the promotion or tolerance of this kind of behavior at school. They think we are encouraging it and we're changing their students against their will.

Mr. Hicks remarked that the parents at his school are “all over the place.” He

stated,

Sometimes, the parents may not be in agreement with each other, or they might not be in agreement with the kid, or they might be supportive, but they knew that [the student's transgender or nonbinary status] may be a killer for grandma.

Overall, administrators at both the Charter School and the Private School felt that parents were supportive of their children.

Need for Professional Development

When asked about the professional development offered to faculty and staff, administrators felt that their schools provided more informal education through discussing the changes of their students with each other. Although faculty admitted that they would like formal professional development, this had not been provided by administration. This could possibly be a systemic failure, especially since the lack of professional development but the need for it was expressed by faculty, staff, and administration. Mr. Hicks stated that “for the most part, it’s been more often casual...reading things and sharing things [with colleagues].” Administrators explained that they presented policies and practices to the faculty and staff that adhered to the inclusive culture of the school. They did acknowledge, however, that faculty and staff could benefit from having speakers come into their schools to help educate them on the changes in language and offer suggestions for how to incorporate inclusion into their curriculum. Ms. Ingram mentioned that a therapist and educational consultant once spoke at her school to discuss diversity issues. She felt that “faculty really seemed to appreciate getting this education.” The faculty did not mention how professional development could help them in their current positions, however.

Like teachers, administrators and staff at the Charter School and the Private School were able to identify the challenges transgender and nonbinary students face in and out of school. Administrators and staff also commented on how, at times, some faculty members' personal beliefs affected their treatment of students. Social identity theory suggests that one may be influenced by their personal concepts of identity, which can then motivate their behavior towards others. Administrators and staff commented that faculty who had difficulty in accepting nonbinary identities were more likely to misgender students than other teachers. Also, in creating a more inclusive environment for all students, administrators and staff implemented policies and practices that benefitted all members of the community. Nevertheless, state policies, such as House Bill 2, made these implementations more difficult at times.

Themes

During the interview process, I became aware of themes emerging, which prompted me to group the educators' narratives. These themes were largely based on the theories grounding this study. Each interview question was derived from topics of focus in social identity theory, queer theory, and ecological systems theory. Grouping the responses allowed me to examine both the similarities and differences of educators' experiences. After completing the interviews, I realized five prominent themes that emerged: Students' Struggles, Making Mistakes, Changes Over Time and Place, Representation Matters, and Minimalizing Impact of Behavior. A full discussion of these themes can be found in Chapter 5.

Overall Results

Faculty, administrators, and staff at the Charter School and the Private School

stated that the culture of their respective schools was inclusive and encouraging in supporting their transgender and nonbinary students. They described the practices they had implemented in and out of the classroom and the challenges they faced. Teachers of some subjects, such as English and art, had an easier time changing their curriculums to serve the needs of all their students. Science teachers, however, had more difficulties. It was interesting that the science teachers in the Charter School and the Private School had a particular assignment that they did not know how to modify to include transgender and nonbinary students. Also, in the interviews, some of the teachers' reactions suggested to me that they had not given much thought to their actual curriculums. They seemed to focus more on their interactions with students directly and personally. Administrators and staff explained that they had found ways to address their transgender and nonbinary students' identities in documentation. Nevertheless, there was very little provided to faculty and staff in terms of professional development.

Faculty, administrators, and staff explained the mistakes they had made and how these transgressions had made them feel. Because the purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of teachers and administrators/staff, their stories provided perspectives of their feelings. Some participants were able to recall specific events in detail that had affected them. In other cases, participants were vague in their answers or did not have an event on which to focus. Those who had misgendered or misnamed students expressed despair at their actions and, in some cases, seemed to be defensive and focus their comments on how hard it was for them to remember their students' identities, especially if the identities changed more than once.

Although each participant felt that their schools are addressing their students'

needs, they acknowledged that there is still work to be done. I found it interesting, however, that participants agreed it was important to create an inclusive environment but did not seek out professional development beyond informal means. Also, it appeared that all the participants expressed that they practiced inclusive behaviors (although they may have fallen short at times), but they acknowledged that other members of their schools did not.

Overall, the narratives obtained through the interview questions answered the research questions and gave an in-depth understanding of the experiences of faculty, administrators, and staff with transgender and nonbinary students. The focus on the feelings and perceptions of the participants has been lacking in literature concentrating on either the practices of faculty and administration/staff or the experiences of students. This study allowed me some insight that has not been thoroughly explored.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The goal of this phenomenological case study was to present the experiences of teachers and administrators in addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. Transgender and nonbinary students have experienced negative treatment in the education system, and previous studies have focused on the experiences of the students and the practices of educators rather than educators' feelings and perceptions. To achieve this study's goal, I conducted interviews with educators in the Charter School and the Private School to gather narrative data describing their beliefs, challenges, practices, hopes, and struggles in addressing their students' needs. An analysis of the data presented educators' perceptions of their practices in and out of the classroom that fostered a more inclusive environment as well as behavior that failed to meet the needs of their transgender and nonbinary students.

This qualitative study was based on two research questions:

1. How do teachers describe their experiences with gender identity in schools?
2. How do administrators and staff describe their experiences with gender identity?

Interview questions were open-ended to allow participants freedom to thoroughly explore the ideas presented. Questions focused on feelings and perceptions rather than actual behaviors (except for questions related to curriculum and policies). While transcribing and coding respondent answers, several themes emerged. This chapter explores the following: a review of methodology, an interpretation and discussion of the results, implications of the study, limitations and delimitations, recommendations for

further research, and the significance of the study. The discussion section is organized into four themes and connects each theme to theories and literature.

Methodology

Qualitative data were collected from Zoom interviews with seven educators from a charter high school and six educators from a private high school. Two sessions of interviews allowed for clarifying and follow-up questions. Participants' answers were video recorded and coded into themes.

Interpretation and Discussion of Results

Upon reviewing the transcribed interviews of the educators from both schools, five prominent themes emerged:

1. **Students' Struggles:** Educators are aware of the struggles and challenges transgender and nonbinary students face, and they want to create a more welcoming environment for all.
2. **Making Mistakes:** Educators' experiences with transgender and nonbinary students have been awkward and/or painful at times, especially when educators made mistakes.
3. **Changes Over Time and Place:** Educators have noticed that their experiences with transgender and nonbinary students have changed over time and are affected by location and type of school; however, the culture of a school reflects the support educators feel they have in addressing their students' needs.
4. **Representation Matters:** Educators understand it is important for students to see representations of themselves in class curriculum as well as in supportive

school policies and practices.

5. **Minimalizing Impact of Behavior:** Educators admitted mistakes they had made, but at times, they seemed to minimize the impact their behavior had on their students.

This section interprets each of the five themes, connecting them to literature and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. Furthermore, opportunities for further research and recommendations for practice are suggested for each theme.

Theme 1: Students' Struggles

Educators are aware of the struggles and challenges transgender and nonbinary students face, and they want to create a more welcoming environment for all. Each participant in the study was asked what they felt were the challenges transgender and nonbinary students faced in society and in school. All the participants agreed that transgender and nonbinary students experience challenges and negative situations. These challenges ranged from academic struggles to social ostracism to physical and mental harm. All the participants also expressed the importance of students having a welcoming environment and the importance of educators providing a supportive school climate. Participants discussed how they provided an inclusive environment for their transgender and nonbinary students by addressing them by their preferred names and pronouns, advocating for them, and creating changes in curriculum and policies.

Nevertheless, some of the participants acknowledged that there were some colleagues who did not address students appropriately. This decision was attributed to colleagues' beliefs that using the plural form of a pronoun for a single person was grammatically incorrect, or that students changed their names and pronouns too often and

were not genuine about being transgender or nonbinary. Some colleagues also felt their religious beliefs denied the validity and acceptance of transgender and nonbinary students.

Connection to Literature

Sadowski (2020) stated that in order for transgender and nonbinary students' experiences in schools to improve, schools needed to be gender inclusive. Part of creating this inclusivity is creating curricula that address transgender and nonbinary topics and people, using preferred names and pronouns for students, and creating policies that highlight and include all students (Mayo, 2014). Furthermore, students need the active advocacy of their teachers and administrators. According to GLSEN's report in 2018, although LGBTQ students were victims of harassment and violent attacks, they did not report these incidences because they felt educators would not support them (Kosciw et al., 2018a). There may be some merit to these feelings. According to Reilly (2019), some teachers purposefully refused to use students' preferred names and pronouns because of their religious beliefs. At times, teachers even ignored harassment they witnessed being perpetrated upon transgender and nonbinary students (Bekiempis, 2015).

Connection to Theories

People who identify with a membership of a particular group may be treated in a manner that relates to the perception (by themselves and others) of that group. Social identity theory discusses the idea of people who are members of a group and people who do not belong to the group, labeling the differences as "in-groups" and "out-groups." The notion of in-groups and out-groups can create a mentality of "us" versus "them" and can also lead to the abuse of people considered "other" (David, 2015). Educators in this study

stated that they realized transgender and nonbinary students often receive discrimination, harassment, bullying, and a degree of living that is not optimal when compared to students who are not transgender or nonbinary. They also acknowledged that transgender and nonbinary students should not experience this type of treatment and felt that schools (and society) should be more welcoming and inclusive.

Furthermore, educators expressed that all students should have the same rights and abilities to live happy, healthy, equitable lives. Queer theory is a basis for gender rights, which suggests that no one's life should be limited based on their gender identity (Wilchins, 2014). By treating transgender and nonbinary students in a harmful manner, these students' basic rights are violated. The negative treatment transgender and nonbinary students are forced to endure hinders them from being able to live authentically, which not only leads to unhappiness and insecurity, but it also impedes their ability to achieve academic success. Queer theory suggests that all members of a society have a responsibility to act ethically towards each other, and this includes treating each other with respect and compassion (Smith, 1998). Educators expressed that in order to create an inclusive community for all students, no student should be treated poorly based on their gender identity.

Further Research

Further research should be conducted in elementary and middle schools to examine the attitudes of the educators who teach younger children. Because this study focused on students in adolescence, the educators' feelings and practices could be affected by the age of the students and the beliefs that these students are closer to adulthood than younger students.

Recommendation for Practice

All members, including educators, parents, students, and staff of the Charter School and the Private School in this study should be made aware of the expectations, policies, and practices of their respective schools in upholding an inclusive and welcoming environment (Mayo, 2014). The values and practices of the schools should be displayed in the schools' handbooks and be required reading for all members at the beginning of the school year. A lack of language to express how the school fosters an inclusive culture can lead to confusion in practices and behavior (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

Furthermore, educators can team up with advocacy groups to lead the charge for school inclusion of all students outside of the school building. This can be done by participating in events, keeping abreast of policies and voting for inclusive laws, and using their voices in educational board meetings.

Theme 2: Making Mistakes

Educators' experiences with transgender and nonbinary students have been awkward and/or painful at times, especially when educators make mistakes. When asked about the challenges they had when addressing gender identity, some participants expressed specific moments when they made mistakes addressing a student's name and/or pronouns correctly. These moments typically happened when teachers and administrators unintentionally used the legal name of the student or when they forgot the student's preferred pronoun. In each of these incidences, participants described uncomfortable emotional states. Their reactions ranged from distress and a desire to do better in addressing their students to frustration at not knowing how to address their

students appropriately. In two cases, however, it appeared to me that teachers minimized the impact of their mistakes. Nevertheless, they all responded that they understood the importance of using students' preferred names and pronouns.

Educators' efforts to support their transgender and nonbinary students are shaped by the culture of the school. According to Mayo (2014), teachers and administrators desire to create a welcoming, supportive experience for their students but fear the reactions and treatment of their colleagues who are not as supportive of an inclusive environment. Also, the reactions of the community surrounding the school, including local, state, and national legislation, affect educators' comfort and even ability in creating and maintaining safe, inclusive environments for students (Thoreson, 2016).

Teachers and administrators need to feel that making mistakes with names and pronouns is not an irreparable situation (Paterson, 2021). By acknowledging the incorrect name and/or pronoun and correcting it as soon as possible with an apology, most transgender and nonbinary students feel this is sufficient.

Connection to Literature

Pennell (2017) stated that to address the needs of transgender and nonbinary students, teachers must be aware of their own beliefs and biases. Because of a prevalence of heteronormative ideals and practices, at times, educators are not cognizant of their behaviors; thus, they are susceptible to making mistakes unwittingly. However, in some cases, teachers willfully refuse to address students by their preferred names and pronouns because of their personal beliefs. Sorto (2019) stated that some teachers resist using gender-neutral pronouns because it does not conform to a "traditional" heteronormative model. Others have difficulty using pronouns such as "they" when addressing a singular

person (Fagell, 2019). Still others, according to Reilly (2019), reject the idea of transgender and nonbinary gender identities because of religious reasons. While interviewing the participants, none of the faculty or administrators/staff verbally acknowledged any bias, although they admitted to making mistakes.

Connection to Theories

Social identity theory suggests that with the process of social categorization, people label themselves according to an established group. Students who consider themselves as transgender and nonbinary connect their identity to being a member of that particular group, and that includes practicing the behaviors associated with that group and being treated in a manner that is associated with that group (Stets & Burke, 2000). This includes the use of preferred names and pronouns within and without a student's identified group. As transgender and nonbinary students connect to a group, so do cisgender faculty and administration/staff connect to another group and adopt those practices and beliefs.

Furthermore, social identity discusses the concept of social comparison, whereas people within and without a particular group compare and contrast themselves against each other (Hogg, 2000). In this case, people's personal concepts of identity can affect their behavior towards transgender and nonbinary students.

Queer theory challenges the notion of heteronormativity, promoting the idea of gender fluidity and disclaiming the validity of cisgender identities as "normal." It also explores the harm of considering transgender and nonbinary people as abnormal and wrong.

Further Research

Further research should be conducted with educators who have experiences with transgender and nonbinary people outside of the school on a regular basis compared to those who only have limited experiences with transgender and nonbinary students during the school hours. Also, case studies that focus on educators' beliefs about transgender and nonbinary identities over an extended period of time may provide insight into the development and possible changes in mindsets.

Recommendation for Practice

According to Warwick International Higher Education Academy (2021), several steps can be taken to correct mistakes made by educators in misgendering or using wrong names. The educator should (a) offer a brief and clear apology, (b) make the correction at the time they are made aware of it, (c) not linger on the mistake but move on with what is going on, and (d) perform actions that will help the educator make right actions rather than mistakes in the future.

Theme 3: Changes Over Time and Place

Educators have noticed that their experiences with transgender and nonbinary students have changed over time and are affected by location and type of school; however, the culture of a school reflects the support educators feel they have in addressing their students' needs (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Participants in the study acknowledged that the overall culture of their current schools was inclusive and supportive of transgender and nonbinary students in terms of practices and policies. When asked to discuss the conditions of previous schools, several participants responded that they were not always in schools that addressed the needs of transgender and nonbinary students. In most cases, the schools that did not have a supportive culture were

religious-based institutions. Furthermore, schools in more urban areas with more diverse populations tended to be more accepting of differences in people than schools that were more homogenous.

Moreover, participants stated that because society at large is more aware and openly expressive of transgender and nonbinary identities today than in the past, their educational institutions also reflect this change in time. Participants explained that in their earlier years as educators, they did not have the language or understanding of transgender and nonbinary identities and, thus, did not receive support on how to address the needs of their transgender and nonbinary students. Today, people have more resources to receive up-to-date information about transgender and nonbinary topics and issues; the most credible of these resources are groups such as Gender Spectrum, Teaching Tolerance, and GLSEN (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018). Moreover, because there is more acceptance in the larger community than in years past, the participants explained that the culture of their current schools supports their transgender and nonbinary students' experiences in living authentic lives.

Connection to Literature

Several bills have been passed in different states that encourage or discourage the support of transgender and nonbinary students. In North Carolina, House Bill 2, also known as the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act, was passed in March 2016 (House Bill, 2016); however, it was repealed in March 2017, after widespread state and nationwide protests with the passage of House Bill 142 (House Bill, 2017). Additionally, several acts, such as the Fair Education Act and Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2018, have focused on discrimination against LGBTQ students; thus, there have been times

when transgender and nonbinary students had more support to live authentic lives and other times when their expression and rights were severely limited. For educators to understand the rights of transgender and nonbinary students in public schools, the National Education Association (2016) created the Legal Guidance on Transgender Students' Rights.

Sadowski (2020) stated that schools must create environments that are gender-inclusive for their transgender and nonbinary students to have better school experiences. Moreover, for everyone to have an optimal experience in school, a school's culture sets the precedent (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

Connection to Theories

Ecological systems theory suggests that people develop within a system of relationships to their environment – microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Gilstrap & Zierten, 2020). These systems shape one's identity and impact their experiences. They include one's family; social and educational institutions; and local, state, and national communities. Bronfenbrenner (1981), the originator of ecological systems theory, proposed that people's behavior is influenced by their environments. Educators in North Carolina have been limited by laws that forbid them the freedom of enacting some practices and policies. Also, because of the political climate, their behavior and sense of morality are influenced by those around them. Nevertheless, faculty and administration/staff who have had the freedom and school culture to support transgender students and foster an inclusive school environment have done so, thus allowing students to live authentic lives. It can be concluded that students who experience positive relationships in their environment tend to have a healthier and

happier understanding of their identity and the identities of others.

Further Research

Further research should be conducted to look at social and political behaviors, such as acts, bills, and laws related to transgender and nonbinary people on local, state, national, and international levels. Acts such as Assembly Bill 245 in California (2021), HB 675 in Idaho (2022), and multi-state bans on transgender students from participating in school sports are some of the acts, bills, and laws that have been passed or are being considered to be passed. By researching local and state politics and looking at the beliefs and practices of schools in those states, educational institutions, especially those that are public, can address the needs of transgender and nonbinary students beyond the schools themselves and look at larger implications (Yurcaba, 2021).

Moreover, more research into the beliefs and practices of religious institutions and how they address the needs of transgender and nonbinary students may provide insight into similarities and differences among all types of educational establishments. This research could also consist of the types of employees hired at the schools, the families who decide to attend these schools, and the attrition rate of both educators and students.

Recommendation for Practice

Although public schools and, to a degree, charter schools are bound by the laws of their local and state legislation, there are several charter schools throughout the country that are leading the charge for LGBTQ inclusivity (Butler, 2021). These schools can be studied and partnered with to create inclusive practices. Public schools, on the individual and district levels, and private schools, individually, should conduct an audit in and out of the classroom to make sure they have inclusive policies and practices.

Theme 4: Representation Matters

Participants stated that they understood the importance for students to see representations of themselves in class curriculum as well as support of them in school policies and practices. However, there is a need for professional development because, at the studied sites, most professional learning is done informally and individually.

Participants were asked about how their curriculums included transgender and nonbinary topics and issues. Humanities teachers appeared to have a greater ease in including transgender and nonbinary creators, inclusive activities, and discussions that focused on marginalized people in their smaller and larger communities. Science teachers expressed their concern about projects and assignments that were more binary in nature and their difficulty in changing these assignments to be more inclusive. However, all teachers stated that there was, at times, difficulty in finding resources for material to use in their classrooms.

Administrators explained changes in some of their policies and practices, such as allowing students to use preferred names and pronouns on internal documentation, creating spaces in schools that are gender neutral, and ending social events such as traditional prom courts. Nevertheless, administrators stated their frustration at the difficulties of using students' preferred names and pronouns on external documents such as transcripts and the limitations of their software.

Both teachers and administrators expressed a need for professional development in meeting the needs of their transgender and nonbinary students within and without the classroom. They stated that their current education on their students' needs was done in an informal capacity. In fact, many educators explained that they received information

about the changes in language and ideal practices from colleagues within and without their respective schools as well as from the students themselves. There were some conflicting results related to this theme, however. Although most participants expressed that they welcomed more formal professional development, some participants felt that they did not prefer to have more official meetings focused on transgender and nonbinary topics.

Connection to Literature

According to Prescott (2018), teachers have had difficulty in finding material to create a gender-inclusive curriculum and, in cases where the material exists, it may not conform to educational local and state standards. Also, although groups such as Gender Spectrum and Teaching Tolerance.org provide resources for teachers of several disciplines, in some cases, teachers are hesitant to implement these resources (Page, 2017). In fact, legislation in some states forbids the inclusion of LGBTQ-focused materials and practices (Petrilli, 2017). Also, according to Stoltzfus (2016), some teachers fear the reactions of parents and the outside community in including materials that address transgender and nonbinary identities. Indeed, some educators have been discouraged from including transgender and nonbinary issues and topics (Thoreson, 2016). Although some individual teachers have expressed comfort in including LGBTQ-related material in their curriculums, hesitancy still exists due to perceived backlash from their communities (Page, 2017).

Connection to Theories

Queer theory suggests that one's attitude and practices, including the creation and implementation of an inclusive curriculum, can have a major impact on transgender and

nonbinary students (Davis, 2012). An inclusive curriculum can foster positive relationships within schools and optimal experiences for students of all gender identities. Educators in this study found that they had more freedom than educators in other schools to dictate what would be in their curriculum, especially the teachers in the humanities, and felt that all students benefitted from materials that were inclusive of all genders.

Ecological systems theory suggests that the availability or lack of resources and professional development in school systems can be related to the values and beliefs of the societies surrounding the school (Bronfenbrenner, 1981); thus, in environments where addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students is highly valued, more emphasis is placed on providing materials needed to accomplish this goal. In areas where transgender and nonbinary support is lacking or even discouraged, less importance is placed on creating inclusive materials and practices.

Further Research

Like the suggested further research for the third theme, research can be conducted looking at the political landscape of a community and measuring the support educators receive in providing transgender and nonbinary resources. These resources can be materials as well as time and space to create assignments and activities that include all gender identities. Also, an in-depth study of how race and religion have been added to curriculums to make them more inclusive may provide a model for adding gender-inclusive material.

Furthermore, research on the various types of curriculums in different disciplines, including humanities and STEM subjects, can provide insight into how gender-inclusive materials and activities can be included in curriculums. Lastly, research on different

grade levels of schools that include gender-inclusive curriculums can suggest grade-appropriate materials that address the needs of transgender and nonbinary students.

Recommendation for Practice

Administrators need to provide at least one opportunity for formal training per year for all faculty and staff. This professional development should include resources and examples of incorporating transgender and nonbinary topics and creators in curriculums, the current appropriate language, and best practices in addressing the specific needs of transgender and nonbinary students. Furthermore, all members of the school community would benefit from partnerships with transgender and nonbinary people and organizations.

Theme 5: Minimalizing Impact of Behavior

When questioned about the mistakes they made in addressing students by their preferred names and pronouns, educators seemed to appear defensive and unaware of the impact their behavior had on students. Although they expressed that they had misgendered or misnamed their students, teachers followed up their admissions with reasons why they had made the mistakes that appeared to be excuses rather than acceptances of why they should behave better. One teacher commented that her age and the large number of students she taught were the reasons why she had misgendered a student. Another teacher inferred that her challenges were the result of a student changing their name more than once. These teachers recognized that the mistakes were hurtful to the students, but they also felt that much was being asked of them to remember the students' preferred names and pronouns.

Educators also seemed to insinuate that students did not extend grace and

understanding to them when they made these mistakes. One teacher responded that she wanted to tell a student that they were overreacting when their name and pronoun were not addressed correctly. She stated that she felt the student was “mean” when responding to the teacher’s mistake. Another teacher felt that students should understand that the mistakes she made were not intentional, and she appeared to resent that the students who had been misgendered or misnamed had talked to another teacher about the incident rather than to her. A third teacher felt that she was the target of a student’s frustration and anger because of what she represented to the student – a cisgender woman.

Lastly, teachers seemed to put the responsibility on the students to correct them when they make mistakes. One teacher asked her students to give her suggestions for how she could be more inclusive in her language. Another stated that she asked her students for help often in appropriate language use.

Connection to Literature

The Legal Guidance on Transgender Students’ Rights (National Education Association, 2016) states that transgender students have a right to be addressed by their preferred names and pronouns. Furthermore, the document states that transgender students have the right to be treated with respect. As given rights, educators do not have a choice of whether they will adhere to this mandate. Although it is understandable that people make mistakes, violating the rights of any student should be treated with the seriousness it deserves. Indeed, in March 2021, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction required that students’ preferred names be listed in the student information system that all public schools use (Polaski, 2021).

Connection to Theories

Although educators may believe that they are addressing the needs of their students, they may have underlying biases of which they may not be aware. Ecological systems theory suggests that people's practices and beliefs are shaped by their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1981); thus, subconsciously, teachers may not understand the seriousness of their mistakes on their students because they may exist in communities where transgender and nonbinary people are very underrepresented.

Furthermore, educators who consider themselves cisgender may have more difficulty in truly empathizing with transgender and nonbinary students, thus leading to not taking the mistakes they make as impactful. Social identity theory states that people develop a mentality of in-groups and out-groups (David, 2015). No matter how well-meaning a cisgender educator may be, that educator may develop a mental block in adjusting behavior to honor the needs of transgender and nonbinary students.

Further Research

Further research should be conducted in schools by analyzing student surveys on how often they are misnamed or misgendered. The surveys should include narrative opportunities for students to describe the situations and educators' reactions when the misnaming and misgendering occurred. By looking at the variety (or lack thereof) of responses, administration may have the opportunity to provide training to help educators respond appropriately and, hopefully, greatly minimize the number of times these happenings occur.

Recommendation for Practice

Similar to the recommendations for the theme of Making Mistakes, educators need to know the proper way to correct their errors; however, educators also need

professional development in understanding the profound consequences of their mistakes. This will require in-depth, sensitivity training. Programs like SEED (Chen et al., 2021) are great resources for personal and professional development in empathy, equity, and inclusion.

Implications

Upon evaluating the results of the study, the implications suggest that educators are willing to make changes to address the needs of all students, including transgender and nonbinary students. These changes consist of developing a curriculum that includes transgender and nonbinary voices and topics. Also, many educators structure documents to include pronouns and chosen names that are different than students' legal designations. Furthermore, practices and policies are put into place to aid in the comfort and inclusion of transgender and nonbinary students. Nevertheless, at times, educators experience challenges in which they make mistakes in addressing students by their preferred names and pronouns, or they may have assignments and activities that do not include populations of transgender and nonbinary people. In these cases, educators experience feelings of distress and failure. Furthermore, educators do not have enough opportunities for formal professional development to aid them in addressing their transgender and nonbinary students' needs and, thus, depend on their own personal research and/or reaching out to the students themselves for education. The implications of this research are critical to all educators, both teachers and administrators, in that they give a basis for emotional and practical support educators need to provide an optimal learning environment for their transgender and nonbinary students.

Delimitations

According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019), delimitations are limitations created by the researcher that can affect the study. One delimitation of this study is the choice of schools to explore. In choosing two schools that consider themselves inclusive and do not have to adhere too strictly to local and state standards, many of the responses were similar in nature. Overwhelmingly, participants responded that they felt addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students was important and that they were practicing behaviors that aided in this process. Also, both schools were in close proximity to each other; therefore, there was less opportunity to fully explore ecological systems theory and the various effects of different communities on their educational systems.

In collecting the demographics for my participants, I neglected to include information about their gender identities. I refrained from categorizing them as cisgender because that would have been an inference I would have been making about another person's identity. Nevertheless, it would have been helpful to this study to include how the participants identified and to analyze the impact that might have had on the responses. Furthermore, a delimitation was not having a transgender or nonbinary person to review my study for any assumptions I may have made, offensive phrasing I may have used, or missing but important aspects that I should have included.

Lastly, research bias is a delimitation that can affect the processing of narratives throughout the study. In the interviews with the participants, I focused on the interview prompts and did not shape questions based on presumptions. I also allowed participants to complete their answers and tried not to interrupt them.

Limitations

Limitations are conditions in a study that cannot be controlled by the researcher

(Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The most significant limitation I encountered in conducting this study was the COVID-19 pandemic, which created the need for social distancing and led to the inability to conduct interviews in my participants' physical presence. Because we were not able to meet physically, I was unable to control the participants' settings; and in communicating over the Internet, I had to depend on the workings of technology. Participants may have been distracted or concerned that their answers could be heard by others who were not a part of this study.

Furthermore, another limitation was the responses of the participants. In answering some of the questions, participants may have desired to present themselves in a particular manner. As much as I could encourage a safe environment, I had to depend on the honesty of the answers provided by the participants. Moreover, the participants expressed comfort with the topic. Thus, the responses were not as varied as they may have been if I had included participants who may not have been as comfortable with the topic.

Summary of Findings

This study revealed that educators understand the harsh conditions faced by transgender and nonbinary students and feel that it is essential to create welcoming and inclusive environments for their students. As teachers and administrators, they explained their importance in developing and maintaining practices and policies that reflect an inclusive school and that it is the responsibility of all members of the school community to support their transgender and nonbinary students. They also acknowledged that understanding the changes in language, societal norms, and laws in the larger community was important in shaping their beliefs and behaviors.

Educators find that, at times, they fall short of addressing the needs of their transgender and nonbinary students. Not only do they make mistakes that they regret, but they also sometimes do not know how they should address these needs. They lack materials and knowledge, and this creates a sense of frustration within them. Because of the possibility of making mistakes and backlash from the community at addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students, they have anxiety about creating a gender-inclusive school. Nevertheless, this study shows that educators care greatly about all their students and, above all, want transgender and nonbinary adolescents to have happy, healthy, productive experiences. They are willing to take the risks that could occur from gender inclusivity because in cultivating that culture, everyone can be their authentic selves and thrive academically, emotionally, socially, and physically in an environment that treats them with safety, respect, and dignity.

Significance of Study

This study was important in that it focused on the feelings and perceptions of educators, a topic that has not been explored as much as the practices and behaviors of educators and the experiences of transgender and nonbinary students. There is a lack of research on the mental and emotional states of teachers and administrators. By examining the experiences of educators, stakeholders can be better equipped in creating and supporting inclusive, welcoming, and productive educative environments for all community members. Furthermore, educators can participate in opportunities that would aid them outside of the school and improve their communities in supporting transgender and nonbinary people.

References

- Ashiabi, G. S., & O’Neal, K. K. (2015). Child social development in context: An examination of some propositions in Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, 5(2), 228–243.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098612X18758592>
- Baxter, D. (2016, November 26). *Image showing Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory* [Illustration]. Wikiversity.
https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/File:Social_identity_theory.png
- Bekiempis, V. (2015, June 24). New York fails transgender students: Report. *Newsweek*.
<https://www.newsweek.com/new-york-fails-transgender-youth-lgbt-trans-teens-346002>
- Bostock v. Clayton County, 590 U.S. __ (2020).
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/590/17-1618/>
- Bronfenbrenner, U (1981). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Butler, B. (2021, June 28). Charter schools supporting LGBTQ students and communities. *National Alliance for Public Charter Schools*.
<https://www.publiccharters.org/latest-news/2021/06/28/charter-schools-supporting-lgbtq-students-and-communities>
- Camera, L. (2015). Charter school enrollment on the rise. *U.S. News & World Report*.
<https://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2015/11/10/charter-schools-continue-to-flourish>

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020a, February 11). *Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*. Author. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020b, February 11). *Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): Social distancing*. Author. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Adolescent and School Health. (2017). Youth risk behavior survey data summary & trends report 2007-2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/trendsreport.pdf>
- Chen, J. C., Cruise-Roberson, G., & Howe, E. (25 January 2021). Enacting what we believe. The National SEED Project. <https://nationalseedproject.org/itemid-fix/entry/enacting-what-we-believe>
- Chen, G. (2019, April). Public school vs. private school. *Public School Review*. <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/public-school-vs-private-school>
- Choi, S. K., Baams, L., & Wilson, B. D. M. (2017). Youth in California's public schools: Differences across the state. *The Williams Institute*. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBTQ-Youth-CA-Public-Schools-Oct-2017.pdf>
- Collins, C., & Ehrenhalt, J. (2018, September 11). *Best practices for serving LGBTQ students*. Teaching Tolerance. <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/best-practices-for-serving-lgbtq-students>

Cox, C. (2021, April 8) As Arkansas bans treatments for transgender youth, 15 other states consider similar bills. *USA Today*.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2021/04/08/states-consider-bills-medical-treatments-transgender-youth/7129101002/>

Creswell, J. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Critchfield, H. (2021, April 9). Amid LGBTQ rights debate, few trans kids play in high school sports in NC. *NC Health News*.

<https://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2021/04/09/amid-lgbtq-rights-debate-few-trans-kids-play-in-high-school-sports-in-nc/>

David, L. (2015, December 15). Social identity theory (Tajfel, Turner). *Learning Theories*. <https://www.learning-theories.com/social-identity-theory-tajfel-turner.html>

Davis, N. (2012, January 2). Queer theory's relevance to student learning [text].

Association of American Colleges & Universities.

<https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/queer-theorys-relevance-student-learning>

Ecological systems theory. (2020, January 30). In *Wikipedia*.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_systems_theory

Ennis, D. (2019, December 18). Lawmakers in 6 states take action to restrict trans student athletes. *Outsports*. <https://www.outsports.com/2019/12/18/21028032/new-hampshire-washington-georgia-tennessee-missouri-restrict-transgender-athletes-sports>

- Eriksson, M., Ghazinour, M., & Hammarström, A. (2018). Different uses of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory in public mental health research: What is their value for guiding public mental health policy and practice? *Social Theory & Health*, 16(4), 414–433. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41285-018-0065-6>
- Exec. Order No. 14021, 86 F.R. 13803 (2021, Mar. 11).
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-03-11/pdf/2021-05200.pdf>
- Exec. Order No. 117, 3 C.F.R. (2020). <https://governor.nc.gov/media/1759/open>
- Fagell, P. (2019, May 7). Teacher wants to know if he has to call a student “they.” *Kappanonline.Org*. <https://kappanonline.org/teacher-student-they-transgender-pronoun-grammar-career-confidential-fagell/>
- Ferriola-Bruckenstein, E. (2018, May 9). *Policing gender in violation of the first amendment*. <https://firstamendmentlawreview.org/2018/05/09/policing-gender-in-violation-of-the-first-amendment/>
- Findlaw. (2016, June). *Public school*. Findlaw. <https://education.findlaw.com/education-options/public-school.html>
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: An introduction* (Vintage Books Ed., March 1990). Random House.
- Fox, R. A., & Buchanan, N. K. (2017). *The Wiley handbook of school choice: An international sourcebook for practitioners, researchers, policy-makers and journalists*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. Jossey-Bass.
- Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408-1416.

- Gallegos, E. (2022, June 23). *Biden proposes broad expansion of Title IX, including new protections for LGBTQ students*. EdSource. <https://edsource.org/updates/biden-proposes-broad-expansion-of-title-ix-including-new-protections-for-lgbtq-students>
- Gender Spectrum. (n.d.). The language of gender. <https://www.genderspectrum.org/the-language-of-gender/>
- Gender Spectrum. (2019). Professional development and training. <https://genderspectrum.org/work/professional-development-and-training>
- Gerstmann, E. (2020, January). *Will states ban trans athletes from competing?* Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/evangerstmann/2020/01/09/will-states-ban-trans-athletes-from-competing/>
- Gilstrap, L. L., & Zierten, E. A. (2020, September 21). *Urie Bronfenbrenner / Russian-born American psychologist*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Urie-Bronfenbrenner>
- Gjelten, E. A. (2015, April). *Can private schools discriminate against students?* Lawyers.Com. <https://www.lawyers.com/legal-info/research/education-law/can-private-schools-discriminate-against-students.html>
- GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders. (2010). The right to establish a GSA in public schools: A basic primer. *Glad Answers*, 4.
- GLSEN. (2018, October 15). GLSEN releases new national school climate survey report. <https://www.glsen.org/article/glsen-releases-new-national-school-climate-survey-report>

GLSEN. (2020). Model local education agency policy on transgender and nonbinary students. <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Model-Local-Education-Agency-Policy-on-Transgender-Nonbinary-Students.pdf>

GLSEN and the National Center for Transgender Equality. (2018, September). Model school district policy on transgender and gender nonconforming students. Transequality.org. https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/images/resources/trans_school_district_model_policy_FINAL.pdf

Gold, S., Sneed, M., & Tellock, M. (2017, February 24). *U.S. departments of education and justice withdraw guidance on transgender students*. Focus on Regulation. <https://www.hlregulation.com/2017/02/23/u-s-departments-of-education-and-justice-withdraw-guidance-on-transgender-students/>

Gordon, A. R., Conron, K. J., Calzo, J. P., White, M. T., Reisner, S. L., & Austin, S. B. (2018). Gender expression, violence, and bullying victimization: Findings from probability samples of high school students in 4 US school districts. *Journal of School Health*, 88(4), 306–314.

Graham, P., & Ferriter, W. M. (2009). *Building a professional learning community at workTM: A guide to the first year* (2nd ed.). Solution Tree.

Greyerbiehl, L., Simmons, C., Seguin B. C., & West, E. (2015). Celebrating LGBTQ youth: The role of educators and families. *Colleagues*, 11(1), Article 5. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1215&context=colleagues>

- Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). *School culture rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it* (1st ed.). Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.
- Gupta, K. (2021, October). Gov. Gavin Newsom signs AB 245 to allow transgender students to use lived names on diplomas. *The Daily Californian*.
<https://www.dailycal.org/2021/10/13/gov-gavin-newsom-signs-ab-245-to-allow-transgender-students-to-use-lived-names-on-diplomas/>
- Gutting, G., & Oksala, J. (2019). Michel Foucault. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Spring 2019). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/foucault/>
- Hall, G. E., & Hord, S. M. (2014). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Halldorson, J. D. (2009). *An exploration of Tajfel's social identity theory and its application to understanding Métis as a social identity*. University of Manitoba.
- Hammond, J. (n.d.). Informed consent in human subjects research. *University of Southern California*, 1-22.
https://www.academia.edu/30470004/Informed_Consent_in_Human_Subjects_Research
- Hogg, M. A. (2000). Social identity and social comparison. In J. Suls, & L. Wheeler (eds.), *Handbook of social comparison*. The Springer Series in Social Clinical Psychology. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-4237-7_19
- House Bill 2, H.R. 2, 2016 Gen. Assem., 2016-3 § 1.2 (N.C. Mar. 23, 2016).
<https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2015E2/Bills/House/PDF/H2v4.pdf>

House Bill 142, H.R. 142, 2017 Gen. Assem., 2017 Sess. § 2 (N.C. Mar. 30, 2017).

<https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/House/PDF/H142v4.pdf>

Howard University. (2018). Introduction to transgender rights in the United States.

Howard University Law Library.

<https://library.law.howard.edu/civilrightshistory/transgender>

Human Rights Watch. (2016). *Like walking through a hailstorm / Discrimination against LGBT youth in US schools*. Human Rights Watch.

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/12/07/walking-through-hailstorm/discrimination-against-lgbt-youth-us-schools>

Jagose, A. (2005). Queer theory. In M. C. Horowitz (Ed.), *New dictionary of the history of ideas* (Vol. 5, pp. 1980–1985). Charles Scribner's Sons; Gale eBooks.

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3424300651/GVRL?u=uiuc_uc&sid=zotero&xid=01182e7b

Jenco, M. (2019). Study: Transgender teens at higher risk of violence, suicide attempts.

AAP News. <https://www.aappublications.org/news/2019/01/24/transgender012419>

Johns, M. M., Lowry, R., Andrzejewski, J., Barrios, L. C., Demissie, Z., McManus, T.,

Rasberry, C. N., Robin, L., & Underwood, J. M. (2019). Transgender identity and experiences of violence victimization, substance use, suicide risk, and sexual risk behaviors among high school students—19 states and large urban school districts.

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 68, 67–71.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6803a3>

- Johnson, L. S. (2014). *The transgender student: Guidelines for independent schools working with and supporting transgender and gender nonconforming students*. National Association of Independent Schools.
<https://www.nais.org/getmedia/dc0a3291-a7b9-44f6-be3b-703a618a4079/TheTransgenderStudent-2014.pdf>
- Kang, A. (2014, June 9). *Kentucky's Atherton High School implements transgender-inclusive non-discrimination policy*. GLAAD.
<https://www.glaad.org/blog/kentuckys-atherton-high-school-implements-transgender-inclusive-non-discrimination-policy>
- Killian, J. (2021, April 20). Transgender treatment ban won't see a vote in NC Senate. *The Pulse: NC Policy Watch*.
<https://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2021/04/20/transgender-treatment-ban-wont-see-a-vote-in-nc-senate/#sthash.sSsNvO9o.dpbs>
- Klages, M. (1997). Queer theory. <https://www.scribd.com/document/155558155/Queer-Theory-Mary-Klages>
- Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018a). *The 2017 national school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. GLSEN.
- Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018b). *The national school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. GLSEN.

Lampen, C. (2018, May 16). *Okay, so what does it actually mean to be sexually fluid?*

Women's Health. <https://www.womenshealthmag.com/sex-and-love/a20662770/what-is-sexually-fluid/>

Lee, H. & Morris, K. (2022, May 25). Charlotte Pride president: NC bill would 'forcibly out' transgender kids to their parents. *WCNC Charlotte*.

<https://www.wcnc.com/article/news/politics/north-carolina-parent-bill-of-rights-lgbtq-students-school-changes/275-875ef7a4-f7ef-418d-b25f-7c5bdc6e7b70>

LGBTQIA Resource Center. (2020, January). LGBTQIA Resource Center glossary.

<https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary>

Lhamon, C. E., & Gupta, V. (2016). *Dear colleague letter: Transgender students*. U.S. Dept. of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

Long, C. (n.d.). *An interview with Kevin Jennings, founder of GLSEN: Safe schools for everyone*. NEA. <http://www.nea.org/tools/30428.htm>

Los Angeles County Department of Education. (2011). About the FAIR education act.

<https://www.lacoe.edu/Curriculum-Instruction/History-Social-Science/FAIR-Act>

Luneau, D. (2022, May 6). Human rights campaign praises Phoenix Union High School

District for adopting resolution opposing discrimination against transgender students. *Human Rights Campaign*. <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/human-rights-campaign-praises-phoenix-union-high-school-district-for-adopting-resolution-opposing-discrimination-against-transgender-students>

Mangin, M. (2018, September 24). Supporting transgender and gender-expansive children in school. *Kaplanonline.Org*. <https://kappanonline.org/mangin-transgender-gender-identity-school-policies-gender-expansive/>

- Marcus, I. (1987). Reflections on the significance of the sex/gender system: Divorce law reform in New York. *Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law*, 42(55), 55-73.
https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1404&context=journal_articles
- Mayo, C. (2014). *LGBTQ youth & education: Policies & practices*. Teachers College Press.
- McGarry, R. (2013). Build a curriculum that includes everyone. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 94(5), 27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171309400506>
- 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(10), 1175–1188.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-010-9540-7>
- Mero-Jaffe, I. (2011). ‘Is that what I said?’ Interview transcript approval by participants: An aspect of ethics in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 10(3), 231–247. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691101000304>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Minero, E. (2018, April). *Schools struggle to support LGBTQ students*. Edutopia.
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/schools-struggle-support-lgbtq-students>
- Movement Advancement Project. (n.d.). *Equality maps: Safe school laws*. Author.
https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/safe_school_laws

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. (2018). What is a charter school?

<https://www.publiccharters.org/about-charter-schools/what-charter-school>

National Association of Independent Schools. (2020). Principles of good practice.

https://www.nais.org/getmedia/39e99ca5-0821-47d7-b710-eeaf6e0ca114/NAIS_PGP_2017.pdf

National Education Association. (2016). Legal guidance on transgender students' rights.

National Education Association. https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/2018_Legal%20Guidance_Transgender%20Student%20Rights.pdf

O'Donnell, K. J. (2020). *Examining school administrators' beliefs & perceptions regarding transgender students* (Publication No. 27829673) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern Maine]. ProQuest.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/2395840035/abstract/2A27CC95759B4DED/PQ/1>

Oswald, R. F., Blume, L. B., & Marks, S. R. (2005). Decentering heteronormativity: A model for family studies. In V. L. Bengtson, A. C. Acock, K. R. Allen, P. Dilworth-Anderson, & D. M. Klein (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theory & research* (pp. 143–165). Sage Publications, Inc.

Page, M. L. (2017). From awareness to action: Teacher attitude and implementation of LGBT-inclusive curriculum in the English language arts classroom. *SAGE Open*, 7(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017739949>

Parents' Bill of Rights, H.R. 755, 2021st Gen. Assem., 2021st Sess. (N.C. May 3, 2021).

<https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2021/Bills/House/PDF/H755v5.pdf>

- Paterson, E. (2021). Accidentally getting someone's pronouns wrong really isn't a disaster. *Vogue*. <https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/getting-pronouns-wrong>
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Pennell, S. M. (2017). Training secondary teachers to support LGBTQ+ students: Practical applications from theory and research. *High School Journal*, 101(1), 62. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2017.0016>
- Peoples, K. (2020). *How to write a phenomenological dissertation: A step-by-step guide* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Petrilli, M. (2017, June 5). *Are private schools allowed to discriminate?* Education Next. <https://www.educationnext.org/private-schools-allowed-discriminate/>
- Plummer, K. (2011). Critical human and queer theory: Living with the tensions. In *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Polaski, A. (2021, March 8). In important victory for transgender students' safety and privacy, North Carolina will default to students' preferred name for school records. *Campaign for Southern Equality*. <https://southernequality.org/in-important-victory-for-transgender-students-safety-and-privacy-north-carolina-will-default-to-students-preferred-name-for-school-records/>
- Polis, J. (2018, March 21). *H.R.5374 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Student non-discrimination act of 2018* [Webpage]. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5374/text>

- Prescott, S. (2018, November 28). *What are the challenges in implementing queer-inclusive curricula?* New America. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/challenges-in-lgbtq/>
- Reilly, K. (2019, November). *"This isn't just about a pronoun." Teachers and trans students are clashing over whose rights come first.* Time. <https://time.com/5721482/transgender-students-pronouns-teacher-lawsuits/>
- Rosa, E. M., & Tudge, J. (2013). Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development: Its evolution from ecology to bioecology. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 5(4), 243–258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12022>
- Rubin, G. S. (2011). *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin reader.* Duke University Press Books.
- Ruel, E., Wagner, W. E., & Gillespie, B. J. (2016). *The practice of survey research: Theory and applications.* SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483391700>
- Russell, B. Z. (2022, March). *House passes anti-trans youth treatment bill.* Idaho Press. https://www.idahopress.com/news/local/house-passes-anti-trans-youth-treatment-bill/article_ebb0623c-6df9-5a94-8beb-16d5c7688834.html
- Russo, J. (n.d.). The queer dictionary: Definition of "heteronormativity." *The Queer Dictionary*. <http://queerdictionary.blogspot.com/2014/09/definition-of-heteronormativity.html>
- Ryan, J. (2014, June 6). *Atherton high school finalizes anti-discrimination policies for transgender students.* WFPL.org. <https://wfpl.org/atherton-high-school-finalizes-anti-discrimination-policies-transgender-students/>

Sadowski, M. (2020). *Safe is not enough: Better schools for LGBTQ students*. Harvard Education Press.

SAFE Act, H.R. 1570, 93rd, Regular Session 2021 § 2 (Ark. Apr. 6, 2021).

<https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Bills/FTPDocument?path=%2FBills%2F2021R%2FPublic%2FHB1570.pdf>

Senate Bill 48, S. 48, 2011 Leg. § 3 (Cal. July 13, 2011).

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120SB48&search_keywords=

Shipman, M. (2019, November 4). Study highlights fluid sexual orientation in many teens. *NC State News*. <https://news.ncsu.edu/2019/11/teen-sexual-orientation/>

Smith, D. (1998, January 17). “Queer theory” is entering the literary mainstream. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/17/books/queer-theory-is-entering-the-literary-mainstream.html>

Sorto, G. (2019, October 2). *A teacher says he was fired for refusing to use male pronouns for a transgender student*. CNN.

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/02/us/virginia-teacher-says-wrongfully-fired-student-wrong-pronouns-trnd/index.html>

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2018, December 13). *Classroom resources*. Teaching Tolerance. <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources>

Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(3), 224–237. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2695870>

Stewart, P. (2016, December 7). *Witness: A teacher unable to protect LGBT students*.

Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/07/witness-teacher-unable-protect-lgbt-students>

Stoltzfus, K. (2016, December 15). *Many teachers can't talk about LGBT issues in the classroom, report finds*. Education Week - Teaching Now.

http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2016/12/teachers_can't_talk_about_t_lgbt_issues.html?cmp=SOC-SHR-FB

Terry, D. J., Hogg, M. A., & White, K. M. (1999). The theory of planned behaviour: Self-identity, social identity and group norms. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 38(3), 225–244. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466699164149>

Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, A. (2019). Limitations and delimitations in the research process. *Perioperative Nursing (GORNA)*, 7(3), 155–162.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.2552022>

Thoreson, R. (2016, September 14). *Shut out / Restrictions on bathroom and locker room access for transgender youth in US schools*. Human Rights Watch.

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/09/14/shut-out/restrictions-bathroom-and-locker-room-access-transgender-youth-us-schools>

Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688 (2015).

<https://www.justice.gov/crt/title-ix-education-amendments-1972>

U.S. Department of Education. (2018, March 1). Family educational rights and privacy act. [Guides]. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Warwick International Higher Education Academy. (2021, June 3). Challenging incorrect pronouns and misgendering.

[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/academy/activities/learningcircles/transqueerp
edagogies/queeringuniversity/resources/misgendering/](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/academy/activities/learningcircles/transqueerp
edagogies/queeringuniversity/resources/misgendering/)

Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. The Free Press.

Weiss, R. S. (1995). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies* (1st ed.). Free Press.

Wilchins, R. (2014). *Queer theory, gender theory: An instant primer*. Riverdale Avenue Books.

Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Youth Health Protection Act, S. 514, 2021st Gen. Assem., 2021st Sess. § 1 (N.C., as introduced, Apr. 5, 2021).

<https://ncleg.gov/Sessions/2021/Bills/Senate/PDF/S514v0.pdf>

Yurcaba, J. (2021, April 8). *Teachers fear transgender students are becoming "political pawns" for GOP bills*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/teachers-fear-transgender-students-are-becoming-political-pawns-gop-bills-n1263526>

Zavala, M. (2022, August 7). *Queer theory: Researching with queer theory*. Illinois Library. <https://guides.library.illinois.edu/queertheory/background>

Appendix A**Student Non-Discrimination Act of 2018**

(2) Educational institutions commencing planned change in admissions

in regard to admissions to educational institutions, this section shall not apply

(A) for one year from June 23, 1972, nor for six years after June 23, 1972, in the case of an educational institution which has begun the process of changing from being an institution which admits only students of one sex to being an institution which admits students of both sexes, but only if it is carrying out a plan for such a change which is approved by the Secretary of Education or

(B) for seven years from the date an educational institution begins the process of changing from being an institution which admits only students of only one sex to being an institution which admits students of both sexes, but only if it is carrying out a plan for such a change which is approved by the Secretary of Education, whichever is the later;

(3) Educational institutions of religious organizations with contrary religious tenets

this section shall not apply to an educational institution which is controlled by a religious organization if the application of this subsection would not be consistent with the religious tenets of such organization;

(4) Educational institutions training individuals for military services or merchant marine

this section shall not apply to an educational institution whose primary purpose is the training of individuals for the military services of the United States, or the merchant marine;

(5) Public educational institutions with traditional and continuing admissions policy

in regard to admissions this section shall not apply to any public institution of undergraduate higher education which is an institution that traditionally and continually from its establishment has had a policy of admitting only students of one sex;

(6) Social fraternities or sororities; voluntary youth service organizations

this section shall not apply to membership practices -

(A) of a social fraternity or social sorority which is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of title 26, the active membership of which consists primarily of students in attendance at an institution of higher education, or

(B) of the Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and voluntary youth service organizations which are so exempt, the membership of which has traditionally been limited to persons of one sex and principally to persons of less than nineteen years of age;

(7) Boy or Girl conferences

this section shall not apply to -

(A) any program or activity of the American Legion undertaken in connection with the organization or operation of any Boys State conference, Boys Nation conference, Girls State conference, or Girls Nation conference; or

(B) any program or activity of any secondary school or educational institution specifically for -

(i) the promotion of any Boys State conference, Boys Nation conference, Girls State conference, or Girls Nation conference; or

(ii) the selection of students to attend any such conference;

(8) Father-son or mother-daughter activities at educational institutions

this section shall not preclude father-son or mother-daughter activities at an educational institution, but if such activities are provided for students of one sex, opportunities for reasonably comparable activities shall be provided for students of the other sex; and

(9) Institution of higher education scholarship awards in "beauty" pageants

this section shall not apply with respect to any scholarship or other financial assistance awarded by an institution of higher education to any individual because such individual has received such award in any pageant in which the attainment of such award is based upon a combination of factors related to the personal appearance, poise, and talent of such individual and in which participation is limited to individuals of one sex only, so long as such pageant is in compliance with other nondiscrimination provisions of Federal law.

(b) Preferential or disparate treatment because of imbalance in participation or receipt of Federal benefits; statistical evidence of imbalance

Nothing contained in subsection (a) of this section shall be interpreted to require any educational institution to grant preferential or disparate treatment to the members of one sex on account of an imbalance which may exist with respect to the total number or percentage of persons of that sex participating in or receiving the benefits of any federally supported program or activity, in comparison with the total number or percentage of persons of that sex in any community, State, section, or other area: *Provided*, That this subsection shall not be construed to prevent the consideration in any hearing or proceeding under this chapter of statistical evidence tending to show that such an imbalance exists with respect to the participation in, or receipt of the benefits of, any such program or activity by the members of one sex.

(c) "Educational institution" defined

For purposes of this chapter an educational institution means any public or private preschool, elementary, or secondary school, or any institution of vocational, professional, or higher education, except that in the case of an educational institution composed of more than one school, college, or department which are administratively separate units, such term means each such school, college, or department.

(Pub. L. 92-318, title IX, Sec. 901, June 23, 1972, 86 Stat. 373; Pub. L. 93-568, Sec. 3(a), Dec. 31, 1974, 88 Stat. 1862; Pub. L. 94-482, title IV, Sec. 412(a), Oct. 12, 1976, 90 Stat. 2234; Pub. L. 96-88, title III, Sec. 301(a)(1), title V, Sec. 507, Oct. 17, 1979, 93 Stat. 677, 692; Pub. L. 99-514, Sec. 2, Oct. 22, 1986, 100 Stat. 2095.)

Appendix B

Dear Colleague Letter – Transgender Students



U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division



U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights

May 13, 2016

Dear Colleague:

Schools across the country strive to create and sustain inclusive, supportive, safe, and nondiscriminatory communities for all students. In recent years, we have received an increasing number of questions from parents, teachers, principals, and school superintendents about civil rights protections for transgender students. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and its implementing regulations prohibit sex discrimination in educational programs and activities operated by recipients of Federal financial assistance.¹ This prohibition encompasses discrimination based on a student's gender identity, including discrimination based on a student's transgender status. This letter summarizes a school's Title IX obligations regarding transgender students and explains how the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) evaluate a school's compliance with these obligations.

ED and DOJ (the Departments) have determined that this letter is *significant guidance*.² This guidance does not add requirements to applicable law, but provides information and examples to inform recipients about how the Departments evaluate whether covered entities are complying with their legal obligations. If you have questions or are interested in commenting on this guidance, please contact ED at ocr@ed.gov or 800-421-3481 (TDD 800-877-8339); or DOJ at education@usdoj.gov or 877-292-3804 (TTY: 800-514-0383).

Accompanying this letter is a separate document from ED's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Examples of Policies and Emerging Practices for Supporting Transgender Students*. The examples in that document are taken from policies that school districts, state education agencies, and high school athletics associations around the country have adopted to help ensure that transgender students enjoy a supportive and nondiscriminatory school environment. Schools are encouraged to consult that document for practical ways to meet Title IX's requirements.³

Terminology

- ☐ *Gender identity* refers to an individual's internal sense of gender. A person's gender identity may be different from or the same as the person's sex assigned at birth.
- ☐ *Sex assigned at birth* refers to the sex designation recorded on an infant's birth certificate should such a record be provided at birth.
- ☐ *Transgender* describes those individuals whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. A *transgender male* is someone who identifies as male but was assigned the sex of female at birth; a *transgender female* is someone who identifies as female but was assigned the sex of male at birth.



U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division



U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights

May 13, 2016

Dear Colleague:

Schools across the country strive to create and sustain inclusive, supportive, safe, and nondiscriminatory communities for all students. In recent years, we have received an increasing number of questions from parents, teachers, principals, and school superintendents about civil rights protections for transgender students. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and its implementing regulations prohibit sex discrimination in educational programs and activities operated by recipients of Federal financial assistance.¹ This prohibition encompasses discrimination based on a student's gender identity, including discrimination based on a student's transgender status. This letter summarizes a school's Title IX obligations regarding transgender students and explains how the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) evaluate a school's compliance with these obligations.

ED and DOJ (the Departments) have determined that this letter is *significant guidance*.² This guidance does not add requirements to applicable law, but provides information and examples to inform recipients about how the Departments evaluate whether covered entities are complying with their legal obligations. If you have questions or are interested in commenting on this guidance, please contact ED at ocr@ed.gov or 800-421-3481 (TDD 800-877-8339); or DOJ at education@usdoj.gov or 877-292-3804 (TTY: 800-514-0383).

Accompanying this letter is a separate document from ED's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Examples of Policies and Emerging Practices for Supporting Transgender Students*. The examples in that document are taken from policies that school districts, state education agencies, and high school athletics associations around the country have adopted to help ensure that transgender students enjoy a supportive and nondiscriminatory school environment. Schools are encouraged to consult that document for practical ways to meet Title IX's requirements.³

Terminology

- ☐ *Gender identity* refers to an individual's internal sense of gender. A person's gender identity may be different from or the same as the person's sex assigned at birth.
- ☐ *Sex assigned at birth* refers to the sex designation recorded on an infant's birth certificate should such a record be provided at birth.
- ☐ *Transgender* describes those individuals whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. A *transgender male* is someone who identifies as male but was assigned the sex of female at birth; a *transgender female* is someone who identifies as female but was assigned the sex of male at birth.

- *Gender transition* refers to the process in which transgender individuals begin asserting the sex that corresponds to their gender identity instead of the sex they were assigned at birth. During gender transition, individuals begin to live and identify as the sex consistent with their gender identity and may dress differently, adopt a new name, and use pronouns consistent with their gender identity. Transgender individuals may undergo gender transition at any stage of their lives, and gender transition can happen swiftly or over a long duration of time.

Compliance with Title IX

As a condition of receiving Federal funds, a school agrees that it will not exclude, separate, deny benefits to, or otherwise treat differently on the basis of sex any person in its educational programs or activities unless expressly authorized to do so under Title IX or its implementing regulations.⁴ The Departments treat a student's gender identity as the student's sex for purposes of Title IX and its implementing regulations. This means that a school must not treat a transgender student differently from the way it treats other students of the same gender identity. The Departments' interpretation is consistent with courts' and other agencies' interpretations of Federal laws prohibiting sex discrimination.⁵

The Departments interpret Title IX to require that when a student or the student's parent or guardian, as appropriate, notifies the school administration that the student will assert a gender identity that differs from previous representations or records, the school will begin treating the student consistent with the student's gender identity. Under Title IX, there is no medical diagnosis or treatment requirement that students must meet as a prerequisite to being treated consistent with their gender identity.⁶ Because transgender students often are unable to obtain identification documents that reflect their gender identity (*e.g.*, due to restrictions imposed by state or local law in their place of birth or residence),⁷ requiring students to produce such identification documents in order to treat them consistent with their gender identity may violate Title IX when doing so has the practical effect of limiting or denying students equal access to an educational program or activity.

A school's Title IX obligation to ensure nondiscrimination on the basis of sex requires schools to provide transgender students equal access to educational programs and activities even in circumstances in which other students, parents, or community members raise objections or concerns. As is consistently recognized in civil rights cases, the desire to accommodate others' discomfort cannot justify a policy that singles out and disadvantages a particular class of students.⁸

1. Safe and Nondiscriminatory Environment

Schools have a responsibility to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students, including transgender students. Harassment that targets a student based on gender identity, transgender status, or gender transition is harassment based on sex, and the Departments enforce Title IX accordingly.⁹ If sex-based harassment creates a hostile environment, the school must take prompt and effective steps to end the harassment, prevent its recurrence, and, as appropriate, remedy its effects. A school's failure to treat students consistent with their gender identity may create or contribute to a hostile environment in violation of Title IX. For a more detailed discussion of Title IX

requirements related to sex-based harassment, see guidance documents from ED's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) that are specific to this topic.¹⁰

2. Identification Documents, Names, and Pronouns

Under Title IX, a school must treat students consistent with their gender identity even if their education records or identification documents indicate a different sex. The Departments have resolved Title IX investigations with agreements committing that school staff and contractors will use pronouns and names consistent with a transgender student's gender identity.¹¹

3. Sex-Segregated Activities and Facilities

Title IX's implementing regulations permit a school to provide sex-segregated restrooms, locker rooms, shower facilities, housing, and athletic teams, as well as single-sex classes under certain circumstances.¹² When a school provides sex-segregated activities and facilities, transgender students must be allowed to participate in such activities and access such facilities consistent with their gender identity.¹³

- **Restrooms and Locker Rooms.** A school may provide separate facilities on the basis of sex, but must allow transgender students access to such facilities consistent with their gender identity.¹⁴ A school may not require transgender students to use facilities inconsistent with their gender identity or to use individual-user facilities when other students are not required to do so. A school may, however, make individual-user options available to all students who voluntarily seek additional privacy.¹⁵
- **Athletics.** Title IX regulations permit a school to operate or sponsor sex-segregated athletics teams when selection for such teams is based upon competitive skill or when the activity involved is a contact sport.¹⁶ A school may not, however, adopt or adhere to requirements that rely on overly broad generalizations or stereotypes about the differences between transgender students and other students of the same sex (*i.e.*, the same gender identity) or others' discomfort with transgender students.¹⁷ Title IX does not prohibit age-appropriate, tailored requirements based on sound, current, and research-based medical knowledge about the impact of the students' participation on the competitive fairness or physical safety of the sport.¹⁸
- **Single-Sex Classes.** Although separating students by sex in classes and activities is generally prohibited, nonvocational elementary and secondary schools may offer nonvocational single-sex classes and extracurricular activities under certain circumstances.¹⁹ When offering such classes and activities, a school must allow transgender students to participate consistent with their gender identity.
- **Single-Sex Schools.** Title IX does not apply to the admissions policies of certain educational institutions, including nonvocational elementary and secondary schools, and private undergraduate colleges.²⁰ Those schools are therefore permitted under Title IX to set their own

sex-based admissions policies. Nothing in Title IX prohibits a private undergraduate women's college from admitting transgender women if it so chooses.

- **Social Fraternities and Sororities.** Title IX does not apply to the membership practices of social fraternities and sororities.²¹ Those organizations are therefore permitted under Title IX to set their own policies regarding the sex, including gender identity, of their members. Nothing in Title IX prohibits a fraternity from admitting transgender men or a sorority from admitting transgender women if it so chooses.
- **Housing and Overnight Accommodations.** Title IX allows a school to provide separate housing on the basis of sex.²² But a school must allow transgender students to access housing consistent with their gender identity and may not require transgender students to stay in single-occupancy accommodations or to disclose personal information when not required of other students. Nothing in Title IX prohibits a school from honoring a student's voluntary request for single-occupancy accommodations if it so chooses.²³
- **Other Sex-Specific Activities and Rules.** Unless expressly authorized by Title IX or its implementing regulations, a school may not segregate or otherwise distinguish students on the basis of their sex, including gender identity, in any school activities or the application of any school rule. Likewise, a school may not discipline students or exclude them from participating in activities for appearing or behaving in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity or that does not conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity (e.g., in yearbook photographs, at school dances, or at graduation ceremonies).²⁴

4. *Privacy and Education Records*

Protecting transgender students' privacy is critical to ensuring they are treated consistent with their gender identity. The Departments may find a Title IX violation when a school limits students' educational rights or opportunities by failing to take reasonable steps to protect students' privacy related to their transgender status, including their birth name or sex assigned at birth.²⁵ Nonconsensual disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII), such as a student's birth name or sex assigned at birth, could be harmful to or invade the privacy of transgender students and may also violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).²⁶ A school may maintain records with this information, but such records should be kept confidential.

- **Disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information from Education Records.** FERPA generally prevents the nonconsensual disclosure of PII from a student's education records; one exception is that records may be disclosed to individual school personnel who have been determined to have a legitimate educational interest in the information.²⁷ Even when a student has disclosed the student's transgender status to some members of the school community, schools may not rely on this FERPA exception to disclose PII from education records to other school personnel who do not have a legitimate educational interest in the information. Inappropriately disclosing (or requiring students or their parents to disclose) PII from education records to the school community may

violate FERPA and interfere with transgender students' right under Title IX to be treated consistent with their gender identity.

- **Disclosure of Directory Information.** Under FERPA's implementing regulations, a school may disclose appropriately designated directory information from a student's education record if disclosure would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy.²⁸ Directory information may include a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance.²⁹ School officials may not designate students' sex, including transgender status, as directory information because doing so could be harmful or an invasion of privacy.³⁰ A school also must allow eligible students (*i.e.*, students who have reached 18 years of age or are attending a postsecondary institution) or parents, as appropriate, a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose a student's directory information.³¹
- **Amendment or Correction of Education Records.** A school may receive requests to correct a student's education records to make them consistent with the student's gender identity. Updating a transgender student's education records to reflect the student's gender identity and new name will help protect privacy and ensure personnel consistently use appropriate names and pronouns.
 - Under FERPA, a school must consider the request of an eligible student or parent to amend information in the student's education records that is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's privacy rights.³² If the school does not amend the record, it must inform the requestor of its decision and of the right to a hearing. If, after the hearing, the school does not amend the record, it must inform the requestor of the right to insert a statement in the record with the requestor's comments on the contested information, a statement that the requestor disagrees with the hearing decision, or both. That statement must be disclosed whenever the record to which the statement relates is disclosed.³³
 - Under Title IX, a school must respond to a request to amend information related to a student's transgender status consistent with its general practices for amending other students' records.³⁴ If a student or parent complains about the school's handling of such a request, the school must promptly and equitably resolve the complaint under the school's Title IX grievance procedures.³⁵

* * *

We appreciate the work that many schools, state agencies, and other organizations have undertaken to make educational programs and activities welcoming, safe, and inclusive for all students.

Sincerely,

/s/

Catherine E. Lhamon
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education

/s/

Vanita Gupta
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Justice

Appendix C

Dear Colleague Letter Withdrawing and Rescinding Previous Documents

Supporting Transgender Students' Protection



U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division



U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights

February 22, 2017

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this guidance is to inform you that the Department of Justice and the Department of Education are withdrawing the statements of policy and guidance reflected in:

- Letter to Emily Prince from James A. Ferg-Cadima, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education dated January 7, 2015; and
- Dear Colleague Letter on Transgender Students jointly issued by the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and the Department of Education dated May 13, 2016.

These guidance documents take the position that the prohibitions on discrimination “on the basis of sex” in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), 20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq., and its implementing regulations, see, e.g., 34 C.F.R. § 106.33, require access to sex-segregated facilities based on gender identity. These guidance documents do not, however, contain extensive legal analysis or explain how the position is consistent with the express language of Title IX, nor did they undergo any formal public process.

This interpretation has given rise to significant litigation regarding school restrooms and locker rooms. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit concluded that the term “sex” in the regulations is ambiguous and deferred to what the court characterized as the “novel” interpretation advanced in the guidance. By contrast, a federal district court in Texas held that the term “sex” unambiguously refers to biological sex and that, in any event, the guidance was “legislative and substantive” and thus formal rulemaking should have occurred prior to the adoption of any such policy. In August of 2016, the Texas court preliminarily enjoined enforcement of the interpretation, and that nationwide injunction has not been overturned.

In addition, the Departments believe that, in this context, there must be due regard for the primary role of the States and local school districts in establishing educational policy.

In these circumstances, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice have decided to withdraw and rescind the above-referenced guidance documents in order to further and more completely consider the legal issues involved. The Departments thus will not rely on the views expressed within them.

Dear Colleague Letter

Page 2 of 2

Please note that this withdrawal of these guidance documents does not leave students without protections from discrimination, bullying, or harassment. All schools must ensure that all students, including LGBT students, are able to learn and thrive in a safe environment. The Department of Education Office for Civil Rights will continue its duty under law to hear all claims of discrimination and will explore every appropriate opportunity to protect all students and to encourage civility in our classrooms. The Department of Education and the Department of Justice are committed to the application of Title IX and other federal laws to ensure such protection.

This guidance does not add requirements to applicable law. If you have questions or are interested in commenting on this letter, please contact the Department of Education at ocr@ed.gov or 800-421-3481 (TDD: 800-877-8339); or the Department of Justice at education@usdoj.gov or 877-292-3804 (TTY: 800-514-0383).

Sincerely,

/s/

Sandra Battle
Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education

/s/

T.E. Wheeler, II
Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Justice

Appendix D**Executive Order 14021**

Executive Order 14021

Presidential Documents Federal Register / Vol. 86, No. 46 / Thursday, March 11, 2021 /

Presidential Documents 13803 Executive Order 14021 of March 8, 2021 Guaranteeing an Educational Environment Free From Discrimination on the Basis of Sex, Including

Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity By the authority vested in me as President by the

Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. It is the policy of my Administration that all students should be

guaranteed an educational environment free from discrimination on the basis of sex,

including discrimination in the form of sexual harassment, which encompasses sexual

violence, and including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender

identity. For students attending schools and other educational institutions that receive

Federal financial assistance, this guarantee is codified, in part, in Title IX of the

Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq., which prohibits discrimination

on the basis of sex in education programs or activities receiving Federal financial

assistance. Sec. 2. Review of Agency Actions. (a) Within 100 days of the date of this

order, the Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Attorney General, shall review

all existing regulations, orders, guidance documents, policies, and any other similar

agency actions (collectively, agency actions) that are or may be inconsistent with the

policy set forth in section 1 of this order, and provide the findings of this review to the

Director of the Office of Management and Budget. (i) As part of the review required

under subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary of Education shall review the rule

entitled “Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities

Receiving Federal Financial Assistance,” 85 FR 30026 (May 19, 2020), and any other

agency actions taken pursuant to that rule, for consistency with governing law, including Title IX, and with the policy set forth in section 1 of this order. (ii) As soon as practicable, and as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, the Secretary of Education shall review existing guidance and issue new guidance as needed on the implementation of the rule described in subsection (a)(i) of this section, for consistency with governing law, including Title IX, and with the policy set forth in section 1 of this order. (iii) The Secretary of Education shall consider suspending, revising, or rescinding—or publishing for notice and comment proposed rules suspending, revising, or rescinding—those agency actions that are inconsistent with the policy set forth in section 1 of this order as soon as practicable and as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, and may issue such requests for information as would facilitate doing so.

(b) The Secretary of Education shall consider taking additional enforcement actions, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, to enforce the policy set forth in section 1 of this order as well as legal prohibitions on sex discrimination in the form of sexual harassment, which encompasses sexual violence, to the fullest extent permissible under law; to account for intersecting forms of prohibited discrimination that can affect the availability of resources and support for students who have experienced sex discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race, disability, and national origin; to account for the significant rates at which students

VerDate Sep2014 15:16 Mar 10, 2021 Jkt 253250 PO 00000 Frm 00001 Fmt 4790 Sfmt 4790

E:\FR\FM\11MRE1.SGM 11MRE1 khammond on DSKJM1Z7X2PROD with

PRESDOC2 13804 Federal Register / Vol. 86, No. 46 / Thursday, March 11, 2021 /

Presidential Documents who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer

(LGBTQ+) are subject to sexual harassment, which encompasses sexual violence; to ensure that educational institutions are providing appropriate support for students who have experienced sex discrimination; and to ensure that their school procedures are fair and equitable for all. Sec. 3. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect: (i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or (ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals. (b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations. (c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person. THE WHITE HOUSE, March 8, 2021. [FR Doc. 2021-05200 Filed 3-10-21; 8:45 am] Billing code 3295-F1-P VerDate Sep2014 15:16 Mar 10, 2021 Jkt 253250 PO 00000 Frm 00002 Fmt 4790 Sfmt 4790 E:\FR\FM\11MRE1.SGM 11MRE1 khammond on DSKJM1Z7X2PROD with PRESDOC2 BIDEN.EPS

Appendix E

Email Request to Participants

 Send	To	
	Cc	
Subject Interest in participating in a doctoral study		

Dear _____,

My name is Donna Eason, and I am currently working on my doctoral degree. The focus of my study is the experiences of teachers and administrators in exploring ways to address the inclusion of transgender and gender non-conforming students in high school. Your name was recommended by _____, who thought you would be interested in this work. My study is qualitative in method; thus, I will conduct interviews with participants and include the narratives as my data. If you are interested (and I really hope you are!), I will contact you via phone to explain the purpose of the study. At this time, we will also discuss our expectations and agree on rules of conduct, and I'll answer any questions you may have. Lastly, we will set up a date for the interview. The next part will be the first interview, which shouldn't take longer than 30-45 minutes. My questions are open-ended, so although I have set questions I'll ask, there may be follow-up questions based on your answers. The second interview will consist of questions gleaned from the first interview.

The interview will be recorded through Zoom since we are not able to meet in person; however, you and your school will remain anonymous in the dissertation. Also, anything stated in the interview is confidential. In other words, your colleagues will not be privy to anything shared with me.

I hope you agree to participate. I feel your voice will be a powerful one for this study!

Thanks so much!

Donna

Donna Eason

Upper School Dean of Students

Teacher, Upper School English Department

Appendix F**Informed Consent Form**

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Informed Consent Form

Title of Study

Education and the Gender Spectrum: Addressing Gender Identity Needs in the High School Environment

Researcher (*name and role/department*)

Donna Eason/Department of Education in Curriculum and Instruction

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is to explore the experiences of high school teachers and administrators in addressing gender identity (particularly transgender and nonbinary students) in their schools. I am interested in the thoughts and feelings of the participants as well as the actions and behaviors experienced in the school environment.

Procedure

What you will do in the study:

Participants will be interviewed twice by me via Zoom, an online teleconferencing program. Participants will be video and audio recorded, and transcripts will be made of the recordings. Questions will be open-ended, allowing participants to follow a narrative path of their choosing. Participants will be allowed to skip any question that causes discomfort and can stop the interview at any time for any reason.

Time Required

It is anticipated that the study will require about 45 *minutes/hours* of your time for each interview. The total time should be approximately 90 minutes.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

Confidentiality

All recordings will be housed on my personal hard drive and not shared with anyone else. Upon the completion of the dissertation, all data, including recordings and transcripts, will be destroyed through deletion.

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a *code number (or pseudonym)*. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a *locked file*. When the study has been completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. None of your personal information will be given to anyone.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. The study may help us to understand how teachers and administrators experience addressing the needs of transgender and nonbinary students and may lead to ways in which to address these needs better. The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

Payment

You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw From the Study

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your audio (or video) tape will be destroyed.

How to Withdraw From the Study

If you want to withdraw from the study, tell me to stop the interview. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact Donna Eason at 919-259-5008.

If you have questions about the study, contact: *(List all researchers and contact information)*

Donna Eason

EdD Candidate

School of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, Gardner-Webb University

XXXXXXX

deason1@gardner-webb.edu

Jennifer Putnam, EdD

School of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, Gardner-Webb University

Faculty Advisor telephone number

jputnam2@gardner-webb.edu

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Sydney K. Brown

IRB Institutional Administrator

Gardner-Webb University

Telephone: 704-406-3019

Email: skbrown@gardner-webb.edu

Voluntary Consent by Participant

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been answered for me. I agree to participate in this study.

_____	Date: _____
Participant Printed Name	
_____	Date: _____
Participant Signature	

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix G
Interview Script

Hi, as you know, my name is Donna Eason and I'm conducting research on the experiences of teachers and administrators when addressing gender identity in their high schools. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes and will consist of open-ended questions that will allow you to express yourself as much or as little as you would like. Although I will begin with planned questions, as the narrative progresses, I will ask follow-up questions based on your responses.

Please know that at any time, you have the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or end the interview. You also have the right to withdraw from the interview process at any time with no penalty.

Are there any questions? If not, then I'd like to propose a set of intentions before we begin. Please feel free to add to this list anything else that you feel would lead to a comfortable and productive experience.

I will like for us to work together to create a narrative that authentically expresses your experiences.

I will only ask questions that are relevant to this study.

I will respect your feelings and understand that if you are not comfortable with a path of questioning, you can state that you do not feel comfortable and cease answering without explanation.

I will ensure that you remain anonymous during and after the process.

I will ensure that you will not be harmed in any way.

Are there any additional intentions you would like to add? If not, we can proceed to the first question.

Appendix H
Qualitative Questions

Tentative Questions for Faculty

1. How would you describe gender identity?
2. What issues do you think transgender and nonbinary students face in society? At your school?
3. How would you describe your experience with transgender and nonbinary students in your teaching career?
 - a. In the classroom
 - b. In school in general
4. How has gender identity influenced/affected your teaching?
 - a. Curriculum
 - b. Tools
 - c. Classroom Management
 - d. Personal behavior
5. How would you describe the climate of your school as it relates to gender identity?

Tentative Questions for Administration and Staff

1. How would you describe gender identity?
2. What issues do you think transgender and nonbinary students face in society? At your school?
3. Describe your experiences with transgender and nonbinary students.
4. How would you describe your experience with transgender and nonbinary students in your teaching career?
5. How has gender identity influenced/affected you in your current position?
6. How would you describe the climate of your school as it relates to gender identity?