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## **ABSTRACT**

The world is witnessing a major shift in the way individuals in the helping professions and Western society understand gender outside the historical binary of male/female. In response to the limited literature that examines how gender and gender diversity is understood, taught, and integrated into educational institutions, the researcher provides an overview of a selected literature which informs the specific topics of gender and gender diversity in schools. This study explored how the information presented in Gender Spectrum trainings was utilized and integrated into four identified natural entry points (personal, structural, interpersonal, and instructional) for creating gender inclusive schools and promoting gender as a prioritized area of diversity. The study asked teachers, administrators, and other school staff members to indicate their level of understanding and reflection related to gender and gender diversity, and to provide feedback about specific changes in school policy, organizational structure, and educational forms that may demonstrate a school's commitment to gender inclusivity. In addition, the study aimed to capture the extent to which participants incorporate Gender Spectrum strategies into curriculum as well as interpersonal interactions with colleagues and students. A discussion of the implications of findings for the field of social work, the strengths and limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research on gender diversity in schools are included in this investigation.

## **GENDER SPECTRUM: EXPLORING GENDER DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS**

A project based upon an investigation at schools that received Gender Spectrum training on the topics of gender and gender diversity, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2014

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

On the cover of the fall 2013 issue of *Equality Inside*, a magazine published by the Human Rights Campaign, sits an 18 year-old young person from a small Texas town who simply wanted a school picture of him published in the yearbook (Human Rights Campaign Equality, 2013). Because this young person identified as transgender, the school moved to exclude his picture from the publication, stating the picture of the student wearing a tuxedo violated local “community standards” (Human Rights Campaign Equality, 2013). The currently evolving social and political climate surrounding lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities brings increased visibility to equal rights movements for individuals who do not identify within the traditional male/female gender binary found in Western civilization.

According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 26% of transgender workers surveyed reported losing their jobs because of their gender identity (Grant et al., 2011). Further, 97% of transgender workers reported negative experiences ranging from verbal harassment to assault in the workplace (Grant et al., 2011). Currently, military regulations deny transgender Americans the right to serve openly. Given this increased visibility and attention, questions have surfaced in current discussions on civil rights, discrimination laws, and education pertaining how to ensure transgender and gender nonconforming children and adults have the same protections, access, and accommodations as cisgender individuals. LGBTQ issues, and more specifically topics associated with gender diversity and inclusiveness in schools are explored in this study. The world is witnessing a major shift in the way individuals in the helping professions and Western society understand gender outside the historical binary of male/female. Contemporary literature and the fifth edition of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) highlight

the distress that results from Gender Dysphoria, as opposed to a transgender or genderqueer identity as the identifiable psychological issue (Fraser et al., 2010). Studies exploring cross-cultural and cross-gender identity and expression indicate that cross-gender identity and expression is not universally viewed as a diagnosable mental illness. Native American, Samoan, Tongan, New Guinean, and Fijian cultures reserve a positively regarded space in their cultural traditions for individuals who present with gender variance (Fraser et al., 2010). Though this may be a contemporary topic for many in the United States, throughout history and across cultures, individuals have expressed themselves in ways that fall under the umbrella terms of transgender and gender nonconforming.

The social and political strides of marriage equality and state anti-discrimination legislation protecting some LGBTQ individuals in the workplace, brought LGBTQ issues to the forefront of equal rights movements. Although this progress is both historic and a promising beginning to a changing social climate, it confirms the way society conflates issues of gender with those associated with sexual orientation. This conflation is further evidenced by the term LGBTQ itself, which suggests the very issues affecting the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community are appropriately grouped with issues affecting those who identify as transgender or genderqueer. According to Gender Spectrum (2014), *sexual orientation* is a term that refers to being romantically or sexually attracted to people of a specific gender (Gender Spectrum, 2014). Sexual orientation and gender identity are separate, distinct parts of overall identity. Studies indicate that although a child may not yet be aware of their sexual orientation, they typically have a strong sense of their gender identity and gender expression (Ehrensaft, 2011).

Gender Spectrum is a non-profit organization based in the San Francisco Bay area. Gender Spectrum provides trainings, information sessions, and literature that present an overview of contemporary perspectives surrounding gender as well as how restrictive definitions and language can be detrimental to individuals who do not fit the existing categorizations for gender. The organization works with educators and educational institutions, medical and mental health professionals, social services agencies, legal professionals, and athletic teams and

coaches to raise awareness and provide training on the topic of gender diversity. Gender Spectrum offers families and their children support and a deeper understanding of how to advocate within and navigate the changing social, political, and economic obstacles that stigmatize and deprive transgender and gender nonconforming individuals and their families basic human rights, benefits, and comforts many take for granted.

Issues related to gender identity and diversity in schools are addressed through the training programs and interventions offered by the non-profit organization, Gender Spectrum. These trainings offer all education related stakeholders the language and concepts to further their understanding and increase their ability to support transgender and gender nonconforming youth in schools. The findings from this study are representative of the responses from teachers, administrators, and other school staff members from seven different schools that vary with regard to level (elementary, middle, and high school), demographical makeup, geographic location, funding source (public/private), and size. This study aims to assess how, if at all, the information presented in the Gender Spectrum training(s) was integrated and implemented into personal understanding, interpersonal interactions, curriculum, organizational structure, and policies. The organization Gender Spectrum largely benefits from the findings and feedback in this study given the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of how the information from the Gender Spectrum training is used by the schools that received training. Additionally, the findings from the study may provide Gender Spectrum with insight into the areas of strength and weakness in their training. The study may benefit the participating schools by providing a tool for reflection and evaluation of current work and commitment to gender inclusion and diversity. The long-term beneficiaries of this study are not limited to any race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, age, religion, or sexual orientation, as an inherent goal of this study is to raise general awareness about the contemporary understandings of gender and gender diversity. Other long-term beneficiaries may include any individual or institution that used the publication and presentation of findings to advocate for training and education on the topic of gender. Short-term beneficiaries include students attending the schools where the study was conducted as well as the individuals that participated in the study.



Due to the limited amount of literature that examines how gender is addressed, taught, and integrated into educational institutions, this study utilizes a survey that asks specific questions about how teachers, administrators, and other school staff members are, if at all, using the information presented in the Gender Spectrum training(s). This survey is used to measure the overall impact of one organization's practices for establishing gender inclusive schools based on the specific schools that received Gender Spectrum training(s) in the past three years. The findings from this study may provide Gender Spectrum with an increased understanding of how the information presented in the trainings is understood and implemented by each individual school and all schools as a whole. Further exploration of the manner in which the information presented in the Gender Spectrum training(s) is utilized and implemented by teachers, administrators, and other staff members serves to expand general knowledge and research findings on the topic of gender diversity in schools.

The topic of study is relevant to social work in view of the impact social workers, school social workers, and schools as both institutions and systemic structures perpetuating the status quo, have in the education of children, adolescents, and adults surrounding the topics of gender and gender diversity. A hope of this study is for the fields of social work and education to have a greater understanding of how to advocate for equal rights, respect, access, support, and recognition for individuals who identify as transgender and gender nonconforming. The findings of this study also may inform future treatment methods, education-related interventions, and public policies as they begin and/or continue to address issues related to gender and gender diversity in local school environments.

The mission and concept for the non-profit 501(C)3 organization Gender Spectrum emerged informally in 2005 when Stephanie Brill, a midwife in the region, began a parent support group at Oakland Children's Hospital. As she worked with families, Stephanie had consistently encountered parents and caregivers with children that were gender expansive or gender fluid. In her efforts to help support these families as they sought to understand their child's gender, Stephanie recognized a complete lack of services related to this topic and the need for

professional and community training and education on the diversity of developmental stages of gender in children. After further research, she found few social service organizations with a mission of attending to the specific issues and concerns of families with gender nonconforming or transgender children. At the early stage of the organization's development, Stephanie focused her efforts towards spreading awareness on this important topic in the spheres of medicine and education. She began to offer trainings to medical professionals, teachers, and administrators on gender diversity.

From these beginnings, Stephanie established a vision for Gender Spectrum as a unique and cutting-edge organization, and sought to reach a national audience. Stephanie partnered with Aiden Key, the founder of Gender Odyssey (a conference in Seattle primarily intended for individuals who identify as Female to Male transgender), with the aim of bringing the transgender and gender nonconforming community together with adults caring for these gender expansive kids. The result was a conference in 2007 specifically involving families with gender variant or transgender children. Titled *Gender Odyssey Family*, this weekend gathering in Seattle featured support groups, educational workshops, films, and performances. According to Gender Spectrum staff, 10-15 families attended the first conference. This event, along with the release of Stephanie Brill's book (Co-authored with Rachel Pepper) titled The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals in 2008, increased the visibility of Gender Spectrum as an organization, and elevated gender variance and diversity as critical social issues. In late 2008 the organization expanded and made its first full-time hire when Joel Baum was brought on as Director of Education and Training. In 2010, the organization engaged in strategic planning work resulting in a new and focused mission statement: *Gender Spectrum provides education, training and support to create a gender sensitive and inclusive environment for all children and teens*. That same year the organization consolidated its work in the San Francisco Bay Area, opening a new office and moving the conference to Berkeley.

Since then, Gender Spectrum's work has evolved as they have expanded their focus to increasing awareness about gender diversity for all children and teens. Over this period, the organization has striven to distinguish itself

as one that addresses gender in general, rather than only focusing on transgender or LGBTQ individuals and communities. Further they have established specific pillars at the foundation of their work, including the need to “meet people where they are,” through employment of a developmental lens for adult learning and the importance of recognizing gender’s intersection with multiple aspects of identity when working to support a young person. As it approaches its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Gender Spectrum’s work has grown to include efforts across the United States and beyond, having worked with families and organizations and conducted trainings throughout the world.

### **Background Information: Mission of Gender Spectrum**

The mission of Gender Spectrum is to increase access, understanding, and support for all youth, specifically the wellbeing of transgender and gender-nonconforming children and teens in the sphere of education. Gender Spectrum’s educational programs provide in-school trainings, presentations, and support to 1) promote understanding about gender identity and gender expression as separate and different from individual sexual orientation and 2) help create gender sensitive and inclusive environments. The agency offers and encourages a school-wide comprehensive training with six sequences: (1) Leadership Consultation, (2) Teacher and Staff Training I, (3) Teacher and Staff training II, (4) Parent Education, (5) Age-appropriate Student Education, and (6) Additional Services and Support (Gender Spectrum, 2012). This integrated system of support is designed to provide information, demonstrate supportive practices, and meet the varying needs of students, parents, teachers, administrators, mental health practitioners, and school staff members for implementing Gender Spectrum’s best practices, gender-inclusive curriculums, and gender-inclusive policies in local schools.

Gender Spectrum performs trainings on a sliding scale at institutions and organizations across the United States in both the public and private sectors in rural, suburban, and urban settings. Gender Spectrum’s philosophy is to provide culturally competent trainings and resources that specifically address historical and evolving perspectives about gender. According to Gender Spectrum, re-education for the entire community is the most accessible and effective means for teaching about gender as separate and different from more general discussions

and school efforts to confront issues around sexual orientation (Baum, 2013).

Gender Spectrum's training is based on the notion that when focusing on the intentional development of gender inclusive school settings it is essential to think about four discrete entry points: Personal, Structural, Interpersonal, and Instructional. According to Gender Spectrum, depending on the context, any one of these entry points may prove to be the best starting point for implementation. Personal entry points focus on the individual educator's own understanding of gender and reflection of how their foundational beliefs impact their work with students. Using worksheets and tools provided by Gender Spectrum, this entry point is the foundation upon which teachers build their gender inclusive practices, applying a lens of gender awareness to the teaching in their classrooms.

Structural entry points are concrete steps that create a foundation for gender inclusive practices to take hold. Structural entry points demonstrate to a community that the institution recognizes and honors gender diversity and actively works to reflect a more complex understanding. Structural approaches include: 1) Policies/Administrative regulations emphasizing gender as an area of diversity supported by the school, 2) Systematic staff training that builds the capacity of teachers and other staff, 3) Written materials and information about gender diversity, 4) Signage/Visuals celebrating gender diversity, 4) Student information systems allowing families and students the ability to self-identify their gender and use preferred names and pronouns, 5) Procedures/Forms that demonstrate a non-binary understanding of gender, and 6) Restrooms/Facilities that provide options for privacy without stigmatizing any students.

Interpersonal entry points are the various ways in which individual interactions and communications are utilized to reinforce a school's commitment to gender inclusion. Supported by many of the structural components, these relational aspects nonetheless require intentional behaviors in the day-to-day interrelationships of a campus. Frequently language-based, teachers operating from this entry point: 1) Use language that challenges binary notions of gender, 2) Help students understand the difference between patterns and rules, 3) Question limited

portrayals of gender, 4) Recognize that gender is about our hearts and minds, 5) Support processes of reflection, 6) Teach empathy and respect, and 7) Normalize gender diversity.

Instructional entry points are specific ways in which teaching and learning are used to instill greater awareness and understanding about gender. Whether standing alone or integrated into other aspects of instruction, instructional approaches are the most direct way to impact students. In some ways, instructional approaches are the most easily accomplished. Teachers have a great deal of autonomy for what takes place in their classrooms. Yet at the same time, in an era of increasingly scripted curriculum, or environments in which controversial subjects are highly scrutinized and regulated, instructional methods for creating gender inclusion can have the highest stakes for a teacher or other educator. Instructional approaches include: 1) Designing lesson plans to expand understandings of gender diversity, 2) Exploring current curriculum areas for natural entry points for inserting gender diversity issues or topics, 3) Using literature that has themes raising gender diversity issues, 4) Utilizing the arts to explore, 5) Using advisory programs or classrooms meetings to surface gender-related themes, 6) Assigning open-ended projects that include gender-related topics, readings, or news, 7) Arranging for transgender or other gender nonconforming individuals to present or work in classrooms, 8) Inviting guest speakers who work for greater gender equity in education, law, or other fields, 9) Using video or other media that present specific ideas about gender, 10) Creating space for students to articulate their own understandings and beliefs about gender, 11) Integrating gender into curriculum areas through story problems, writing prompts, readings, art assignments, or research project.

Gender Spectrum's unique education and training programs aim to help schools and educators understand the relevance of gender as a crucial area of student diversity affecting all youth, school employees, the school organizational structure and policies, curriculum, and overall school climate and safety. The researcher shares Gender Spectrum's belief that culturally competent trainings and resources that specifically address historical and evolving perspectives about gender are the most accessible and effective means for teaching gender as separate and

different from more general discussions and school efforts to confront issues around sexual orientation. As a small and emerging non-profit organization that was established in 2006, Gender Spectrum has only six employees and few resources dedicated to evaluation and research. Given these limited resources, the researcher saw a need and potential benefit for Gender Spectrum to assess the overall impact of their training and educational programs through research and evaluation. This study aims to assess how, if at all, the information presented in the Gender Spectrum training(s) was integrated and implemented into personal understanding, curriculum, interpersonal interactions, organizational structure, and policies.

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## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter will review the literature on the topics of gender in the context of psychology, social work, and education. Due to the limited amount of literature that examines how gender and gender diversity is understood, taught, and integrated into educational institutions, the researcher provides an overview of a selection literature, all of which informs the specific topics of gender and gender diversity in schools. This chapter will present a section comprised of relevant historical and cultural information, related to the language and development of gender, followed by a section that aims to address gender issues in the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM)* and the role of the *DSM* with regard to understanding gender, a section of relevant theoretical literature, and a section of relevant empirical research.

#### **History, Language, Culture, and Gender Development**

The following section includes a brief summary of the history of gender in psychology, definitions of relevant terms, the role and use of language in pathologizing gender, early perspectives on gender development, the role of culture in gender formation, multi-cultural understandings of gender, social norms and stigma related to gender, contemporary perspectives, and gender inequality.

An increasing number of mental health clinicians view gender nonconformity as a normal human variation, as opposed to a pathology requiring ongoing mental health treatment. Historically, the concept of gender is rooted in the male/female gender binary of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fausto-Sterling, 2012). Drescher (2010) posits that many current gender beliefs find their historic roots in the ancient male/female binary, which moved towards a 19<sup>th</sup> century heterosexual/homosexual binary, and is currently evolving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century cisgender/transgender

binary (Drescher, 2010). John Money, a psychologist and sexologist who published his theories on gender identity in the 1950s, coined the term gender role (Drescher, 2010). Money defined the term gender role, as "...those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of a boy or man, girl or woman, respectively (e.g. general mannerisms, deportment and demeanor, etc.) and regardless of that person's anatomical sex" (Drescher, 2010, p.437). In his historical analysis of gender variance, Drescher (2010) suggests that Money was the first psychologist to "...see gender identity as the private experience of gender role and gender role as the public manifestation of gender identity" (Drescher, 2010, p.438). This paper employs a definition of the word gender as "...the culturally local behavioral expression of masculine and feminine. In this sense, gender is not universal, but is tailored to the specific culture in which a child develops" (Fausto-Sterling, 2012, p. 399). Johnson & Stewart (2009) state:

Gender, like sex is multifaceted. *Gender identity* refers to how one sees or defines one's gender. *Gender roles* refer to those roles that are ascribed to men and women in our society. *Gender relations* refer to the relational patterns that exist because of gender based factors. Finally, there is the notion of *institutionalized gender*, which refers to the ways that societal institutions (like the DSM) reinforce particular gender roles and stereotypes (Johnson & Stewart, 2009, p.18).

The language clinicians and professional use to indicate gender is an area of dispute, as language choice is representative of a theory of origin. According to Fausto-Sterling (2012), "The terms *gender identity disorder*, *gender dysphoria*, *gender variant*, and *gender nonconforming* each suggest different behaviors that may or may not warrant clinical treatment" (Fausto-Sterling, 2012, p.399). Diane Ehrensaft, PhD, (2011) and other leading practitioners working with gender nonconforming and transgender youth support this notion, positing that all individuals need to move away from the limitations and stigmatization associated with the *DSM-IV* definition of Gender Identity Disorder, towards a non-pathologizing understanding of Gender Identity Creativity (Ehrensaft, 2011).

Freud (1937) understood gender as reflecting biological, anatomical, and evolutionary characteristics of the self. Despite the fact that Freudian theories related to gender were eventually called into question, it is historically



significant to mention the father of psychoanalysis held the perspective that although children are born male, female, or intersex, children do not begin to develop a psychosocial gender identity until the genital stage of development when a child begins to identify with the a caretaker (Hansell, 2011). According to Leaper (2011)

Until the 1970s, psychoanalytic theory (e.g. Freud, 1927) and social learning theory (e.g. Michael, 1966) were the two dominant theories in developmental psychology that were invoke to explain children's gender development. Both theories stressed the importance of children's relationship with their parents with particular emphasis on children's identification with or modeling of same-gender parents (in psychoanalytic theory and social learning theory) and parents' differential treatment of girls and boys (in social learning theory) (Leaper, 2011, p.348).

In the 1960s, Robert Stoller (1968) first analyzed children experiencing gender identity issues (Stoller, 1968).

Soon after Stoller published his piece *Sex and gender: On the development of masculinity and femininity* (1968),

Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) called in to question the "primacy of parent-child relationships in gender

development" (Leaper, 2011, p.348). More contemporary research demonstrates that parents can indeed, influence

children's gender development, but not to the degree originally believed by theorists such as Freud, Michael, and

Stoller (Leaper, 2011).

Lacan (1977) introduced the notion that culture, in addition to anatomy and biology, plays a vital role in

identity development. Wilson (1996) discusses identity development as it relates to the concept of two-spirit

people as recognized throughout history in Indigenous American cultures (Wilson, 1996). Wilson (1996) states:

In some cultures, two-spirit people were thought to be born 'in balance,' which may be understood as androgyny, as balance of masculine and feminine qualities, or male and female spirits. In many Indigenous American cultures, two-spirit people had (have) spiritual roles and responsibilities within their community. They are often seen as 'bridge makers' between male and female, the spiritual and the material, between Indigenous American and non-Indigenous American (Wilson, 1996, p. 305).

From the time Europeans colonized the Americas, Indigenous cultural traditions and norms, such as the two-spirit

identity, have been misrepresented and misunderstood. An example of this misrepresentation is reflected in the

stereotypical European American perspective of mutually exclusive gender categories of male and female. This

relatively rigid perspective informs the European American understanding of what it means to be transgender or

transsexual, two terms that are often thought about and used in a politically incorrect and interchangeable manner. Individuals who identify as transsexual use surgery to alter their physical body in order to become the “opposite sex” while individuals who identify as transgender may choose not to adhere to either male or female gender, or choose to dress in clothing stereotypically associated with the “opposite” gender (Wilson, 1996). It is these social norms and understandings surrounding gender that must be unlearned in order to re-educate society about gender diversity and bring about a gender related history, language, and culture that are no longer misinterpreted, misrepresented, or misused.

Fausto-Sterling (2012) explains a debated perspective held by clinicians approaching gender formation from a biopsychosocial model using psychodynamic mechanisms. According to Fausto-Sterling (2012), “...the child manifests the symptoms of a distressed family; cross-gender interests are the symptoms of a poorly functioning family, and treatment needs must be a family affair. Importantly, different children may have different response thresholds for similar traumatic incidents, possibly explaining why what appears to be similar family stress could, in one case, results in a gender-focused coping response but not in another” (Fausto-Sterling, 2012, p. 402). Contemporary approaches to gender in the field of psychology, social work, and mental health adopt a more developmental lens through which to view gender identity formation.

Ehrensaft (2012) describes gender as being “performed” and explores how the true self develops and takes individual shape within a particular nexus of culture, nature, and nurture (Ehrensaft, 2012). Ehrensaft’s theoretical model for understanding gender emphasizes the impact of psychosocial and environmental factors on gender development and overall wellbeing of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. Leaper (2011) calls attention to conceptions and presentations of masculinity and femininity in social settings, stating that beliefs and meaning attached to masculinity and femininity vary based on individual experience and impact gender formation.

Leaper (2011) states:

Sexual harassment and other forms of sexism perpetuate gender inequities in status and power in society. Traditional masculinity norms emphasizing emotional control limits both girls’ and boys’ capacities to enjoy satisfying relationships together. Gender-biased views of

particular academic subjects and occupations (e.g., engineering as masculine or reading as feminine) can block potential pathways where girls and boys might find success.” (Leaper, 2011, p. 352).

Fortunately, developmental researchers have begun to consider ways to address some of these problems through various interventions, trainings, and evidence-based practices aimed at deconstructing the gender binary and re-educating society on issues of gender diversity and development. Fausto-Sterling (2012) suggests “offering families a deeper conceptualization of the dynamics of gender identity formation in childhood may well be the best therapy of all” (Fausto-Sterling, 2012, p. 408).

### **The Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) and Gender**

This section the literature review presents general information about the DSM related to gender, amendments to more recent editions of the DSM specific to gender, the topics of pathology and diagnosis in the context gender and gender variance, perceptions of the DSM in LBGQT communities, and more appropriate terms to categorize gender as proposed by LBGQT community members.

The recent release of the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM)* brought new discussions about gender terms, gender socialization, and gender pathology in the field of mental health. Contemporary discussions involve both the change in terminology from Gender Identity Disorder in the *DSM-III* and *DSM-IV* to Gender Dysphoria in the *DSM-V*, as well as the larger social and political climate surrounding gender and the emerging queer theory that challenges existing pathology (Lev, 2013). According to Lev (2013), “The shift in diagnostic nomenclature initiates a potential shift in clinical conceptualization from gender nonconformity as ‘other,’ ‘mentally ill,’ or ‘disordered’ to understanding that gender, as a biological fact and as a social construct, can be variable, diverse, and changeable, and existing without the specter of pathology” (Lev, 2013, p. 289). There is a growing belief among social workers that the labeling of gender variant individuals as having a *DSM* diagnosable mental disorder is an ethical issue in and of itself.

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), *DSM* diagnoses function to provide mental health researchers and clinicians the language to classify, investigate, and communicate about treatment, outcomes,

and the relevant biological and social factors of common mental health issues (Kamens, 2011). Kamens (2011) discusses the histories and controversies surrounding Sexual and Gender Identity (SGI) diagnoses in the *DSM-V*:

Since their inception, psychiatric diagnoses for alternative genders and sexual behaviors have been among the most controversial in the DSM. The diagnosis Homosexuality, once listed as a paraphilia, is exemplary of the arguably inappropriate influence of social attitudes towards certain behaviors on official definitions of mental illness (Kamens, 2011, p30).

Other past examples of *DSM* diagnoses that once reinforced socially rooted gender stereotypes are hysteria, nymphomania, and neurasthenia, all of which encouraged women's conformity to particular social norms of that time (Johnson & Stewart, 2009). LGBTQ community members and activists who opposed these two diagnoses maintained that SGI diagnoses serve to promote a social and cultural prejudice that continues pathologize natural variance found in human identifications and expressions of gender (Kamens, 2011). Despite its opposition, the APA and closely affiliated *DSM* is granted the social and political power to act as gatekeeper for those individuals who seek insurance coverage of hormonal therapy and sex reassignment procedures. Without a diagnosis, transgender or gender nonconforming individuals cannot access basic medical and mental health care related to their gender variance.

Lev (2013) stated "Plummer (1981) has said that the '...realization that one was collectively oppressed rather than individually disturbed...' (p. 25) was the realization of gay and lesbian people in the 1960s, a realization that dawned on transgender people in the 1990s" (Lev, 2013, p. 290). Members of the LGBTQ community seized the opportunity to take an active stance in an attempt to have a voice in the proposed revisions from Gender Identity Disorder to Gender Dysphoria in the *DSM-V*. Fraser et al. (2010) proposed the following change for diagnostic criteria as the removal of "terms such as 'cross-sex' or 'cross-gender' to better include those with gender dysphoria who do not fit binary conceptualizations of gender" (Fraser et al., 2010, p.83). Terms such as "gender discordance," "gender dissonance," "gender discomfort," or "gender incongruence" were also proposed as names for gender-related diagnoses that were accepted by the LGBTQ community (Cohen-Kettenis & Pffafflin, 2009).

## Theoretical Literature

This section presents a brief summary of the foundational theories for understanding gender, postmodern and post structural theories that account for gender variance and fluidity, and applications for empowerment theories in schools.

Contemporary theoretical perspectives on gender approach this issue through the framework of a fluid spectrum versus a gender binary (Malpas, 2011). Theoretical literature identifies individualism, nurturance, and culture as social and environmental factors informing the development of gender identity (Ehrensaft, 2011). In exploring the components of gender theoretical perspectives, Winnicott's notions of the true and false self are highlighted as one of the original sources upon which more contemporary theories about gender are formulated. According to Winnicott (1960), a false self refers to an individual's way of relating to the world in a way that does not feel authentic and genuine to the individual's core self. In his description of the normal equivalent of the false self, Winnicott (1960) states:

There is a compliant aspect to the True Self in healthy living, an ability of the infant to comply and not to be exposed. The ability to compromise is an achievement. The equivalent of the False Self in normal development is that which can develop in the child into a social manner, something which is adaptable (Winnicott, 1960, p. 150).

The false self serves the function of reducing the anxiety and discomfort one feels with regard to the true self and/or how the true self is understood (or misunderstood) and accepted (or excluded) by social norms (Berzoff, Melano, Flanagan and Hertz, 1996). Although Winnicott does not directly refute the gender binary in his discussion of true and false selves, his work proves to be a powerful frame through which emerging gender theories in the fields of psychology and social work are accepted and validated (Winnicott, 1962).

Postmodern and post structural theorists view gender and gender binaries as social constructions that people use to create a subjective "reality" that is based on the exclusion of other options (Beasley, 1999). Monro (2005) puts forth the following example to help explain this notion:

For example, the development of a 'male' identity involves the rejection of supposedly 'female' characteristics, such as the 'caring' involved in playing with dolls, and the identification with

supposedly ‘masculine’ traits, such as being competitive (for instance, interested in football) (Monro, 2005, p. 4).

Post structural and postmodern approaches understand gender subjectivity as having no foundational basis.

Further, these theorists view concepts such as being a man trapped in a woman’s body as a result of the interaction between an individual’s subjective reality and the social and cultural norms (Monro, 2005). Monro (2005)

suggests there is a need for gender pluralist theory, which takes a spectrum approach:

It includes all genders and, therefore, all forms of gender theory. It addresses feminisms, masculinity theories, and queer theories as part of the gender theory spectrum, but, by adding in other gender spaces and identities, and an understanding of movement between fluidity and categorization, it provides a means to a more complex analysis of sex and gender (Monro, 2005, p. 19).

Gender pluralist theory is a useful lens when examining gender fluidity and the gender non-identification of people related to gender roles and expression (Monro, 2005). Monro contends that binaried models of gender are inadequate for understanding gender diversity and promotes the conceptualization of gender as a spectrum that includes male, female, and other socially accepted positions along the spectrum (Monro, 2005).

Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory puts forth the idea that “behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning” (McLeod, 2011). These learned behaviors are encoded, then imitated, and finally met with either reinforcement or punishment (McLeod, 2011). Social learning theory is relevant to both behavior and social understanding. School climate and peer influence are particularly prominent and instrumental factors affecting social and moral development during latency and adolescence. Leaper (2011) states:

Each of these theories [gender schema theory, social cognitive theory, and intergroup theory] emphasizes the idea that gender development ultimately involves self-socialization. That is, once children form a concept of gender, they use their gender schemas to interpret environmental events. Representations of gender are formed through observing others in real life and the media. These gender schemas guide the kinds of behaviours that children exhibit themselves, (Leaper, 2011, p. 350).

Using this notion, school interventions that address issues related to gender identity and gender expression should

be implemented in the elementary level. If a basis for understanding and acceptance of gender on a spectrum versus a binary is established at an early age, students will learn that bias based on gender identity and expression is not acceptable in the school environment.

Theoretical literature rooted in the field of education is also relevant and applicable to the issue of gender identity and gender diversity when explored in a school context. In an effort to undo the social stigmatization associated with gender variant presentations, the literature draws on both empowerment theories and strengths-based perspectives. Empowerment theories address the barriers that prevent individuals and communities from accessing resources that enhance wellbeing (Tully, 2000). Tully (2000) suggests the empowerment perspective enhances wellbeing of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals through reframing and aligning the term gender with more positive and all-encompassing associations such as gender diversity and gender inclusivity (Tully, 2000). In a school setting, this use of theoretical perspective has the potential to drastically inform the way gender variance, gender nonconformity, and transgender issues are taught, understood, and addressed.

On a macro level, it is through re-education, acceptance, further research, and use of a strengths-based perspective that gender inclusive spaces are created both in schools and in society. Working within these theoretical models, gender nonconforming and transgender youth are more able to acknowledge their individual and collective power. Implementations such as Gender Alliances clubs, gender neutral bathrooms, and non-gendered curriculums, support the ideas presented in these theories and therefore play a key role in changing ideologies about gender identity and expression. Mental health clinicians working in education can positively impact the experience of transgender and gender nonconforming youth in school by bringing these theories to administrators, teachers, staff members, students, and parents. Increasing awareness about the shifting perspectives towards understanding gender as a spectrum empowers gender nonconforming and transgender students and their allies to advocate for equality with regard to safety, understanding, acknowledgment, and support.

## **Empirical Research**

The following review of relevant empirical research includes studies exploring the experience of LGBTQ youth in schools, intervention for improving the experience of LGBTQ youth in schools, the impact of victimization and harassment for LGBTQ youth, the role family and caregiver support for LGBTQ youth, gender differences related to feelings of self-worth, student activism as an empowerment tool, structural changes to enhance wellbeing of LGBTQ youth, the gender identity and gender identity development of LGBTQ young adults, the needs of gender variant children and their families, and integrating queer theory into curriculum and classroom environments.

According to the 2009 National School Climate Survey, published by the Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), 62.6% of student respondents heard negative remarks about gender expression (not acting “masculine enough” or “feminine enough”) frequently or often at school (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2011). Much of the literature on the topic of gender identity and gender expression in the context of schools is based in the experience of LGBT youth, either excluding gender nonconforming individuals who identify as heterosexual or grouping transgender experiences with those of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.

GLSEN conducted a national study that measured 1) the prevalence of gender normative and binary reinforcing language and victimization, 2) the effect that these experiences have on transgender and gender nonconforming students’ achievement and well-being, and 3) the utility of interventions in lessening the negative effects of a hostile school climate and promoting a positive educational experience, as part of a larger study on the perceptions and experiences of LGBT students in schools (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2011). The 2011 GLSEN National School Climate Survey (NSCS) solicited a demographically diverse sample that consisted of 8,584 students between the ages of 13 and 20, from all 50 states and from 3,224 unique school districts



(Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2011). GLSEN reports two-thirds of the sample (67.9%) were White, about half (49.6%) were female, and over half identified as gay or lesbian (61.3%). Students were in grades six to 12, with the largest numbers in grades 10 and 11 (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2011). While much of the current research examines factors affecting the wellbeing and biopsychosocial development of LGBT youth in the context of schools, NSCS was one of few studies to distinguish between experiences based gender identity and gender expression as separate from sexual orientation and other identities.

Craig, Tucker, & Wagner (2008) performed a mixed methods study with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students about school-based violence, harassment, discrimination, and of the effects these factors on students' attendance at a Safe Schools Summit (Craig et al., 2008). This study demonstrates a gap in the research, conducting research under the assumption that the experience of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth is comparable to specific experiences of gender nonconforming and transgender students in an educational settings.

Existing literature agrees that inherent in this issue is an increased need for 1) the re-education of students, school employees, and families about gender issues, 2) research about a more general experience of gender nonconforming and transgender youth in schools, and 3) the implementation of specialized, gender-neutral and inclusive curriculums and programs to better understand, protect, and support this increasingly visible and vulnerable population (Allan, Atkinson, Brace, DePalma & Hemingway, 2008; Craig et al., 2008; Kosciw et al., 2011; Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009). In a study that reviewed existing data about how victimization in adolescence relates to sexual orientation and gender identity, Collier, van Beusekom, Bos, and Sandfort (2013) reviewed 39 relevant studies from 12 different countries between 1995 and 2012. In the analysis of the collective findings, Collier et al. (2013) presented evidence that peer victimization based on sexual orientation and gender identity is associated with a diminished sense of belonging at school, increased levels of depressive symptoms, disruptions in educational trajectories, traumatic stress, and alcohol and substance use.

Organizations such as the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Gender Spectrum, and

the Human Rights Watch are publishing materials that hold “school officials and lawmakers at the local, state, and federal levels accountable for refusing to dismantle the policies or eliminate the practices that permit the continual victimization of these students” (Craig et al., 2008, p. 239). The common limitations of the studies presented above are grounded in the generalizing nature of the measures and findings, few of which distinguish between sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Existing literature on the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth argues that solely improving school climate is not enough to understand, advocate for, and support the wellbeing of gender variant students. Caregiver efforts aimed at de-stigmatizing and normalizing the experience of LGBT students provide the foundational support for families to negotiate issues with regard to safety, wellbeing, and development within the familial and natural environments (Malpas, 2011). Parental engagement and education about sexual orientation and gender are directly correlated with LGBT youth’s belief that they would have a fulfilling, happy, and productive life. A groundbreaking study conducted Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez (2010) found that family acceptance promotes well-being and helps protect LGBT young people against risk. And family rejection has a serious impact on a gay or transgendered young person’s risk for health and mental health problems (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). Further, the results from this qualitative study show family rejection increases the likelihood that a LGBT youth will attempt suicide, report high levels of depression, use illegal drugs, and be at risk for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (Ryan et al., 2010).

Smith & Leaper (2006) performed a cross sectional study examining adolescents’ gender identity in relation to peer context and self-concept (Smith & Leaper, 2006). The sample for this questionnaire-based research included 119 girls and 110 boys ranging in age from 12 to 17 who were participating in summer sports camps (Smith & Leaper, 2006). This study utilized Harter’s (1988) Self-Perception Profile to measure adolescent self-concept, and an amended version of Egan and Perry’s (2001) Multidimensional Gender Identity Inventory to measuring gender typicality, peer pressure, and gender contentedness (Egan & Perry, 2001; Harter, 1988; Smith &

Leaper, 2006). The findings from this study indicate 1) a positive correlation between feelings of gender typicality and self-worth among boys and girls, and 2) no difference in the self-worth of gender nonconforming and conforming adolescents provided they felt accepted by their peers (Smith & Leaper, 2006). Given these conclusions, it is beneficial for school-based interventions aimed at promoting peer acceptance of transgender and gender nonconforming students to reach the entire student body and all educational stakeholders. If and when peer and community support of the gender spectrum (vs. the gender binary) are established and supported, the wellbeing, sense of self-worth, and safety of students who identify as transgender and gender nonconforming will be enhanced.

The findings in existing literature continue to demonstrate that involvement in LGBT activism and organizations reduce and prevent victimization and bullying of LGBT youth in schools (Kosciw et al., 2009). Although student activism proves to have a positive impact on the experience of LGBT students, the literature recommends future research address the need for programs and organizations to prioritize gender equality as an integral part of school discussions around bullying as a source of distress for students (Smith & Leaper, 2006).

According to the empirical evidence, both individuals and institutions should strive to improve the school climate for gender nonconforming and transgender youth through interventions that encourage educators to go beyond holding school summits, such as pushing authority figures to revise organizational structures, school policies, interpersonal activities, and curriculums to promote gender diversity and create gender-inclusive environments (Kosciw et al., 2009).

Saltzburg and Davis (2010) conducted a qualitative study using a modified focus group comprised of 10 LGBTQ youth to explore the topic of gender-queer youth identities. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 23 and were members of a community center for LGBTQ youth (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010). The authors observed language to be a recurring topic in the discussion, describing how the absence of socially accepted language to fit how youth identify and express themselves foster feelings of exclusion and invisibility for transgender and gender

nonconforming youth (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010). Regarding a part of the discussion about the personal meaning of the term “gender”, Saltzburg and Davis (2010) explain:

...they [the youth] engaged in conversations that shift the language of gender from a rigid discourse to one that reflects more borderless possibilities. De-categorizing the human experience, ‘gender-being’ for them represents a phenomenon in which one may move in and out of realms of gender expression, creating a synthesis of varied gender ways (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010, p. 95).

Other themes in the discussion included the intersection of gender and sexuality, viewing self and others as having both masculine and feminine characteristics and preferences, and “...realizing the expression of sexual attraction within and across gender realms” (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010, p. 99). Saltzburg and Davis (2010) discuss implications for mental health professionals, highlighting the field’s misconception that a person who identifies as transgender is always an individual who identifies with the opposite biological sex and desires to transition into a heteronormative gender perception of the opposite gender (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010). The youth described their complex yet broadly defined understanding and experience, demonstrating an advancement in the ideas of LGBTQ youth about gender identity development.

The International Journal of Transgenderism published a study that explored the needs of gender variant children and their parents according to health professionals (Riley, Sitharthan, Clemson, & Diamond, 2011). The study used an Internet survey instrument and recruited 29 participants from eight different countries who self-identified as professionals working with the transgender community. Riley et al. (2011) note the small amount of data generated in this study as a result of the limited pool of educated professionals, even in countries where resources for transgender and gender nonconforming individuals exist. The findings of the study identified the dominant need for gender variant children as essentially “to discuss their feelings, to be accepted, and to be allowed to express their gender, while the parent’s needs were to gain knowledge and find guidance and professional support” (Riley et al, 2011, p. 55). This study highlights the necessity for more extensive research on issues facing transgender children and their parents, while further promoting community education as a means to support families with gender variant children and raise awareness about gender diversity (Riley et al., 2011).

Jiménez (2009) conducted a qualitative study investigating the use of queer interventions to disrupt heterosexist schooling practices (Jiménez, 2009). Jiménez presents a series of four vignettes from teachers, three of which identify as gay or lesbian, in both Canada and the United States. Jiménez provides anecdotes describing barriers and obstacles teachers encounter when attempting to “queer classrooms” (Jiménez, 2009). Jiménez quotes a teacher about her inability to facilitate a “more thoughtful education about LGBT lives while teaching Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*,” suggesting that without strong support for queer curriculum, teachers often do not have the language or understanding to facilitate a discussion (Jiménez, 2009, p. 174). McCaskell and Russell (2000) determined other barriers to support for LGBT individuals in education to be the absence of an anti-discrimination policy, inexperience with equity issues in general, and fear of parental or administrative reaction.

Jiménez offers general experiences and specific examples of instructional strategies and structural locations where queer interventions were implemented. Jiménez describes the educational context and justification for the study, stating:

In schools, boundary maintenance against queers works within a broad framework of removing bodies, emotions, and sexuality from classrooms. A western tradition of schooling proposes that classrooms serve the intellect alone (hooks 1994). Because queer is often associated with bodies, desire, and sexuality, rather than lessons about families, history, and civil rights, teachers may have no idea how to respond, and/or respond from a place of fear (Jiménez, 2009, p. 172).

Further, Jiménez suggests queering classrooms is not about LGBT issues but related to “ ‘pedagogy’s curiosity towards the social relations made possible in the process of learning’ (Luhmann, 1998, 141)” (Jiménez, 2009, p.178). Sears (1999) proposes a similar notion that queer elementary classrooms are only possible when assumptions are abandoned, norms are unlearned, and adults help students generate insight into the many varieties of the human condition (Sears, 1999).

Empirical research related to gender diversity and inclusion in education informs future studies that aim to explore the messages and lessons students receive, in both subliminal and directive manners. Further, this research provides useful recommendations and interventions for raising awareness about gender diversity. Despite biases,

assumptions, and limitations, empirical research on this topic benefits students, school employees, children, adolescents, families, and communities by providing both qualitative and quantitative presentations of the factors impacting the experience of LGBT youth in educational settings and how to better understand and support these students. In conclusion, the research designs and findings in empirical literature on educational interventions increasing the wellbeing of LGBT youth remain very useful. When considered alongside the strategies and resources, educational stakeholders can utilize and implement gender-inclusive curriculums and policies, increase safety for gender nonconforming and transgender individuals in the educational sphere, and put the best practices for creating gender-inclusive schools into action.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this primarily quantitative methods study is to deepen the understanding of how, if at all, schools that received training in both general gender awareness and creating gender-inclusive schools, integrate the information and use strategies for implementation. By surveying teachers, administrators, and other school staff members, the study explored the topic of gender diversity within the context of Gender Spectrum's four entry points for implementation (personal, structural, interpersonal, instructional). The survey (Appendix A) asked participants a series of close-ended questions, with some optional open-ended question. All survey questions served to measure the depth of understanding and degree to which information from the Gender Spectrum trainings is utilized and applied in the school setting. The study solicited feedback on the impact of Gender Spectrum's trainings and possible areas of improvement to incorporate the strategies for creating gender inclusive spaces within existing educational institutions.

A primarily quantitative exploratory survey was designed to answer the following questions: 1) how, if at all, do teachers, administrators, and other school staff members currently use the information from the Gender Spectrum trainings in their day-to-day responsibilities and duties at the school; 2) how do administrators, teachers, and school staff members describe their personal level of understanding around general gender awareness of teachers, administrators, and other school staff members at the schools where Gender Spectrum completed training; 3) are there relationships between the personal understanding of gender and demographic and/or education background characteristics of the participating teachers, administrators, and other school staff members; 4) do the schools that received Gender Spectrum trainings support teachers, administrators, and other school staff

members in raising awareness about gender diversity among students, parents, and colleagues; 5) do the schools that received Gender Spectrum trainings encourage teachers to include elements of gender diversity in their curriculum and interactions with students; 6) what impact do teachers, administrators, and other school staff members perceive Gender Spectrum trainings have for creating gender inclusive school environments; 7) what additional support is needed for teachers, administrators, and other school staff members to address issues of gender diversity in their schools? While initially solely quantitative questions were considered for the survey, some open-ended questions were added to capture the diversity in experience, exposure, and understanding that exists across different schools and the varying educational roles of participants. Further, the study aimed to collect teacher, administrator, and other school staff members' impressions of how they utilize the information provided by the Gender Spectrum training, while comparing the difference of impressions across differing schools and differing roles within the educational environment. The exploratory nature of the study allowed for the possibility to generate feedback and perceptions about this relatively new and unstudied topic of gender diversity in order to suggest areas for possible further research.

The Internet was used as a tool to recruit and survey individuals employed at educational institutions that received training on the topic of gender diversity and creating gender-inclusive schools. While no formal reliability or validity tests were run on the survey instrument, it was reviewed by Gender Spectrum's executive director and the director of training and education. These two individuals suggested revisions to improve the clarity of certain survey questions and to ensure the language of the survey was aligned with the language in the Gender Spectrum trainings. Lastly, individuals from Gender Spectrum requested space on the survey for participants to provide examples and qualitative feedback from their personal experience with either the Gender Spectrum training or subject matter.

## **Sample**

The requirements to participate in the study stated that individuals must either self-identify as a teacher,



administrator, or other school staff member at an institution where Gender Spectrum completed training aimed at creating gender-inclusive schools. All participants were over the age of 18, and employed at least half time at one of the schools where Gender Spectrum performed the training. Participants who did not have the ability to complete the survey electronically via Survey Monkey were excluded from this study. Each participant was permitted to complete and submit one survey. An inherent limitation of this study was related to the fact that the sample population was limited to the seven schools where Gender Spectrum completed training for administrators, teachers, and other school staff members. The researcher determined the impact of Gender Spectrum's training could potentially be explored from any exposure, including indirect exposure, to Gender Spectrum materials, information, and training, and therefore chose not to limit survey responses to individuals who personally attended a Gender Spectrum event. No specification was made regarding whether or not participants personally attended the trainings nor was there a specification regarding the particular role participants assume at their school. A diverse audience was sought in order to provide a broad range of responses and to obtain a sufficient number of participants.

Non-probability purposive snowball sampling was used in an effort to obtain responses from the target population of individuals who work at least part-time at a school that received Gender Spectrum training. Since there is a high level of variability in the size, structure, funding source, educational philosophy, and age of students at each of the seven schools surveyed, the researcher worked with a single contact person at each site in order to recruit a diverse sample of participants with regard to educational role, educational background, and demographic information.

The initial sample of complete surveys included 71 respondents. A total of 116 respondents accessed the survey online of which two indicated they did not consent to participate in the survey. Of the 114 who consented to participate in the survey, 43 respondents did not complete the survey in its entirety, and therefore these responses were not initially included in the initial data analysis. The exclusion of 43 survey responses may impact

the findings in a number of ways. The researcher hypothesized one way in which this exclusion may have altered findings, suggesting that participants who do not provide direct instruction to students, who were instructed to select the “N/A” choice for questions in the Instructional Entry Point Section of the survey, may have skipped questions instead of selecting “N/A”. This may have disqualified a disproportionate number of participants who self-identified as either an administrator or other school staff member. In order to incorporate responses and feedback from individuals who occupy a variety of school roles, approximately 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys were included to generate a more diverse sample. The number of incomplete surveys included in the data analysis for each survey question was dependent on how many answered each question. The researcher specifies when and where this more diverse sample, comprised of both complete and incomplete surveys, was used in the presentation of the findings.

## **Recruitment**

Recruitment for the survey was carried out by using strategies that were dependent on the existing strong relationships between Gender Spectrum and the identified primary contact person at each of the schools surveyed. Initially, Gender Spectrum provided the researcher a list of six schools that received training(s) from Gender Spectrum related to creating gender inclusive environments. Throughout the data collection process, one additional school received recent training and became eligible to participate in the study. The researcher submitted a protocol change form to the HSR committee in order to include this additional school in the survey (Appendix B). The final data included a total of seven schools. The selected schools are referred to as School A, School B, School C, School D, School E, School F, and School G in order to protect the identities of each institution and participant. School A is a tuition-free public charter high school grades nine through 12, is located on the west coast, and has a focus in arts and technology. School A has approximately 419 students. Fifty-six percent of students at School A are Hispanic, 18% are Black, 11% are White, 9% are Asian or Pacific Islander, 5% are American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1% are Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander. School B is a private elementary

school in the Midwest and serves children age three to grade six. School B has approximately 357 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Sixty-three percent of students at this school are White, 14% are Two or more races, 10% are Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander, 7% are Black, 4% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 2% are Hispanic. School C is a designated Arts Demonstration Elementary School in a public school district on the west coast. School C serves approximately 300 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Forty-four percent of students at School C are White, 21% are Two or more races, 16% are Black, 14% are Hispanic, 4% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1% is Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander. School D is a small school located on a college campus on the west coast and serves children from age zero through 10 in either the Infant/Toddler Program, Preschool, or Elementary School. School D's elementary school has an average class size of less than 20 students and three mixed-grade classrooms. School E is a private day school on the west coast that serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade. School E has approximately 470 students. School E has a student body that is approximately 59% White, 26% Two or more races, 6% Asian or Pacific Islander, 6% Hispanic, and 4% Black. School F is an independent pre-kindergarten through fifth grade Chinese English language immersion school on the west coast. School F serves students ages three through 11 and has approximately 520 students. Demographic regarding the students from School F was not available. School G is a private day school located in an urban area on the west coast and serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade and has approximately 400 students. School G has two classrooms per grade level and an approximate average class size of 22 with an average of two teachers per classroom in grades Kindergarten through five. School G has 67 individuals on its faculty, 67% of whom have been at School F for five or more years. Sixty-three percent of the students at School G are White, 23% are Two or more races, 8% are Asian or Pacific Islander, 4% are Black, and 3% are Hispanic.

The researcher obtained e-mails indicating consent from each school and identified an individual at each site who consented to be the primary contact as well as assist with recruitment and dissemination of the survey. Gender Spectrum then provided the researcher with the e-mail address and phone number of the school's contact

person. The researcher contacted these individuals via e-mail for an introduction and to briefly discuss the proposed study, survey process, appropriate recruiting strategies given the school environment, and any other questions. In these conversations the researcher noted the contact person should strive to have as little interaction as possible in order to not compromise anonymity and create bias. Additionally, the researcher discussed issues of anonymity and coercion with the primary contacts at each school site. The researcher also presented contacts with ways these individuals could reassure participants the survey would be entirely voluntary and participation would have no impact on the participants' employment at the school. Given the technological advancements of e-mail, I asked contact people if their school had an e-mail "blast" address. This e-mail "blast" address allowed a school-wide email to be sent to all individuals employed at the school while maintaining the recipients anonymity. All seven schools surveyed in this study used an e-mail "blast" to recruit participants. Once teachers, administrators, and other school staff members received the e-mail with the recruitment script and link to the survey prospective participants had the opportunity to contemplate participating in the proposed study. If a recipient of the e-mail chose to participate, the participants then clicked on the survey link or copied and pasted it in an internet browser. At this point in time, participants were instructed to thoroughly read and print out a copy of the informed consent form before moving on to the survey. If participants consented to the survey, each clicked the "I accept" button on the Consent viewing page that navigated participants to page one of the survey. A copy of the e-mail and script the researcher used when contacting primary school contact individuals is attached in Appendix C. Primary contacts at each site were instructed to use the script in their e-mails and announcements about the study. The researcher requested that if possible, each school contact person make an announcement in a staff meeting or school-wide staff e-mail about the survey and how to participate.

### **Ethics and Safeguard**

The thesis proposal was submitted and approved by the Human Subjects Review (HSR) board at Smith School for Social Work to make certain all efforts were made to maintain confidentiality and avoid creating bias

(Appendix D). The HSR further reviewed the proposal to make certain the researcher took steps necessary to minimize the risks of participating in the study. The informed consent outlined the study, including a description of the study procedures as well as issues related to potential risk or discomfort associated with being in the study, potential benefits for respondents, confidentiality, and participant rights (Appendix E). The informed consent included the researcher's contact information in case of possible questions or concerns. A list of resources was included in case respondents desired more information on the topics covered in the survey.

All participants who agreed to the informed consent and complete the survey in its entirety were included in the initial analysis. Surveys from participants who either did not complete Section A: Demographic and Educational Information of the survey in its entirety, or did not complete the informed consent were electronically deleted. Participation in the study included a small amount of psychological risk and discomfort given the questions in the survey. Before starting the survey, participants were notified of this risk and that the survey considers how people utilize and integrate the information and strategies presented in the Gender Spectrum training(s) into practice. Respondents were informed there were no guaranteed benefits for participation, but individuals may feel they benefitted from sharing knowledge and feedback that could be useful for future improvements, additions, and changes to Gender Spectrum trainings. Participants may have also benefitted from knowing the results of the survey would be shared with their school and other schools who engaged in similar trainings in order to raise awareness about issues of gender diversity in schools.

The online surveys were anonymous, given that Survey Monkey does not collect identifying information for participants. Participants were reminded that the researcher would not include any information in any report that would bring about the possibility of identifying participants. Surveys submitted online were only accessed by the researcher through password protected login. At the close of analysis, all online surveys were downloaded as a password protected file to a media device that was stored in compliance with research standards. The survey and all associated files were removed from survey monkey on April 28, 2014. All materials for the study will be kept

secure for three years according to federal regulations and kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period.

## **Data Collection**

Participants interested in participating in this study had access to the online survey from February 10, 2014 to April 25, 2014. Five participants accessed the survey in the month of February, 41 participants completed the survey in the month of March, and 51 participants completed the survey in the month of April. The data for this research study was collected through the use of a mixed methods survey, created by the researcher, and was primarily comprised of closed-ended questions with limited space provided for respondents to offer small amounts of qualitative feedback. An online version of the survey was created and edited using the programming available on Survey Monkey website. The survey consisted of 58 questions organized into six sections with a mixture of multiple choice, likert scale, and open-ended questions.

Section A of the survey solicited education and demographic related information from participants including school affiliation, role/position at respective school, grade level, length of time at respective school, length of time in education in general, length of time since Gender Spectrum conducted training at respective school, the nature of participants' exposure and interaction to Gender Spectrum training and materials, which Gender Spectrum professional development activity (if any) participants attended, race, age, gender, and sexual orientation. Section B, titled Personal Entry Points, presented questions that focused on the individual's own understanding of gender and reflection about how their foundational beliefs impact their work in schools. This section aimed to explore the foundation upon which individuals build their general inclusive practices and apply a lens of gender awareness to their work in schools. Likert scales were used to determine participants' level of understanding and perceptions of personal and institutional commitment to understanding gender. Question 15 had a qualitative component and asked participants, if possible, to provide an example of the ways in which expectations about gender expression changed over time.

Section C: Structural Entry Points, explored ways participants' classroom, institution, and school community recognize gender diversity, and actively work to reflect a more complex understanding. This section utilized likert scales to measure the extent to which the selected schools took concrete steps and practices, such as visual signage and gender-neutral bathrooms, to create a foundation for gender inclusive practices to take hold. Question 30 in this section asked respondents, if possible, to provide an example from their own experience of a specific change related to changes in school policy, practice, or other structural aspects that occurred since the Gender Spectrum training.

Section D, titled Interpersonal Entry Points, presented questions that explored the ways interactions and communications are utilized to reinforce a school's commitment to gender inclusion. In addition to likert scale questions, four question in this section asked participants, if possible, to provide a specific example from their own experience.

Section E of the survey addressed Instructional Entry Points. This section aimed to explore specific ways participants use teaching and learning to instill greater awareness and understanding about gender. These questions were intended for participants who provide direct instruction to students. Respondents were instructed to indicate "NA" on any question in this section if they felt it did not apply to their respective role within the school. Likert scale questions were again used to determine participant's level of commitment to integrate the topic of gender diversity into curriculum and teaching. Question 51 in this section asked participants, if possible, to provide an example from their personal experience about a specific change in curriculum and/or other classroom activities related to gender that occurred since the training.

The final section of the survey, Section F: Additional Reflections, asked participants questions related to how important Gender Spectrum's support was in raising gender diversity awareness at their respective schools. Further, questions explored ways participants worked to create more gender inclusive conditions at schools, as well as whether participants desired additional support, information and training on this topic. This section consisted of

a mixture of likert scale, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Each section and question was developed based on existing themes, terminology, and language from the Gender Spectrum training and materials.

## **Data Analysis**

Analysis of this primarily quantitative study consisted of 1) descriptive statistics for demographic, multiple choice, and likert scale questions, 2) qualitative analysis of open-ended responses, and 3) inferential statistics that looked at the relationship between demographic and educational characteristics of respondents and likert scale responses. In many instances, participants who indicated yes on the informed consent did not answer all survey questions. Seventy-one out of 114 respondents who consented completed the survey in its entirety; these responses are referred to as “complete responses” or “complete surveys”. All complete responses were from individuals who identified their role as a teacher who worked at a school that received Gender Spectrum training. In order to include a range of responses from participants in varying school roles, incomplete surveys were incorporated into data analysis to inform general findings from the study. Responses from incomplete surveys are referred to as “incomplete responses” or “incomplete surveys”. Incomplete responses were used in the analysis of specific sections of the survey. Incomplete surveys were used in sections of the survey where the researcher determined a more diverse sample may potentially generate different numbers and findings than solely the use of a smaller sample comprised of only participants who identified themselves as teachers. Cross tabulations showing responses to questions organized according to participants’ school role is one example of how incomplete surveys were utilized. The researcher specifies when and where incomplete surveys were used in the presentation of the findings.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample population with regard to demographic characteristics, training related information, and participant’s background in the field of education. The results of the surveys were exported to Microsoft Excel and analyzed using the program’s statistical tools. Frequencies were calculated for the following demographic, training, and education related information: the school with whom the



participant is affiliated, participants' role at school, age, race, gender, sexual orientation, length of time participants worked at current school, length of time participants worked in education in general, length of time since Gender Spectrum performed training at school site, and the nature of participant's exposure to, and interaction with Gender Spectrum training and materials. The majority of the likert scale questions in the survey asked participants the degree to which they agreed with the statement in the survey question. Response categories for these questions included strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Other likert scale questions asked participants to indicate their level of use, or the level of use participants observed related to Gender Spectrum information and materials in their school. These response categories included very often, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. For each question the frequency and percentages of each category was calculated.

Thematic analysis was used for the open-ended questions in the survey. The majority of the open-ended questions in this survey asked participants to provide specific examples from their personal experience with the training and/or material. Incomplete responses were included in the thematic analysis. The researcher manually input each open-ended response into a password protected word document. All responses were reviewed for possible recurring themes and then grouped according to theme. The researcher calculated the number of times each theme was mentioned in an open-ended response and then ranked the themes based on frequency of occurrence.

Inferential statistics were used to compare subgroups to each other. Differences based on respondent's affiliated school, respondent's role at school, the grade level with whom respondents work, respondent's age, length of time in education in general, length of time at current school, length of time since school received training, and nature of participation and exposure to Gender Spectrum training and materials, all were examined with respect to the following survey responses: personal entry points related to personal understanding and reflection of gender and gender diversity, structural entry points related to foundational changes that help gender inclusive practices take hold, interpersonal entry points related to ways interactions are used to reinforce

commitment to gender inclusion, and instructional entry points related to ways teaching, curriculum, and learning are used to promote understanding about gender. Marjorie Postal, Smith School for Social Work's statistical consultant, created scales by combining personal and structural survey questions. Before combining the questions into scales, the statistician ran a Cronbach's alpha test of internal reliability to decipher how well a group of questions fit together. The statistical consultant then conducted a paired t-test to determine if there was a difference in the mean response to the personal entry points and structural entry points scales. The mean responses to the scales were compared to investigate if participants demonstrated more agreement in the personal entry points section of the survey than in the structural entry points section of the survey. Findings were reported to the researcher to evaluate, present, and discuss in chapters four and five.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

This study investigated how the information presented in the Gender Spectrum training(s) was integrated and implemented into personal understanding, interpersonal interactions, curriculum, organizational structure, and policies at seven schools. Participants completed a survey that asked the following questions: how, if at all, do teachers, administrators, and other school staff members currently use the information from the Gender Spectrum trainings in their day-to-day responsibilities and duties at the school; how do administrators, teachers, and school staff members describe their personal level of understanding around general gender awareness where Gender Spectrum completed training; are there relationships between the personal understanding of gender and demographic and/or education background characteristics of the participating teachers, administrators, and other school staff members; do the schools that received Gender Spectrum trainings support teachers, administrators, and other school staff members in raising awareness about gender diversity among students, parents, and colleagues; do the schools that received Gender Spectrum trainings encourage teachers to include elements of gender diversity in their curriculum and interactions with students; what impact do teachers, administrators, and other school staff members perceive Gender Spectrum trainings have for creating gender inclusive school environments; what, if any, additional support is needed for teachers, administrators, and other school staff members to address issues of gender diversity in their schools?

This chapter introduces major findings from this study beginning with the demographic, training, and education related information of participants. The chapter will then present participants' responses to

questions in the personal entry points, structural entry points, interpersonal entry points, and instructional entry points sections of the survey. This will be followed by a presentation of quantitative and qualitative data from the additional reflections section of the survey. Due to rounding, total percentages may add up to more or less than 100%.

### **Section A: Demographic, Education, and Training Information**

A total of 116 respondents consented to the survey. Forty-four respondents were excluded from the first set of data analysis because questions were left unanswered in sections A through F. After analysis, it became apparent the initial sample of complete responses was comprised entirely of individuals who described their role at school as teacher. The demographic characteristics of these responses are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1  
Demographic Characteristics of the Complete Responses

		Frequency	Percent	Total
	Teachers	71	100%	
	Administrators	0	0%	71
	Other School Staff Member	0	0%	
<hr/>				
Age	21-30	8	11.7%	
	31-40	23	33.7%	
	41-50	20	29.4%	68
	51-60	10	14.8%	
	61-70	7	10.2%	
<hr/>				
Gender	Male	16	22.9%	
	Female	54	77.1%	70
<hr/>				
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	62	91.2%	
	Lesbian	1	1.5%	
	Gay	4	5.9%	68
	Queer	1	1.5%	
<hr/>				
Race	White/Caucasian	54	77.1%	
	Black/African American	3	4.3%	
	Latino/a	3	4.3%	70
	Asian	2	2.9%	
	Two or more races	8	11.4%	

Education and training related information of complete responses is illustrated in Table 2. Participants were instructed to check all grade levels they provide direct instruction to, therefore the total “Grade Level Taught” is 109.

Table 2

Education and Training Related Information of Complete Responses

		Frequency	Percent	Total
Grade Level Taught	Kindergarten	15	21.1%	109
	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	8	11.3%	
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	10	14.1%	
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	16	22.5%	
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	19	26.8%	
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12	16.9%	
	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	15	21.1%	
	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8	11.3%	
	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6	8.5%	
Years Working at Current School	1-5	24	34.7%	69
	6-10	22	31.8%	
	11-15	9	12.9%	
	16-20	7	10.0%	
	21-25	5	7.1%	
	26-30	1	1.4%	
	31-35	1	1.4%	
Years Working in Education	1-10	20	28.8%	69
	11-20	29	41.8%	
	21-30	13	17.7%	
	31-40	5	7.0%	
	41-50	2	2.8%	
Length of time since Gender Spectrum performed training at your school				
	Less than 1 year ago	35	50.0%	70
	1 year ago	17	24.3%	
	2 years ago	13	18.6%	
	3 years ago	4	5.7%	
	I don't know	1	1.4%	
Nature of exposure to and interaction with Gender Spectrum training and materials				
	Personally attended	63	88.7%	71
	Not personally attended, but received information	6	8.5%	
	Have not received any information	2	2.8%	

The above sample of complete survey responses was comprised of 71 respondents, though some respondents skipped questions, which is demonstrated in the varying totals in Table 2. This sample was diverse with regard to age, length of time at current school, length of time in education in general, length of time since Gender Spectrum training. Sixty-three respondents from the sample of complete responses personally attended a Gender Spectrum training or event.

In order to include responses from individuals within a wider variety of roles in the findings and discussion of this study, a sample of 93 respondents, comprised of 68 teachers, 13 administrators, and 12 other school staff members, was represented as the general sample for the study. This sample included approximately 71 complete surveys and 22 incomplete surveys, depending on how many participants skipped a given question. It is important to note that individuals included in the general sample did not complete every survey question. Table 3 illustrates the demographic characteristics of respondents from this sample.

Table 3<sup>1</sup>Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency	Percent	Total
	Teachers	68	73.1%	
	Administrators	13	14.0%	93
	Other School Staff Member	12	12.9%	
Age	21-30	8	8.7%	
	31-40	32	34.8%	
	41-50	25	27.2%	92
	51-60	16	17.4%	
	61-70	11	12.0%	
Gender	Male	21	22.3%	
	Female	73	77.7%	94
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	85	92.4%	
	Lesbian	2	2.2%	
	Gay	3	3.3%	92
	Queer	2	2.2%	
Race	White/Caucasian	72	77.4%	
	Black/African American	4	4.3%	
	Latino/a	3	3.2%	93
	Asian	3	3.2%	
	Two or more races	11	11.8%	

Table 4 presents education and training information related to the sample. Participants who selected the “other school staff members” option included individuals who identified as school counselor, library media specialist, learning specialist, health aide, school psychologist, preschool teacher, early education teacher, director of alumni relations, librarian, and Title One consultant. Question four asked participants who described their role as teacher

<sup>1</sup> This data includes information from 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys.



to indicate the grade level(s) they teach. Participants were instructed to check all grade levels they provide direct instruction to, therefore the total “Grade Level Taught” is 115.

Table 4<sup>2</sup>

Education and Training Related Information

		Frequency	Percent	Total
Grade Level Taught	Kindergarten	15	27.3%	115
	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	9	16.4%	
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	10	18.2%	
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	16	29.1%	
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	20	36.4%	
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	13	23.6%	
	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	16	29.1%	
	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	9	16.4%	
	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	7	12.7%	
Years Working at Current School	1-5	38	40.9%	93
	6-10	29	31.2%	
	11-15	9	9.7%	
	16-20	7	7.5%	
	21-25	7	7.5%	
	26-30	2	2.2%	
	31-35	1	1.1%	
Years Working in Education	1-10	26	28.0%	93
	11-20	38	41.0%	
	21-30	21	22.6%	
	31-40	6	6.5%	
	41-50	2	2.2%	
Length of time since Gender Spectrum performed training at your school				
	Less than 1 year ago	51	54.8%	93
	1 year ago	19	20.4%	
	2 years ago	14	15.1%	
	3 years ago	5	5.4%	
	I don't know	4	4.3%	
Nature of exposure to and interaction with Gender Spectrum training and materials				
	Personally attended	83	89.3%	93
	Not personally attended, but received information	8	8.6%	
	Have not received any information	2	2.2%	

<sup>2</sup> This data includes information from 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

Table 5 below illustrates the frequencies of teachers, administrators, and other school staff members at each school. Of the 93 individuals who indicated their affiliated school, 11 respondents were from School A, 20 respondents were from School B, four respondents were from School C, seven respondents were from School D, 26 respondents were from School E, 10 respondents were from School F, and 15 respondents were from School G. This demonstrates that although the amount of representation varied from school to school, the sample included representation of participants from all seven schools.

Table 5<sup>3</sup>

	Teacher	Administrator	Other School Staff Member	Total
School A	8 72.7%	2 18.2%	1 9.1%	11
School B	18 90.0%	1 5.0%	1 5.0%	20
School C	3 75.0%	0 0.0%	1 25.0%	4
School D	7 100%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	7
School E	17 65.4%	6 23.1%	3 11.5%	26
School F	4 73.3%	2 20.0%	4 40.0%	10
School G	11 73.3%	2 13.3%	2 13.3%	15
Total Respondents	68	13	12	93

Amongst the 55 teachers who indicated grade level(s), 15 respondents taught Kindergarten, nine respondents taught 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 10 respondents taught 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 16 respondents taught 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 20 respondents taught 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 13 respondents taught 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 16 respondents taught 6<sup>th</sup> grade, nine respondents taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and seven respondents taught 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Question five requested participants indicate the number of years worked at their current schools. The mean for this question (length of time participants worked at their current school) was nine years. Question six asked individuals how many years they worked in education in general. The mean for this question (how long participants worked in education in general) was 17 years. Question seven asked

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<sup>3</sup> This data includes information from 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

individuals approximately how long ago Gender Spectrum performed training at their school. Fifty-one out of 93 respondents received training less than one year ago, 19 respondents received training approximately one year ago, 14 respondents received training approximately two years ago, five respondents received training approximately three years ago, and four respondents indicated they did not know when their school received training. Question eight asked participants about the nature of their exposure to and interaction with Gender Spectrum materials. Eighty-three respondents personally attended a Gender Spectrum training or event, eight respondents did not personally attend but received information related to training from staff who attended, and two respondents did not receive any information related to Gender Spectrum training.

Question 10 asked participants to identify their race by checking any and all racial categories that apply. Of the 94 participants that answered this question, four participants identified as Black/African American, three participants identified as Latino/a, three participants identified as Asian, and 11 participants identified as Two or more races. The large majority of respondents, or 78 individuals, identified as White/Caucasian. The ages of respondents showed a more even distribution with eight respondents who were 21-30 years old, 32 respondents who were 31-40 years old, 25 respondents who were 41-50 years old, 16 respondents who were 51-60 years old, and 11 respondents who were 61-70 years old. The majority of respondents, or 73 individuals, self-identified as female and 21 respondents self-identified as male. When asked about sexual orientation, 85 participants identified as heterosexual, two participants identified as lesbian, three participants identified as gay, and two participants identified as queer. Other responses to this question included bisexual and asexual.

## **Section B: Personal Entry Points**

Questions in section B related to an individual's personal understanding of gender and reflection about how their foundational beliefs impact their work in schools. When asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement "I have a clear understanding about the difference between biological sex and gender," 57 participants indicated they strongly agreed, 36 participants agreed, and one participant disagreed. Ninety-three out of 94

respondents either strongly agreed or agreed they were able to describe ways in which expectations about gender expression have changed over time. This question was followed by an open-ended prompt asking individuals to provide a specific example from their personal experience. The themes most frequently mentioned in these narrative responses were the use of clothing, social norms related to colors, and evolving fashion trends and hairstyles as examples of ways in which gender expression and expectations have changed over time. Other less frequently mentioned examples were the acceptance of gender fluidity and the recognition of identities outside the traditional male/female binary. One respondent explained, “I don’t address my class as ladies and gentlemen, but rather mathematicians, writers, and ornithologists.”

All 93 respondents who answered question 16 indicated they either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, “I understand the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation.” Question 17 asked individuals about their understanding of how the three dimensions of gender (expression, biology, and identity) intersect and lead to an individual’s authentic gender. A large majority, or 91 out of 94 participants stated they either agreed or strongly agreed they had an understanding of how the three dimensions of gender intersect to lead to an individual’s authentic gender. When asked about the extent to which participants believe efforts to promote gender diversity are present at their school, 25 participants believed efforts were very present, 46 participants believed efforts were present, 21 participants believed efforts were somewhat present, and two participants did not believe efforts were present at their school. This information is presented in Table 6.

Table 6<sup>4</sup>

Question 18: To what extent do you believe efforts to promote gender diversity are present at your school?

	Very Present	Present	Somewhat Present	Not Present	Total
Q18	25 26.6%	46 48.9%	21 22.3%	2 2.1%	94

Question 19 asked respondents how relevant they felt the information and resources from the Gender Spectrum training were to their work. The majority of respondents, or 56 individuals, indicated the information and material

<sup>4</sup> This data includes information from 23 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

to be very useful, while 29 individuals indicated useful, seven individuals indicated somewhat useful, and one individual indicated the material and information was not useful. Participants were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement “Since the training, I have done significant personal reflection about my own understanding and perception of gender.” Of the respondents who selected an answer for this survey question, 33 participants stated they strongly agreed with the statement, 46 participants stated they agreed with the statement, eight participants stated they disagreed with the statement, and seven participants selected the “N/A” option. Table 7 presents this information and data.

Table 7<sup>5</sup>

Question 20: Since the training, I have done significant personal reflection about my own understanding and perception of gender.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Total
Q20	33 35.1%	46 48.9%	8 8.5%	0 0.0%	7 7.5%	94

Question 21 asked participants who personally attended a Gender Spectrum training the extent to which they thought about how their personal ideas about gender impact their work with students. The large majority of respondents, specifically 85 participants indicated they either strongly agreed or agreed that they thought about how their personal ideas about gender impact their work with students. One participant disagreed with the statement and seven participants selected the “N/A” option. When respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed their school supports and encourages teachers to personally reflect upon understandings of gender, 49 respondents stated they strongly agreed, 42 respondents stated they agreed, and three respondents stated they disagreed. This data is illustrated in Table 8.

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<sup>5</sup> This data includes information from 23 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

Table 8<sup>6</sup>

Question 22: I feel my school supports and encourages teachers to personally reflect upon understandings of gender.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Q22	49 52.1%	42 44.7%	3 3.2%	0 0.0%	94

### Section C: Structural Entry Points

Section C was comprised of questions aimed to explore ways participants’ classroom, institution, and school community recognize gender diversity and actively work to reflect a more complex understanding.

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement, “My school has policies/administrative regulations that emphasize gender as an area of diversity supported by the school.” Thirty respondents strongly agreed, 49 respondents agreed, nine respondents disagreed, and six selected the “don’t know” option. Findings demonstrate that 85 respondents either strongly agreed or agreed their school offers staff training that builds the capacity of administrators, teachers, and staff to implement best practices for creating gender inclusive schools. A small number, or five respondents, indicated disagree while four participants selected the “don’t know” option. The majority of participants, or 66 respondents, stated their school provides all teachers, administrators, and school staff members written materials and information about gender diversity. Nineteen respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their school provided all employees with resources about gender diversity. Nine respondents chose the “don’t know” option.

Participants were asked about the existence of signage and/or visuals that celebrate gender diversity at their school. Table 9 presents frequencies and percentages for this survey question.

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<sup>6</sup> This data includes information from 23 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

Table 9<sup>7</sup>

Question 26: My school posts signage and/or visuals that celebrate gender diversity.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total
Q26	10 10.8%	44 47.3%	24 25.8%	2 2.2%	13 14.0%	93

Question 27 measured the extent to which participants agreed their school has a student information system that allows families and students the ability to self-identify their gender and use preferred names and pronouns.

Findings demonstrate 52 individuals either strongly agreed or agreed with the above statement, 17 individuals either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 24 individuals indicated the “don’t know” option. When asked about the presence of procedures and/or forms that demonstrate a non-binary understanding of gender at their school, six respondents strongly agreed, 27 respondents agreed, 20 respondents disagreed, six respondents strongly disagreed, and 32 respondents selected the “don’t know” option. This data is illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10<sup>8</sup>

Question 28: My school has procedures and/or forms that demonstrate a non-binary understanding of gender.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total
Q28	6 6.6%	27 29.7%	20 22.0%	6 6.6%	32 35.2%	91

Responses to question 26 of the survey show some significant variation in participants observations regarding the existence of procedures and forms that demonstrate a non-binary understanding of gender. Further, the fact that 32 of the 91 respondents who answered this question indicated “don’t know” may suggest 1) schools may not be informing all employees of changes to procedures and forms, or 2) schools that received training did not prioritize procedures and forms as an entry point to promote gender inclusivity.

Respondents were asked if their school has a restroom and/or facilities that provide options for any student who may desire them. Fifteen respondents strongly agreed these facilities existed at their school, 41 respondents

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<sup>7</sup> This data includes information from 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

<sup>8</sup> This data includes information from 20 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

agreed, 28 respondents disagreed, five respondents strongly disagreed, and five respondents selected the “don’t know” option. The last question in this section measured the extent to which participants agreed with the statement, “I can identify specific changes in our school’s policies, practices, or other structural aspects since the training took place.” The findings showed 13 participants strongly agreed, 51 participants agreed, 11 participants disagreed, one participant strongly disagreed, and 16 participants selected the “don’t know” option. Participants were asked, if possible, to provide a specific example from their personal experiences. One participant offered the following example:

In practice, we are providing for a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade transgender student’s use of a group bathroom that corresponds to the student’s gender identity—we have educated the students in that grade about gender diversity so they understand. We are planning for education of our middle school students about gender diversity to pave the way for gender variant students entering middle school next year.

Of the 24 participants who offered open-ended responses, 15 mentioned they currently have gender neutral restrooms and/or a policy that allows students to choose the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity. Six participants noted their school is presently contemplating or in the process of planning to implement gender neutral bathrooms, four responses discussed the use of pronouns and referring to students based on gender identity, and three responses mentioned changes on school forms to reflect a non-binary understanding of gender. One response mentioned changes to curriculum, and one response mentioned educating students about gender diversity.

#### **Section D: Interpersonal Entry Points**

Section D included questions about interpersonal entry points, related to the ways interactions and communications are utilized to reinforce a school’s commitment to gender inclusion. An “N/A” response category was added in this section of the survey for participants who felt the questions did not apply to their role at the school. Question 31 asked respondents to indicate how often they use language that challenges binary notions of gender. Responses to this question showed 21 participants use language that challenges binary notions of gender very often, 47 participants use this language often, 20 participants use this language sometimes, five participants use this language rarely, zero participants use this language never, and one participant indicated “N/A”. This



demonstrates that every survey respondent indicated intentionally using at least some language that challenges notions of gender in their work. When asked how often individuals help students understand the difference between patterns and rules with regard to gender expression and gender identity, 12 participants indicated very often, 38 participants indicated often, 30 participants indicated sometimes, seven participants indicated rarely, zero participants indicated never, and seven participants selected “N/A”. This demonstrates that 100% of respondents made at least some intentional effort to help students understand the difference between patterns and rules with regard to gender expression and gender identity. Seventeen participants provided specific examples describing ways they help students understand the difference between patterns and rules with regard to gender. One participant offered the following example, “Discussions in advisory—have you ever been expected to do something just because of your gender? Or told you couldn’t do something?” The most commonly occurring theme that emerged from these examples revealed a number of participants who facilitated conversations with students about gender stereotypes related to colors and clothing. Another respondent described, “When a group of students mentioned ‘pink is for girls’ I help them engage in a discussion about whether or not that’s really true or just a stereotype.”

Question 33 measured how frequently respondents question portrayals of gender in their work with students. Findings showed 16 respondents question portrayals of gender very often, 34 respondents question portrayals of gender often, 32 respondents question portrayals of gender sometimes, five respondents question portrayals of gender rarely, zero participants chose the “never” option, and six respondents selected the “N/A” option. When prompted about how frequently participants question portrayals of gender in their work with other teachers, staff members, and administrators, 10 participants indicated very often, 30 individuals indicated often, 33 individuals indicated sometimes, 15 individuals indicated rarely, two individuals indicated never, and two individuals indicated “N/A”. Participants were asked how frequently they teach empathy and respect around issues of gender diversity by asking “tough” questions (i.e. How do you think it would feel if people were always asking

you about your own gender?). There was diversity in the range of responses to this question, which is demonstrated by 11 respondents who stated very often, 18 respondents who stated often, 33 respondents who stated sometimes, 24 respondents who stated rarely, three respondents who stated never, and four respondents who selected the “N/A” option. Eight participants shared specific examples of ways they teach empathy and respect by asking “tough” questions. One respondent described how they used a student’s question as a springboard for creating teachable moment about gender:

We try to ‘teach’ and model empathy and respect in all interactions about difference. Once children asked a female teacher if she became a boy when she cut her hair very short. The teacher then pointed out the boys with long hair in the class, asking the children, ‘Do boys become girls when they grow their hair out?’ The children then answered ‘No’ and we helped them see that length of hair is not the determinant of being a boy or girl.

Other examples included discussions about “gender police”, use of radio broadcasts about “how her sister dresses as a boy and it doesn’t mean a thing”, and more general discussions when the topic of gender organically presents itself.

Question 36 asked participants how often they talk with students about how gender is based on how we feel on the inside. The frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 11.

Table 11<sup>9</sup>

Question 36: I talk with students about how being a boy or girl or something else is not about what you like, or what you wear, or your body, but something each of us figures out for ourselves based on how we feel inside.

	Very Often	Often	Rarely	Never	N/A	Total
Q36	4 4.4%	27 29.4%	43 46.7%	7 7.6%	11 12.0%	92

A smaller number, or four respondents, indicated they do this very often, whereas 27 respondents indicated often, 43 respondents indicated rarely, seven respondents indicated never, and 11 respondents indicated “N/A”. This may suggest that although participants have an understanding of how gender is based on “how we feel on the inside”, they may not have the language or practice required to have these conversations with students. The last question in

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<sup>9</sup> This data includes information from 21 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

this section of the survey measured the extent to which individuals agree with the statement, “I can identify specific changes in adults’ interaction with students about gender since the training took place.” Findings showed seven participants strongly agreed they could identify specific changes in interactions with students, 51 participants agreed they could identify specific changes in interactions with students, 13 participants disagreed that they could identify specific changes in interactions with students, and 21 participants chose the “N/A” option. Twelve participants offered open-ended responses that described a specific example from their personal experience. Themes mentioned in these example included the use of gender-neutral terms, correcting colleagues “if someone makes a gender specific faux pas”, the sharing of stories amongst colleagues when they “interrupted bias gender talk”, and conversations about shifts to use non-binary language and practices. One respondent expressed disappointment regarding their observation of change stating, “When a lone teacher makes jokes about gender. I know they want to do the right thing but are still uncomfortable so they laugh about things.” Initial general findings from Section D seem to indicate the majority of respondents make at least some conscious effort to utilize communication and interactions with colleagues and students to reinforce the school’s and participant’s personal commitment to gender inclusion.

### **Section E: Instructional Entry Points**

The instructional entry points section of the survey consisted of question about how participants use teaching and learning to instill greater awareness and understanding about gender. The questions in this section had four likert scale categories for responses that included very often, often, rarely, never, and an “N/A” option for individuals who do not provide direct instruction to students. The researcher removed the “sometimes” category that is present in previous survey sections in an effort to distinguish between a participant that regularly incorporates gender into teaching and learning versus a participant who uses lesson plans to expand understandings of gender diversity on one or two occasions. The initial sample of complete responses (n=71) was used in the data analysis for this section of the survey in order to focus the findings for the instructional entry points questions to

respondents who self-identified as a teacher and therefore provided direct instruction to students.

When asked how frequently they use existing lesson plans to expand understandings of gender diversity, four respondents stated very often, 18 respondents stated often, 26 respondents stated rarely, eight respondents stated never, and eight respondents selected the “N/A” category. Question 39 asked participants to indicate how frequently they create lessons plans to expand students’ understandings of gender diversity. In the responses to this question, two participants stated they create lessons plans to expand students’ understandings of gender diversity very often, 16 participants stated often, 34 participants stated rarely, five participants stated never, and seven participants selected the N/A response. Participants were questioned about how often they explore current curriculum areas for natural entry points for inserting gender diversity lessons or topics. A small number, or three individuals indicated exploring curriculum for natural entry points for inserting gender very often, 27 individuals indicated exploring curriculum for natural entry points often, 30 individuals indicated exploring curriculum for natural entry points rarely, two individuals indicated never exploring curriculum for natural entry points, and four individuals chose the “N/A” option. Questions 41 through 50 asked participants about specific subjects, teaching strategies, and learning tools they may use to explore the topic of gender and raise gender diversity themes. Table 12 presents the frequencies and percentages of use for specific strategies and tools for integrating gender into learning and teaching.

Table 12<sup>10</sup>

Question 41: I use non-binary portrayals of gender from other cultures in my work with students.

Question 42: I use literature that has themes raising gender diversity issues.

Question 43: I utilize the arts to explore gender.

Question 44: I use advisory programs or classroom meetings to surface gender-related themes.

Question 45: I assign open-ended projects that include gender-related topics, readings, or news.

Question 46: I arrange for transgender or other gender nonconforming individuals to present or work in classrooms.

Question 47: I invite guest speakers who work for greater gender equality in education, law or other fields.

Question 48: I use video or other media that present non-binary perspectives and beliefs about gender.

Question 49: I create space for students to articulate their own understandings and beliefs about gender.

Question 50: I integrate gender into curriculum areas through word problems, writing prompts, readings, art assignments, and/or research projects.

	Very Often	Often	Rarely	Never	N/A	Total
Q41	2 3.1%	17 26.6%	27 41.54%	15 23.4%	3 4.7%	64
Q42	7 10.9%	17 26.6%	21 32.8%	11 17.2%	8 12.5%	64
Q43	4 6.2%	8 12.3%	25 38.5%	18 27.7%	10 15.4%	65
Q44	3 4.6%	16 24.6%	31 47.7%	4 6.2%	11 16.9%	65
Q45	1 1.6%	7 11.1%	23 36.5%	19 30.2%	13 20.6%	63
Q46	1 1.5%	2 3.1%	15 23.1%	33 50.8%	14 21.5%	65
Q47	0 0.0%	2 3.1%	10 15.6%	35 54.7%	17 26.6%	64
Q48	0 0.0%	4 6.3%	24 37.5%	26 40.6%	10 15.6%	64
Q49	6 9.2%	25 38.5%	28 43.1%	3 4.6%	3 4.6%	65
Q50	3 4.8%	12 19.0%	24 38.1%	17 27.0%	7 11.1%	63

Findings from these questions demonstrate that instructional entry points are an area where respondents showed broader distribution of responses than in other sections of the survey. The two most utilized tools for integrating gender into instruction were literature and discussions about other cultures. Respondents indicated the two least utilized tools for integrating gender into instruction were the use of guest speakers who work for greater gender equity and video or other media. The last question of this section measured the extent to which participants agreed

<sup>10</sup> This data includes information 71 complete surveys and 0 incomplete

they could identify specific changes in curriculum and/or other classroom activities related to gender since the training(s) took place. Four respondents strongly agreed they could identify specific changes, 30 respondents agreed they could identify specific changes, and 17 respondents disagreed they could see specific changes.

Respondents were prompted with an optional open-ended question requesting a specific example of a curricular or classroom change from their personal experience. Thirteen participants provided qualitative responses. Four responses mentioned the implementation of a unit or lesson on gender stereotypes, and four responses noted creating specific lessons plans using books, graphing, and topics in biology and history to address topics related to gender and gender diversity. Other emerging themes that surfaced less frequently included creating space for students to express gender nonconforming ideas, and initial discussion amongst school personnel about how to build conversations about gender into lessons.

## **Section F: Additional Reflections**

The additional reflections section of the survey presented questions related to how important Gender Spectrum's support was in raising gender diversity awareness in respective schools. This section also aimed to understand ways participants worked to create more gender inclusive conditions at schools, as well as explore whether participants desired additional support, information and training on gender and gender diversity. The first question in this section solicited information about how important Gender Spectrum's support has been in raising gender diversity awareness at respondents' schools. The large majority of participants, or 76 individuals, indicated Gender Spectrum's support was either very important or important in raising gender diversity awareness at school. Seven individuals indicated Gender Spectrum's support was slightly important, and zero respondents indicated Gender Spectrum's support was not important at all. Question 53 invited participants to list any and all other ways they worked to create more gender inclusive conditions at their school. Twenty-eight respondents stated they supported school-wide activities focused on gender diversity. Twenty-seven respondents indicated they worked closely with individual students or families to support a child's greater expression or identity, and twenty-five

respondents shared various resources with colleagues. Other less frequently checked responses demonstrated that 16 participants advocated for greater gender inclusion work at school with leadership or administration, 11 participants led activities or lessons in other classrooms, and four participants conducted trainings with colleagues. When questioned about their desire for additional support, 60 respondents stated yes, they would like additional support to continue building their own understanding and/or practice with regard to gender diversity, while 27 respondents stated no. Twenty-six participants offered open-ended responses detailing specific areas or issues where additional support is desired. Six of the 26 responses referred to lesson planning and curriculum integration as areas in which participants desire additional support to prioritize the topic of gender diversity. Six responses mentioned continued partnership and work with Gender Spectrum in general as a means of support. Other themes mentioned in these responses were continued training with school staff, training with students, and additional materials and resources related to gender and gender diversity.

Participants were asked the extent to which they agreed their school's leadership encouraged them to address gender diversity with students since the training(s). Nineteen respondents strongly agreed their school encouraged them to address gender diversity with students since the training, 55 respondents agreed, 11 respondents disagreed, and one respondent strongly disagreed. Question 56 inquired if there were specific topics around gender about which participants would like to learn more. Twenty-eight respondents stated, yes, there are specific aspects related to gender about which they would like to learn more, while 53 respondents stated no, they would not like to learn more. Respondents were then prompted to provide an example of an aspect of gender about which they would like to learn more. Fifteen respondents submitted open-ended responses to this question that included a wide range of aspects. Aspects noted in these responses included more general training, information related to children's and student's perspectives on gender, curriculum integration, language and terminology, how to support students and families, gender fluidity, and issues related to puberty and gender. Questions 57 and 58 of the survey were open-ended and optional for respondents to complete. Question 57 solicited reflections from

participants about how Gender Spectrum has supported them, their school community, and their colleagues to create more gender inclusive conditions for all students. Twenty-three participants opted to share personal reflections related to how Gender Spectrum supported them and their school. Nine of the 23 responses credited Gender Spectrum training with being the catalyst for new and/or deeper conversations in school on the topics of gender and gender diversity. Eight participants raised themes related to an increased awareness and expanded understanding of gender as way Gender Spectrum provided support. Other less frequently mentioned themes that emerged from this question included participants' ability to support and help students and families on this topic, participants feeling empowered and inspired, and the acquisition of new language and terminology, resources and information, and curriculum and lessons. One respondent contributed the following reflection:

The training truly elevated our conversations around inclusivity in gender, as this is an area of identity we've done less work around in the past. Teachers see how important it is, and yet we know we've got some re-thinking to do regarding how things have been done in the past. Policies like birthday parties, bathrooms, and classroom lessons are all areas we are re-thinking with this new lens in place!

The final question of the survey provided respondents a space to include any additional questions or comments related to gender diversity and/or strengthening gender inclusivity at school. Ten participants shared feedback on this optional survey question. One respondent asked, "How can we make PE and sports as inclusive as possible?" Another respondent stated, "I need help broadening my awareness about gender and after school activities." One respondent asked about the potential benefits of "more guidance and training around next steps." Responses to this prompt seem to suggest there are specific areas of implementation where participants feel additional resources and support are necessary in order to integrate strategies for gender inclusivity into personal, structural, interpersonal, and instructional entry points.

### **Cross Tabulations**

Cross-tabulation was used as a statistical tool to summarize categorical data in order to illustrate relationship between variables. Table 13 illustrates the findings when responses were categorized based on



participants' affiliated school. Little significant variation related to respondents' level of personal understanding of gender and gender diversity was observed. The researcher chose Question 17 to demonstrate respondents' level of personal understanding of gender and gender diversity due to the complexity and specificity of its content as compared to the more basic and general questions also in this section.

Table 13<sup>11</sup>

Question 17: I understand how the three dimensions of gender (expression, biology, and identity) intersect and lead to an individual's authentic gender.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
School A	4 36.4%	6 54.6%	1 9.1%	0 0.0%	11
School B	6 30.0%	13 65.0%	1 25.0%	0 0.0%	20
School C	1 25.0%	2 50.0%	1 25.0%	0 0.0%	4
School D	0 0.0%	8 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	8
School E	9 33.3%	18 66.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	27
School F	5 50.0%	5 50.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	10
School G	11 73.3%	4 26.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	15

The large majority of individuals at each school site indicated they either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement in Question 17. This may suggest that all seven schools are similarly absorbing the information from the Gender Spectrum training and either expanding or reflecting on personal understandings of gender. School G school demonstrated a significantly deeper understanding of gender and gender diversity than Schools A-F, with 11 out of 15 participants stating they strongly agreed.

Responses to the questions in the personal entry points section were examined based on respondents' school role of teacher, administrator, and other school staff members. Table 14 presents the responses to Question 17 organized by school role.

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<sup>11</sup> This data includes information from 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

Table 14<sup>12</sup>

Question 17: I understand how the three dimensions of gender (expression, biology, and identity) intersect and lead to an individual’s authentic gender.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Teacher	25 36.2%	42 60.9%	2 2.9%	0 0.0%	69
Administrator	4 30.8%	8 61.5%	1 7.7%	0 0.0%	13
Other School Staff Member	7 58.3%	5 41.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	12

Some variability may exist in the responses of teachers, administrators, and other school staff members to questions about level of personal understanding of gender. Approximately ninety-seven percent of teachers, 92.3% of administrators either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement in Question 17, and 100% of respondents who identified as other school staff members strongly agreed with the statement. This may suggest the information from the training was absorbed and retained similarly across school roles.

Cross tabulations were calculated for responses to Question 17 in the personal entry points section and length of time since Gender Spectrum performed training at school. Table 15 presents responses to Question 17 organized by length of time since training

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<sup>12</sup> This data includes information from 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

Table 15<sup>13</sup>

Question 17: I understand how the three dimensions of gender (expression, biology, and identity) intersect and lead to an individual’s authentic gender.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Less than 1 year ago	16 30.8%	35 67.3%	1 1.9%	0 0.0%	52
1 year ago	11 57.9%	7 36.8%	1 5.3%	0 0.0%	19
2 years ago	5 35.7%	8 57.1%	1 7.1%	0 0.0%	14
3 years ago	1 20.0%	4 80.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	5
I don’t know	3 75.0%	1 25.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4

Little significant variability across responses was observed. This may indicate those participants from schools that received Gender Spectrum training three years ago demonstrated a similar understanding to those participants that received training two years ago, one year ago, and less than one year ago. One notable difference was apparent in respondent’s who received training less than one year ago. The majority of respondents who received training less than one year ago, 67.3%, selected the agree option as opposed to the strongly agree option. This may suggest that individuals who received training more recently may require more time to develop a deeper and stronger understanding of gender and diversity.

Section C of the survey explored structural entry points for creating gender-inclusive and sensitive school environments for children and adolescents. Cross-tabulation analysis was used to investigate any variation in responses to three survey questions in this section. The cross-tabulations categorized responses to Question 25, Question 27, and Question 29, by participants’ affiliated school. Question 25 asked participants to signify the extent to which they agreed with the statement, “My school provides all teachers, administrators, and school staff members written materials and information about gender diversity.” Question 27 explored respondents level of agreement/disagreement to the statement “My school has a student information system that allows families and

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<sup>13</sup> This data includes information from 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

students the ability to self-identify their gender and use preferred names and pronouns.” Question 29 of the survey asked participants the extent to which they agreed with the statement “My school has restrooms and/or facilities that provide options for any student who may desire them. Table 16, Table 17, and Table 18 illustrate participants’ responses to these questions organized by affiliated school.

Table 16<sup>14</sup>

Question 25: My school provides all teachers, administrators, and school staff members written materials and information about gender diversity.

Q25	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total
School A	0 0.0%	5 45.5%	4 36.4%	0 0.0%	2 18.2%	11
School B	4 20.0%	11 55.0%	2 10.0%	1 5.0%	2 10.0%	20
School C	3 75.0%	1 25.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4
School D	1 12.5%	5 62.5%	2 25.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	8
School E	12 46.2%	10 38.5%	3 11.5%	0 0.0%	1 3.9%	26
School F	4 40.0%	4 40.0%	2 20.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	10
School G	2 13.3%	4 26.7%	5 33.3%	0 0.0%	4 26.7%	15

Some variation was observed with regard to participant responses to Question 25 when organized by school.

Approximately one-third of participants from School G and approximately 33% of participants from School A indicated they disagreed with the statement in Question 25, while School B, School C, and School E had less than 15% of their affiliated participants disagree with the statement.

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<sup>14</sup> This data includes information from 23 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

Table 17<sup>15</sup>

Question 27: My school has a student information system that allows families and students the ability to self-identify their gender and use preferred names and pronouns.

Q27	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total
School A	0 0.0%	4 36.4%	2 18.2%	2 18.2%	3 27.3%	11
School B	3 15.8%	10 52.6%	2 10.5%	1 5.3%	3 15.8%	19
School C	0 0.0%	2 50.0%	1 25.0%	0 0.0%	1 25.0%	4
School D	2 25.0%	4 50.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 25.0%	8
School E	3 11.5%	9 34.6%	3 11.5%	3 11.5%	8 30.8%	26
School F	1 10.0%	6 60.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 30.0%	10
School G	2 13.3%	6 40.0%	2 13.3%	1 6.7%	4 26.7%	15

Table 17 demonstrates the range of responses participants submitted with regard to the existence of an information system that allows families and students the ability to self-identify their gender and use preferred names and pronouns at their affiliated school. Findings may suggest that some schools that received Gender Spectrum training have prioritized this structural change more than others. For example, School D had zero respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement in Question 27. This shows the majority of respondents at this school were in agreement their school had an information system similar to the one described in the survey question. Table 17 also shows the notable number of respondents at each school who selected the “don’t know” option. This may suggest that individuals at any given school who do not access or input data into student information systems may not be aware of the policies and practices used for students to identify their gender and preferred gender pronoun. Table 17 illustrates responses to Question 29 categorized by respondent’s affiliated school.

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<sup>15</sup> This data includes information from 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

Table 18<sup>16</sup>

Question 29: My school has restrooms and/or facilities that provide options for any student who may desire them.

Q29	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Total
School A	0 0.0%	9 81.8%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 18.2%	11
School B	2 10.0%	10 50.0%	6 30.0%	2 10.0%	0 0.0%	20
School C	0 0.0%	1 25.0%	3 75.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4
School D	1 12.5%	7 87.5%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	8
School E	1 3.9%	3 11.5%	17 65.4%	3 11.5%	2 7.7%	26
School F	2 20.0%	6 60.0%	1 10.0%	0 0.0%	1 10.0%	10
School G	9 60.0%	5 33.3%	1 6.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	15

Some variability was observed between the responses to Question 29 when organized by participants' affiliated school. Cumulatively, 76.9% of respondents from School E either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their school has restrooms and/or facilities that provide options for students who may desire them, while 100% of respondents from School D and 93.3% of respondents from School G either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. This may suggest that Schools D and G prioritized this structural change and/or had the institutional support to successfully implement facilities promote inclusivity related to gender at their school.

Questions in Section D: Interpersonal Entry points investigated how, if at all, participants incorporate information from the Gender Spectrum into interactions with students and colleagues. Question 31, Question 33, and Question 36 were used in cross-tabulation analysis and responses were categorized according to participants' role at their school. Tables 19, 20, and 21 present frequencies and percentages for teachers, administrator, and other school staff member responses. Responses to Question 31, which asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement, "I use language that challenges binary notions of gender (i.e. There are lots

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<sup>16</sup> This data includes information from 23 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

of ways to be boys and girls; Rather than ‘boys and girls’ refer to students as ‘students,’ ‘children,’ or another non-gendered term for the group,” are illustrated in Table 19.

Table 19<sup>17</sup>

Question 31: I use language that challenges binary notions of gender (i.e. There are lots of ways to be boys and girls; Rather than “boys and girls” refer to students as “students,” “children,” or another non-gendered term for the group).

Q31	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	N/A	Total
Teacher	17 25.0%	34 50.0%	14 20.6%	2 2.9%	0 0.0%	1 1.5%	68
Administrator	1 7.7%	5 38.5%	5 38.5%	2 15.4%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	13
Other School Staff Member	3 25.0%	7 58.3%	1 8.3%	1 8.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	12

Findings from Table 19 demonstrate that participants who identified themselves as administrators may use language that challenges binary notions of gender less frequently than teachers and other school staff members. Seventy-five percent of teachers and 83.3% of other school staff members indicated using language that challenges binary notions of gender either very often or often, while 46.2% of administrators indicated using language that challenges binary notions of gender either very often or often. This variance may be due to the fact individuals who are in administrative roles oftentimes have less direct interaction with students on a daily basis.

Question 33 asked respondents to indicate how frequently they question portrayals of gender in work with students. Table 19 presents responses to Question 33 categorized by participants’ role in the school.

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<sup>17</sup> This data includes information from 22 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

Table 20<sup>18</sup>

Question 33: I question portrayals of gender in my work with students at school (i.e. Who decided what things are for boys and what things are for girls? We get messages about some things being for boys and some things being for girls, but these messages are just SOME people’s ideas, they may not be right for you).

Q33	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	N/A	Total
Teacher	14 20.9%	25 37.1%	25 37.3%	2 3.0%	0 0.0%	1 1.5%	68
Administrator	1 7.7%	6 46.2%	3 23.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 23.1%	13
Other School Staff Member	1 8.3%	3 25.0%	4 33.3%	2 16.7%	0 0.0%	2 16.7%	12

Cumulatively, 58% of teachers and 53.9% of administrators indicated they question portrayals of gender in their work with students either very often or often, while 33.3% of other school staff members indicated they question portrayals of gender in their work with students either very often or often. Question 36 asked participants how frequently they talk with students about how being a boy or a girl or something else is not about what you like, or what you wear, or your body, but something each of us figures out for ourselves based on how we feel. Table 20 illustrates responses to this question organized by school role.

Table 21<sup>19</sup>

Question 36: I talk with students about how being a boy or girl or something else is not about what you like, or what you wear, or your body, but something each of us figures out for ourselves based on how we feel inside.

Q36	Very Often	Often	Rarely	Never	N/A	Total
Teacher	4 6.1%	21 31.8%	33 50.0%	4 6.1%	4 6.1%	66
Administrator	0 0.0%	2 15.4%	5 38.5%	2 15.4%	4 30.8%	13
Other School Staff Member	0 0.0%	4 33.3%	4 33.3%	1 8.3%	3 25.0%	12

The most frequently chosen response option for Question 36 was rarely. Thirty-three teachers, five administrators, and four other school staff members selected rarely, while 21 teachers, two administrators, and four other school staff members indicated they rarely had conversations with students similar to the one presented in Question 36.

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<sup>18</sup> This data includes information from 21 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys

<sup>19</sup> This data includes information from 20 incomplete surveys and 71 complete surveys



## **CHAPTER V**

### **Discussion**

The results of this research study suggest educational stakeholders utilize and incorporate information from Gender Spectrum training into the four entry points for implementation. This chapter will further synthesize and interpret the core findings from this study. This will be accomplished by highlighting patterns and trends in the data from the personal entry points, structural entry points, interpersonal entry points, instructional entry points, additional reflections, and cross-tabulations sections of the survey. Next, the author compares themes emerging from the data with information highlighted in the literature review. This chapter will then address implications of findings for the field of social work, strengths and limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research on gender diversity in schools

#### **Patterns and Trends**

##### *Personal Entry Points*

This study found that a majority of teachers, administrators, and other school staff members who received Gender Spectrum training(s) are indeed using the information and strategies in their personal and professional practices. Findings show individuals demonstrated more integration of Gender Spectrum material in some entry points than in others. Findings indicated that educational stakeholders determined Gender Spectrum training(s) present concepts that relate to and are more frequently incorporated into personal entry points than in other areas for implementation. This suggests Gender Spectrum provides information and support that successfully instills a deeper, more complex understanding of gender and gender diversity in individuals who are employed at schools that received training. Despite the significant level of personal growth and understanding around gender that

occurred, findings reveal a wider range of agreement around the extent individuals believe efforts to promote gender diversity are present at their school. This may suggest schools that received Gender Spectrum training consider the Gender Spectrum training itself a significant effort to promote gender diversity, but not beyond this intervention. Another interpretation of this finding could be related to the absence of concrete steps presented in Gender Spectrum training that address the institutional prioritization of gender as an issue of diversity.

A notable trend in qualitative themes from this survey section is seen in individuals' use of specific examples to describe ways in which expectations about gender expression have changed over time. Findings may suggest that educational stakeholders feel more comfortable engaging students with more accepted and less controversial content. Examples include changing norms around gender-specific colors and fashion trends, as opposed to introducing ideas about the fluid and flexible nature of gender expression in individual people over the course of different stages of development and life (i.e. it is now more acceptable for individuals to dress in a characteristically masculine way one day and more characteristically feminine way another day than it was 50 years ago, when individuals thought about gender expression as being stagnant). It is important to consider that Gender Spectrum may not specifically touch upon the most effective and useful examples individuals could use to instigate critical thinking related to expectations about gender expression in elementary and middle school students.

### ***Structural Entry Points***

Gender Spectrum training material related to structural entry points introduce concrete steps that create a foundation for gender inclusive practices to become rooted in the organizational and political structure of a school. Participants demonstrated less overall agreement with the statements in this section of the survey than in the personal entry points and interpersonal entry points sections. The following patterns and trends were observed in this section: 1) educational stakeholders that receive Gender Spectrum training agree their school's commitment to gender as an area of diversity was reflected in policies and administrative regulations; 2) after receiving Gender

Spectrum training, schools make specific changes to policies, practices, or other structural aspects; and 3) most schools that receive Gender Spectrum training offer additional staff training that builds the capacity of individuals at that particular school to implement best practices for creating gender inclusive schools. Participants shed light on areas within structural entry points where less implementation of Gender Spectrum strategies was demonstrated. These included the existence of signage that celebrate gender diversity, an information system that allows families and students the ability to self-identify their gender and use preferred names and pronouns, forms that demonstrate a non-binary understanding of gender and gender neutral bathrooms. One prominent trend in this section is the number of participants who selected the “don’t know” response option. The idea that individuals who receive Gender Spectrum training(s) may “not know” about structural aspects of their school that demonstrate a commitment to gender inclusivity, may be interpreted in a number of ways. Sometimes, the organizational structure and size of school impact how frequently and effectively educational stakeholders occupy differing roles. It is possible the roles of administrators and other school staff members may lend themselves to more interaction with and exposure to shifts in organization structural, systems, and policy within a given school than the role of a teacher.

### ***Interpersonal Entry Points***

Findings from Section D: Interpersonal Entry Points, highlight how information from the Gender Spectrum training(s) inform ways in which educational stakeholders use interactions and communications to reinforce personal and institutional commitment to gender diversity. Data from this section suggests that individuals who receive Gender Spectrum training make at least some intentional attempt to help students understand the difference between patterns and rules related to gender expression and gender identity. This suggests that Gender Spectrum training does indeed impact how educational stakeholders approach conversations, discussion, and teachable moments around gender. Responses to prompts related to questioning portrayals of gender with students, as well as with colleagues, reveal that individuals who received Gender Spectrum training(s) question portrayals of gender

with co-workers less frequently than with students. Educational institutions, like society, have a hierarchy of power that values some voices over others. There is a possibility that teachers, administrators, and other school staff members feel questioning portrayals of gender with adults and co-workers may be a higher risk than questioning portrayals of gender with students.

The extent to which individuals who received Gender Spectrum training understand and subscribe to the notion that gender is about how individuals feel on the inside was evaluated in this section. Fifty participants indicated they rarely or never engaged students on this specific topic. This may suggest that while educational stakeholders who receive Gender Spectrum training acquire a deeper understanding of gender, these individuals may not have the specific language, narratives, or practice necessary to have conversations with students about how being a boy or girl or something else is not about what an individual likes, what they wear, or their body, but something an individual interprets for themselves based on how they feel inside.

### ***Instructional Entry Points***

The instructional entry points section of this study surfaced a number of patterns and trends associated with the use of curriculum and teaching to instill greater awareness and understanding about gender. A significantly higher level of disagreement was observed in the findings from this survey section as compared with findings from others. The most frequently selected response in the instructional entry points survey section was the “rarely” option. A potential explanation for this variance could be related to 1) the limited amount of time Gender Spectrum dedicates to curriculum implementation and teaching modalities in its training(s), and 2) the absence of a “sometimes” option in this section of the survey. Further, unless schools request specific training(s) for teachers about incorporating gender issues into curriculum and lesson planning, teachers may have little guidance and support in this process. Although teachers did not indicate using teaching tools to explore gender frequently, responses indicated using a wide variety of teaching tools when they did address issues related to gender in the classroom. This may suggest that more general Gender Spectrum training(s) introduce strategies for implementing

gender issues into curriculum, but do not provide enough information for teachers to consistently integrate aspects of gender diversity into instruction.

### *Additional Reflections*

Participants offered open-ended reflections that allow the researcher to make supplementary interpretations about the importance of Gender Spectrum support in raising gender diversity awareness. The majority of educational stakeholders who receive Gender Spectrum training continue to desire additional further support. Areas are highlighted where additional resources and training may be useful. One particular respondent solicited additional support in the area of PE and athletics. In the United States educational system, athletics and physical education are oftentimes required for all students. This respondent drew attention to a crucial area of inclusion often overlooked in educational training. Athletics, similar to the classroom, should be an area of education that welcomes all youth, including gender nonconforming and transgender youth. This could be accomplished by specifically addressing issues related to gender diversity in athletic policies and practices.

The qualitative data from this survey section revealed the top two ways in which Gender Spectrum training(s) were utilized. These were 1) aiding students or families to support a child's gender expression or identity, and 2) sharing resources with colleagues. Further, a significant number of participants noted that Gender Spectrum training and information was the catalyst for new and/or deeper conversation in schools on the topics of gender and gender diversity. These examples speak to the versatility of the Gender Spectrum training and education programs. Gender Spectrum approaches issues of gender through micro (direct action), mezzo (consciousness raising), and macro (structural and policy change) lenses that try to create a culture of awareness, openness, and comfort around issues of gender in schools. Findings may suggest schools that receive Gender Spectrum training demonstrate significant growth on micro and mezzo levels. Less implementation and change appear to be occurring on the macro level.

### *Cross-Tabulations*

Findings from Section A-F were analyzed according to school, educational role, and length of time since Gender Spectrum completed training. Cross-tabulation from the personal entry points section of the survey suggests information from the Gender Spectrum training(s) is similarly absorbed across schools. This may indicate that school environment and organizational culture are not significant factors impacting the extent to which individuals are able to gain a personal understanding and reflect upon ideas about gender. When personal entry points were explored across school roles, information was absorbed similarly among teachers, administrators and other school staff members. This may suggest that education role is not a factor affecting the level of personal understanding individuals are able to develop based on Gender Spectrum training. Responses were examined based on the length of time since Gender Spectrum completed training at a particular school. Findings may suggest that individuals who receive Gender Spectrum training more recently may require more time to develop a deeper and stronger understanding of gender and gender diversity.

Cross-tabulations were calculated for responses from the structural entry points section organized by school. This appears to indicate schools that receive Gender Spectrum training prioritize some structural changes more than others. The organizational culture and the level of endorsement/dissent schools and communities voice around structural changes may dictate the type of intervention that is implemented. For example, educational stakeholders at one school may decide to prioritize non-binary understandings of gender on forms while another school may decide to prioritize the creation of gender-neutral restrooms. Other factors that may influence how a particular school prioritizes structural changes around gender are funding, political/religious affiliations, community influence, parental opinions, and the needs of individual students. Responses to question in the interpersonal entry points section of the survey were investigated across educational roles. Administrators used interpersonal interactions to address issues related to gender less frequently than teachers and other school staff members. The variance observed in this cross-tabulation may be due to the fact that individuals who are in

administrative roles oftentimes have less direct interaction with students on a regular and consistent basis. Another possible interpretation of this finding could be related to how administrators understand their roles and responsibilities within a school. If administrators, who are in a position of power, do not view having interpersonal interactions with students about gender as part of their role, they may be less likely to engage in such conversations. Additionally, it is possible that because administrators have less direct interaction with students, they may not feel comfortable or practiced using the language necessary to have meaningful discussions around gender.

### **Findings in Light of Literature Reviewed**

This study was pursued in light of limited research on the topic of gender identity, gender expression, and gender diversity in schools. Most literature has focused on 1) gender identity development and gender variance individuals, 2) how to address issues around sexual orientation in schools, and 3) the experiences of LGBTQ students in schools. There is essentially no literature that specifically addresses the topic of bringing issues related to gender identity and gender diversity into the educational sphere.

Ehrensaft (2012) presents a unique, contemporary understanding of gender development in children and adolescents that may not fit the traditional male/female binary. Gender Spectrum successfully utilizes Ehrensaft's (2012) perspective of gender development to educate teachers, administrators, and other school staff about the multidimensionality of gender. Further, Gender Spectrum uses Ehrensaft's (2012) theoretical model to emphasize and justify the importance of psycho-social and environmental factors in creating gender-inclusive schools for transgender and gender nonconforming students.

Johnson & Stewart (2009) discuss how *DSM* diagnoses reinforce socially rooted gender stereotypes. Open-ended responses from participants show that educational stakeholders do not use the *DSM* changing diagnoses as an example how society reinforces existing gender stereotypes. While this may not be an example that is appropriate for teachers, administrators, or other staff members to use with elementary and middle school aged

students, it may be an important example for Gender Spectrum to use in its training. Discussions around how the *DSM* has evolved over time may be beneficial in helping educational stakeholders contextualize gender as being heavily influenced by social norms and its medicalization.

It is necessary to understand and consider training models for addressing gender identity, gender expression, and gender diversity in schools alongside psychological theories. Social learning theory (McLeod, 2011) suggests that school climate and peer influence are instrumental factors impacting social and moral development of children and adolescents. In the context of findings from this study, social learning theory becomes the catalyst for deeper understanding, reflection, and implementation after schools complete Gender Spectrum training(s). Social learning theory supports the notion that educational stakeholders set the example from which students imitate behavior and gain an understanding of issues related to gender identity, gender expression, and gender diversity. Findings from this study may support Tully's (2000) supposition that empowerment theories help to reframe gender with more positive associations that undoubtedly impact how gender is taught, understood, and addressed. Feedback from participants may suggest Gender Spectrum's use of a strengths-based approach empowers educational stakeholders to integrate gender into their school as a celebrated area of diversity.

Much of the empirical research reviewed touched on the victimization of LGBT students and the impact of a hostile school and family climate on overall wellbeing. Further, empirical research highlights parental engagement and education as crucial factors impacting LGBT youth mental health. As a result of these studies, researchers call for the re-education of students, school employees, and families about gender issues. Gender Spectrum's education and training program aims to meet this need as stated in the research.

Findings are aligned with issues related to the needs of transgender and gender variant children and families also seen in existing literature (Riley et al, 2011). The research recommends promoting community education as a means to support families with transgender or gender nonconforming children and to raise awareness about gender diversity (Riley et al., 2011). Findings demonstrate raised levels of personal understanding and awareness around



gender diversity in individuals who received Gender Spectrum training. This may suggest that the completion of Gender Spectrum training with educational stakeholders indirectly increases feelings of social support for families with transgender or gender nonconforming children. Jiménez's (2009) study presented specific examples of instructional strategies and structural locations for queer interventions in schools. Findings from this study, similar to those in Jiménez's study, indicate instruction and lesson planning as an area where implementing queer or gender-related interventions is more difficult and occurs less frequently.

### **Implications for Social Work**

The study may benefit social work given the implication and application of its findings may benefit school social workers, all students, families, teachers, administrators, and school staff members by heightening awareness and understanding about gender identity and gender expression through implementing and restructuring curriculums, policies, programs, and services to create gender sensitive school climates. Through these trainings, wide ranges of individuals are given the language and information to appropriately understand and support the experiences of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth.

This study's findings provide potentially valuable information for the field of social work, and more specifically school social work, as it speaks to the unique challenge of integrating a progressive conceptualization of gender into personal understandings, organizational structures, interpersonal interactions, and instructional practice in contemporary education. At present, some schools are becoming required to make accommodations for students who identify as transgender or gender nonconforming. Without a solid and deep understanding of gender, gender identity, gender expression, and gender diversity, educational stakeholders find it difficult to support transgender or gender nonconforming students and their families. Oftentimes, educational stakeholders have the desire to prioritize gender as an area of diversity but are at a loss of how to begin this process.

School social workers should focus on integrating gender into educational systems and practices on micro, mezzo and macro levels. It is the role of social workers to address how gender diversity is a social issue impacting

not only gender-nonconforming and transgender youth but all youth. On the macro level, it is through re-education, acceptance, further research, and a strengths-based, empowerment approach that gender-inclusive spaces are created both in schools and in society. Using a community-based, participatory model, LGBT, gender-nonconforming, and transgender youth can play a key role in making change, in turn, empowering these students and their allies to advocate for equality with regard to safety, access, and support.

The National Association of Social Work code of ethics include “social justice” and “dignity and worth of a person” in their stated values. In the context of education these values speak to the rights of students to feel supported by both educational stakeholders, as well as educational policies and structures to be their authentic selves. Findings from this study suggest educational stakeholders may require specific and varying types of support depending on their role and specific school needs. To uphold these values, school social workers should strive to provide the internal support, education, and training necessary for educational stakeholders to become change agents. As change agents, these individuals should instigate and encourage a shift in school climate and instruction towards gender inclusion and celebrating gender diversity. The dignity and worth of all youth, specifically transgender and gender nonconforming youth, will be fully recognized when an understanding and prioritization of gender diversity is reflected in individual practices and institutional structures and policies.

### **Strengths of Study**

This study’s strengths include that it was primarily quantitative, exploratory, and included some open-ended questions. This research design captured how information and strategies presented in Gender Spectrum training(s) are being utilized and implemented by educational stakeholders in schools. Given the lack of research on the topic of teaching gender diversity and promoting gender inclusion in schools and education, this study may serve as a platform for a specific organization to explore the overall impact of one training and education program on personal, structural, interpersonal, and instructional levels.

## **Limitations of Study**

There are important limitations to this study, which include both the smaller and less diverse sample size of the initial sample of complete surveys. The initial sample size (N=71) of complete surveys included only the participants who completed the entire survey, answering all of the questions. This sample was also more homogenous with regard to demographic characteristics and participants' role in school. Additionally, the large majority of participants are involved in education at a particular geographic location the west coast. The percentage of participants who identified as Two or more races also reflects the demographic population of this particular area of the United States. Although the research attempted to include a diverse population, all individuals who participated in this study identified as cisgender male or cisgender female. Further, the majority of participants tended to be White, heterosexual, women, which certainly impacts their personal experience and understanding of gender. These factors also limit the generalizability of this study's findings. Though all schools in this study received at least one Gender Spectrum training on general gender education, some schools and individuals received more training and information than others. The specific amount of training received was not controlled across schools. Another limitation of this study is related to survey design. The inconsistency of likert scale response options across all survey sections limited the types of data analysis and statistical tests that could be conducted to generalize and compare findings.

## **Recommendations for Future Research on Gender Diversity in Schools**

As stated in earlier sections of this chapter, several limits to this study may inform future research. Prior to registering for training, participating schools and Gender Spectrum could collaborate and prioritize entry points for creating gender inclusive schools, dependent on the needs and desires of that particular school. This type of research would give Gender Spectrum, the participating schools, and the fields of education and social work, more insight into how and where each school envisions gender diversity being integrated into the school's organizational structure and culture at a particular moment in time. This would also allow an opportunity for more focused,

specific training and research in one area. Further, this type of research may reveal specific barriers and obstacles to implementation and understanding that were not addressed in this study.

An exploratory investigation into what types of support teachers need in order to apply their lens of understanding gender to curriculum, lesson planning, classroom, management, and general interactions with students would be an important area for future research. This type of study could provide a clearer picture of why the instructional entry point section of this survey demonstrated some weakness with regard to implementation. Given the mixed responses participants offered around additional support, it would be important for future research to determine how individuals feel about the amount of information they received at the training related to their desire to learn more about gender and gender diversity in schools. Finally, a greater understanding of how practices and strategies for creating gender-inclusive schools are received by students, may also offer helpful insight and validation for teachers, administrators, other school staff members, and trainers attempting to put gender inclusive practices into action. Individuals in the fields of education and social work are in a unique position to be leaders and innovators raising awareness and instigating change in the gender diversity arena.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Survey**

# Gender Spectrum Survey

## Section A: Demographic Information

### 2. What school are you affiliated with?

- CAT
- New City School
- Peralta Elementary School
- Mills College Children's School
- Prospect Sierra
- Chinese American International School
- San Francisco Day School

### 3. What position best describes your role at your school?

- Teacher
- Administrator
- Other School Staff Member

Other (please specify)

### 4. If a teacher, at what grade level do you teach? Check all that apply. If you are not a teacher you may skip this question.

- Kindergarten
- 1st Grade
- 2nd Grade
- 3rd Grade
- 4th Grade
- 5th Grade
- 6th Grade
- 7th Grade
- 8th Grade

### 5. How long have you been working at your current school?

Please enter the number of years you have worked at your school.

## Gender Spectrum Survey

6. How long have you been working in education in general?

~~Response field~~

~~minutes/days/years~~

~~work/retirement~~

~~years~~

7. How long ago did Gender Spectrum perform training at your school? (approximately)

- Less than 1 year ago
- 1 year ago
- 2 years ago
- 3 years ago
- 4 years ago
- 5 years ago
- I don't know

8. What is the nature of your exposure to and interaction with Gender Spectrum trainings and materials? (Check all that apply)

- I have personally attended Gender Spectrum training events
- I have not personally attended Gender Spectrum training events, but I receive information about training from staff members/colleagues
- I have observed my friend/colleague attend Gender Spectrum training at another school

9. In which of the following gender spectrum professional development activities have you participated? (Check all that apply) If none, please skip to the next question.

- ~~Reads about Gender Diversity (read articles of gender, reads professional articles, cultural competence of gender)~~
- ~~From the perspective of gender (role of gender in school, data analysis of gender in diverse schools and community of gender in diverse practices)~~
- ~~On a planning session with Gender Spectrum staff (lesson specific lessons and activities on training gender, reflection due on performance, planning etc.)~~
- ~~Facilitated a session~~
- ~~Gender Spectrum conference~~
- I have not participated in any Gender Spectrum activities

~~Other (please specify)~~

## Gender Spectrum Survey

10. How do you identify your race? (Check all that apply)

- White/Caucasian
- ~~African American~~
- Latino/a
- Hispanic
- ~~American Indian/Alaska Native~~
- Asian
- ~~Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander~~

~~Other (please specify)~~

11. What is your age?

~~Please type your age in~~

12. How do you identify your gender?

- ~~Male~~
- ~~Female~~
- ~~Gender nonconforming~~
- ~~Transgender~~
- ~~Other~~

~~Other (please specify)~~

13. How do you identify your sexual orientation?

- ~~Heterosexual~~
- ~~Lesbian~~
- ~~Gay~~
- ~~Bisexual~~
- ~~Queer~~

~~Other (please specify)~~

## Section B: Personal Entry Points

~~Please enter your personal entry points for your gender and sexual orientation in the following~~

## Gender Spectrum Survey

~~Let's get started! This section contains questions about your understanding of gender and how you apply these concepts in your work.~~

14. I have a clear understanding about the difference between biological sex and gender.

~~Strongly Agree~~      ~~Agree~~      ~~Disagree~~      ~~Strongly Disagree~~

15. I am able to describe ways in which expectations about gender expression have changed over time.

~~Strongly Agree~~      ~~Agree~~      ~~Disagree~~      ~~Strongly Disagree~~

If possible, please provide an example for your response.

16. I understand the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation.

~~Strongly Agree~~      ~~Agree~~      ~~Disagree~~      ~~Strongly Disagree~~

17. I understand how the three dimensions of gender (expression, biology, and identity) intersect and lead to an individual's authentic gender.

~~Strongly Agree~~      ~~Agree~~      ~~Disagree~~      ~~Strongly Disagree~~

18. To what extent do you believe efforts to promote gender-diversity are present at your school?

~~Very Present~~      ~~Present~~      ~~Somewhat Present~~      ~~Not Present~~

19. Overall, how relevant do you feel the information and resources from the Gender Spectrum training are to your work?

~~Very Useful~~      ~~Useful~~      ~~Somewhat Useful~~      ~~Not Useful~~

20. Since the training, I have done significant personal reflection about my own understanding and perception of gender.

~~Strongly Agree~~      ~~Agree~~      ~~Disagree~~      ~~Strongly Disagree~~      ~~NA~~

21. Since the training, I have thought about how my own personal ideas about gender impacts the work I do with students.

~~Strongly Agree~~      ~~Agree~~      ~~Disagree~~      ~~Strongly Disagree~~      ~~NA~~

## Gender Spectrum Survey

22. I feel my school supports and encourages students to express their gender identity and gender expression.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Section C: Structural Entry Points

23. My school provides a safe and supportive environment for gender-diverse students. This section explores ways in which your district or school community recognizes and supports diversity and actively works to create a more inclusive environment.

23. My school provides a safe and supportive environment for gender-diverse students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. My school offers training that builds the capacity of all individuals, teachers and staff, to meet the needs of transgender and gender-diverse students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. My school provides all teachers and individuals who work for the district with training and resources for supporting gender-diverse students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. My school provides a safe and supportive environment for gender-diverse students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. My school has a clear plan for identifying and supporting low-income students and the ability to identify their needs and provide them with resources and supports.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. My school provides a safe and supportive environment for gender-diverse students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. My school has restrooms and facilities that provide privacy and safety for transgender students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Gender Spectrum Survey

30. I can identify specific changes in our school's policies, practices, or other structural aspects since the trainings took place

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Other/No
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If possible, please describe the changes you observed:

## Section D: Interpersonal Entry Points

~~This section is optional. It is intended for those who wish to provide feedback on their own work with students.~~

31. I use language that challenges binary notions of gender (i.e. There are lots of ways to be boys and girls; Rather than "boys and girls" refer to students as "students," "children," or another non-gendered term for the group).

Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	NA
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32. In my work at school, I help students understand the difference between patterns and rules with regard to gender expression and gender identity (i.e. Who says only girls wear dresses? Do all girls wear them? Do all or some boys wear dresses?; What patterns have you observed about expectations for youth about gender?).

Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	NA
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If possible, please describe the patterns you observed:

33. I question portrayals of gender in my work with students at school (i.e. Who decided what things are for boys and what things are for girls? We get messages about some things being for boys and some things being for girls, but these messages are just SOME people's ideas, they may not be right for you.)

Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	NA
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Gender Spectrum Survey

34. I question portrayals of gender in my work with other teachers, staff members and administrators at my school (i.e. Who decided what things are for boys and what things are for girls? We get messages about some things being for boys and some things being for girls, but these messages are just SOME people's ideas, they may not be right for you.)

Very Often   
  Often   
  Sometimes   
  Fairly   
  Never   
  N/A

If possible, provide an example for your response:

35. I teach empathy and respect around issues of gender diversity by asking "tough" questions (i.e. How do you think it would feel if people were always asking you about your own gender?)

Very Often   
  Often   
  Sometimes   
  Fairly   
  Never   
  N/A

If possible, provide an example for your response:

36. I talk with students about how being a boy or girl or something else is not about what you like, or what you wear, or your body, but something each of us figures out for ourselves based on how we feel inside.

Very Often   
  Often   
  Fairly   
  Never   
  N/A

37. I can identify specific changes in adult's interactions with students about gender since the trainings took place

Strongly Agree   
  Agree   
  Disagree   
  Strongly Disagree   
  N/A

If possible, provide an example for your response:

## Section E: Instructional Entry Points

**These are the specific ways you are starting to bring your goals to life and understanding that goal. These are the specific ways you are taking steps to bring your goals to life. These are the specific ways you are taking steps to bring your goals to life.**

38. I use existing lesson plans to expand understandings of gender diversity.

Very Often   
  Often   
  Fairly   
  Never   
  N/A

## Gender Spectrum Survey

39. I create lesson plans to expand students' understandings of gender diversity

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~  
                       

40. I explore current curriculum areas for natural entry points for inserting gender diversity issues or topics.

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~  
                       

41. I use non-binary portrayals of gender from other cultures in my work with students

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~  
                       

42. I use literature that has themes raising gender diversity issues.

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~  
                       

43. I utilize the arts to explore gender

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~  
                       

44. I use advisory programs or classroom meetings to surface gender-related themes.

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~  
                       

45. I assign open-ended projects that include gender-related topics, readings, or news.

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~  
                       

46. I arrange for transgender or other gender nonconforming individuals to present or work in classrooms.

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~  
                       

47. I invite guest speakers who work for greater gender equity in education, law or other fields.

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~  
                       

48. I use video or other media that present non-binary perspectives and beliefs about gender.

~~Very Often~~      ~~Often~~      ~~Fairly~~      ~~Never~~      ~~NA~~

## Gender Spectrum Survey

49. I create space for students to articulate their own understandings and beliefs about gender.

~~Very Often~~       ~~Often~~       ~~Fairly~~       ~~Never~~       ~~NA~~

50. I integrate gender into curriculum areas through word problems, writing prompts, readings, art assignments, and/or research projects

~~Very Often~~       ~~Often~~       ~~Fairly~~       ~~Never~~       ~~NA~~

51. I can identify specific changes in curriculum and/or other classroom activities related to gender since the training(s) took place.

~~Study/Age~~       ~~Age~~       ~~Grade~~       ~~Study/Grade~~

If possible, provide an example for your response

## Section F: Additional Reflections

52. Overall, how important has Gender Spectrum's support been in raising gender diversity awareness at your school?

~~Very important~~       ~~Important~~       ~~Slightly important~~       ~~Not important at all~~

53. Please list any other ways in which you have worked to create more gender inclusive conditions at your school (as many as apply)

- I have worked closely with individual students of all genders to support their self-identified gender expression and identity
- I have worked closely with my colleagues
- I have worked to integrate gender inclusion into all of my school work and leadership activities
- I have taken various measures with my colleagues
- I have spoken to my school community about gender diversity
- I have taken various measures in my classroom
- I have participated in district or school-wide efforts to support gender inclusion

Other (describe briefly)

## Gender Spectrum Survey

54. I would like additional support to continue building my own understandings and/or practice with regard to gender diversity

Yes

No

If yes, please state:

55. Since the training(s), my school's leadership has encouraged me to address gender diversity with the students with whom I work

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

56. Are there specific aspects about gender about which you'd like to learn more?

Yes

No

If yes, please state:

57. OPTIONAL: Please share your reflections about how Gender Spectrum has supported you, your colleagues, and your school community to create more gender inclusive conditions for all students.

58. OPTIONAL: Please include any other questions or comments related to gender diversity and/or strengthening gender inclusivity at your school.

## Appendix B

### Protocol Change Form



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**School for Social Work**  
Smith College  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063  
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

April 22, 2014

Meredith Abrams

Dear Meredith,

I have reviewed your amendments and they look fine. This amendment to your study is therefore approved. Thank you and best of luck with your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Kersten'.

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.  
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: John Erlich, Research Advisor

## Appendix C

### Recruitment Script

Hello,

My name is Meredith Abrams and I am a student at the Smith College School for Social Work. For my thesis, I am reaching out to teachers, administrators, and school staff members who work at a school where Gender Spectrum completed training(s) on creating gender inclusive environments. My goal is to better understand and explore how, if at all, teachers, administrators, and school staff members use the information and strategies presented by the Gender Spectrum to promote and create gender inclusive schools. Questions in this survey ask participants specific questions about how topics related gender diversity, are supported, taught, and/or encouraged. At the end of this paragraph is a link to a survey designed to explore experiences and opinions on this matter. This study is anonymous and participation is optional. The data collected from this study will be used to complete my Master's in Social Work (MSW) Thesis. The results of the study may also be used in publications and presentations. The survey should take you 10-15 minutes and is entirely voluntary. You may exit the survey at any time.

Feel free to contact me with concerns or questions.

LINK TO SURVEY: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GenderSpectrumSurvey>

Thank you for your time,

Meredith Abrams

Smith College School for Social Work; MSW Candidate '14

[mabrams@smith.edu](mailto:mabrams@smith.edu)

[XXX-XXX-XXXX](tel:XXX-XXX-XXXX)

## Appendix D

### Smith College Human Subject's Committee Approval Letter



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Smith College  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063  
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

February 4, 2014

Meredith Abrams

Dear Meredith,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

*Please note the following requirements:*

**Consent Forms:** All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

**Maintaining Data:** You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

*In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:*

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

**Renewal:** You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

**Completion:** You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.  
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: John Erlich, Research Advisor

## Appendix E

### Informed Consent

Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Smith College • Northampton, MA

Title of Study: Dimensions of Diversity: Exploring Gender Inclusive Schools  
Investigator: Meredith Abrams, Smith School for Social Work, (XXX) XXX-XXXX

#### Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study that intends to explore how, if at all, teachers, administrators, and school staff members use the information and strategies presented by the organization Gender Spectrum to promote and create gender inclusive schools. Questions in this survey ask participants specific questions about how topics related gender diversity, are supported, taught, and/or encouraged.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you self-identify as a teacher, school staff member, or administrator where one or more Gender Spectrum trainings were completed. Participants must be over the age of 18. Each participant is only allowed to complete and submit one survey. Individuals who work less than half time at one of the schools where Gender Spectrum performed training will be excluded from participating.
- We ask that you read this form and print a copy for your own records before agreeing to be in the study.

#### Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to gain understanding about how, if at all, teachers, administrators, and other school staff members contemplate, use or integrate the strategies and information into their work at school.
- This study is being conducted as a thesis requirement for my master's in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

#### Description of the Study Procedures

- If participants agree to be in this study, they will be asked to do the following things: complete an anonymous survey that asks questions about your understanding of gender diversity and how you integrate the information and strategies presented to your institution into your individual practice. Participants will access the Consent Form and survey through a html link to Survey Monkey. Participants will be asked to complete this survey one time. The survey takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes and includes 6 Sections (A-F).

#### Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There is a small amount of psychological risk and discomfort associated with the questions in this survey. This survey deals with how you utilize and integrate the



information and strategies presented into the Gender Spectrum trainings into practice. If you have any concerns about anonymity or coercion, you have the right to decline to participate without any repercussion. If after completing the survey you have questions or concerns, please refer to the following list of contacts and organizations where you can get more information about the study and on the topics addressed in the survey.

Contacts:

Meredith Abrams, Researcher, MSW Candidate at Smith College School for Social Work

Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Email: [mabrams@smith.edu](mailto:mabrams@smith.edu)

Joel Baum, M.S.- Director of Education and Training for Gender Spectrum

Phone: 510-567-3977

Email: [info@genderspectrum.org](mailto:info@genderspectrum.org)

Gender Spectrum

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/>

Organizations:

Gay Lesbian & Straight Education Network

[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

Welcoming Schools

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

Benefits of Being in the Study

There are no guaranteed benefits for the participants of this study. The survey aims to gather information that will be used to gain a better understanding of educators' efforts to utilize Gender Spectrum's strategies and best practices for creating gender inclusive schools at their individual school site.

Participants will be able to share their knowledge and feedback about the topic of gender diversity at their school that is based on the information and strategies presented at the Gender Spectrum trainings. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own understanding and practice related to gender diversity both personally and in interactions with students and other staff members. Additionally, participants will be able to share reflections about the overall conditions related to gender diversity at your school.

This research may have repercussions for social work practice as it relates to those who are involved in school social work and child/adolescent mental health. As the political climate changes (that is, gender nonconforming and transgender students have legal protections in schools), the social work profession will have an important role to play in informing these changes. In addition, this study could highlight areas of weakness and strength in Gender Spectrum's training and presentation of the best practices for

creating gender inclusive schools.

#### Confidentiality

- This study is anonymous. Survey Monkey will not provide the researcher with any identifying information, such as an IP address
- The data from this study will be kept strictly confidential. Electronic data will be coded and secured using a password protected file. The researcher will not include any information in any report that would make it possible to identify you.
- The data will be kept for at least three years according to Federal regulations. They may be kept longer if still needed for research. After the three years, or whenever the data are no longer being used, all data will be destroyed.

#### Payments

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

#### Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely at any point during the study. In order to withdraw from the Survey Monkey survey, participants can either navigate away from the survey web page or close their Internet browser. Withdrawing from this survey will not effect participants' employment at the school site. If you choose to withdraw, the researcher will not use any of your information collected for this study. However, since I will not know participants identities, once you submit the survey you will be unable to withdraw.

#### Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Meredith Abrams at [mabrams@smith.edu](mailto:mabrams@smith.edu) or by telephone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

#### Consent

- Clicking the "I agree" button below indicates your consent, that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study and that you have read and understood the information.

## Appendix F

### Agency Affiliation

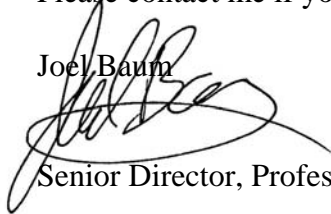
January 21, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

Gender Spectrum is excited to collaborate with Meredith Abrams on her Social Work thesis project at Smith. We look forward to learning about if, and if so to what degree our training efforts around gender inclusiveness in schools are having an effect on teacher practice.

Please contact me if you have any questions about this project.

Joel Baum

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Baum', written over a horizontal line.

Senior Director, Professional Development and Family Services