8-2022

Authentic Truth at Work: A Case Study of the Lived Professional Experiences of a Transgender Educational Leader Through the Lens of the Synergistic Leadership Theory

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AUTHENTIC TRUTH AT WORK: A CASE STUDY OF THE LIVED

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF A TRANSGENDER EDUCATIONAL LEADER

THROUGH THE LENS OF THE SYNERGISTIC LEADERSHIP THEORY

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Administration

(P-12 System-Level Educational Leadership)

Under the Supervision of Professor Dr. Nicholas J. Pace

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 2022

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University of Nebraska, 2022

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At the time of this study, very little research existed concerning transgender people and educational leadership. The Synergistic Leadership Theory (SLT) was developed by researchers at Sam Houston State University in 1999. While previous researchers found the SLT to be gender-inclusive, the only studies to date had been conducted with cisgender participants. Thus, this study incorporated a non-cisgender subject to examine the professional experiences of an educational leader who is transgender through the lens of the SLT. By utilizing a qualitative descriptive case study, the researcher sought to answer two questions: (a) What are the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent? and (b) Does the SLT offer a reasonable explanation of how a transgender superintendent does his work? Lark Doolan was the first openly transgender public-school superintendent in the country after coming out to his staff, students, and school board in 2017. Data was collected through the completion of the Organizational and Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (Bamberg, 2004) followed by a semi-structured open-ended interview with the researcher. The researcher mined data from documents and artifacts that were readily available online.

The findings indicate the lived professional experiences of Doolan offer an example of the how the SLT is a plausible lens through which a transgender leader does his work. Doolan's lived professional experiences reflect interactive factors of the SLT. This study affirmed that the SLT is a plausible lens through which a transgender leader does his work and affirmed that the SLT is a useful tool for examining leaders and leadership regardless of gender identity because it gives voice to a queer person and expands and enriches the body of academic work around a leadership theory that has not been associated with gender non-conforming/non-binary persons. Implications for practice and areas for further research are included in Chapter 5.

Acknowledgements

I am forever grateful to my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Nick Pace, for his support and encouragement over the many years that it took me to complete this study. Dr. Pace believed in my study from the beginning, and I could not have produced the final product without his patience, feedback, and guidance. Additionally, I would like to express sincere thanks to my committee members, who provided strong suggestions and critical feedback throughout the process.

Words cannot express my gratitude to my family and friends who encouraged me every step of the way. Mom and dad, thank you for the hours of listening that you provided and for reminding me that "if it were easy, everyone would do it." Eric, my partner and love, thank you for taking care of everything while I was working on "the paper" and for always supporting and encouraging me…even when I was grumpy. You never stopped believing in me and I love you for that! Grace, Jack, and Amelia, thank you for your patience and encouragement as you watched me finish this endeavor. I'm hopeful that I've modeled a love for learning as well as demonstrated the importance of perseverance, inclusion, and a strong work ethic for the three of you. Thank you to Anne and Michelle, and my many other amazing friends, for your love, support, and encouragement throughout this project (and, of course, for listening to my whining). A very special thanks goes to Kim K. for countless hours of time spent together while I was writing, as well as for your encouragement, support, mentorship, and of course, your friendship. I'm forever grateful for our "golden opportunity."

Lastly, this endeavor would not have been possible without Lark's partnership, willingness to share his story, and his courage. Lark, I have learned so very much from you as a leader and as a human. Thank you for bravely living your authentic truth.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Representation is an important concept in people's development. It is human nature to seek out inspiration from others who are like us, from whom we feel are a representation of ourselves. Educators are a particular group of people who often seek to inspire and be inspired. Teachers and school administrators constantly strive to motivate and influence one another and their students. Additionally, the idea of representation and inspiration has grown tremendously in recent years through social movements such as the Women's movement, Black Lives Matter, Indigenous Rights, and LGBTQ+ Rights. Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, wrote an online column focused on why children of color need to be able to see themselves in the books they read and titled, "It's hard to be what you can't see" (2015). The idea behind this line demonstrates how marginalized groups often do not pursue academic or career opportunities when they lack representation from others like them in such roles.

As a doctoral student and public school administrator over the last five years, I have continued to develop my own understanding of representation and why it matters as well as my passion for advocacy. Through my work as an educator and my voice as a citizen, I strive to advocate for marginalized groups and believe in social justice and inclusion. As a cisgender white woman, I strive to recognize my privilege and endeavor to create safe and welcoming environments for others in all areas of my life. This is a work in progress, as I have continually worked to expand my understanding of privilege and as well as how my positionality impacts others. This personal growth and

development has coincided with my professional development. Through the Educational

Leadership degree I am seeking and my work as an educator, I have sought to develop

my understanding of leadership as well as my own leadership skills. In exploring topics

for my dissertation, I learned of a leadership theory that was positioned in postmodernism

and developed with a feminist perspective rather than traditional male-dominant and

androcentric qualities and applicable to male and female leaders: The Synergistic

Leadership Theory (SLT).

The Synergistic Leadership Theory was developed by researchers at Sam Houston

State University in 1999. Irby et al. (2002) developed the post-modernist leadership

theory in order to provide an alternative to traditional theories that "were traditionally

dominated by masculine incorporation and lacked feminine presence in development and

language" (p. 304). The SLT offers a leadership theory based on a systems theory

approach and is "inclusive of women's voice, yet applicable to both male and female

leaders . . . and relational and interactive, rather than linear, with four factors interacting

in substantial ways" (Irby et al., 2002, pp. 311-312). The theory and the four factors are

explained in detail later in this paper.

About the same time that I learned of the SLT, I was inspired by my principal's

mentee, a 17-year-old Latina high school student who would come by our school office

to chat and hang out. One afternoon when she stopped by the office, she shared her

leadership in advocating for a bathroom for transgender students at her high school. This

student showed a compassion and advocacy for others by which I was truly inspired.

Prior to that conversation, I attended the Women's March in Washington, DC, in January

2017 and, as a result, I began to advocate for women's rights as well as the rights of marginalized people. LGBTQ+ rights continued to be at the forefront of social issues, and many LGBTQ+ people gained a spotlight as society began to recognize and celebrate the achievements of marginalized people. Additionally, my leadership and reflection on my practice continued to evolve as I worked with several middle and high students who were open about their transgender and gender fluid identities. Thus, the idea of representation emerged as I began to wonder whether there were any openly transgender educational leaders who could provide representation for transgender or gender fluid youth as well as current and aspiring educators. In addition, I was curious whether the SLT, which was developed with a binary understanding of gender, could provide a backdrop for the work of an educational leader whose gender identity does not fit within a gender binary.

With my interest piqued, I began researching educational leaders who are openly transgender. A search of the internet led me to Lark Doolan, the superintendent and former principal of the Peninsula Union School District, a small school district in Samoa, California. According to the Association of California School Administrators, Doolan is the first openly transgender public-school superintendent in the U.S.A., after coming out to his staff, students and school board (2019a). Doolan was labeled female at birth and identifies as a trans guy. He has worked as the superintendent and principal of the Peninsula Union School District since 2016. Thus, his experience as an educational leader offers a unique perspective to examine the way a transgender superintendent does his job through the lens of the Synergistic Leadership Theory.

Theoretical Framework

The Synergistic Leadership Theory

Traditional theories in leadership and management have consisted of a male-dominant or androcentric perspective. Almost 35 years ago, Shakeshaft and Nowell (1984) attempted to challenge existing leadership theory, stating:

> When female behavior ran counter to the theory, it was the female, rather than the theory, who was found to be inadequate. Thus, from a conceptual point of view, female behavior was ignored, not because females weren't studied, but because their experience, by definition, had to parallel male behavior; if it didn't, the females were labeled deficient and the theory was left unchallenged. A similar result occurs even if the problem is formulated in a gender-inclusive manner but the methods used to test the questions emerge from an androcentric perspective. (p. 198)

Almost a decade later, researchers at Sam Houston State University, Brown and Irby (1995) called for the advancement of "new theory that includes the feminine perspectives and the feminine experience" (p. 41). They believed that this advancement of theory would address concerns "that the [then] current white male leadership paradigm has no relevance for the post-industrial age" (p. 41). The researchers also believed that "a feminist-value-inclusive theory would not only provide the needed alignment with currently advocated leadership practices, but would also have the potential to change our views of effective leadership" (p. 42). Thus, they set out to develop such a theory.

Along with some of their doctoral students, Irby et al. (2002) analyzed 24 leadership theories that were commonly included in leadership and management courses and nine generalizations emerged, illustrating dated and exclusionary premises related to leadership theory (pp. 304-306). Additionally, their findings reaffirmed Shakeshaft and Nowell's (1984) point that leadership theory was typically developed through "a male

lens" and was "subsequently applied to both males and females" (p. 187). Thus, the

researchers supported a reconceptualization of management and organizational theory

that included the female experience, yet is relevant for both male and female leaders (Irby

et. al., 2002, p. 306).

In the last year of the 20th century, the researchers' findings led to the

development of a new theory. Irby et al. (2002) determined a need for an additional

leadership theory based on five problems. First, no theories existed that were fully

inclusive of feminine-aligned practices even though many people and organizations

advocated for such practices and paradigms. Second, leadership preparation programs

were not effectively supporting female leaders' development. Third, male-based theories

presented barriers for women leaders. Fourth, the traditional theories promote

stereotypical norms for organizations. Fifth, such theories limit the voice of a

marginalized group of educational leaders (Irby et al., 2002, pp. 306-308).

Thus, the Synergistic Leadership Theory (SLT) was developed and includes four

interacting factors: (a) leadership behavior, (b) organizational structure, (c) external

forces, and (d) beliefs, attitudes, and values. An assumption of the SLT is that when all

four factors are in alignment, the leader will be perceived as successful. Conversely, if

there is a misalignment among the four factors, then tension or disharmony will result,

and in turn, negatively impact the perception of the leader's effectiveness (Irby et al.,

2002, p. 312). Multiple studies have validated the theory as useful for understanding

leadership practices because the foundation of the theory is gender inclusive (Irby et al.,

2002; Schlosberg, 2003; Trautman, 2000). However, these studies have only been

inclusive of cisgender women and men. For example, in her research, Trautman (2000) found that male and female educational leaders acknowledge the use of a wide range of male and female leadership behaviors. Additionally, Schlosberg (2003) utilized male and female participants to examine the extent of applicability of the SLT to selected educational leaders in a Mexican non-profit school setting, determining that the SLT is a helpful tool for understanding leadership practice and that the four factors of the SLT have cross-cultural applicability for the participants.

Statement of the Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the professional experiences of an educational leader (principal/superintendent) who is transgender through the lens of the SLT. By utilizing a qualitative descriptive case study, I seek to investigate if the ways in which an educational leader who identifies as transgender describes his work are consistent with the SLT.

This study has regional and national significance. The potential findings of this study are important and relevant to the continued study of educational leadership, transgender educational leaders, and the Synergistic Leadership Theory. Several groups may find this study of interest, including (a) individuals interested in the experiences of an educational leader who identifies as transgender, (b) individuals who identify as transgender (openly or not) and who are in or aspire to a leadership role, and (c) individuals interested in the Synergistic Leadership Theory.

The proposed study could benefit educational leaders who identify as transgender as well as all educational leaders regardless of gender identification because it has the

potential to help improve leadership practices as well as educational leadership programs at universities. The study could impact educational leaders who are transgender but who have not openly shared this identity within their workplace or to the public and therefore provide them with an example from which they can learn and perhaps be more confident in their own openness regarding their gender identity. Additionally, this study could aid in supporting the Synergistic Leadership Theory and how it relates to the practice of an openly transgender superintendent, which may lead to additional studies based upon this theory and thereby adding to the academic literature. Lastly, this study could add to the body of research regarding transgender educators in K-12 public education, as little research with transgender people as the subject currently exists. Linda McCarthy (2003) asserts that "academic research on transgender teachers is non-existent" (p. 170).

As indicated in the Review of Literature, Virginia Tech Doctoral students Leonard and Jones (2009) stated, "[the] SLT provides a gender-inclusive theoretical framework for leaders to develop and cultivate effective 21st Century leadership" (p. 28). While they found the SLT to be gender-inclusive, the only studies to date had been conducted with cisgender participants. Thus, a significant need exists for research that incorporates non-cisgender subjects to further study the applicability of the SLT to all educational leaders regardless of gender identity.

Additionally, very little research exists concerning transgender people and educational leadership. The Review of Literature reveals "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) experiences and identities are nearly absent from the scholarly literature on educational leadership preparation" (O'Malley et al.,

2018, p. 583). It is also suggested that researchers "within and beyond the field of educational leadership to lead in this regard by constructing queered research designs that continuously seek out as their starting points that which is marginal, closeted, or silenced within our theoretical and empirical investments" (O'Malley et al., 2018, pp. 584-585). The Review of Literature revealed only two articles that highlighted K-12 transgender teachers' experiences in public school setting in the U.S.A. and no academic research on transgender educational leaders. According to Nicolazzo et al. (2015), the ever-expanding field of transgender research has yet to have been taken up significantly within K-12 public education, especially in the realm of study of the identities, lived experiences, and pedagogies of transgender teachers. Thus, because it is critical to include perspectives and voices of queer folks in educational research, my study of a transgender educational leader will give voice to a queer person as well as expand and enrich the body of academic work around a leadership theory.

Research Question

I seek to answer the following qualitative questions:

1. What are the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent?

2. Does the SLT offer a reasonable explanation of how a transgender superintendent does his work?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study. However, it is important to note that terms associated with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning community are

complex and have experienced a multitude of connotations for well over 100 years. According to Blount (2005), "adding to the complexity of terminology is the notion that boundaries between different terms often are murky. A label to one person may mean something different to someone else" (p. 6). For the purposes of this study, I will utilize the acronym LGBTQ+ to refer to multiple communities of people under the umbrella term, although different researchers included in the Literature Review may utilize other terms. Additionally, it is important to recognize the letters L, G, and B in the acronym refer to sexual orientation, while the letter T relates to gender (Teich, 2012, p. 15).

Cisgender: "A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth" (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.).

Coming out: "The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others" (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.).

Gender binary: a social system whereby people are thought to have either of two genders: man or woman (Teich, 2012, p. 5).

Gender expression: "External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine" (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.).

Gender-fluid: "A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity" (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.).

Gender identity: "One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth" (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.).

Gender-inclusive theory: a theory "developed to include, purposefully, female leadership experiences and perspectives" (Irby et al., 2013, p. 994).

LGBTQ: an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning and used to describe a person's gender identity or sexual expression (The Center, 2022).

Non-binary:

An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid. (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.)

Queer: a term that "embraces the full complexity and fluidity of human sexuality and gender" (Blount, 2005, p. 6) and encompasses "those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning their sexuality, or otherwise do not fit into the heterosexual or male/female binary worlds" (Teich, 2012, p. 16). It is important to note that although the term was "once considered a pejorative term, queer has been reclaimed by some LGBT people to describe themselves; however, it is not a universally accepted term even within the LGBT community" (The Center, 2022).

Transgender:

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms— including transgender. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to bring their bodies into alignment with their gender identity. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures. (The Center, 2022)

Transitioning:

A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all or none of these processes. (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.)

Assumptions

It is assumed that the respondent will answer all survey and interview questions honestly and to the best of his abilities. The respondent is a volunteer who may choose to withdraw from the study at any time and with no ramifications. Additionally, the respondent can choose to use a pseudonym, although he has acknowledged that at the time of research, he is the only known openly transgender public-school superintendent in the country. Prior to this study, I communicated with the respondent via email and a video conference to request his participation, to which he was willing. While anonymity may not be an option due to the public nature of his role and the fact that he is openly transgender within his community, I will respect his privacy and not share publicly anything that he wants to be private.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it is being conducted during a global pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis is impacting how qualitative research is being conducted, and thus, the researcher will have to utilize video-conferencing for data collection rather than in-person interviews. Additionally, educators and researchers are being emotionally and physically taxed due to the pandemic, and asking the participant to participate in research at this time may put him under additional unnecessary stress. The realities of the pandemic may also impact his responses and the data collection. The researcher will ensure the health and well-being of the participant is given priority in this study.

For the purposes of this research, it should be noted that the researcher recognizes her own biases as an educator for the last fifteen years and as a participant in her own journey to achieve a greater understanding of people whose gender identity is different than her own. The researcher has a deep admiration for people who are open about their gender identity, particularly those whose gender identity is outside of traditional binary gender confines. However, as a cisgender woman, the researcher acknowledges that while she can empathize with a trans person's experiences, she cannot fully understand all things that they endure. Thus, the researcher may interpret the meaning of the participant's experiences in ways that do not accurately represent his experience. Additionally, as a woman who continually strives to compete in a traditionally androcentric field of educational leadership, great care will be taken to not make assumptions about the professional experiences, challenges, or barriers experienced by the participant. The researcher also acknowledges her own biases as a feminist and

advocate for women's rights and the rights of marginalized people. Significant steps will be taken to not make assumptions about the views and preferences of the participant.

Delimitations

Numerous studies around the SLT have been completed by other researchers over the past two decades. These studies have focused on "both male and female and at various management levels across American ethnic cultural and geographic locations in the United States and in international settings" (Irby et al., 2013, p. 989). However, at the time of research, there have been no studies around an openly transgender educational leader. Thus, at the time of research, I have chosen to study the extent to which the work of an educational leader who identifies as transgender is consistent with the SLT. The study includes one participant due to the unique nature of the study and the access to the population that fits the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The researcher seeks to examine the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent and if the SLT offers a reasonable explanation of how a transgender superintendent does his work; thus, the researcher sought out the one known openly transgender public-school educational leader in the country at the time of the study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has presented the introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms, assumptions and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 contains the review of related literature and research related to the study, specifically Transgender People and Educational Leadership Research including: Synergistic Leadership Theory, Queer Theory, Experiences of Transgender Teacher,

How Dominant Norms and Hegemonic Environments Shape the Experiences of

Transgender People, Experiences of LGBTQ People in Multiple Areas of Education,

Aspects of LGBTQ in Educational Leadership Preparation Programs, and Attitudes and

Actions of School Leaders Regarding LGBTQ Issues. The research design and

procedures used to gather data for the study are presented in Chapter 3. The results of

analyses and findings to emerge from the study will be contained in Chapter 4. Chapter 5

will contain a summary of the study and findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, a

discussion, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

The literature review provides a framework for this study given the relevance of the literature as it relates to understanding the theories and research (Creswell, 2007) relevant to school leaders who openly identify as transgender and how the Synergistic Leadership Theory relates to the professional experiences of a transgender superintendent. The literature review will consist of peer-reviewed research focused on seven themes: Synergistic Leadership Theory, Queer Theory, experiences of transgender teachers, how dominant norms and hegemonic environments shape the experiences of transgender leaders, experiences of LGBTQ people in multiple areas of education, aspects of LGBTQ in educational leadership preparation programs, and attitudes and actions of school leaders regarding LGBTQ issues.

In an effort to create an integrated literature review, I conducted a search of scholarly (peer reviewed) journals using keywords and databases to examine the literature. As Torraco (2016) states in his article, *Writing Integrative Literature Reviews*, "A careful, comprehensive literature search is vital to the quality of the review because the literature constitutes the 'data' for this type of research" (p. 418). I utilized the following key terms to conduct a search of several databases:

- Transgender and "synergistic leadership theory"
- LGBTQ and "synergistic leadership theory"
- Transgender and "educational administration"

- LGBTQ and "educational administration"

- Transgender and superintendent

- LGBTQ and superintendent

- Transgender and "educational leadership"

- LGBTQ and "educational leadership"

- "Synergistic leadership theory" and diversity

- "Synergistic leadership theory"

- "Hegemonic environments" and workplace

- "Hegemonic environments" and transgender

- "Hegemonic environments" and "educational leadership"

- "Dominant norms" and workplace

- "Dominant norms" and transgender

- "Dominant norms" and "educational leadership"

The search confirmed that very little research exists concerning transgender people and educational leadership. The search returned a total of 275 articles with a total of 21 relevant articles. Selection criteria for relevant articles included: a connection to/discussion of theory; a connection to/discussion of dominant norms and hegemonic environments; experiences of LGBTQ or queer educators in K-12 public education and higher education; LGBTQ in educational leadership preparation programs; attitudes and sections of school leaders regarding LGBTQ issues.

Although the search generated 275 articles, several topics were not relevant to the discussion found in this literature review. Table 1 outlines these topics, listed

Table 1

Topics of Generated Articles that are Not Relevant

- Anti-Discrimination Issues
- Campus Climate
- Counselors as Advocates
- Dissertation on Creating a College for LGBTQ Students
- Educators' Work with Trans Parents
- GSAs and Administrators' Perceptions
- Hate Crimes Reform
- Higher Education
- Hypothetical Case Studies for Education Administration Students
- Impact of GSAs in Canadian Schools
- LGBTQ Teachers' Experiences
- LGBTQ Youth and Bullying
- LGBTQ Youth/Students
- Measuring the Impact of Religious Affiliation on LGBTQ-Inclusive Education Practices
- Multicultural Organizational Change on a Small Catholic College Campus
- Non-Heterosexual Educators in Catholic Schools
- Policy (ie: human resource issues; employment discrimination; diversity inclusive; etc.)
- Pre-Service Teachers
- Principal Preparation & Social Justice Leadership
- Resilience Strategies
- Responsibility of Social Justice Leaders
- Safe Schools and School Structures
- School Counselors
- School Policies
- School Psychologists
- Sexuality Education
- Staff Development
- Students as Policy Actors
- Superintendents and Principals in Missouri Public Schools - Ensuring Social Justice for All Students
- Supporting a Students' Transition in Elementary School
- Surrey, British Columbia: Book Ban in the Courts
- Teacher and Student Gender Diversity
- Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions RE: LGBTQ students
- Tolerance
- Training for Counselors
- Transgender College Students

alphabetically. While important to the broader scope of research of LGBTQ people and education, they are not consistent with the purpose and the goals of this review.

Synergistic Leadership Theory

The first theme of the literature review is the title of the theory that this study is utilizing, the Synergistic Leadership Theory (SLT). The search for peer reviewed literature relating to the SLT theory only yielded two articles and one dissertation. An additional search utilizing the University of Nebraska's Institutional Repository yielded three dissertations connected to the SLT. An additional search for information regarding the development and evolvement of the theory utilizing UNL's library resources and collections return several sources that aided in understanding the theory and its trajectory over time, which I incorporated in the introduction of this study, Chapter 1. What follows is a discussion of the peer reviewed literature and a brief overview of the dissertations.

The first article by Leonard and Jones (2009) is a chapter published in a larger collection entitled, *21st Century Theories of Educational Administration* written by Virginia Tech Doctoral students in Summer 2009. The chapter is simply titled *Synergistic Leadership Theory*. The author provides an overview and literature review of the theory and its four factors: Organizational Structure, Leadership Behavior, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values, and External Forces. A brief section of the chapter provides implications for school leaders and supports that relevance and application of the theory to educational leaders. The authors note:

> Implications for school leaders include the recognition that effective leadership in public schools in the 21st century must include that balance of external forces, leadership behavior, organizational structure, and attitudes, and values and beliefs of organization. Educational leaders of the past have been able to operate within

the confines of their own organizational structure using traditional leadership approaches . . . SLT provides a gender inclusive theoretical framework for leaders to develop and cultivate effective 21st Century leadership within our schools. (Leonard & Jones, 2009, p. 28)

Although Leonard and Jones (2009) found the SLT to be gender inclusive, the only studies to date had been on cisgender people. This indicates a need for research utilizing non-cisgender subjects to further study the applicability of the theory to all educational leaders regardless of gender identity.

The second relevant article comes from the *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*. Glenn et al. (2009) published the article titled, *Consultant Perceptions of Skills that School Boards Value in Superintendent Applicants*. The purpose of their study was to "describe the perceptions of superintendent search consultants as they relate to the selection of superintendent candidates" (Glenn et al., 2009, p. 2) using the synergistic leadership theory as the theoretical framework. The researchers utilized a slightly modified version of the Organizational and Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (OLEI) to survey superintendent search consultants (Irby et al., 2002, as cited in Glenn et al., 2009, p. 2). The researchers organized their findings around management traits, interpersonal traits, external factors, and values, attitudes and beliefs into lists of most important and least important traits as perceived by the participants.

Then, the researchers discussed the implications from the findings of this study. One implication is that university preparation programs should address the question of "can the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and abilities be taught explicitly as part of the superintendent's university program?" (Glenn et al., 2009, p. 19). Additionally, they recommend that "superintendent candidates need to be cognizant that as they move up

the administrative hierarchy the technical skills may change but the need for strong

interpersonal are a constant and a prerequisite for obtaining a position as a

superintendent" (Glenn et al., 2009, p. 19). Lastly, the researchers state that

> the superintendent must possess conceptual, technical, and human relations skills
> . . . [and] institutions of higher education, superintendent candidates, and school
> boards can use the information identified in this study in preparing and securing
> individuals who will succeed as school superintendents. (Glenn et al., 2009, p. 19)

According to the researchers, this study supports that the Synergistic Leadership Theory

is valid and can be utilized with all school leaders. However, no prior studies had

included non-cisgender leaders, reinforcing that more research is needed to incorporate

educational leaders across all platforms, regardless of gender or gender identity.

The literature search through the UNL Institutional Repository revealed four

dissertations that incorporate the SLT. According to a chapter titled "The Synergistic

Leadership Theory: An Inclusive Theory in the Twenty-First Century" in *The Handbook*

of Educational Theories, "Since it's development, the SLT has been validated for both

male and females and at various management levels across American ethnic cultural and

geographic locations in the United States and in international settings" (Ardovini et al.,

2006; Bamberg, 2004; Glenn, 2008; Hernandez, 2004; Holtkamp, 2001; Holtkamp et al.,

2006; Schlosberg, 2003; Trautman, 2000; Truslow, 2004; and, Irby et al., 2008, as cited

in Irby et al., 2013, p. 989). Trautman (2000) utilized a mixed methods study to validate

the SLT using male and female superintendents, assistant superintendents, and

elementary and secondary principals. According to Irby et al. (2013),

> Her quantitative study, applying the OLEI, found that males and females
> acknowledge use of a wide range of male and female leadership behaviors. With
> the researcher-developed open-ended interview data, her qualitative findings

revealed that although males and females saw the four factors of the SLT interacting in different ways, they did acknowledge that all four factors of the SLT are interactive. (p. 989)

A second dissertation found through this search is Holtkamp's (2001) study titled

The Validation of the Organizational and Leadership Effectiveness Inventory. Holtkamp

(2001) sought to determine if the OLEI was a valid measure of the SLT through the

examination of the psychometric properties of the OLEI (p. 2). According to Irby et al.

(2013),

> The results of this quantitative study evidenced the OLEI as a statistically valid measure of the SLT. Additionally, because the OLEI data aligned with the four factors of the SLT, the OLEI and the theory can be applied to male and female leaders from the four management levels, as well as leaders from different ethnic groups. (pp. 989-990)

Bamberg's (2004) dissertation titled, *An Application of the Synergistic Leadership*

Theory to the Leadership Experiences of Five Female Superintendents Leading

Successful School Districts, investigated the experiences of five female superintendents

leading successful school districts across the nation through the lens of the SLT using a

qualitative research method. Irby et al. (2013) stated:

> Bamberg, via the qualitative case studies, found three of the five superintendents had aligned factors in their districts. Two superintendents did not have alignment with their external forces; however, one used her leadership behaviors to marginalize the impact of the misalignment, while the other did not take corrective actions and the factors continued to be misaligned. As a result, the superintendent was perceived as unsuccessful and subsequently left the position. (p. 990)

The fourth dissertation yielded from the search is Yang's (2010) *A Validation of*

the Synergistic Leadership Theory by Educational Leaders in Chinese and American

Public Universities. Yang (2010) utilized a mixed methods study to determine the

applicability of the SLT "to educational leaders . . . in 50 high-ranking Chinese universities and 50 high-ranking U.S. public universities" (pp. 8-9). According to Irby et al. (2013), Yang's study found the following:

> By examining and comparing the SLT and East Asian cultural values and traditions that impact leadership practices in East Asian cultures, researchers found some linkages and congruence existing between the Western-developed SLT and Confucian Asian values and traditions. Specifically, the linkages and congruence deal with ethics of care and the transformational nature of the SLT. Because of the congruence, the study confirmed the possibility of the transcendence of the SLT to leaders in East Asian cultures. (p. 991)

Although my search of the UNL Institutional Repository did not yield other dissertations, Irby et al. (2013) highlight several other studies used to validate the SLT. These studies include Scholsberg's (2003) study that examined "the extent of applicability of the SLT to selected educational leaders in a Mexican non-profit school setting"; Truslow's (2004) study that identified "the differences in conflict management modes of male to female public school superintendents in relation to the SLT"; Kasper's (2006) study that "utilized phenomenological case study method to examine the relationship of the SLT to the experiences of four elementary principals leading exemplary, low socioeconomic schools"; Justice's (2007) study that determined "whether there exist significant differences between the perceptions of male and female secondary school principals in relation to the four factors of the SLT"; and Glenn's (2008) study that "employed a mixed method to examine superintendent search consultants' perceptions of school boards' expectations of superintendent candidates in relation to the SLT" (pp. 990-991). Irby et al. (2013) summarize the validation studies and state the following:

the SLT is a useful theory for understanding leadership practices and educational organizations because, foundationally, the SLT

1. is gender inclusive [of cisgender women and men] (Irby et al., 2002; Schlosberg, 2003; Trautman, 2000);
2. is contextual and situational (Kaspar, 2006; Irby et al., 2002; Trautman, 2000; Holtkamp, 2001);
3. is cultural transcendent (Irby et al., 2002; Schlosberg, 2003; Yang, Irby, & Brown, 2008);
4. possesses explanatory power across a range of leadership positions and by gender (Justice, 2007; Kaspar, 2004; Trautman et al., 2006; Truslow, 2004);
5. is practical and useful for understanding interactive systems (Trautman et al., 2006); and
6. is applicable by external search firms in determining fit for executive school positions (Glenn, 2008). (p. 991)

An important limitation to recognize is that prior to this research study, the SLT had only been utilized with cisgender participants. Thus, more research is necessary to determine if a theory developed with a binary understanding of gender can provide a backdrop for the work of an educational leader whose gender identity does not fit within a gender binary.

Queer Theory

One theme that emerged from the review of the literature is Queer Theory. When conducting a research study with a participant who is transgender, it is important to consider and embrace perspectives of people whose gender identity transgresses heteronormative confines. According to Young and Lopez (2005), "queer theory aims to understand why and how specific discourses, structures, behaviors, and actions become inscribed, normalized, and reproduced through linguistically codified and culturally sanctioned rules and norms" (p. 343). The word *queer* has historically held a negative connotation and has been used as a derogatory slur toward people who are not heterosexual or whose sexuality has been called into question, thus affirming the idea that

heterosexuality is normal and anything else (i.e. queer) is deficient or abnormal. Young

and Lopez (2005) posit:

> By reappropriating the term to signify not a lack of something but the presence of
> something else (e.g., same-sex desires, fondness for drag, genital ambiguity, etc.),
> queer theory undermines the homo/hetero, masculine/feminine, male/female
> binaries, while inverting traditional assumptions of what one considers to be
> normal. (p. 344)

"According to Tierney (1997), queer theory revolves around five central tenets:

(a) It seeks to understand sexual identity over time, (b) it seeks to uncover norms and

deconstruct ideological practices within social institutions, (c) it is confrontational rather

than consensual, (d) it seeks to understand sexual identity as being more than sexuality,

and (e) it sees society and culture as interpretive and political" (as cited in Young &

Lopez, 2005, p. 344).

Firstly, it seeks to understand sexual identity over time. Young and Lopez (2005)

state, "Tracing the history of sexuality over time . . . is a critical first step in

understanding how society normalizes and regulates issues of sexuality writ large, and

same-sex relations in particular" (p. 344). Secondly, it seeks to uncover norms and

deconstruct ideological practices within social institutions, and, therefore, "[b]y

uncovering . . . examples of heterosexual privilege in everyday life, queer theory helps us

understand that heterosexism is deeply ingrained and rampant in society: It permeates our

practices, discourses, and ways of thinking about the world" (Young & Lopez, 2005,

p. 345). Thirdly, queer theory is confrontational rather than consensual, thus:

> Queer theory aims to critically interrogate how power is manifested in all realms
> of life: What is often taken for granted as normal is really a by-product of social
> discourses and how they discipline and control identities and individual behavior.
> Queer theory provides an important theoretical space that reveals the promises

and problematics of power while providing a forum for understanding how a direct confrontation of normality exposes the arbitrariness of the social world as well as the systems of power that order our world. (Young & Lopez, 2005, p. 345)

The fourth tenet of queer theory "seeks to move the discourse away from sexual acts as the basis for sexual identity and highlight the ways in which society prescribes identities for individuals" (Young & Lopez, 2005, p. 345). Regarding the fifth and final tenet of queer theory, Young and Lopez (2005) state:

Queer theory reminds us that there is, indeed, a real struggle in the world: a struggle over discourse, a struggle over political interests and power, a struggle over identity, a struggle to make visible the politics of the invisible, and a struggle to define and defend what we come to see, experience, and believe to be normal and natural. (p. 345)

Coloma (2009) affirms, "Queer theorizing is a powerful tool in discourses, movements, and research that embrace and celebrate difference, deviance, and defiance" (pp. 274-275). Understanding queer theory when conducting educational leadership research is critical in order to embrace perspectives of people whose identity falls outside the boundaries of traditional heteronormative confines. Thus, including the perspective of an educational leader who identifies as transgender and non-binary/non-conforming in academic research regarding a leadership theory is imperative in order to incorporate diverse perspectives in educational leadership research. In conclusion, researchers Tierney (1997) and Tierney and Dilley (1998) found, "queer theory can be used in educational leadership to disrupt our taken-for-granted assumptions of how administrators, teachers, students, and community members--of any gender or sexual orientation-- 'should' behave or act with or in educational organizations and society at large" (as cited in Young & Lopez, 2005, p. 350).

In *Asking Queer(er) Questions: Epistemological and Methodological Implications for Qualitative Inquirers*, O'Malley et al. (2018) point out that "queer theory offers a breadth of epistemological, methodological, and analytic possibilities for qualitative projects that are too frequently overlooked for many reasons, including strictly associating queer research topics and researchers" (pp. 572-573). The authors begin their article stating, "Locating educational inquiry within globally complex socio-historical dynamics and a conflicted post-Obergefell/post-2016 election U.S. context, this polyvocal article poses multiple trajectories through which various scholars explore queer(er) qualitative inquiry in educational studies" (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 573). The authors make a case for increasing the amount of research that incorporates perspectives and experiences of people who identify as queer. O'Malley et al. (2018) make the claim that "queer knowledges and methods are largely untapped intellectual resources in the wider educational research field that hold rich potential for expanding research practices oriented toward questions of justice, inclusion, transformation, and equity" and they present five essays that explore epistemological and methodological implications of queer perspectives for qualitative studies in education (p. 573). Thus, their desired outcome is that "the design/ers of qualitative research processes, with the intent that 'queer(er) questions' will generate more transformative findings for informing educational practice" (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 573). Their idea supports my study because more research with queer participants is needed to explore educational leadership in an increasingly diverse world.

One of the essays included in the collection discusses the implications that two examples of forced scavenging have for analysis and educational research (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 576). The authors attribute the need for forced scavenging because of what they refer to as *Qualitative headaches* and *Historical headaches*. The authors state,

> the historical hesitance of (and often resistance by) administrators to explicitly address the needs of queer persons and queer-positive inquiry . . . presents a real, and ongoing, obstacle to qualitative researchers - especially since many studies in and around schools require, in part, the permission of district-level administrators, principals at each site, and the local board of education. (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 576)

> Additionally, according to Blount (2005),

> historical evidence about the experiences of LGBT school workers truly is difficult to find . . . [and] vandals have exacted a serious toll on the scanty material that has been published . . . [with many pieces] missing, shredded, torn up, or defaced beyond use. (p. 9)

Similarly, O'Malley et al. (2018) state that "flat rejections of access" also exist (p. 576). The authors highlight that they "continue to literally scavenge for data, employing novel approaches to secure factual information [needed] to answer seemingly basic questions regarding queer people, their/our lives, and their/our educational experiences (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 577).

While they acknowledge that some may critique their method of scavenging, they "pointedly note that the traditional social sciences, including the 'educational sciences,' have been ill-equipped to confront the homophobia lurking (raging?) at the bottom of their epistemological souls, rendering them under-theorized and methodologically inept" (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 577). Thus, the authors recommend that other researchers "also begin taking epistemological and methodological risks as they scavenge" (O'Malley

et al., 2018, p. 577), and consequently, positively contribute to the body of research

involving queer people and educational research. This work relates to my study because

the authors point out that "importantly, there are endless areas within education that are

under-explored, and consequently ripe for methodological risk-taking . . . there are

decades of research yet to be conducted with LGBTIQ educators, particularly public

school administrators" (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 577).

Another essay in the collection, *Canonical Silences: A Queer Troubling of a*

Tempered Social Justice Discourse in Educational Leadership, sets out "to delineate and

exceed boundaries of the [educational leadership] field's tempered social justice

discourse, providing an alternative, queer logic that locates and works from the margins

of that social justice discourse rather than its canonical center (O'Malley et al., 2018,

p. 582). The authors "theorize and interrupt a reproductive dynamic through which the

field's justice discourse fundamentally fails to disrupt the foundational cultural logic that

produces and sustains inequitable structures and practices in schools and society"

(O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 582). They utilized two textual sources for their analytical work

"to delineate the contours of a canonical social justice discourse in the field of

educational leadership and its concurrent silences (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 583):

> (1) a comprehensive literature review (Maxwell, 2006) of US research focused
> specifically on educational leadership preparation for social justice and
> (2) findings from an empirical study investigating how educational leadership
> professors across 80 research universities in the US address social justice in
> principal preparation programs (O'Malley & Capper, 2014). (as cited in O'Malley
> et al., 2018, p. 583)

Their comprehensive review of 72 articles and scholarly texts related to educational

leadership of social justice "found that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and

queer (LGBTIQ) experiences and identities are nearly absent from the scholarly literature

on educational leadership preparation, and, at best, peripheral within the social justice

leadership preparation literature" (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 583). The authors' empirical

study addressing social justice themes in principal preparation programs found similar

patterns: "LGBTIQ and religious/belief identities receive the least emphasis, with less

than half of sampled social justice programs offering even moderate emphasis for these

themes" (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 583). Thus, the authors "argue that integration of

identities more frequently marginal to the social justice discourse in educational

leadership, such as LGBTIQ, presents one effective measure of the credibility of the

field's social justice discourse" (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 584). They state that

> the concurrent reflection of this pattern of silence in the leadership for social justice research base is even more disturbing. It appears that what we know in the field about marginality does not directly influence our research agendas or leadership preparation practices. (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 584).

The authors recommend that researchers and scholars in the educational leadership field

do the following:

> [A]bandon a tempered social justice discourse that takes as a generally exclusive object of reflection those identities, experiences, and themes already centered and canonically validated. [They] call for a rethinking of difference in qualitative inquiry that opts to engage queer experiences, persons, and theories as part of the pathway to justice and intersectionality . . . this calls for queer(er) or anti-normalizing research questions and methods that avoid framing participants by singular identities in favor of searching for transgressive cultural capital with groups that forms as a result of complex identities. (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 584)

Lastly, the authors urge that researchers "within and beyond the field of educational

leadership to lead in this regard by constructing queered research designs that

continuously seek out as their starting points that which is marginal, closeted, or silenced

within our theoretical and empirical investments" (O'Malley et al., 2018, pp. 584-585).

Thus, because it is critical to include perspectives and voices of queer folks in

educational research, my study of a transgender educational leader will give voice to a

queer person as well as expand and enrich the body of academic work around a

leadership theory.

A third essay in the collection, *Refutation, Complexity, and Grace: Encounters*

With the Transgender/Non-binary in Educational Research, presents two considerations

for qualitative inquirers in educational research. Their first consideration focuses on

people being able to identify how they desire to do so. The authors state:

> [A] language is nonetheless needed to 'get at' the realities of persons whose life
> experiences differ magnificently from structurally encoded heterosexist and
> cisgender norms...Our use of transgender/non-binary as an umbrella term does not
> prevent individuals from continuously redefining who they are becoming. Rather,
> we encourage the queer space in which research allows for each person to identify
> in their own, often evolving, way. (O'Malley et al., 2018, pp. 585-586)

Their "second consideration for qualitative inquirers addresses the (in)visibility of

transgender/non-binary persons in educational research" (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 586).

The authors state:

> [T]ransgender persons are present in educational contexts and in this sense
> included in researched populations, though infrequently rendered following from
> cisgender priorities that most commonly identify participants as 'male' or
> 'female' without attention to a more realistic range of gender identities and
> expressions. Further, despite an increasing representation of transgender persons
> in the news media and pop culture, research in the field of education concerning
> transgender persons remains limited. (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 587)

This supports the need for my research study, as transgender people do hold positions in

education and leadership roles, but they are rarely represented in educational leadership

research. Their study incorporated a review of theses and dissertations on *ProQuest*

utilizing the term 'transgender' and the search dates were limited to 1993-2005. Their

findings included the following:

> [Our review] revealed an impressive 156 dissertations or theses cueing on the
> keyword 'transgender.' While we use transgender/non-binary to be inclusive of
> the non-binary community that is part of the transgender population, the term
> transgender has been in use longer and is more canonical in literature. Searching
> for 'transgender' as representative of the transgender/non-binary community in
> the literature was intended to offer the most expansive search results possible. . ..
> Of the 156 dissertations and theses returned, 44 cued from an added search term
> of 'education.' Of those 44, only 10 address transgender persons specifically
> rather than a generalized part of the LGBTQIA umbrella. (O'Malley et al., 2018,
> p. 587)

Additionally, their study included a more recent year-range of 2006-2012 with the same

search parameters. Their findings from this search included the following:

> [Our review] yielded 306 results. Of these, 118 cued from the addition of the
> search term 'education' and 26 of those 118 citations focus specifically on
> transgender persons rather than on the LGBTQIA umbrella group. Within these
> recent 26 studies, only one relates substantively to the relationship between
> transgender/non-binary K-12 students and their own educational experiences -
> Sullivan's 2009 dissertation entitled *Hiding in the Open: Navigating Education at
> the Gender Pole: A Study of Transgender Children in Early Childhood.*
> (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 587)

Thus, their review shows a significant shortfall in the representation of transgender

persons in educational research. The authors state:

> This context clearly calls for adjustments to structural assumptions in qualitative
> inquiry. At a minimum, inquirers need to consider the definitional issues
> presented above and incorporate into research designs more robust pathways for
> persons to locate their gender experience. The common approach to forcing an
> artificial choice between male or female for all participants, or perhaps a puzzling
> 'other,' is artificial and actively renders transgender/non-binary persons invisible.
> (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 587)

The authors point out that the James et al. (2016) U.S. Transgender Survey, had 27,715

respondents from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto

Rico, and U.S. military bases overseas, and more than three-quarters of those reported

some form of mistreatment if they were out in K-12 school (as cited in O'Malley et al.,

2018, p. 587). Thus, the authors indicate a crucial need for more research around

transgender/non-binary students by incorporating more diverse gender identity

recruitment processes. The authors state:

> [T]his consideration calls for focused educational research that addresses the life experiences of transgender/non-binary persons as a primary topic as well as visible representation and interpretive attention for transgender/non-binary persons participating in research projects taking up 'unrelated' primary research questions. These strategies call for intentional capacity building across the qualitative research community and [the researchers] most specifically argue for explicit attention in doctoral level research methods courses to (1) possibilities for educational research with transgender/non-binary persons and (2) inclusive strategies for identifying, welcoming, representing, and interpreting gender transgression in qualitative and other research. (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 587)

Again, the authors' suggestion supports my study and the inclusion of a transgender

educational leader as the participant.

The third consideration in the essay involves the relationship of educational

research projects and inquirers to transgender/non-binary persons. Researchers Beck

(2014), Lewis (2017), and O'Malley and Capper (2015) found that transgender/non-

binary persons are "generally systematically excluded from a large portion of the extant

educational research base" (as cited in O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 588). Additionally,

Gamson (2000) reported that "transgender/non-binary persons are both targeted in

schools and society when desired" (as cited in O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 588). Thus,

O'Malley et al. (2018) claim this "indicates that the educational research establishment is

not an adequate source for informing such inquiry in regard to gender transgression,

inclusive of methodological, ethical, and theoretical dimensions" (p. 588) and they

acknowledge "that the educational research community is woefully underprepared to lead

transgender/non-binary inclusive inquiry" (p. 588). The authors believe "this context

prioritizes the importance of generating participatory educational research in partnership

with transgender/non-binary persons and organizations" (Heron & Reason, 1997, as cited

in O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 588). Ultimately, O'Malley et al. (2018) state that

"transgender/non-binary activists, advocates, and community educators ought to be

accepted as pedagogical allies in the work of learning and creating robust inquiry taking

up gender transgression in educational contexts" (p. 588). Lastly, O'Malley et al. (2018)

state:

> While there are exceptional scholars engaging in this work, the disproportionately overlooked engagement with queer experiences, perspectives, histories, knowledges, and theories is evident across educational studies . . . [the authors] call on [their] colleagues in qualitative educational studies to genuinely explore and take up the robust epistemological and methodological implications offered by queer(er) questions and conceptualizations, and specifically to do so in relation to topics not initially perceived to be queer. . . . Rather than relegating queer resources to the study of queer subjects and topics, the essays collectively assert that queer resources are appropriate for expanding the qualitative inquiry into educational phenomena that are specifically not associated with the queer. The juxtaposition of queer epistemologies and methodologies, for example, with questions of school improvement, educational segregation, equity, or leadership preparation offer fertile possibilities for understanding beyond our current disciplinary, practical, and policy limitations. (p. 588)

In conclusion, my study of an educational leadership theory with a transgender

participant is an excellent space for expanding such qualitative inquiry that has not

typically been associated with the queer.

Researcher Cindy Rottmann (2006) explores queer theory in her article, *Queering*

Educational Leadership from the Inside Out. Rottmann (2006) utilizes "a review of

relevant literature and policy examples illustrating some of the potential risks faced by

sexually-minoritized individuals and their advocates [to] focus on how hegemonic

sexuality continues to organize public schools" (2006, p. 2). Rottman (2006) studies

educational administration within the framework of queer theory merged with political

and academic work to "disrupt narrow constructions of leadership and support critical

dialogue among individuals dedicated to confronting homophobia and heterosexism in

the education system" (p. 2). The author outlines the theoretical and experiential

foundations upon which queer theory has been constructed. According to Rottmann

(2006):

> Despite multiple divergent and occasionally internally contradictory voices, most queer theorists seem to be informed by the gay liberation movement and some combination of feminist and poststructuralist thought. In line with Weston's (1998) claim that queer studies as an academic discipline has pursued a great deal of 'straight' theorizing at the expense of 'street' theorizing (as cited in Rottman, 2006, p. 5), this article builds upon experiential (gay liberation, queer activism) as well as academic (poststructuralist and feminist theory) work. (p. 5)

Additionally, Rottmann (2006) states, "By merging feminist theory,

poststructuralism, and political activism, the queer theoretical framework developed here

provides a conceptual lens to help educators broaden current notions of 'effective'

leadership, and challenge heterosexist discrimination in schools" (p. 10). The author uses

Vaid's (1995) three recommendations for leadership to organize the conceptual work of

queer theorists and suggests, "The queer community should demystify their vision of

leadership; replace their personal attacks on community leaders with critical dialogue;

and use their resources to develop structures that will support the leadership capacity of

all community members (as cited in Rottman, 2006, p. 12). Rottman uses three sections

to organize the article: demystifying leadership, critical dialogue, and support. According

to Rottmann (2006):

> [The first section, demystifying leadership] asks educational administrators,
> teachers, and academics who study educational leadership to blur the boundary
> between heterosexual and homosexual at the same time as it demands that they
> blur the boundary between leader and follower. In this case the link to queer
> theory is in the "queering" or the "making strange" or the "disrupting" of
> traditional dichotomous categories rather than in the traditional actions that may
> be taken by individuals in administrative positions dedicated to improving the
> material safety for those who inhabit queer-identified bodies . . . [the] "critical
> dialogue" and "support" . . . sections continue to present conceptual work or queer
> theorists but they focus more explicitly on social actions teachers and
> administrators in formal educational positions may take to negotiate sexuality
> issues in their schools. (pp. 12-13)

In the first section, demystifying leadership, Rottmann shares that Vaid (1995)

"believed it is the responsibility of all community members to deconstruct their

expectations of visionary or heroic leadership and to participate in organization and

advocacy work" (as cited in Rottman, 2006, p. 13). Thus, Rottman (2006) states, "Queer

theory can assist in this task by encouraging us to 'queer' or destabilize normative visions

of leadership, and by blurring boundaries that occur between inside/outside and

leader/follower" (p. 13). Rottmann recommends the following:

> [W]e should consider that students, teachers, community members and
> educational administrators all have a capacity for leadership and a capacity to
> nurture and support the leadership of others. When force, centralization and
> standardization appear to be the only possible solutions to educational problems,
> we might do well to recognize that we have hit the limit of our thinking and that it
> is time to ask those who are not stuck on a particular problem (either because they
> do not envision it to be a problem or because they have thought of less harmful
> solutions) to work through the relevant issues. (p. 14)

Rottmann (2006) makes the case for collaborative leadership and states that queering

educational norms can challenge the

current inclination to place the burden and authority of problem solving on the backs of individual leaders who cannot possibly represent the socially diverse group of students, staff or community members who live, learn and work in North American public schools. (p. 14)

This is one example of why including the study of a transgender educational leader is important to educational research. Additionally, expanding the body of knowledge regarding the relevance of a leadership theory to non-binary persons helps increase representation in the field and supports expansion of diverse ideas in leadership.

In the second section, critical dialogue, Rottmann suggests that open and critical dialogue can lead to more productive action and less personal attacks. Rottmann (2006) explains:

Queer theory can support the effort to exchange personal attacks with critical dialogue within the field of educational administration by helping us move beyond strictly rational modes of communication and by challenging the private and public aspects of sexuality that have shaped current educational governance structures. (p. 15)

Rottmann (2006) believes that discussing sensitive or controversial issues can be beneficial and allow for critical reflection as long as the contributions are not meant to cause pain (p. 15). The author asserts:

If it is the case that the thought of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual or transgender principal or superintendent makes some people cringe in a way that a married heterosexual administrator does not, then it is also the case that sexuality is a strong, emotional organizing factor in educational administration. (Rottmann, 2006, p. 15)

Rottmann explains that how people react to sexual diversity issues in schools can show the socio-political climate and that sexuality is already a public matter in public school systems (Blount, 1999, 2003; Lugg, 2003a, 2003b; Lugg & Koschoreck, 2003, as cited in Rottmann, 2006, p.15). Rottmann (2006) states the following:

The fact that sexually-minoritized individuals who would like to maintain job security, safety and comfort in the school system are pressured to keep their sexual identity private while those whose sexual identity coincides with societal norms are encouraged to flaunt their sexuality publicly through wedding rings and discussions in the staff room about family-related issues provides evidence that we still have something to debate or discuss. This inequitable state of affairs runs counter to the expressed values of a school system that prides itself on democracy and equality of access. The final victory of queer theory or activism in educational administration would not be for all educators and students to publicly declare their sexual identity, but rather for the public debate to open up issues of sexuality so that inequitable power dynamics along this and other dimensions can be challenged. (pp. 15-16)

In the third section, support, the researcher relies on Vaid's (1995)

recommendation to "invest temporal and monetary resources into the development of

new generations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and transsexual-identified

leaders and the infrastructure to support this work (as cited in Rottmann, 2006, p. 16).

Rottmann (2006) asserts:

The work of educational leaders interested in challenging homophobia and heterosexism in schools would be facilitated by an inquiry into current educational structures that constrain and support anti-homophobia efforts and by a focus on research and graduate programs in the field of educational administration through a conceptual lens of queer theory. (p. 16)

Rottmann (2006) calls for more research that exposes systemic constraints to reduce

sexual discrimination and suggests that similar structures used to protect the human rights

of sexually-minoritized youth be extended to sexually-minoritized teachers and

administrators (p. 16). Rottmann (2006) claims:

With more research into the ways in which sexuality and gender structure the certification process, staff hiring and firing, general administrative decision-making processes and the curriculum generation process, policies about safety may be extended to those who teach and lead in schools. Since those who are threatened by sexual diversity issues are likely to continue challenging anti-homophobia efforts, it is the responsibility of the rest of us to vigilantly and

continuously counter homophobic discrimination in new and creative ways.
(p. 16)

Rottmann's (2006) article supports that "more research is needed to connect queer theory, activism and the mainstream study of educational administration" (p. 17). Rottmann (2006) states:

> Queer theory's potential to transform the practice and study of educational leadership is as yet unfulfilled. Further research that moves beyond a focus on sexually-minoritized individuals to examine the ways in which attention to sexuality may challenge assumptions about all administrators, teachers and students as sexual beings is necessary for a more complete analysis of educational leadership. (p. 17)

In *A Shadow of Ourselves: Identity Erasure and the Politics of Queer Leadership*, researchers Catherine A. Lugg and Autumn K. Tooms (2010) seek to answer the question "what does it mean to employ an explicitly 'queer' leadership style"? (p. 77). They utilize prior work and ongoing research around US educational leadership and queers to discuss identity, sexual orientation and gender identity, and educational leadership and their implications for leadership preparation (Lugg & Tooms, 2010, p. 77). The authors found that little research has been completed around school administrators. They state:

> Within the context of education, several researchers have examined queers and identity negotiation primarily through the lens of teachers and coaches (Carlson 1998; Griffin 1992). By contrast, research dedicated to this subject within the arena of school administration is almost non-existent. (as cited in Lugg & Tooms, 2010, p. 81)

Thusly, their research supports my study to focus on a transgender school administrator since limited academic research on queer school administrators exists.

Additionally, they found, "Historically, US public schools have been fairly hostile places for queer adults and youth (Blount 1998, 2003, 2005; DuBoisson 2006; Harbeck

1997; Kosciw and Diaz 2006; Kozik-Rosabal 2000; Lugg 2003a, 2003b, 2006; as cited in

Lugg & Tooms, 2010, p. 81). Their research also shows "Queer administrators must

generally cover their identities" (Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Tooms, 2007; Yoshino, 2006;

as cited in Lugg & Tooms, 2010, p. 81). Lugg and Tooms also make a case for adding

queer people to the academic discussion regarding social justice and school leadership.

They report that a special edition of the *Journal of School Leadership* edited by Grogan

(2001) addressed issues concerning queers, but unfortunately the authors were unable to

eradicate the taboo surrounding discussions focused on the lived experiences of queers

(as cited in Lugg & Tooms, 2010, p. 84). Lugg and Tooms (2010) also state, "While it is

currently chic to call for social justice and equity work, there remains a group of

marginalized and highly stigmatized people who are routinely left out of the

conversation: queers. Clearly, just whose social justice counts?" (p. 84). One

recommendation the authors make in order to have school leaders "best consider

leadership as an effort which provides an environment of inclusivity for all students and

their families [is:] . . .. *The principal can and must stop all forms of teasing, bullying and*

harassment, regardless of community context" (Lugg & Tooms, 2010, p. 84). They

conclude stating, "How educational leaders frame their learning environments determines

the kinds of closets in which queers are forced to reside -- or not" (Lugg & Tooms, 2010,

p. 86).

Experiences of Transgender Teachers

      Very little academic research on transgender educators exists. According to Linda

McCarthy (2003), "in comparison to the empirical and theoretical discussions on gay,

lesbian, and bisexual youth issues in education, research on transgender youth is sparse, and academic research on transgender teachers is non-existent" (p. 170). The review of relevant literature returned four articles that discussed the experiences of transgender educators and one that discussed queer and genderqueer women's experiences at a Canadian university. Two articles highlighted K-12 transgender teachers' experiences in public school settings, one article highlighted one person's experience as a transgendered life orientation teacher in a rural school in the Free State, South Africa, and on one article explored the experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming educators in higher education settings.

Kristopher Wells (2018) focused his research on examining the political, pedagogical, and personal experiences of transgender teachers in Canadian K-12 schools across three decades. Through in-depth interviews with three trans-identified research participants, he established co-constructed narratives to "serve as springboards to explore the lived realities of transgendered teachers within public schools" (Wells, 2018, p. 1550). His findings indicate recommendations for other transgender teachers to consider during their own transitions within their K-12 school environments. These findings include (a) proceed with caution, (b) be strategic and incremental, (c) be flexible and adaptable, (d) find school-based allies, (e) be prepared for transphobia, (f) be and trust yourself (Wells, 2018, p. 1576). Through his research, Wells (2018) makes a call for action to increase empirical research of transgender and gender diverse individuals to help serve as a catalyst for how gender, gender identity, and sexuality are understood within 21st-century schools. Wells (2018) states,

> By seeking to interrupt heteronormativity and dominant gender binaries, we can work to open up a horizon of possibility for each student, teacher, administrator, or school employee to fully be themselves and to explore their limitless potential without the fear of threat or ridicule. Public education ought to be about building educational spaces that support all teachers and students to move from being in a position of having to worry about their survival to a place where they can be supported to thrive and enrich their classrooms and communities. (p. 1577)

Including the storylines of transgender teachers in educational research will help to build an inclusive public educational system.

McCarthy's (2003) exploratory study offers a closeted female-bodied transgender-identified teacher's story in an urban public school system. McCarthy interviewed the participant at length about "the process of coming to identify as transgender; the overlap between lesbian and transgender identities; the experiences of harassment in school, gender in the classroom, and relationships with students, parents, and administration" (p. 172). McCarthy found that the participant's sexual orientation and gender identity impacted her work experiences. The participant experienced homophobia in similar ways that others who step outside of gender norms experience it. The participant also felt "limited in her ability to directly address queer themes or characters in the curriculum because of her fear that the conversation will 'turn' on her" (McCarthy, 2003, p. 180). The participant also described how she was excluded from social interactions and feared losing her job in the beginning years of her career; however, as she began to feel more confident in her job status, she increasingly expressed her gender outwardly through men's clothing and hairstyles. McCarthy (2003) also found that the participant felt that her presence was liberating for her school community as she served as an advocate for students who expressed themselves outside of traditional

gender norms. Lastly, the participant described that she felt little support from administrators when she encountered direct harassment and thus, she is compelled to try harder. McCarthy (2003) states, "Like white women and members of targeted racial groups, transgender teachers may find that they have to prove themselves, and be better than the average teacher, just to be taken seriously" (p. 181).

At the conclusion of the study, McCarthy (2003) calls for more studies on the experiences of transgender-identified teachers and their impact on and relationship to school communities. In doing so, McCarthy (2003) posits that schools will be more inclusive environments that support a range of gender expression if school staff examine how they contribute to restrictive gender roles and "understand and challenge what society constructs as normal gender expression" (p. 181).

Similar to Wells (2018) and McCarthy (2003), Francis (2014) utilized in-depth interviews with a research participant who identifies as a 'lesbian man', which the participant describes as someone who "is born as a woman but who identifies now as a man and who has sex with women" (p. 539). Through the in-depth interviews, the researcher constructed a life history of the participant, who is a transgender man teacher living and teaching in a rural state school in South Africa. From the exploratory study, the researcher concluded that the participant is not interested in norm breaking, but rather in getting recognition as a man. Francis (2014) states, "Thatho's life history shows that masculinity is not a fixed character type that systematically accesses privilege but rather that the relationships between competing hegemonic, subordinate and marginalized masculinities give him differing abilities to access gendered privileges" (p. 549). The

researcher found that the participant's education qualifications, teaching experience, and involvement in the union, influenced negotiable and flexible gender relations in his rural community.

A fourth relevant article examined "how trans and gender non-conforming educators enact and understand their pedagogy and how they experience resistance from students, colleagues, and their larger higher education institutions" (Jaekel & Nicolazzo, 2020, p. 2). The study included 10 participants who identified as trans or gender non-conforming and critical educators and who all came from different institutions across the United States and Canada. The researcher conducted critical narrative inquiry through in-depth interviews in which participants were asked to discuss themselves, their pedagogical stances, and examples of resistance both in the classroom setting and in their lives as educators.

Three primary findings emerged from the study by Jaekel and Nicolazzo (2020). The first finding centered on participants using their own gender to help students understand normativity as well as to be visible for minoritized students. Within this finding, "participants experienced their genders were simultaneously 'too much' and 'not enough' which invoked both a hypervisibility and invisibility" (Jaekel & Nicolazzo, 2020, p. 18). The second finding was resistance about and to trans identity and topics. Participants shared that much of the resistance occurred as they were working to further their careers, and therefore could be understood as professional gender gatekeeping. This professional gender gatekeeping had larger consequences for trans faculty, particularly through added labor. Such added labor consisted of supporting students due to the lack of

other trans individuals on campus and lack of resources, and often went unrewarded by the participants' institutions. Overall, the researchers determined that institutional resistance toward trans educators occurs through institutional commitments to unknowing gender "by failing to come to understand and address how gender mediates faculty life, institutional policies, student, faculty, and staff interactions, and pedagogical practices" (Jaekel & Nicolazzo, 2020, p. 20).

Jaekel and Nicolazzo recommend that institutions make a commitment to know and understand the complexities, nuances, and transgressions of gender in order to ensure that binary conceptualizations of gender do not negatively impact trans faculty teaching evaluations. Additionally, the researchers recommend institutions "recognize the ways in which they benefit from the added labor of trans educators" and call for institutions to hire more trans and gender non-conforming faculty and staff and provide more resources and programming on college campuses (Jaekel & Nicolazzo, 2020, p. 21).

A study conducted by Dimberg et al. (2019) on the experience of transgender educators focuses on the risk factors experienced on campus by queer women in a Canadian university. The qualitative study explores the lived experiences of eight sexual-orientation minority undergraduate individuals on an urban Canadian public research university campus. The participants self-selected into the queer women's group. Through a dual moderator focus group, the researchers determined four microaggressive themes that targeted the participants: "(a) facing skepticism as response to sexual orientation, (b) living with surveillance as response to gender presentation, (c) encountering heteronormative assumptions, (d) experiencing vulnerability" (Dimberg et al., 2019,

p. 11). Through these findings, the researchers note that participants experienced gender and/or sexual-orientation microaggressions. The research participants "felt targeted by student acquaintances, anonymous persons, professors, health professionals, and campus security guards in various social settings, classrooms, the library, and outside or inside restrooms" (Dimberg et al., 2019, p. 15).

While the researchers anticipate that the findings would be similar for other students in similar contexts, they suggest that further research is needed to assess the transferability to other marginalized populations. They call for research around how queer men in a university setting experience microaggressions. Additionally, Dimberg et al. (2019) suggest:

> university administrators should sponsor faculty and staff trainings that educate university personnel about heterosexism, misconceptions about the LGBQ community, and the impact of heterosexism and microaggressions on both LGBQ community members, as well as cisgender and/or hetero-sexual members of the university community. (pp.19-20)

The researchers call for university administrators to examine biases in personal and professional interactions and encourage university personnel to integrate such ideas into areas of their work, including university policy implementation, curriculum, or student services. Doing so, they suggest, would "facilitate a safer and more inclusive campus for queer women and reduce negative psychological and academic outcomes" (Dimberg et al., 2019, p. 20).

According to Nicolazzo et al. (2015), the ever-expanding field of transgender research has yet to have been taken up significantly within K-12 public education, especially in the realm of study of the identities, lived experiences, and pedagogies of

transgender teachers. Francis (2014) calls for a need to focus on transgendered issues in educational systems, stating that "transgender issues in education affect the school climate, policies and population" (p. 540). McCarthy (2003) posits that transgender issues are becoming increasingly relevant as teachers 'come out' as transgender and explore non-normative gender expression. Hence, the current research suggests a need for my educational research study on a transgender educational leader.

Dominant Norms/Hegemonic Environments

Little research exists that explores how dominant norms or hegemonic environments impact experiences of transgender leaders. The research that is available is limited to higher education. An additional search of scholarly (peer reviewed) journals utilizing the terms dominant norms, hegemonic environments, workplace, educational leadership, and transgender returned three relevant articles.

One study focused on the cultural influences that can cause compulsory heterogenderism on college campuses, what the effects of compulsory heterogenderism are for trans college students, and how might they overcome the phenomenon (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 249). The term, compulsory heterogenderism, was coined by the researcher "to explain the ways in which participants' gender identities and sexualities were consistently understood in and through each other . . . [and] calls attention to the way cisgender people made sense of participants' trans-ness through notions of sexuality" (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 246). In the study, the researcher used interviews with four trans participants and found that "compulsory heterogenderism pervaded a wide array of participants' social interactions" at the college (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 251). Essentially, the researcher found

that "cisgender people's misperceptions of participants' genders were largely rooted in sexuality-based stereotypes that dictated one's sexuality as a direct result of gender presentation (e.g., a masculine-presenting female being understood by others as a lesbian)" and therefore, caused their diverse gender identities to not be recognized (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 246). Although focused on college students' experiences, this study is relevant to my study as the author recommends that educators work to challenge their own assumptions about gender through continuous self-reflection, which would provide "all people with agency in naming their genders rather than relying on the sexuality-based stereotypes that reinforce compulsory heterogenderism (e.g., all masculine women are lesbians, not trans)" (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 257).

The same researcher also explored how higher education has become a discipline in which transgender scholars have begun to engage. Nicolazzo and Jourian (2020) discuss how the ways of trans people are "disruptive of cultural understandings of normative gender, of educational institutions, and of ways of knowing," specifically at higher education conferences (p. 57). The study consisted of seven trans and gender non-conforming scholars who served on a panel at the 42nd Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) annual conference in 2017. The 75 minute dialogue was recorded and data was collected through the manuscript of the interactive symposium entitled, *Not Your T*oken: The Power of Trans(*) and Gender Non-Conforming Scholars (NYT*)* (Nicolazzo & Jourian, 2020, p. 59). The data highlighted tension points and led researchers to frame their findings through three questions:

1. How are discourses of gender institutional(ized) at/beyond academic conferences?

2. What does it mean to disrupt?
3. Are conferences potent(ial) sites of disruption? (Nicolazzo & Jourian, 2020, pp. 60-64).

Through their discussion, the researchers enlist a call to action for disruption to extend beyond academic conferences and they "are mindful that continuing to engage in academic conferences as potent(ial) sites for ongoing disruption in and beyond higher education is critical to realizing the worlds [they] want and need as trans people" (Nicolazzo & Jourian, 2020, p. 66).

A key component of their work was that "the disruptive intention of NYT* was to noticeably mark a moment of take-back, of trans scholars reclaiming our agency in the telling, analyzing, and theorizing of our and our kin's lives, realities, bodies, and voices, thereby interrupting their cislation" with cislation referring to the practice of sharing trans perspectives with a presumably nontrans audience (Nicolazzo & Jourian, 2020, p. 63). Nicolazzo and Jourian (2020) point out that much of the research involving trans subjects has been ciscentric, which has forced a gender binary worldview upon trans people's perspectives. Nicolazzo and Jourian (2020) state that

> cis-gendered studies (many of which were not empirical and thus relied primarily on nontrans observation) overgeneralized trans students' experiences by presenting them as a homogenous group with little if any specificity to varying gender, racial, sexual, and other intersecting identities that might exist in the population sample. (p. 63)

Thus, their study sought to offer a counter-narrative to "dominant ideologies and assumptions about trans people, who are underrepresented within higher education, including faculty ranks" (Nicolazzo & Jourian, 2020, p. 64).

While not specifically about dominant norms or hegemonic environments, a third article compares survey results from two confidential and anonymous surveys given four years apart regarding the workplace climate for LGBT educators in K-12 schools in the United States. Wright and Smith (2015) sought to explore "whether the workplace climate changed at all for LGBT educators between the first and second iterations of the survey" (p. 395). The study's research questions were:

1. How do LGBT educators perceive their workplace climate?

2. What factors influence them in how they perceive their workplace climate?

   (Wright & Smith, 2015, pp. 394-395)

The first survey was administered in 2007 and a second survey was given four years later with participants recruited through educational, liberal faith, academic, and national LGBT organizations. The researchers found that nearly all LGBT educators experienced demeaning language, that school climate was a source of stress, many were harassed and not reporting the harassment, and that their employment could be at risk if they were to come out to their administrators (Wright & Smith, 2015, pp. 402-403). Based on the findings, Wright and Smith recommend ways administrators can improve school climate for LGBT educators including:

- consistently enforce policies related to the use of homophobic language
- provide professional development related to the learning needs of LGBT students and respect for all members of the school population
- work to increase teachers' and administrators' awareness of the need to intervene when LGBT people are spoken about or treated without respect. (Wright & Smith, 2015, pp. 403)

Additionally, the researchers' findings suggest that school leaders both directly and indirectly impact the climate for LGBT educators through policies, professional

development, support for gay-straight alliances, and discipline and education for bullying behavior (Wright & Smith, 2015, pp. 405). Lastly, the researchers suggest that future research focuses on how administrators perceive their support of LGBT teachers and how they can help teachers support LGBT students (Wright & Smith, 2015, pp. 405).

Experiences of LGBTQ People in Multiple Areas of Education

Another theme that emerged from the review of the literature is Experiences of LGBTQ People in Multiple Areas of Education. The search turned up three relevant studies that highlighted experiences of queer people: two studies about higher education and one study about K-12 public education. The lack of relevant studies available supports the need for additional research around educators who identify as transgender and non-binary/non-conforming.

In Kortegast and van der Toorn's (2018) article, *Other Duties Not Assigned: Experiences of Lesbian and Gay Student Affairs Professionals at Small Colleges and Universities*, the researchers sought to discern how LGBTQ professionals in student affairs situate their sexual identity within the institutional culture and their professional responsibilities at small colleges and universities (SCUs). According to Renn (2010), three categories generally make up the literature concerning LGBTQ topics on college campuses: LGBTQ student identities and experiences, visibility of LGBTQ people, and evaluations of institutional resources/campus climate. The authors point out that "although several studies have illustrated the experiences of LGBTQ faculty (Dolan, 1998; Tierney, 1997; Sears, 2002), there is a significant gap in research of the

experiences of administrators" (as cited in Kortegast & van der Toorn, 2018,

pp. 269-270).

The study included 19 participants who identified as gay, lesbian, or fluid and

data were collected through semistructured phone interviews with interview questions

focusing on their experiences "related to four broad categories: openness about sexual

identity on campus, experiences during the job search process, experiences on campus,

and experiences in the field of student affairs as LGBTQ professionals" (Kortegast &

van der Toorn, 2018, pp. 270-271). Four themes emerged in the researchers' findings:

"Disclosure of Sexual Identity, Enactment of Outness, Assumed Roles and

Responsibilities, and Recognition and Support of LGBTQ Activities" (Kortegast &

van der Toorn, 2018, p. 271).

Participants of the study indicated that a "supportive environment at their

institution allowed them to feel comfortable being out in the workplace, and all

participants discussed being open about their sexual identity to at least immediate

coworkers" (Kortegast & van der Toorn, 2018, p. 275). However, disclosing their sexual

identity and their outness was carefully constructed, which researchers found to serve two

purposes:

> (a) it sends the message that it is acceptable to be out, but not 'in your face' out
> and (b) it serves to reinscribe heteronormativity [which] creates and maintains an
> inequitable, binary power system in which heterosexuality is seen as normal and
> superior. (Kortegast & van der Toorn, 2018, p. 275)

Participants identified that they assumed informal responsibilities that were not part of

their formal job descriptions and were driven by individual interest rather than enacted by

the institution (Kortegast & van der Toorn, 2018, p. 276). Kortegast and van der Toorn

(2018) stated:

> If engaging in inclusive practice such as providing LGBTQ student services is minimized as volunteer work and not rewarded, then the unspoken message being communicated is that this work is not essential and professionals will not be held accountable for engaging in inclusive professional practice. (p. 275)

Additionally, the researchers state that there is the potential of LGBTQ student

affairs professionals being exploited because of their identity and they state that

"although it is doubtful that this exploitation is conscious, the additional labor and

services offered benefits the institution without threatening the institutional structure"

(Kortegast & van der Toorn, 2018, p. 276). The authors recommend that other SCUs

include gender identity/expression and sexual orientation in their nondiscrimination

policies and benefits packages, provide compensation for additional responsibilities of

LGBTQ services and note such responsibilities in formal performance evaluations, and

engage all stakeholders in inclusive professional practices (Kortegast & van der Toorn,

2018, p. 277). Lastly, they call for more research regarding the experiences of LGBTQ

student affairs professionals that also includes more intersectionality of identity at other

types of institutions (Kortegast & van der Toorn, 2018, p. 277).

A second article, *Queer Activist Leadership: An Exploration of Queer Leadership

in Higher Education* (Pryor, 2020) "explored the use of positional leadership and

applications of grassroots activism toward social change, illuminating the experiences of

grassroots leaders who work toward LGBTQ equity on their campus" (p. 3). The guiding

research question for this study was: "How do LGBTQ leaders at RPU [(Rural Public

University)] engage in grassroots queer leadership to change policies and practices to

improve the climate for LGBTQ individuals?" (Pryor, 2020, p. 1). According to the researcher, he focused on how LGBTQ leaders at the school implement change while navigating campus political climates. Participants were determined by identifying staff members on campus who were involved with LGBTQ change initiatives or self-identified themselves as LGBTQ advocates (Pryor, 2020, p. 4). Pryor's (2020) findings indicate that the participants were able to overcome challenges, successfully advocate for LGBTQ equity, and lead to changes in the university (p. 7). Pryor (2020) utilized a queer activist leadership framework that incorporated queer activists, queering leadership, and queer policy and practice to explore their experiences (p. 7). Pryor (2020) found that "a queer activist identity was a distinguishing role many of the queer leaders claimed" (p. 7). Pryor (2020) found that "queering leadership requires leaders to center queer identities in leadership practice and necessitates a disruption of heterogendered culture embedded in institutional leadership and practice" (p. 8). The study found that a number of strategies were utilized by participants to center their queer identities in the leadership process. Also, participants actively engaged in educating their colleagues in their core values of LGBTQ inclusion and advocacy and worked to influence institutional values with LGBTQ equity. Lastly, the study found that "resistance was pervasive, requiring them first to navigate varying levels of power dynamics from other departments, faculty, and campus leadership" (Pryor, 2020, p. 8).

The third component of queer activist leadership calls for change in policy or practice in order to shift normative notions toward equity for LBGTQ community members (Pryor, 2020, p. 9). The study found that RPU implemented several changes

that demonstrate how queer leaders have influenced a traditionally heterogendered

institution to include greater equity for queer members of their community (Pryor, 2020,

p. 9). The researcher states:

> These participant experiences provide a model for engaging queer leadership in
> higher education. Queering grassroots leadership allowed for a thorough
> exploration of the individual and organizational dynamics that shape the RPU
> campus climate for LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff. Applying the lens of
> queer activism, centering queer identities, and the leaders' intentional application
> of queer centered change in policy and practice emphasized how queer leadership
> may function within a single institution. (Pryor, 2020, pp. 9-10)

In the recommendations, Pryor (2020) suggests that future research is needed to

understand the experiences of faculty and staff who support social equity as well as a

continued exploration of support and experiences of LGBTQ student affairs staff, stating

that "understanding their stories is necessary for educators to prepare or continue to

challenge institutions that inadequately support queer faculty, staff, and students" (p. 11).

Pryor (2020) also recommends that future research explores how leaders advocate and

advance LGBTQ equity as well as explore how queer leadership continues to manifest

and support the progress of that equity on college campuses and "must test and expand on

how other LGBTQ advocates and activists pursue change in their particular contexts,

informing new ways for doing queer work in higher education" (p. 11). Lastly, Pryor

(2020) advocates that,

> As the participants demonstrated, systemic change requires more than a policy or
> a few queer leaders, it will take an entire community to shift away from the
> barriers of the THI, disrupting the norms that create the traditionally
> heterogendered institution. (p. 11)

> A third study within the theme of Experiences of LGBTQ People in Multiple

Areas of Education is *Queer Educators in Schools: The Experiences of Four Beginning*

Teachers (Tompkins et al., 2019). The researcher sought to understand the experiences of new teachers in Canada who identify as members of the LGBTQ community. Tompkins et al. (2019) pointed out that "to date much less has been written about how homophobia and transphobia impact LGBTQ teachers working in the educational system" than has been written about LGBTQ students and their experiences (p. 389). According to Eribon (2004) and Taylor et al. (2015), "the teaching profession lags behind other professional workplaces in acknowledging the rights of LGBTQ individuals (as cited in Tompkins, 2019, p. 387). Tompkins et al.'s (2019) study incorporated individual interviews with each of the four beginning teachers during the 2015-2016 school year and focused on challenges and successes they experienced while advocating for LGBTQ-inclusive education (p. 393). Four themes emerged from Tompkins et al.'s (2019) study:

> [A] theme of feeling empowered and accepted to engage in some level of LGBTQ education was experienced by all of the participants, although the degree to which they could engage in challenging homophobia and transphobia in schools varied. A second theme that surfaced related to the ability to which each participant could bring their LGBTQ identity 'out' in the context of their teaching contexts, which varied for each educator. The extent to which the responsibility for LGBTQ education was a shared responsibility among many educators or fell on the shoulders of these beginning LGBTQ educators is the third theme examined. School leadership and climates was the fourth theme to emerge; not surprisingly, these LGBTQ beginning educators were more likely to engage in LGBTQ-inclusive education and feel supported as educators when the school leadership and climate were supportive and much less so when they were hostile. (p. 402)

Overall, Tompkins et al.'s (2019) study found that an astounding level of vulnerability and unpredictability still exists for LGBTQ educators. The study calls for "a critical mass of educators, both LGBTQ and CH, to transform heteronormativity and cisgender privilege" (Tompkins et al., 2019, p. 409). The study also highlighted the critical roles that others play in supporting LGBTQ teachers and socially just educational

environments. Tompkins et al. (2019) states, "the voices of four LGBTQ educators show that anti-oppressive education is needed not only for LGBTQ youth and families in schools, but for the LGBTQ educators who work in the educational system" (p. 410).

Aspects of LGBTQ in Educational Leadership Preparation Programs

An additional theme that surfaced from the review of literature is Aspects of LGBTQ in Educational Leadership Preparation Programs, although only one relevant article represents this topic: O'Malley and Capper's (2015) article titled, *A Measure of the Quality of Educational Leadership Programs for Social Justice: Integrating LGBTIQ Identities Into Principal Preparation*. O'Malley and Capper (2015) found that:

> [T]he LGBTIQ experience is nearly absent from the literature on leadership preparation and, at best, peripheral within the social justice leadership preparation literature. Furthermore, no empirical data exist prior to this study on how principal preparation programs across the United States educate aspiring school leaders to respond to the unique, documented issues and circumstances encountered by LGBTIQ students, staff, and families. (p. 292)

Their study examines "how aspiring principals in the United States are prepared for social justice leadership by focusing particular attention on equitable leadership for LGBTIQ persons as a measure of the preparation program's commitment to social justice" (O'Malley & Capper, 2015, p. 291). They utilized an online survey with faculty members of principal preparation programs at University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) member institutions. The researchers found two significant findings to inform strategic interventions for principal preparation. First, the study found that "LGBTIQ identities are the least attended identity across non-social justice programs (0% high or moderate emphasis) and comparable with religious/belief identities for least

emphasis across social justice-oriented programs (LGBTIQ at 48% and religion/belief at

45.1% high or moderate emphasis)" (O'Malley & Capper, 2015, p. 318).

Secondly, O'Malley and Capper (2015) found:

[the] integration of LGBTIQ identities frequently occurs (or not) at the level of the individual professor often operating in isolation...in concrete terms, it is disturbing to consider that despite the known limitations to equity and access for LGBTIQ youth in P-12 schools and the concurrent harmful effects to these youth (Kosciw et al., 2012; Robinson & Espelage, 2011, 2012, as cited in O'Malley & Capper, 2015), more than 50% of our respondents report that their social justice-oriented programs give minimal or no emphasis to LGBTIQ topics. (pp. 318-319)

Thus, O'Malley and Capper (2015) call for educational leadership professors to critique

their principal preparation programs and continue to develop their knowledge, skills, and

awareness to counter the marginalization of certain groups of people. Additionally, they

recommend professors work to change problematic institutional structures and cultures

within departments or programs that add to social injustices (O'Malley & Capper, 2015).

p. 319).

The researchers organize their recommendations into two categories:

(a) Enhancing the Social Justice Character of Principal Preparation Programs; and

(b) Enhancing Equitable Inclusion of LBGTIQ Identities Within Principal Preparation

Programs. One recommendation in the latter category relates to my study of increasing

educational leadership research around LGBTQ-related topics and states, "Principal

preparation programs in institutions of higher education ought to explicitly recruit, hire,

and support faculty who have LGBTIQ-related research agendas in order to respond to

the limited LGBTIQ research and knowledge base within the field of educational

leadership" (O'Malley & Capper, 2015, p. 322).

Attitudes and Actions of School Leaders regarding LGBTQ Issues

The review of literature's last theme that emerged is Attitudes and Actions of

School Leaders regarding LGBTQ Issues. The literature search returned one relevant

article. Hart and Hart's (2018) article, *When Johnny Becomes Janie: An Investigation of*

the Attitudes of School Leaders on the Placement and Hiring of Transgender Teacher

Candidates, examined

> the factors considered by P–12 partners in making a field placement for a
> transgender teacher candidate[,] . . . the extent of possible community response as
> a factor and the possible increased level of educator diversity inherent in
> placing/hiring a transgender candidate. (pp. 115-116)

The researchers designed a qualitative study with HR directors and school principals as

the targeted participants and asked the following research questions:

1. To what extent do school/district leaders consider the impact of increased
   educator diversity as a factor in placing/hiring a transgender candidate?
2. To what extent does a teacher education candidate's transgender gender
   identity impact field placement/hiring factors considered by school/ district
   leaders?
3. To what extent do school/district leaders consider community response in
   placing/hiring a transgender candidate? (Hart & Hart, 2018, p. 116)

Four themes emerged from the study. According to Hart and Hart (2018), "the first theme

was that school leaders perceive there are benefits inherent in hiring diverse teacher

candidates, including having role models and fulfilling social justice goals" (p. 129). Two

relevant sub-themes emerged: (a) the Role Model benefit; and (b) the Social Justice

benefit. The researchers stated the following about the first sub-theme, the Role Model

benefit:

> [It] was derived from interview comments suggesting that a diverse faculty would
> benefit students from similar backgrounds as well as providing positive, diverse
> role models for all students, thereby increasing students' overall exposure to

diversity. Participants also expressed their belief that it was constructive to expose students to broader perspectives than were afforded from relatively homogenous faculties that currently existed in their schools. (Hart & Hart, 2018, p. 119)

Additionally, Hart and Hart (2018) labeled the second sub-theme of benefit as "'Social Justice,' meaning that participants viewed the presence of a transgender student teacher/teacher as serving a moral purpose, the 'right thing to do.'" (p. 120)

From the research, "the second theme noted that participants typically would alter their field placement or hiring process for a transgender candidate, but that most of the alterations would be for the benefit of the candidate, to try to ease the transition" (Hart & Hart, 2018, p. 129). According to the researchers' discussion:

> [I]n discussing their approach to placement of transgender candidates, ten of the 14 participants (71%) described some aspect of that process that they would change to accommodate candidates because of their transgender status. It is important to note that the participants expressed that they would use such knowledge to ensure a positive experience for the candidate; all participants seemed aware that a transgender candidate may face increased difficulties beyond that of a traditional candidate. Nonetheless, these results signal that participants were aware that their approach in placing transgender candidates in their schools would potentially demand a different path than placement of a traditional student teacher. (p. 121)

Thus, the researchers found that a person's transgender status may impact the placement or hiring of candidates. Secondly, participants noted that they have a passive role in student teacher placement "despite these placements being a recruitment tool for filling teacher vacancies. All participants perceived that their districts defer to EPPs regarding the placement of student teachers" (Hart & Hart, 2018, p. 122).

The third theme to surface from the study was a concern about negative community responses in connection to the placement or hiring of transgender teacher candidates. According to Hart and Hart (2018), "All participants anticipated that the

placement/hiring of a transgender teacher candidate would cause some divisiveness

within their schools and communities" (p. 123). Participants "believed that suburban

areas would be more agreeable to having a transgender student teacher/teacher while

rural areas would be the most resistant" (Hart & Hart, 2018, p. 124). Additionally, some

participants mentioned how their Boards of Education might react to the placement/hiring

of a transgender teacher candidate. According to Hart and Hart (2018), "While all

participants felt that their Boards would approve such a hiring recommendation, they also

noted that their Boards would have concerns about potential disruption and controversy"

(p. 125). A sub-theme emerged from Research Question 3 related to a candidate's

professional behavior connected to a community's response. The researchers found:

> While all participants indicated that they personally would be willing to place a transgender student teacher for clinical experiences and/or to hire a transgender teacher, several participants believed that it was imperative for a transgender candidate to maintain silence in the workplace regarding their gender identity, thereby concealing their identity and limiting potential disruption and controversy. They noted that all candidates are expected to maintain high levels of professionalism, and that student teachers/teachers should not share information with students about their gender identity, sexual orientation, or other aspects of their personal lives. (Hart & Hart, 2018, p. 126)

Lastly, the fourth theme to surface was the participants' uncertainty of how to

handle transgender issues with potential employees (Hart & Hart, 2018, p. 129).

According to Hart and Hart (2018), "Participants routinely said that they want to handle

such issues appropriately, but they wanted more direction about how they were to do so"

(p. 128).

Hart and Hart (2018) make several recommendations at the conclusion of their

study. They advise administrators that they will need to confront conflicting views from

all stakeholders, as LGBTQ individuals become more widely visible in society and

"assert their educational and civil rights in schools" (p. 129). As more young adults

become more open about their gender identities, school leaders will experience more

LGBTQ individuals who are student teaching and seeking employment. Thus, Hart and

Hart (2018) recommend:

> Based on the feedback from participants in this study, school leaders should
> expect resistance to the placement of transgender student teachers or the
> subsequent hiring of transgender teachers. The best remedy is for leaders to
> respond proactively, establishing policies and regulations that outline acceptable
> procedures while specifically noting that discriminatory and illegal practices will
> not be tolerated. (p. 131)

Additionally, the researchers ascertain that "training should specifically address the

transgender experience (versus "the gay and lesbian" experience)" (Hart & Hart, 2018,

p. 131). Hart and Hart (2018) state,

> Despite the suggestions offered by several participants in this study, it is
> unrealistic (and unfair) to expect a transgender candidate to hide their gender
> identity in the workplace. Research has further shown that transgender individuals
> who disclose their status and are accepted by co-workers may be more likely to
> remain in their jobs for longer (Law et al., 2011, as cited in Hart & Hart, 2018).
> Training of district and school personnel, particularly those in leadership roles
> with hiring and placement responsibilities, must include thoughtful and reflective
> conversations to lay the groundwork for community acceptance of the candidate.
> (p. 131)

Lastly, the researchers call for more collaboration between school districts and EPPs

regarding placement of transgender student teachers and they suggest that they include

the candidate in the conversations to show support, acceptance, and respect and lessen

opportunities for potential claims of discrimination or harassment. According to Hart and

Hart (2018),

> This issue is wrought with implications for both schools and EPPs in regard to placement and hiring. The need for mutual understanding about how to support the transgender candidate, the need for increasing personal comfort levels for accepting transgender diversity, and the need to be legally responsive are only a few of these implications. (p. 132)

Overall, this research relates to my study because of the importance of increasing educator diversity through hiring and supporting transgender employees as well as providing diverse role models for students. Additionally, more research highlighting transgender educators' experiences is needed.

Implications

As Torraco (2016) states, "The value of the literature review is enhanced when it probes the future of a topic or field" (p. 422). Implications of this review of literature highlight the need for further research in the field of educational leadership and transgender persons.

Several researchers identified that little research exists in regard to transgender school administrators and their experience as leaders and urge other researchers to expand on traditional research practices by the inclusion and specificity of transgender educational leaders' experiences (Kortegast & van der Toorn, 2018; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; O'Malley et al., 2018; Rottman, 2006; Tompkins et al., 2019). O'Malley and Capper (2015) call for more educational leadership university faculty with LGBTIQ-related research agendas to add to the limited LGBTIQ research and knowledge base. Hart and Hart (2018) recommend school administrator training specifically incorporates the experience of transgender educators.

No research exists that explores the application of the Synergistic Leadership Theory to the experiences of leaders who identify as transgender. However, Glenn et al. (2009) found that leadership traits in the OLEI can be utilized to prepare and secure successful superintendents regardless of gender. Thus, conducting a study that incorporates a transgender individual and the Synergistic Leadership Theory is an important addition to the body of educational leadership research.

Summary

As outlined in the introduction, the literature review focuses on seven themes that emerged from the search. I utilized the search terms "transgender," "LGBTQ," "synergistic leadership theory," "educational administration," "superintendent," "educational leadership," "diversity," "hegemonic environments," and "dominant norms" across several different databases and the University of Nebraska's Institutional Repository.

The first section reviews the literature on the Synergistic Leadership Theory and assists in framing the research topic of this study. As mentioned in chapter one, the SLT is touted as a gender-inclusive leadership theory developed by researchers at Sam Houston State University in 1999, although it has only been utilized with cisgender participants in other studies. Irby et al.(2002) developed the post-modernist leadership theory in order to provide an alternative to traditional theories that "were traditionally dominated by masculine incorporation and lacked feminine presence in development and language" (p. 304). The SLT offers a leadership theory created with the inclusion of the female voice as well as issues concerning diversity. This leadership theory includes four

interacting factors: (a) leadership behavior, (b) organizational structure, (c) external

forces, and (d) beliefs, attitudes, and values and when all four factors are in alignment,

the leader can be perceived as successful. Conversely, if the four factors are not aligned,

the tension can then negatively impact the perception of the leader's effectiveness (Irby

et al., 2002, p. 312). According to Irby et al. (2002), the main purposes of the SLT are to:

1. add to existing leadership theory to include:
   a. a theory situated in post-modernism;
   b. a theory reflective of females' leadership experiences;
   c. a theory applicable to both male and female leaders; and
   d. a theory that addresses gender, cultural, and political issues;
2. enhance relevancy of theory presented in leadership training programs; and
3. create a framework for describing interactions and dynamic tensions among leadership behaviors, organizational structures, external forces, and attitudes and beliefs. (p.316)

The second section focuses on Queer Theory and the need for more research

connected to educational leadership regarding transgender persons. The following

sections explore the experiences of transgender teachers, how dominant norms and

hegemonic environments shape the experiences of transgender leaders, experiences of

LGBTQ people in multiple areas of education, aspects of LGBTQ in educational

leadership preparation programs, and attitudes and actions of school leaders regarding

LGBTQ issues, respectively.

Chapter 3

Methods

After careful consideration, the researcher determined that a qualitative case study was best suited to investigate the experience of a transgender superintendent and the ways in which he does his job through the lens of the SLT. As this study considered whether the SLT, which was developed with a binary understanding of gender, could provide a backdrop for the work of an educational leader whose gender identity does not fit within a gender binary, the researcher sought an approach that would be considered valid. One reason the researcher chose a qualitative research design was because "Qualitative research is an appropriate approach when there exists a need to better understand 'the nature of persons' experiences with a phenomenon' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 19, as cited in Hart & Hart, 2018, p. 116).

Additionally, according to Creswell (2013), "we conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored . . . [and also] because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (pp. 47-48). Merriam (2009) states, "as the product of an investigation, a case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 46). It was important to consider the perspectives and experiences of leaders who identify as transgender in the field of education in order to determine if the leadership theory applies to leaders who identify outside traditional binary gender roles. Thus, a qualitative method of data collection was used in a descriptive case study that is explained.

Different advantages and disadvantages exist when utilizing a case study. One advantage is that in a case study, "the researcher explores an issue or problem, and a detailed understanding emerges from examining a case or several cases" (Creswell, 2013, p. 123). As Merriam (2009) puts it, "anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon" (p. 51). Additionally, according to Creswell (2013), a case study bounded in time or place with extensive material from multiple sources of information provides an in-depth picture of the case (p. 125). One disadvantage of this study is that there is currently only one openly transgender superintendent in the U.S.A., thus limiting the study to his participation and perspective. An additional disadvantage is that case study can experience an ethical issue. Merriam (2009) advises "both the readers of case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product" (p. 52).

This case study is organized based on Creswell's (2007) approach to qualitative research and is organized as follows: Research Design, Researcher's Role, Bounding the Study, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Verification, and Reporting the Findings (Creswell, 2007). The case study seeks to examine the ways in which a transgender superintendent does his job through the lens of the SLT. The researcher seeks to answer the following qualitative questions:

1. What are the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent?
2. Does the SLT offer a reasonable explanation of how a transgender superintendent does his work?

Research Design

A qualitative case study was conducted in order to answer the research questions. The population that was studied is one openly transgender superintendent/principal in the U.S.A. For this study, the participant, Lark Doolan, is referred to by Superintendent Doolan, or Doolan, or by his preferred pronouns, he/him/his. Purposeful sampling was used as it is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Specifically, a unique sampling technique was used since the research participant was currently the only openly transgender superintendent in the U.S.A. According to Merriam (2009), "a unique sample is based on unique, atypical, perhaps rare attributes or occurrences of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 78). The case study is a bounded system, as Doolan is the only known openly transgender superintendent in the country at the time this study was conducted, and thus, the researcher has identified the case.

The Researcher's Role

A critical component of a qualitative, phenomenological study is that the researcher discloses her bias prior to the study so that "prior beliefs about a phenomenon of interest are temporarily put aside, or bracketed, so as not to interfere with seeing or intuiting the elements or structure of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). Merriam (2009) refers to this process as epoche and bracketing and suggests that prior to interviewing participants, researchers explore their own experiences "in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices,

viewpoints, and assumptions" (p. 25). Researchers then bracket their bias so it does not interfere with the research. Although this is a case study rather than a phenomenological study, the same critical component should be applied in order to keep the researcher's personal cisgender experiences in check so that she considers how her bias may shape the research.

Epoche

For the purposes of this research, it should be noted that the researcher recognizes her own biases as an educator for the last 15 years and as a participant in her own journey to achieve a greater understanding of people whose gender identity is different than her own. The researcher has a deep admiration for people who are open about their gender identity, particularly those whose gender identity is outside of traditional binary gender confines. However, as a cisgender woman, the researcher acknowledges that while she can empathize with a trans person's experiences, she cannot fully understand all things that they endure. Additionally, as a woman who continually strives to compete in a traditionally androcentric field of educational leadership, great care will be taken to not make assumptions about the professional experiences, challenges, or barriers experienced by the participant. The researcher also acknowledges her own biases as a feminist and advocate for women's rights and the rights of marginalized people. Significant steps will be taken to not make assumptions about the views and preferences of the participant.

Permissions

Verbal permission was obtained by Superintendent Doolan. Written permission was also obtained and included in the Appendix. Both verbal and written permissions

discussed the purpose of the research and the researcher's strict adherence to the University of Nebraska's Institutional Review Board approval process.

Institutional Review Board

Permission was sought from the University of Nebraska Lincoln Institutional Review Board (IRB) for expedited review.

Bounding the Study

Site Description

At the time of this study, Superintendent Doolan worked for Peninsula Union School District in Samoa, California. The district served approximately 35 students in grades TK-8 and employed five certified staff members and seven classified staff members (Peninsula Union, n.d.c.). The Board of Trustees consisted of three community members and met monthly. According to the District Profile published by the California Department of Education (2020), 94.3% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. The site was not selected by the researcher but was included in this study as the participant's role as a school leader in this district was significant to the research topic.

Population

As previously mentioned in the research design section, the population that was studied was one openly transgender superintendent/principal in the U.S.A.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the researcher's role as a school leader within a public school district, care was taken not to influence the participant. The participant was outside of the researcher's community and the researcher did not share her title or business card with the participant

but rather only shared that the researcher is a doctoral student and a public school administrator.

Data Collection

A preliminary introduction to Superintendent Doolan, who is open and public about his gender identity, was made via email along with a follow up video conference call due to the researcher's interest in the study. An overview of the process was provided, and permission sought verbally and was verified in writing. Research included the researcher-developed Organizational and Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (OLEI) that was adapted from a prior study (Irby et al., 1999, as cited in Trautman, 2000, p. 88). According to Trautman (2000):

> That study piloted the instrument in a shortened format with 34 feminine leadership characteristics and was validated by an expert group of university professors for face validity. Additionally, to establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted on the revised instrument which was sent out to 30 educational leaders. Results from Chronbach's alpha yielded $\alpha = .9837$ for internal consistency. Reliability results for the entire instrument yielded $\alpha = .928$. (p. 88)

The participant was asked to complete the OLEI prior to a semi-structured open-ended interview with the researcher via video-conferencing. Additionally, there was a qualitative element on the OLEI in which the participant can provide "Further Comments" after the demographic information request. This area asked the respondent to give further comments on his perception of how his work aligns with or differs from the four factors (leadership behaviors, organizational structure, external forces, and one's attitudes, beliefs, and values). Having the option for further comments on the OLEI helps to capture the richness of the respondent's experiences in his own terms. According to

Patton (1987), direct quotations serve as "basic source of raw data that revealed the

respondents' levels of emotion, the way in which they had organized the world, their

thoughts, and basic perceptions" (as cited in Trautman, 2000, p. 89).

Results from the OLEI was utilized with the participant and the researcher as a

part of the interview process. The qualitative instrument employed in this study sought to

answer the following research questions:

1. What are your professional lived experiences as a transgender superintendent?

2. Does the SLT offer a reasonable explanation of how you do your work?

Interview questions were determined after the data collection from the OLEI survey,

similar to explanatory design in a mixed-methods research design, and are listed in

Appendix A. In explanatory design, researchers make decisions regarding what

quantitative results need to be further explored through the qualitative data collection.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggest "the researcher should identify the results that

need further information and use these results to guide the design of the qualitative phase

research questions" (p. 186). After the survey, the researcher reviewed the data and then

added questions informed by the survey for an interview to collect qualitative results. A

similar process was utilized by another researcher in her dissertation involving the OLEI.

Bamberg (2004) examined and analyzed the leadership experiences of five female

superintendents and conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with questions

created through reviewing the OLEI after participants completed the survey.

The interview took place via video-conferencing. Any remaining questions that

emerged were asked in a follow-up interview conducted via telephone or video-

conferencing and are listed in Appendix B. Note-taking occurred throughout the interview to capture non-verbal communication and to make any other key observations during the video-conference. The interviews were voice-recorded so that they could be transcribed and coded for analysis.

In addition to the survey, the researcher mined data from documents and artifacts that were readily available online and included Superintendent Doolan as the main subject. The documents and artifacts allowed the researcher to understand Superintendent Doolan as a person and assisted in the development of the interview questions. The researcher determined the authenticity and accuracy of the documents and artifacts based on a series of questions suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1981) in the chapter on mining data from documents (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 151). Furthermore, the researcher utilized a system for coding and cataloging the documents to aid in the analysis and interpretation stage (Merriam, 2009, p. 152).

There were several documents and artifacts available to the researcher. One artifact was a video available on YouTube titled, *ACSA Speaker Series: Lark Doolan*, which features Superintendent Doolan and explores why he decided to openly transition and how he impacts the students at his school. The It Gets Better Project (2020) produced another video artifact titled, *This Superintendent is Keeping Students Fed During COVID-19 Queer Heroes: Lark Doolan*, and published the video on YouTube in May of 2020. A third video artifact titled *Transgender superintendent has a servant's heart* was produced by ACSA and published on YouTube in July of 2019. Additionally, multiple articles have been published about Superintendent Doolan, including an article published

by the Lost Coast Outpost titled, *Peninsula School Superintendent-Principal Comes Out as Transgender* (Burns, 2017). The Lost Coast Outpost also published a follow-up article about Doolan in May of 2019, titled, *Checking in With Peninsula Superintendent Lark Doolan, the First Openly Transgender Public School Administrator in the Country* (Burns, 2019). Superintend Doolan was also highlighted in an article published in the September 28, 2020, issue of People Magazine (2020) titled, *The It Gets Better Project 10 years Later: I Learned How to Really Liv*e and an article published in the Eureka Times Standard titled, *Samoa school superintendent featured in People magazine* (Schneider, 2020).

Data Analysis

Case study data analysis steps were taken to analyze the data collected from the multiple sources of information, including the OLEI survey, which included the "further comments" section of the OLEI, and the interview, as well as the documents and artifacts collected by the researcher.

The interview (as well as a follow-up interview) was recorded and transcription arrangements were made in advance. All transcripts were kept locked, on a password protected computer and destroyed after two years of completing the dissertation. Notes were taken by the interviewer during the interview to capture observations and non-verbal communication that the audio recording was not able to record. An interview summary was drafted following the interview to capture key points and potential themes.

Upon completion of the interview and the transcription as well as the collection of available documents and artifacts, the researcher completed a holistic analysis of the

entire case. According to Creswell (2013), the data collection allows for a detailed

description of the case to emerge (pp. 100-101). The researcher utilized categorical

aggregation and then "focus[ed] on a few key issues (or analysis of themes), not for

generalizing beyond the case, but for understanding the complexity of the case"

(Creswell, 2013, p. 101). In the final interpretive phase, the researcher developed

naturalistic generalizations and provided readers with a rich description and report of the

meaning of the case, so that, as Creswell (2013) states, "people can learn from the case

either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases" (p. 200).

Verification

The researcher took verification efforts to ensure the accuracy of the findings. The

researcher utilized three validation strategies as described by Creswell (2013): peer

review, clarifying researcher bias, and member checking (pp. 251-252). Peer review

allowed for an external check of the research process and was conducted in conjunction

with the researcher's doctoral advisor. Clarifying researcher bias from the beginning of

the study ensured the reader understands the researcher's position and any biases

(Merriam, 1998, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Member checking, as Creswell

(2013) states, "involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the

participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (p. 252).

Upon summary of the findings, the researcher solicited the participant's view of the

credibility of the findings and interpretations through member checking, which Lincoln

and Guba (1985) consider "the most critical technique for establishing credibility"

(p. 314, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 252). The researcher invited the participant to

examine rough drafts of the researcher's work, such as preliminary analyses. In doing so, the researcher acknowledged her cisgender perspective and asked the participant questions such as, "Did I get it right?" Additionally, the researcher incorporated her doctoral advisor, allowing for triangulation of the analyses and encouraging thought-partnering. Lastly, the researcher checked the transcripts to ensure that mistakes were not made by the third party transcriptionist (Creswell, 2007).

In order to ensure validity, the researcher utilized Creswell's (2013) criteria he suggests for evaluating a strong case study:

- Is there a clear identification of the "case" or "cases" in the study?
- Is the "case" (or are the "cases") used to understand a research issue or used because the "case" has (or "cases" have) intrinsic merit?
- Is there a clear description of the "case"?
- Are themes identified for the "case"?
- Are assertions or generalizations made from the "case" analysis?
- Is the researcher reflexive or self-disclosing about his or her position in the study? (p. 265)

Reporting the Findings

The findings are presented in Chapter 4 and include the participant's results from the OLEI, the participant's comments in the "further comments" section of the OLEI that highlight the participant's experience as a school leader who identifies as transgender, the documents and artifacts analyzed by the researcher, and the significant statements and themes generated from the interview. As this is a descriptive case study, the researcher strove to richly describe the participant's experience so that "the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

Summary

The research methods described in this chapter allow for deeper understanding regarding the extent to which the SLT applies to an educational leader who identifies as transgender. The theoretical framework comprised of the Synergistic Leadership Theory and the literature review provide a foundation for this qualitative, descriptive case study. By perusing the experiences of an educational leader who identifies as transgender, this research facilitates a deeper understanding of the SLT. Verification and validation measures were taken to ensure the essential, invariant structure accurately reflects the participant's experiences. These measures assure readers that the findings are significant.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

This chapter provides the case study of the participant. The first section of the case study presents current demographics of the Peninsula Union School District. The second section includes descriptive data about the participant, Superintendent Doolan. The third section of the case study includes data organized by the four factors of the SLT and addresses the first research question from this study: *What are the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent?* The data include: (a) interviews with the participant; (b) the responses of the OLEI; and (c) the document analysis, which included videos available online, a magazine article published in People, and online newspaper articles. The fourth section discusses how aspects of the four factors of the SLT are evident in the leadership experiences of a transgender superintendent and addresses the second research question from this study: *Does the SLT offer a reasonable explanation of how a transgender superintendent does his work?*

Demographic Information

Peninsula Union School District is a small public school district located on traditional Wiyot land in what is now called Samoa, CA. The school district is located in Northern California in Twahya't (Samoa), on the unceded land of the Wiyot Tribe. According to the district's website, "In Wiyot language, the Humboldt Bay is called Wigi (pronounced Wee-Gee). Our school is located on the western side of Wigi, in the sand dunes between the bay and the ocean" (Peninsula Union, n.d.d). Peninsula Union School

District serves students in transitional-kindergarten through 8th grades in a single school district campus.

The demographics of Peninsula Union School District were gathered from the Data Reporting Office of the California Department of Education (n.d.) and included the following information at the time it was chosen for the study: It was a small, rural district and served 33 students in the 2020-2021 school year. The district had one campus with a student racial/ethnic distribution of 58% White, 18% Two or More Races, 12% Hispanic or Latino, 6% African American, 3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 3% not reported, 0% Asian, 0% Filipino, 0% Pacific Islander (California Department of Education, n.d.). According to Doolan, about 96% of the students live at or below the poverty level (It Gets Better Project, 2020).

Participant in the Study

Lark Doolan is the superintendent and director of special services of the Peninsula Union School District, a small school district in Samoa, California. Doolan is the first openly transgender public-school superintendent in the U.S.A., after coming out to his staff, students and school board in 2017 (Association of California School Administrators, 2019a). Doolan was labeled female at birth and identifies as a trans guy. Doolan's career in education began in 2007 as a Special Education paraprofessional and then Special Education teacher. In 2016, Doolan took a job as a Special Education teacher, principal, and superintendent in Peninsula Union School District. Doolan's role evolved over the years as the district's enrollment increased and the district hired a

special education teacher and then a principal, thus allowing him to focus on the role of superintendent as well as the director of special services.

Doolan grew up in Berkeley, California in a supportive family with three older brothers. In an interview with Ryan Burns (2017) of the *Lost Coast Outpost*, Doolan shared that since he did not fit into traditional, binary gender roles, he sometimes experienced bullying and social policing (para. 6). For example, in an interview with Jason Sheeler (2020) for the September 28 issue of *People Magazine*, Doolan spoke of a severe incident of bullying at school where he was stripped in the bathroom by a group of girls and dragged into a crowded hallway in an effort to teach him how to wear a bra (para. 2). Doolan stated, "I think that those [early experiences] have made me a better educator in that it provides me with a level of nuance and understanding that disenfranchised populations can be targeted in the school community" (Burns, 2017, para 8).

At age 18, Doolan left home for college in Humboldt County. He attended Humboldt State University and fell in love with the area. Burns (2017) reported that Doolan had been searching for his true name for years, even asking every teacher to call him by a different name in seventh grade (para. 10). However, on a road trip with some friends to attend Reggae on the River, he saw a street sign that read, "Lark" and he "just knew it was [his] name" (Burns, 2017, para. 9). He has been known as Lark by his close friends ever since and they have also affirmed his gender by using male pronouns (Burns, 2017, para. 10). Burns (2017) reported,

> 'When people use 'he' pronouns for me I smile,' Doolan said. 'That hasn't changed for me in 10 years.' Gradually he has asked more and more people to

address him that way. 'And as that percentage of people in my life has increased, I've felt increasingly happy and comfortable and confident,' he said. 'And at a certain point, the opportunity to have that everywhere in my life seemed more valuable than whatever obstacles were between me and that." (para. 14)

Doolan decided to transition in 2017 after reflecting deeply on what was right for him. He told Burns (2017), "I decided to go deep and figure out what's right for me. And the moment I made that decision to really look, the answer became really clear to me. I realized that transitioning was something I need to do" (para. 16). Additionally, Doolan believed that sharing his transition was important for his school community. He told Burns (2017) that he wasn't worried about the response, stating,

> Our students at Peninsula School are an incredible, kind, caring, thoughtful group of kids, and I have tremendous confidence in their ability to understand that this is just me being me. The fact that I am transgender is not something to be ashamed of or to hide from the kids. I really believe in treating children with dignity and respect, and to do something like this and not even tell them, to me, would go against the authentic leadership style that I embody. (para. 20)

Doolan shared with Burns (2017) that he views his coming out consistent with the philosophies from which he leads – using restorative practices, ensuring equity in the classroom, and deep respect for one another (paras. 21-22). Doolan said of his transition,

> The things that I value have not changed – wanting students to live authentic, courageous lives that are right for them. This is an opportunity for me to embody that and to give students the opportunity to learn about one of the many ways that diversity exists in our culture. (Burns, 2017, para. 23)

In a video produced by the ACSA, Doolan told the interviewer, "I grew a lot as a person through my transition process. I learned a lot. I'm able to be myself more fully. I'm able to express myself more clearly and that makes me a better educator" (Burnes, 2019).

While Doolan's public transition was mostly well-received by students, staff, and the community, not everyone was open and accepting. The ACSA video reported that

eight students left the school without any explanation the summer after Doolan's

transition; however, 14 new students enrolled that fall (Burns, 2019, para 5). Doolan, who

never regretted his decision to come out, told the interviewer,

> I'm happy to be transgender. The fact that I was raised and socialized to be a woman makes me a better man. I live my authentic truth and I celebrate other people living their authentic truth. For me, being transgender, that's just part of who I am. (Burns, 2019, para 6)

> Doolan identifies as a trans guy. In an interview with the researcher, Doolan

stated,

> I am a trans guy. I use he/him pronouns. I identify as a trans guy, not a trans man. Subtle nuance, but I associate 'man' with a lot of things that I just don't occupy. So 'guy' feels a lot more colloquial. It's just more my style. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

However, he shared with the researcher that he was assigned female at birth and was

"socialized in all of those ways that women are socialized in our society" (Interview,

December 29, 2021). Doolan began his tenure with Peninsula Union School District in

2016 presenting to the public as a woman. Doolan's public transition was carefully

planned and meticulously thought out. Doolan told the researcher,

> For me to authentically identify as being a guy at work, took years of resource building, professional development, skill building, maybe $15,000 in whether it's surgery, or hormones, or travel expenses, or legal consults . . . my transition plan was like a yearlong, very involved fulltime job all by itself. Trying to prepare for each contingency and address things as appropriately as possible so that it could go as well as it could–and it went great–but that was, it took a lot, right? I had to learn how to interact with the press, I had to learn how to cover my bases. I had to learn how to negotiate my contract in a different kind of way and, um, and death threats, right? Like I had to learn how to deal with, um, hostility and hate and violence towards me. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

> In addition to living as his true and authentic self, Doolan hoped to provide

representation for others who were looking to come out as trans in the workplace. When

he began to plan his transition, he was unable to find any other school administrator Pre-

K - 12 who had publicly transitioned or come out as trans at work. Doolan told the

researcher,

> When I wanted to come out as a trans guy, I looked far and wide for anyone in my
> profession, school administrator under the college level, who's ever come out. I
> couldn't find anyone anywhere in the world that I could learn from, draw from.
> So I looked at other fields. . . . It was hard because a lot of the resources for trans
> people coming out are like 'go to your boss' or 'go to the HR' and I'm like, I am
> the boss, and I am HR. And so no, there really was no representation. I had to do a
> lot of, kind of extrapolating from representation that was kind of different. So that
> was a lot of work. It felt like kind of inventing the wheel within my field.
> (Interview, December 29, 2021)

When Doolan began his transition process, he sought legal advice, talked with public

relations professionals, and consulted other resources before coming out. In an interview

with the researcher, Doolan stated,

> I spoke to a lesbian who had come out and shared about her coming out journey,
> which is really different than a trans process. But she was able to give me some
> good tips, like make sure that I get evaluated by my board in writing before I
> come out, so that the high commendations are documented in March when I come
> out in April, so that in May. . .. So she was really helpful in giving me, you know,
> tips like that, that were really useful. And helped set me and my team up for best
> outcomes. But again, it took a lot of extrapolating and trying to figure it out.
> (Interview, December 29, 2021)

> Although Doolan couldn't find school administrators in the Pre-K - 12 setting

who publicly came out as transgender, he believes that he is definitely not the first trans

person to hold the job. Doolan told the researcher,

> I know that I'm not the first superintendent who's trans. I imagine there have been
> trans superintendents ever since superintendents were invented. But when I tried
> to find any evidence of one, to try to get guidance on how to do it, how to
> transition in that role, I found nothing. And so that complete void of
> representation. And we went all the way up to the White House (looking).
> (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Doolan transitioned in 2017, not too long after President Obama had left office. While

planning his transition, he worked with a media specialist who reached out to a woman

who worked in the Department of Education at the White House, and she informed them

that she wasn't aware of anyone under the college level who was out and trans in a school

leadership role. Doolan told the researcher, "There was just like nobody who knew of

anybody that I could access. And I didn't want anyone else to ever have that experience

again. I wanted there to at least be a template of something" (Interview, February 9,

2022).

That is one of the reasons why he decided to do the initial interview with Burns of

the Lost Coast Outpost. Doolan wanted to give others an experience from which to

follow as well as position his announcement in a positive light. Doolan told the

researcher,

> One [reason] was, I live in a small enough town, like there was no way it wasn't
> gonna be news. And so the opportunity to get out ahead of it and control the
> narrative a little was appealing. But also the opportunity to make sure that the
> representation was positive. There's so many depressing stories about trans
> people, and I wanted to make sure that there was positive representation. And that
> I was identifiable, so that people could find me. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Within two weeks of the *Lost Coast Outpost* article, a trans school administrator who was

planning on coming out contacted Doolan and asked him to connect. Doolan provided

that person with some tips that he had found helpful in his own process and that person

utilized some similar strategies, providing the kind of guidance and representation that

Doolan himself could not find. Doolan shared, "And it seemed to work really smoothly

for them, at least in that initial phase when I was contacted by them. So now there, you

know, there were the two" (Interview, February 9, 2022).

Other opportunities for Doolan to provide representation surfaced at the international, national, state, and local levels. In May 2020, Doolan was featured in a video as a Queer Hero through the It Gets Better Project after being nominated by a community member thanks to the work he was doing in the community in the early stages of the pandemic. In a video produced for the It Gets Better Project, Tess Yinger said, "He's showing us how to be out and have courage and bravery in the workplace, and be ourselves without fear or shame, and I think that is huge" (It Gets Better Project, 2020). The video showcases Doolan as he said,

> When I think of my life and the journey I've been on, I know that it would have looked very different if I had had queer heroes as a youth. I want that for today's youth, and tomorrow's youth. I want youth to grow up knowing that whoever they are authentically, in their being, is valuable and that their contributions in the world matter and that they're not alone. (It Gets Better Project, 2020)

Additionally, in the feature article in *People Magazine*, Doolan reflected on the It Gets Better Project and the impact the videos had on his own life while sharing parts of his own story. Doolan told the researcher,

> I did the *People Magazine* article and people were able to see some representation on a national level through [that article]. I did the It Gets Better Campaign: Queer Heroes, and again, that was a way people could have access to representation. I'm not a big fan of being a public figure; it's not my favorite part of what I do. But it's something I do to be of service, because I think it's important. And I think representation saves lives. (Interview, 2022)

At the state-wide level, Doolan is on the committee for the ACSA's administrator conference to be held in May of 2022, the *Lead with Pride Summit*, the first queer-specific conference the association has held.

Doolan strives to provide representation and support at the local level as well. He told the researcher,

Locally, I'm very visible. And we have a variety of trans people working in our school districts now, who I am supporting in a variety of ways. And just, you know, that I exist, you know, and that they know of me, and that when they come out to their boss, their boss is like, 'Oh yeah, Lark is trans. I have a reference point.' I lead a professional learning community for our local 31 school districts. And it's a place where queer people and allies can come and develop more skills to create more inclusive schools. And so that's also a way that, that I'm increasing representation, both through my presence, but also through background supporting these queer people in schools. And supporting them in being supported in their districts. And, you know, when they experience a pushback or whatever, I can be like, 'Do you want me to call your superintendent?' Like, I got his cellphone, right? Like, we meet all the time. And so I have. Because of my role as superintendent, I can connect with their boss's boss when something is going wrong, and help background support for the admin in knowing what to do as well. And so locally, those are some of the things that I've been up to as well. (Interview, 2022)

When Doolan was looking for representation before he transitioned, he not only

struggled to find any predecessors, but he also struggled to find male school

administrators that he might emulate. Doolan told the researcher,

One of the pieces of representation for me as I was transitioning, was looking around for men who are school administrators who I could template from. Even if they weren't trans. Like, okay I know what it's like to be a woman running a school district. Um, I don't know what it's like to be a man running a school district, right? There's a different relational positioning in that. So I looked around. I remember being at a meeting and looking around at 20 guys in my region who run school districts, you know, looking for like, is there any guy here who I could template from, right? Who I can like, be like, oh yeah, I'm gonna be like that. And the answer was no. Um, there was one, and he quit within the month, he was gone. And it was really interesting for me to notice, like, there were so many women in that room who I really admired and respected as school leaders. And of the men in the room, there weren't any that I aspired to resemble in any way really, or (at least) in many ways. And that was really interesting just to notice, like the level of excellence that the women in the field had to reach to become school leaders. And then like, a lot of good old boys who like married someone whose dad was a school administrator and then got hired. Like, it was just really interesting to notice how few men there were in the field, at least at that one meeting, that I could see, you know, representing who I could become in the person I was becoming. (Interview, February 9, 2021)

Organizational Leadership and Effectiveness Inventory

The Synergistic Leadership Theory (SLT) acknowledges leadership behaviors and characteristics that apply to both men and women (Holtkamp, 2001). The SLT includes four interacting factors: (a) leadership behavior, (b) organizational structure, (c) external forces, and (d) beliefs, attitudes, and values. While the SLT was developed with a binary understanding of gender, the question for this study is to what extent can it provide a backdrop for the work of an educational leader whose gender identity does not fit within a gender binary. Doolan completed the Organizational and Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (OLEI), which is divided into six parts around the four factors of the SLT and a demographic section. The researcher developed interview questions after reviewing the responses from the OLEI as well as the artifacts readily available to the public. The researcher then utilized the four interacting factors of the SLT to answer the first research question: *What are the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent?*

Leadership Behaviors

There were 73 items on the Leadership Behavior I section of the OLEI and six items on the Leadership Behavior II section of the OLEI. Table 2 and Table 3 outline Doolan's responses. Doolan answered "Strongly Agree," to 21 items in the Leadership Behaviors sections of the OLEI.

Table 2

Leadership Behaviors I—"To what extent do you agree that the following behaviors

reflect your personal leadership style?"

Inventory Item	Superintendent Response
10 - Leads by example	Strongly Agree
11 - Combines social talk with administrative talk	Agree
12 - Uses affiliative language	Agree
13 - Participative	Agree
14 - Inclusive	Strongly Agree
15 - Nurturing	Strongly Agree
16 - Democratic	Agree
17 - Intuitive	Agree
18 - Ability to "juggle"	Agree
19 - Strong communicator	Strongly Agree
20 - Mentor Persistent	Strongly Agree
21 - Flexible/adaptable	Agree
22 - Life-long learner	Strongly Agree
23 - Community builder	Strongly Agree
24 - Cooperative	Agree
25 - Empathetic	Strongly Agree
26 - High expectations	Strongly Agree
27 - People-oriented	Agree
28 - Compassionate	Strongly Agree
29 - Sense of collegiality	Agree
30 - Team player	Agree
31 - Strong interpersonal skills	Strongly Agree
32 - Consensus builder	Agree
33 - Strong academic self-concept	Agree
34 - Empowers others	Strongly Agree
35 - Networker	Agree
36 - Transformational	Strongly Agree
37 - Motivational	Strongly Agree
38 - Shares a vision	Strongly Agree
39 - "Can do" philosophy (resourceful)	Agree
40 - Persistent	Agree

Inventory Item	Superintendent Response
41 - Dominant (desire to influence others)	Agree
42 - Dependable	Agree
43 - Efficient	Agree
44 - Assertive	Agree
45 - Directive	Agree
46 - Authoritative	Strongly Disagree
47 - Decision maker	Agree
48 - Risk taker	Agree
49 - Task oriented	Agree
50 - Controlling	Disagree
51 - Prefers routine and stability	Disagree
52 - Delegating	Strongly Agree
53 - Change agent	Strongly Agree
54 - Influencer	Agree
55 - Analytical	Disagree
56 - Strong need for power	Strongly Disagree
57 - High energy	Disagree
58 - Achievement oriented	Agree
59 - Emotionally stable	Agree
60 - Self sufficient	Disagree
61 - Resourceful	Agree
62 - Effective time manager	Agree
63 - Tolerant of stress	Agree
64 - Organized	Agree
65 - Persuasive	Agree
66 - Compliant	Strongly Disagree
67 - Tolerance for ambiguity	Agree
68 - Receptive to new ideas/change	Agree
69 - Interactive	Agree
70 - Emotionally expressive	Agree
71 - Alert to social environment	Agree
72 - Impulsive	Agree
73 - Responsive to needs of faculty/staff	Strongly Agree

Table 3

Leadership Behaviors II—To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Inventory Item	Superintendent Response
74 - I am an effective leader.	Strongly Agree
75 - I know what I need to do to improve my leadership.	Strongly Agree
76 - I often reflect on the impact of my leadership.	Strongly Agree
77 - It is easy to get others to see my point of view.	Agree
78 - I am good at finding out what my constituents want.	Agree
79 - My school board shares my vision for the organization.	Agree

Comparisons of the Identified Leadership Behaviors

Table 4 outlines a comparison of Doolan's identified leadership behaviors. The left column lists Doolan's leadership skills identified by the researcher through the interviews and artifacts. The right column lists the corresponding leadership behaviors that Doolan identified as "Strongly Agree" in the OLEI.

Eighteen (18) leadership behaviors were identified for Doolan in the interviews and artifacts. Sixteen (16) of those leadership behaviors were aligned to the 21 leadership behaviors on the OLEI to which Doolan marked "Strongly Agree." Each leadership behavior on the OLEI to which Doolan marked "Strongly Agree" was supported with evidence in the interviews and artifacts.

Doolan's responses to the interview questions revealed several leadership behaviors and characteristics that he embodies and are evident in his lived professional experiences. When asked what leadership behaviors he utilizes to contribute to the success of his school district, Doolan told the researcher he uses management skills and

Table 4

Comparisons of Identified Leadership Behaviors

Interviews and Artifacts	OLEI Leadership Behavior Responses
Models values and beliefs, Empowers others	Leads by example; Motivational; Empowers others
Inclusive; Collaborative goal setting	Inclusive; Community builder
Authentic leader; Relational; Centers on humanity; Considerate of staff well-being	Nurturing; Empathetic; Compassionate
Creates opportunities for staff to develop leadership skills	Mentor Persistent; High expectations
Life-long learner	Life-long learner; I know what I need to do to improve my leadership.
Functional/Management skills	Delegating; Strong communicator; Strong interpersonal skills
Visionary	Shares a vision
Transformative	Transformational; Change agent
Responsive	Responsive to needs of faculty/staff
Confident	I am an effective leader.
Reflective	I often reflect on the impact of my leadership.
Prioritizes learning/professional development	—
Servant leader	—

Note: Two items did not have a match in the OLEI for the leadership behavior.

functional behaviors such as the "nuts and bolts business office stuff" that needs to get

done in order to keep a school district running (Interview, December 29, 2021). One

example he provided is ensuring that attendance is being input, so that they receive their

ADA funding, and other "getting the job done kind of stuff" (Interview, December 29,

2021).

Doolan believes that he began his role as the superintendent and principal at

Peninsula Union School District as an authentic leader, very relational and supportive of

the humanity of himself and his team. Doolan believes the district "values the humanity

of every member of our school community . . . and we believe in the incredible power of

celebrating our differences and building bridges, so that we can be deeply connected and

also beautifully autonomous" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan recognizes that he

is very relational and makes a point to emphasize self-care and having a healthy work

balance. Doolan told the researcher,

> I have a tea setup in my office, and I make my tea during the day to build in self-care. And I encourage teachers to have their own kind of ways to sustain during the day. And, I think that because I embody it and don't just tell people to do it, the teachers have permission to embody it and not just tell the kids to do it. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

Additionally, he is "careful not to email staff on weekends or evenings" and tries to be

strategic about what he asks of his staff and as well as do "capacity checks…and be

honest about [his] own capacity" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan attempts to

center their humanity by "building in wellness to every staff meeting, making sure that

we're not just telling kids to try mindfulness, we're embedding it into our agenda"

(Interview, December 29, 2021).

Doolan utilizes collaborative goal setting with teachers as well as with students, "really involving people and making decisions about their own work and learning" (Interview, December 29, 2021). His background as a Special Education teacher prepared him to ensure that all team members were a part of making a plan and sharing their expertise. He told the researcher,

> So I try to meet with our various community groups, our teachers, our classified staff, our parents, admin, community partners, etcetera, and just including everyone in every stage of processes as much as possible, so that things are collaborative, so people have buy-in. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Doolan shared that he believes in taking the time to collaborate with others around vision. He told the researcher he strives to,

> Really [take] the time to vision together . . . do an inventory of where we really are. Because, you know, it's hard to move forward on a map if you don't know where you're starting. So . . . [we] look at our metrics, to assess where we are, and then talk about what our visions are long term. And then what are the short term things that we need to do in order to move us towards those long term goals. And taking the time to do that with all the groups. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Doolan prefers to start with visioning because "a lot of times, even if we have a lot of disagreements about what to do and how, a lot of times we have a lot in common around our big picture vision" (Interview, February 9, 2022). Doolan said that including people in the goal setting process and visioning has helped dissuade passive or even active resistance, finding "they're less likely to be sticks in the mud . . . or to kinda sandbag things, or say they're gonna go along with it, but then under the surface be like a submarine that's going around after undermining things" (Interview, February 9, 2022).

Doolan is reflective and recognizes his own growth, and he strives to model how he hopes his staff and students behave. He has also supported professional development,

is a life-long learner himself, and one example of this is through his hiring of an equity

coach. Doolan said, "I've grown tremendously through this experience, especially

through getting an equity coach, someone who can challenge me, right, so that I can

model cultural humility" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan believes that his staff

and students have grown from his leadership and modeling. Doolan told the researcher,

> It was incredibly powerful when we were at a staff meeting and I used a term like 'your classroom is your kingdom,' and . . . our equity coach [said] 'let's look at the hierarchical masculine centering language.' And I was able to be like, 'oh, thank you so much for giving me that feedback'. And so I was able to model what it's like to humbly take feedback. I don't know a lot of school districts where superintendents are given those opportunities to learn in a kind way and model what humility looks like. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

After that meeting, Doolan experienced humbly receiving feedback from a teacher in a

classroom with students. He shared that the teacher very respectfully gave him feedback

when he said something that was off and he was able to model receiving feedback

gratefully and really listen and respond in a non-defensive manner. He told the

researcher, "I know so few school administrators who know how to do that themselves,

but even less who have created a culture where teachers feel safe to do that" (Interview,

December 29, 2021).

Doolan is an advocate for high quality professional development and he strives to

be inclusive in this endeavor. He ensures that they include all staff members–bus drivers,

the food services staff, teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators–in their

professional development. He believes that all staff need to get the foundational training

and then have ongoing opportunities to develop and expand their learning to support

growth. Doolan also supports being thoughtful about onboarding new staff members as

well, so that they can maintain their progress. Doolan has established professional

development for his staff on restorative practices, mindfulness, trauma-informed

practices, self-regulation development and equity. Doolan told the researcher,

> From the second year, we learned that a lot of the trauma that kids were
> experiencing in their life was rooted in inequities they were experiencing in the
> world based on poverty, based on racism, based on all these different factors. So
> that's when we brought in the equity piece and got our equity coach who came
> throughout the year. There was a big training at the beginning of the year, a
> refresher for restorative practice, a refresher for mindfulness, a mindfulness coach
> that then came every six weeks, and then our equity person who led the training.
> And when those three pieces came together, that's when we knew we were really
> on to something. That's when our school started to transform, and instruction
> started to shift to being really relevant for our kids. (Interview, December 29,
> 2021)

Seeing the success of the professional development in his own school district has

prompted Doolan to showcase the work and allow others to learn from them. Doolan told

the researcher, "Everything that we do is open source. So we are happy to share

everything we develop around equity in our school district, because that's how we think

it gets better" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan envisions seeding this work

outside of his own district for the betterment of the community and in order to make an

even greater impact. One example Doolan gave of why sharing the equity work is

important is "because if you're in a different school district, you still might be the nurse

at the hospital 20 years from now when I need a nurse who is trans friendly" (Interview,

December 29, 2021).

As a leader, Doolan has worked to create opportunities for his staff to develop

leadership skills. Doolan told the researcher, "I really believe in investing in my people,

and investing in professional development. Helping people move towards their dreams,

even if their dreams aren't working in a school, or working in our school" (Interview, February 9, 2022). Doolan helped a staff member interested in a school garden through finding and sending her to a five-day school garden training program in Sonoma during the summer. Doolan described the staff member as enlivened by the experience and her passion led to a completely revamped school garden. Doolan told the researcher,

> It was like recognizing this is someone who has an interest in something, and finding resources to help them develop that interest in a way that enhances who they are as a professional in our community, but also enhances the quality of their life, and helps them build skills that will take them to wherever the next place is, even if it ends up not being with us. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Another example of Doolan supporting a staff member and her interests that in turn positively impacted the school community was when the after school program coordinator took an interest in creating safe local protests following George Floyd's murder. The staff member, a woman of color, noticed a protest was disorganized and unsafe, especially for people of color. She took on a leadership role and started running the protests. Doolan recognized it as an educational opportunity for students and had students "learn about social justice movements, protesting, and creating their own questions for leaders of protests about what was going on" (Interview, February 9, 2022). Then, a student leader interviewed the staff member and Doolan recorded and published the interview to make it available online and shared it with other schools across their county as a teaching resource. Doolan said,

> I saw a lot of schools that were just ignoring what was happening; kids were seeing and hearing things but there was no context for it. And so I supported that staff member in the work she was doing, and valued the work she was doing in our community, and gave her an opportunity to help our whole county. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Additionally, Doolan strives to give people resume building experiences and his district

created a committee system on their campus to give people opportunities to develop their

leadership skills. He has "gone to the board and advocated for a teacher on special

assignment positions, so that people can follow their passions and develop those

leadership things" (Interview, February 9, 2022). Doolan also started a transformational

leadership superintendent's group that meets once a month to support one another around

equity, trauma informed practices, and restorative practices. Outside of his role as a

superintendent, Doolan is the executive director at Queer Humboldt, a nonprofit group

working towards intersectional queer liberation. Through this work, Doolan presents

professional development and leads ongoing professional learning communities around

queer topics in schools.

Doolan has evolved from an authentic leader to a transformational leader. When

he began his superintendency, he was very relational, focused on "humanity based in

terms of being a human [himself] and supporting the humanity of [his] team" (Interview,

February 9, 2022). However, he recognizes that over the "years of doing the work and the

secondary trauma from various things, and the primary trauma from discrimination [he

has] experienced, [he is] a little more distanced . . . a little less authentic" (Interview,

February 9, 2022). Additionally, his district has experienced a lot of change, including a

steady growth curve, and he said it has been transforming the district. Thus, as the district

needed transformational growth, Doolan gradually shifted in 2018 and became more of a

transformational leader responding to the needs of his students, staff, and community.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, Doolan shifted again to being a servant leader due to the needs of his district. Because over 95% of the district's students qualified for free or reduced cost school meals, Doolan's first thought when they learned the school would be shuttered was around food insecurity. Many families depended on two or three meals a day provided by the school for their students. So Doolan and other staff members worked to deliver food to families in need. Thadeus Greenson (2020) of the North Coast Journal of Politics, People, and Art reported that "the district solicited donations and got $13,000 in funding . . . and launched a daily door-to-door meal delivery service" (para. 8). The entire non-teaching staff was repurposed for the efforts and the district expanded their outreach to not only students' families, but others in the community over 65 or who were immunocompromised; they ended up providing about 150 meals a day, as well as other groceries and household items (Greenson, 2020). Doolan told the reporter,

> There really aren't a lot of institutions on the peninsula, so we saw the potential to use our infrastructure at the school to serve the broader needs of the community. At school, we teach about uplifting people. We talk about using our words and our actions to help our neighbors. This is an opportunity to teach our kids what it means to be in an emergency and what it means to embody those values in the community. (Greenson, 2020, para 12)

Doolan was responsive to his school's needs and put his servant leadership to work for the betterment of the entire community.

Doolan is confident in his abilities as a leader and knows the impact of his leadership and the work of his district. Doolan told the researcher,

> It's an incredible opportunity to make an impact in my community and to be of service. I love working in small school districts because change can happen so fast. I mean, in three years, we've flipped my district and created something that is really unprecedented for a public school district. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

One example of his impact is centered around the future of his students. Doolan stated

that the school is "this incredible opportunity to give our students a reference point for

something very different" because many students' live in what he calls a "company

town" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Their parents work for the company and the

company is their landlord and Doolan recognizes that "the leadership of the company is

overtly racist and bigoted . . . and [the] school district is just this radical other thing"

(Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan told the researcher,

> When I started at the school district, I asked the kids what do you wanna do when you grow up, and they all said I wanna work for the company. And four years later, a couple still want to work for the company, but another wants to be a horse trainer, and another wants to be an actor. And now the world has gotten so much bigger for these kids. And that's very meaningful. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

While Doolan selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to most of the items in the

Leadership Behaviors section of the OLEI, he marked "Strongly Disagree" to three of the

items: (a) Authoritative, (b) Strong need for power, and (c) Compliant. The researcher

asked Doolan to clarify his responses during the follow-up interview and Doolan

provided an explanation of two of his selections. Regarding "Authoritative," Doolan told

the researcher,

> It's not that it never comes in, but it's really not a very sustainable system. The only time I'm likely to use an authoritative approach is if all else failed. Or it is a true emergency . . . otherwise, I don't think it's a healthy tool to lean on. Any time I fall upon seeing an authoritative approach, I reflect afterwards around how I could have avoided getting to that point in the first place. And it's not a sustainable model of leadership. It's alienating, it's hurtful . . . I think it squelches creativity and innovation and honestly, reduces vulnerability and authentic communicating. I really appreciate that staff can come to me and say, 'hey, I'm bipolar, and I'm struggling right now, and this is what I think could help me.' I appreciate that I have staff that come to me and say things like that so I can be mindful of how I can best support them. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Doolan also provided clarification around selecting "Strongly Disagree" for the OLEI item, "Compliant." Doolan indicated that he would select "Disagree" if he had the chance to change it. Doolan stated,

> I was thinking about this one. I would probably change that to Disagree. Obviously being compliant in terms of legal requirements can be really important. You can lose funding if you're not compliant. And we all want to get paid. And so it's really, really important to be compliant in the ways that are required, in the ways that are necessary in order to do basic functionality. I was thinking about compliance in terms of a leadership value, right? For example, I'm not looking for a compliant staff. I'm not looking for a staff that is just going to go and do whatever I tell them to do all of the time. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Instead, Doolan said he wants a staff who is thoughtful and will speak up. He told the researcher,

> Maybe a staff member sees something in a way that I'm not seeing it. And rather than just being compliant and doing what they are told, I want them to share what they saw, because maybe I can learn something too. Maybe what I asked for is being misunderstood. Maybe it's just a communication breakdown, or maybe I'm learning something and changing . . . so I was thinking about compliance more in that context [when selecting Strongly Disagree]. Because obviously . . . we need to turn in our federal funding paperwork in a compliant way so we keep getting our grants. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Organizational Structure

There were 20 items on the Organizational Structure I section of the OLEI and six items on the Organizational Structure II section of the OLEI. Table 5 and Table 6 outline Doolan's responses, respectively. Doolan answered "Strongly Agree" to seven items in the Organizational Structure I section of the OLEI. Doolan identified three items with a three on a likert scale of 0-4 in the Organizational Structure II section of the OLEI.

Table 5

Organizational Structure I

- *Respond to what extent you agree that the following characteristics apply to your organization.*
- *Then, respond to what extent you believe that your supervisor would agree that the following characteristics are important.*

Inventory Item	Superintendent Response
80 (Organization) - Participative decision making	Agree
80.1 (Supervisor) - Participative decision making	Agree
81 (Organization) - System of rotating leadership	Disagree
81.1 (Supervisor) - System of rotating leadership	Disagree
82 (Organization) - Recognizes ability or expertise rather than rank or position	Agree
82.1 (Supervisor) - Recognizes ability or expertise rather than rank or position	Agree
83 (Organization) - Arrives at goals through consensual process	Agree
83.1 (Supervisor) - Arrives at goals through consensual process	Agree
84 (Organization) - Values members as individual human beings	Strongly Agree
84.1 (Supervisor) - Values members as individual human beings	Strongly Agree
85 (Organization) - Commitment to employee growth	Strongly Agree
85.1 (Supervisor) - Commitment to employee growth	Strongly Agree
86 (Organization) - Power sharing	Agree
86.1 (Supervisor) - Power sharing	Agree
87 (Organization) - Promotes community and cooperation	Strongly Agree
87.1 (Supervisor) - Promotes community and cooperation	Strongly Agree
88 (Organization) - Promotes nurturing and caring	Agree
88.1 (Supervisor) - Promotes nurturing and caring	Strongly Agree
89 (Organization) - Promotes subordinate empowerment	Agree
89.1 (Supervisor) - Promotes subordinate empowerment	Agree

Table 6

Organizational Structure II

- *Indicate where you think your organization falls on the following scale:*

90. Formalization				
Few Rules				*Many Written Rules*
0	**1**	2	3	4

91. Specialization				
Overlapping				*Separate tasks/roles*
0	**1**	2	3	4

92. Hierarchy				
Flat hierarchy of authority (few layers of administrators)			*Tall hierarchy of authority (many layers of administrators)*	
0	**1**	2	3	4

93. External Environment				
Unstable (many unpredictable changes)			*Stable (few changes)*	
0	1	**2**	3	4

94. Culture				
Ambiguous norms & values			*Clear norms & values*	
0	1	2	**3**	4

95. Professionalism				
Low professional training			*High professional training*	
0	1	2	**3**	4

96. Goals				
Goals not defined			*Well-defined goals*	
0	1	2	**3**	4

Comparisons of Leadership Behaviors to the Leadership Behavior and Organizational

Structure Responses on the OLEI.

A comparison of leadership behaviors from interviews and artifacts and the

responses of the leadership behaviors section of the OLEI and the responses of the

organizational structure section of the OLEI are listed in Table 7.

Table 7

Comparison of Leadership Behaviors to the Leadership Behavior and Organizational

Structure Responses on the OLEI

Interviews and Artifacts	OLEI Leadership Behaviors	OLEI Organizational Structure Responses
Values the humanity of every member of the school community	Nurturing; Empathetic; Compassionate	84 (Organization) - Values members as individual human beings 84.1 (Supervisor) - Values members as individual human beings
Supportive of individuals' passions and growth; Prioritizes learning/professional development	Responsive to needs of faculty/staff	85 (Organization) - Commitment to employee growth 85.1 (Supervisor) - Commitment to employee growth
Collective leadership; Collaborative goal setting	Inclusive; Community builder	87 (Organization) - Promotes community and cooperation 87.1 (Supervisor) - Promotes community and cooperation
Supportive of self-care; Relational; Considerate of staff well-being	Nurturing; Empathetic; Compassionate	88.1 (Supervisor) - Promotes nurturing and caring

Doolan's responses to the interview questions revealed several leadership behaviors and characteristics connected to organizational structure that he encapsulates and are evident in his lived professional experiences. When Doolan began his tenure as principal/superintendent of Peninsula Union School District, he oversaw a significant shift in the organizational structure of the district. Before Doolan, there was an office manager who served as the hub for the school and a few retired administrators who came in two days a week to serve as superintendent/principal. Doolan told the researcher that there had been a teacher who was mainly in charge five days a week who was handling a lot of things outside of the scope of her role. Additionally, Doolan shared that there were communication issues among the staff and several staff members would not speak to other staff members. Thus, Doolan significantly "disrupted the system" in the best interest of the school when he began and there was "a leader in the office who was willing to do that part of the work" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan described the organizational structure to the researcher:

> Our teachers are the hub of what happens in their classrooms . . . and they have a lot of freedom and autonomy and leadership within their classroom. Collectively, the teachers have a lot of power and leadership in terms of communal spaces, like the cafeteria and recess. They work with the principal to collaborate around what our rules are for the playground and how we're going to address things that are coming up that are bigger than classroom level. Our office manager is focused much more on office stuff now . . . and is still a major hub in terms of ordering supplies and certain things like that. The principal works under my leadership as the superintendent. And I'm doing a lot of the things beyond the site, right? The meetings across the county, anything that's bigger than the site itself. But site daily operations, the principal is the leader of that with the teachers having a lot of leadership in their areas. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

Thus, it is evident through his organizational structure that Doolan employs collective leadership. When Doolan began his role as the superintendent/principal, his vision for a

collaborative and supportive community influenced the organizational structure. He told

the researcher,

> I knew that I wanted everyone to be able to have at least a professional level conversation with everyone. We don't all need to be best friends . . . we do all need to be able to interact with each other in a professional way to get work done, in a way that is kind and respectful . . . that was definitely a part of my vision. That we are a community and work together toward a common goal. We each have our own roles within that, but everyone is equally valued in terms of their contribution. And that's what we've been able to accomplish. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

Within that organizational structure, Doolan exhibits additional leadership

behaviors that are aligned to characteristics from the OLEI. For example, he values the

humanity of every member of the school community, which aligns to the OLEI

Organizational Structure item *Values members as individual human beings*. Additionally,

he is supportive of individuals' passions and growth and prioritizes learning and

professional development. This behavior aligns to the OLEI Organizational Structure

item *Commitment to employee growth*. Lastly, Doolan is supportive of self-care practices

and is considerate of the well-being of his staff, which aligns to the OLEI Organizational

Structure item *Promotes nurturing and caring.*

When Doolan completed the OLEI, his response to one of the items, *Promotes*

nurturing and caring, was different for the organization and a supervisor. Doolan marked

"Agree" for the organization and "Strongly Agree" for the supervisor. When asked about

the different responses, Doolan explained to the researcher,

> I guess I hold leaders to a higher standard than I hold everyone else. Because there is power and authority vetted in that position. And so it becomes more important to embody certain characteristics. And I don't think it's necessarily fair to hold everyone to that standard all the time, but if you're accepting the position

of leadership, that means you're accepting that higher level of responsibility. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

External Forces

External forces are the outside influences on the organization. The leader or the superintendent has no control over external forces but is required to work within their boundaries and influences (Irby et al., 2002). Table 5 in the previous section outlines Doolan's responses to items on the Organizational Structure I section of the OLEI, which are related to external forces that Doolan experiences: school board, union, parents, staff, and media. Table 8 outlines leadership behaviors used with external forces as identified through the interviews and artifacts. The table pairs the leadership behaviors identified by Doolan as "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on the OLEI with the corresponding external forces.

Doolan highlighted different challenges involved in working with external forces that he has encountered through his lived professional experiences. When he first began as the superintendent/principal, the district had a five person board. Doolan worked with the board and community to vote and make the board a three person board, as two of the five members had not been participating consistently. Doolan recognized that he now has "three solid board members and three seats . . . [which] has been really helpful" (Interview, December 29, 2021).

Another challenge was navigating a negative staff and union leadership. Doolan told the researcher that when the union president retired, "a teacher who had a lot of past trauma around school districts being exploitative and problematic became the union

Table 8

Leadership Behaviors Used with External Forces

Leadership Behavior	External Force
Participative decision making Arrives at goals through consensual process Power sharing	School Board, Union, Staff
Recognizes ability or expertise rather than rank or position Values members as individual human beings Commitment to employee growth Promotes nurturing and caring Promotes subordinate empowerment	Staff
Promotes community and cooperation	Staff, Parents, Media
Communicates*	School Board, Union, Parents, Staff, Media

*Item not included on OLEI but identified through interviews and artifacts.

leader" (Interview, December 29, 2021). This was coupled with the hiring of a different

teacher who also had a lot of trauma around being non-reelected and not being respected.

Doolan told the researcher,

> The pandemic hit, and the two of them really went into a trauma spiral together
> . . . and they went down a really dark rabbit hole, that wasn't based on reality . . .
> they created this version of me as a monster . . . and that was very unpleasant.
> And both of them decided to leave, which was fine, but they tried to do as much
> damage as possible on their way out. And that was not nice. It was unpleasant. So
> that was the biggest challenge I think I've experienced in terms of the union.
> (Interview, December 29, 2021)

Doolan went on to describe how he championed pay raises for his staff, as they

were the among the worst paid districts in the county when he started his role. Doolan

said, "I've been very aggressive about reframing our budget, saving money where we

can, and giving raises to staff" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan's district gave

teachers a 10% raise in the 2020-2021 school year. However, the challenge of the two

staff members mentioned above negatively impacted the district, as Doolan shared that

"what they ended up doing was costing the district tens of thousands of dollars in legal

fees that we then couldn't apply to a raise. And that was sad for me because I could see

them hurting themselves" (Interview, December 29, 2021). In the 2021-22 school year,

Doolan hoped to deliver another 10% raise to all district staff, but due to the added costs

related to all of the above, the district and union settled on a 3% raise instead. Doolan

shared that he has "hurt around that and disappointment and sadness" and he recognizes it

as his biggest challenge in all of the years in the district (Interview, December 29, 2021).

Another external force that has presented Doolan with challenges are parents.

Doolan identified there have been ongoing challenges associated with parents in the

school community and transphobia. He told the researcher that he has dealt with a lot of

transphobia from the parent population, although he thinks that parents generally see how

much the school district has done for them and their kids and they are appreciative of

that. However, he told the researcher when something happens that parents don't

appreciate such as their child gets in trouble or something,

> it pivots really fast to transphobic rhetoric like conflating being transgender to being a transgender child molester, who has sex with animals. And it's like anything that happens that they don't like, it . . . can escalate in pretty unpleasant ways very quickly. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

Doolan described the first time he experienced transphobia from a parent when he

read the book *I Am Jazz* to students and a parent became very upset. Doolan read this

book to students prior to when he came out. He told the researcher, "I was testing the

waters, 'cause I knew I was going to be coming out, so I was kind of starting to build the

foundation for language and communication, so that when I came out, there was context

for that to exist" (Interview, February 9, 2022). The parent told Doolan that people like

that are going to hell and that reading that book to students was a violation of religious

freedom since Doolan mentioned trans people in front of his kid. Doolan addressed it as

reasonably as possible, stating,

> I was just very calm, and centered, and clear about why we do it, and what the law is, and [said] no, there isn't a parent opt out for the Fair Act. And I just addressed what he brought up . . . and that situation ended up ultimately resolving, and then when I came out, he pulled his son from the school. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

> Doolan states that after coming out, transphobia was very different. Doolan told

the researcher,

> I haven't had people be like 'you're going to hell' as often . . . the first thing I noticed was a family that immediately jumped to assuming that I must be sexualizing all the children. And that was really alarming. The first time. I mean, I've gotten more used to navigating that now. Because that is where people go. But the first time, that was really upsetting and I called legal and so I just followed legal's advice on how to handle it. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

As Doolan has navigated different experiences with transphobia, he has tried to

remember that it is not really as personal as it seems and he works to address it directly as

it comes up. Doolan told the researcher, "[I] make sure I'm following all the protocols

and procedures . . . and acting in accordance with legal in whatever ways I need to"

(Interview, February 9, 2022). In a situation where a student says something such as 'my

parent says I don't have to listen to anything you say because you're a gender fail,'

Doolan told the researcher he typically responds with the following go-to response:

> You know, some people might believe that, and other people believe that being who you are is important. But regardless of what you choose to believe, or what your parents choose to believe, or what I choose to believe, at this school, we treat everyone with respect and kindness. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Doolan said that a lot of times the way that transphobia shows up is indirectly. For example, parents don't address him directly, but instead they say toxic things to children, and then the children say something like, 'well, my dad says the fact that you live with a man is disgusting, and that you're a pervert and shouldn't be around children.' So Doolan addresses it with the child; he told the researcher he responds with the following:

> Well, your dad can believe that. And other people can believe that love in all of its forms is beautiful. And you're gonna grow up and you're gonna get to choose what you get to believe. But at this school, we treat everyone with kindness and respect. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

> Another common instance that Doolan has had to address is people repeating things because a lot of the pushback and threats are not direct. For example, a parent may say, "Well, I don't have a problem with it, but another parent has a problem with it. They think . . ." and then state things in earshot of others who didn't hear the lead in that the person saying it doesn't think it. Doolan told the researcher,

> What we talk about with that is, when you repeat something, you amplify it with the gift of your voice. And so if someone says something hurtful, hateful, discriminatory, and then you go repeat it around other people who can hear it, you are responsible for everything you said that other people heard. The initial person was responsible for what they said, but you are responsible for what you say . . . we really work on like, okay, if you hear something, you have a choice about what you repeat, where you repeat it, how you repeat it, who hears it, and the impact of that. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Doolan centers impact when addressing things people say because he believes that people hide with intent. For example, if someone says, "Well, I didn't intend to do any harm. I

was just repeating what they said" then Doolan directly addresses the impact. Doolan told

the researcher he would say the following in response:

> We're not talking about your intention right now. We're talking about the impact. The impact that you said these slurs, and these 20 people heard it. Some of whom might be a member of those populations, and now don't feel safe around you, or in their classroom. And that hurts their ability to learn. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

While Doolan has addressed transphobia issues as they have arisen, he told the

researcher that most of what he experiences doesn't tend to be direct. For example, most

people channel their messages through anonymous methods, such as online forums or

anonymous phone calls or voicemails. Doolan said such anonymous messages tend to be

extremely negative and have included threats to drag him out of his office or statements

including, "people like me are equivalent to people who have sex with animals and why

don't we just let pedophiles run our schools" (Interview, February 9, 2022). Thus, he told

the researcher, "mostly what I end up dealing with is the indirect, and so I meet the

indirect with directness" (Interview, February 9, 2022).

One way Doolan was intentionally direct was through his initial transition plan

and his interview that he completed with Burns for the article about his coming out in

2017. Doolan used the opportunity to help him have control of the narrative as he

transitioned publicly. In the article, Burns reported that Doolan planned to respond to

negative reactions through educating others, referring to the "many resources available

for learning and educating ourselves so we can approach these matters from a kind and

compassionate place of understanding rather than fear and ignorance" (Burns, 2017, para

31). Additionally, the article listed numerous links to helpful websites for students, parents, or anyone else who wanted to learn more.

Doolan recognizes his strategies for navigating the challenges around transphobia from external forces. Doolan told the researcher,

> So I handle those challenges through cultivating empathy, through massive amounts of self-care, through being deeply self-reflective, to staying focused on the work and not the drama. By being proactive and hyper-vigilant about avoiding problems whenever possible, and also just being really honest about who I am and who I am not . . . and that I don't have to take things personally that aren't personal. And I just continue to stay focused on the students and serving them as best we can with what we've got. And being ready and willing to show up for repair if others are available for that. And also, like, self-protection, right? Like, I have the sheriff's cellphone number for a reason. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

Philosophical Beliefs and Principles

Attitudes, values, and beliefs are the foundation of principles for an organization and its leaders. Doolan was asked by the researcher to describe the underlying values and beliefs of the school district and how he has been influential to those values and beliefs. In addition to the interviews, Doolan completed the Philosophical Beliefs and Principles section of the OLEI, which included nine items. Table 9 outlines Doolan's responses.

Comparison of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs From Interviews and Artifacts to the Philosophical Beliefs and Principles Responses on the OLEI

Table 10 lists a comparison of answers from the interviews or that were identified in the artifacts with the responses from the Philosophical Beliefs and Principles section of the OLEI that Doolan marked as "Strongly Agree."

Table 9

Philosophical Beliefs and Principles

- *Respond to what extent you believe the following apply to you.*

Inventory Item	Superintendent Response
1 - Emphasis on professional growth	Agree
2 - Openness to change/diversity	Strongly Agree
3 - Adherence to tradition	Strongly Disagree
4 - Emphasis on collegiality	Strongly Disagree
5 - Emphasis on character, ethics, integrity	Strongly Agree
6 - Importance of programs for at-risk students	Strongly Agree
7 - Emphasis on innovation	Agree
8 - Views teachers as leaders	Strongly Agree
9 - Emphasis on reflective practice	Strongly Agree

Table 10

Comparison of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs from interviews and artifacts to the

Philosophical Beliefs and Principles Responses on the OLEI

Interviews and Artifacts	OLEI Philosophical Beliefs and Principles Responses
Celebrates differences and diversity	Openness to change/diversity
Values humanity of every member of school community Being values-aligned Emphasis on hiring people based on values/beliefs/goals	Emphasis on character, ethics, integrity
Personal connections to students Responsible to dismantle inequities in our society Restorative practices	Importance of programs for at-risk students
Collaborative Opportunities for growth High quality professional development	Views teachers as leaders
Mindfulness	Emphasis on reflective practice

Ten attitudes, values, and beliefs were identified for Doolan in the interviews and artifacts and each of those attitudes, values, and beliefs were aligned to the five attitudes, values, and beliefs on the OLEI to which Doolan marked "Strongly Agree." Each philosophical belief and principle on the OLEI to which Doolan marked "Strongly Agree" was supported with evidence in the interviews and artifacts.

Doolan's responses to the interview questions revealed several attitudes, values, and beliefs that are critically important to his lived professional experiences. Doolan places a significant emphasis on ensuring that his values align with where he works. Doolan told the researcher, "Being values-aligned is one of the most important things I look for in any community that I am a part of, especially professionally, but really anywhere I am. If it's not values-aligned, why am I there?" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan's values align with the district's goals and vision. Table 11 portrays the district's Goals and Vision Statement, which can be found on their website (Peninsula Union, n.d.b).

Doolan highly values the humanity of each member of his school community. This is evident in the interview responses and artifacts. Doolan told the researcher, "The humanity of each individual is valued and honored . . . we believe in the incredible power of celebrating our differences and building bridges so that we can be deeply connected and also beautifully autonomous" (Interview, December 29, 2021). In a video produced for the It Gets Better Project (2020), Doolan expressed his belief that all students are worthy, stating, "I want youth to grow up knowing that whoever they are authentically in

Table 11

Peninsula Union School District Goals and Vision Statement

The goal of Peninsula School is to produce citizens who have the capacity to apply knowledge and cultural understanding to new contexts, appreciate beauty and care for the environment.

The Vision of Peninsula School is to help students develop and utilize academic and social skills necessary for effective participation in a democratic society.

It is our goal to help students attain independence, gain skills and see learning as a way to improve their lives.

We have identified positive character traits that include the capacity to care for one's self and others, the ability to work with others, and willingness to take risks.

We aim to provide our students with opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways to our learning community and the extended community as they learn that individuals can make a difference in their world.

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their being is valuable, and that their contributions in the world matter, and that they are not alone." The district's goals and vision statement mirror Doolan's attitudes, values, and beliefs and offer a platform for their daily work to improve students' lives.

Another aspect of how Doolan's attitudes, values and beliefs impact his work is through an emphasis on hiring people based on values, beliefs, and goals. Doolan and his team seek out diverse candidates and are "really proactive about posting our jobs in places where marginalized community members are more likely to see them and access them" (Interview, February 9, 2022). Additionally, Doolan insists on a collaborative hiring process and says his team understands "when we interview someone, they're also interviewing us. We try to interview by committee whenever possible, so that multiple perspectives are represented, and when they have questions for us, they can be asked of a

classified or credentialled staff member" (Interview, February 9, 2022). When it comes to

their beliefs around equity and diversity, Doolan told the researcher,

> We also always include at least two equity questions in our script of what we ask. So, for example, we were hiring a maintenance person last week. And one of our questions is, 'If you hear a student say something hateful, for example, a racial slur, what would you do?' And we ask our equity question of all people who get hired. You could be the cook, you can be a custodian, you can be a teacher, or become an aid. Everyone gets asked our equity questions. And the other one is specifically around LGBTQ topics. For example, 'If a student came out to you as being transgender, how would you respond?' (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Moreover, Doolan shared an example showcasing the impact of asking questions

aligned to the district's values. Doolan stated,

> We interviewed two custodians. One was an older white man and one was a young black man. And, when we asked the [equity] question, at the end of the interview, the black man said, *'I was excited about this job, but because of the way you've approached this interview, and the questions that you asked, I am more enthusiastic than ever, right? I really think this is a place where I could thrive.'* And so we use this opportunity to show this is who we are, and this is what our values are. If you're not down to answer the questions we're asking, then maybe this isn't the right place for you. So it's one of the ways we flag that. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Doolan continued explaining that the two candidates portrayed different values in their

answers and his team was able to glean a significant amount of information from their

answers. Doolan told the researcher,

> With that set of interviews, it was just abundantly clear. One candidate said on the racial slur [question], his response was, *'well, I mean, I'm not the teacher, so I wouldn't do anything with that. I'm certainly not gonna rat out any students.'* And I was like, wow, that's a red flag. That's a big hard stop. And with the other person, his response was . . . *'well, the first thing I would want to do is whoever that's said to, I'd want to make sure that they were taken care of, and any harm that was caused was addressed. So I'd make sure, you know, are you okay? What do you need in this moment? And then I would follow up with the student who said it, and I would ask them do you know what that means, because maybe they'd just never been educated. It's something that they've heard, and they've never been educated. So they have an opportunity to learn and to treat it like a teachable*

> *moment. That being said, if they've said it before and they've already been educated, that's a different thing. And then level three, I'm going to make sure I communicate with the team. Probably the teacher and the office. Just so everyone is aware of what happened. So that's what I would do.*' And I was blown away because this person who's never worked in schools landed those three points. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Thus, Doolan not only had insight into that person's values but also where he would need to begin with supporting that staff member. Doolan stated,

> I learn so much from people's responses to those questions. [If] they say something like, 'I didn't know what to do in that moment, but I'm really down to learn. I want to be there for that kid, I just don't know how,' then I know to proactively provide professional development for that person in the beginning. Whereas, for this individual . . . I'm going to prioritize maintenance skills as his professional development in the beginning because he's already in the adequate range on [equity]. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Incorporating questions in the hiring process aligned to the district's values ensures they find candidates who are a good fit for their team and community.

Doolan told the researcher another question they ask when hiring is, 'What strengths do you bring to working in a diverse workplace where there's a lot of different types of people who you'll be interacting with?' Doolan said that question is "helpful to get a sense of where people's communication skills are, what their level of understanding is in terms of what it means to be a member of a diverse community" and it helps his team know what kind of support that person may need as they begin working in their district (Interview, February 9, 2022). Additionally, he looks for certain qualities in candidates that would help them be well-suited for working in their small yet diverse school community. Doolan shared,

> One of the qualities I'm looking for is humility, and being able to recognize when something is out of their realm and admit it. When someone says, 'you know, I actually don't know how to do that, but I'm willing to learn,' I really like hearing

that. I'm looking for people who recognize that they aren't everything all of the time. Because we're a team. And I'm also looking for people who are teachable, because we all have a lot to learn all the time. And if someone is really closed off and unwilling to learn, sometimes that shows during an interview. And that's not going to work well for our team either. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Thus, Doolan finds it beneficial to emphasize recruiting and hiring staff with similar values, beliefs and goals to further support and enhance the district's goals and vision.

Another area of Doolan's work that reflects his philosophical beliefs and principles is how he has created a culture of acceptance where diversity and differences are celebrated in the school community. Doolan observes indicators of such a culture through feedback from staff whom he has hired. Doolan told the researcher,

When we hire someone who's worked in schools before, after a few weeks there is this look on their face of just complete shock. And they come to me and they're like, 'I never knew it was possible to have a school like this. I've never felt supported in these ways' . . . and that happens really consistently. There are also people who have never worked in schools, who had hard experiences (growing up) in schools. I'm thinking of a Native person I hired years back who had a name that was just definitely Native that their teachers refused to use in their elementary school growing up. And they got teased for having a Native name. And after being in school a few weeks, they're coming to me and expressing all this childhood trauma that was coming up, because now they have a reference point for what's possible, and what we're doing with these kids, and how much they wish they had had that when they were young . . . so the fact that most of our staff have that moment within their first few weeks of working with us definitely is an indicator. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Diversity is not only celebrated, but Doolan strategically incorporates learning opportunities for staff and students on a monthly basis. Their district website illustrates this value:

Every month we choose a new theme, and cover the campus in Equity. Students learn about a diverse range of people who contribute to our amazing world. Our staff engages in ongoing professional development so that we may be effective educators for all our students, and so that our students graduate ready to navigate

our beautiful and diverse world with kindness and agency. (Peninsula Unjion, n.d.a)

Doolan points out the greatest measure of the impact of their work around equity and diversity is through their students. He told the researcher,

The biggest indicator of all is the students and how accepting they are of each other and of diversity. We have monthly assemblies where students teach us what they've learned that month about various equity themes. And those are incredibly moving and inspiring, just to realize the impact that we're having for these kids. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Doolan also demonstrates his philosophical beliefs and principles in his connections with and devotion to the students in his school district. In a video created for the It Gets Better Project (2020), teacher Tess Yinger said, "Lark [Doolan] is easily the most thoughtful administrator that I have ever met. His top priority is always students. When shelter-in-place went into effect, Lark was very proactive about meeting the basic needs of families on the peninsula." Doolan underscores his passion for serving students as well as making personal connections to his students in a video created in June of 2019 by the ACSA highlighting his work as the first openly transgender public school superintendent in the country. In the video, Doolan states, "at a small school, we all have our individual roles, but we're all really beholden to the bigger picture of serving the students" (ACSA, 2019b). Doolan also shares that it is often his job to fill in whenever and wherever as needed, stating, "if we don't get a substitute teacher, I'm in a classroom. Some days I show up and it turns out I'm teaching kindergarten that day. Or our cook is out and I'm serving up breakfast" (ACSA, 2019b). Additionally, Doolan's unique role as the superintendent of a small school district provides him with opportunities for more one-on-one time with students. Doolan states, "I really enjoy the opportunity to have

breakfast with the kids, have lunch with the kids. Have them really know me well and to

get to know them really well" (ACSA, 2019b). Doolan told the researcher, "I really

appreciate that I know my students and they know me. I'm not removed in the way that

larger districts can kind of be isolating for upper management" (Interview, December 29,

2021).

Doolan's devotion to his students and their well-being is also illustrated through

his commitment to teaching them restorative practices. According to the district website,

"Peninsula Union follows a three tiered Restorative Practice system so that students may

learn from their mistakes and build a stronger community through circles" (Peninsula

Union, n.d.a). Doolan and his staff utilize three tiers–Community Building, Community

Repair, and Restorative Conferencing–to shift "[their] school culture from one that's

punishment based to one that [includes] opportunities for growth and relational

development" (Interview, December 29, 2021).

Additionally, Doolan is passionate about removing barriers for students. A

majority of the students in attendance qualify for free or reduced-cost meals and Doolan's

district provides free breakfast and lunch for all students, as well as an evening meal and

snacks for students who attend their after school program. Doolan believes in supporting

students and families in order to deconstruct inequities and create a better world for all,

and he leads his staff in this endeavor. Doolan told the researcher,

> We believe that school systems in our country throughout history have
> perpetuated a lot of harm and reinforced a lot of inequities in our society. And we
> have a responsibility to dismantle that, and build something that sets all of our
> students up to live in a diverse world, and have the skills to be kind, caring
> members of an international community. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

His philosophical beliefs and principles significantly influence his advocacy for his students' education and successful futures.

In addition to students, Doolan's attitudes, values, and beliefs affect his work with teachers, school staff, and other educators. Doolan highly values the staff members on his team and strives to provide them with opportunities for growth and high quality professional development. Doolan expressed that building the leadership capacity of others is a big part of how he leads. He said, "I really believe in investing in my people, and investing in professional development" (Interview, February 9, 2022). As mentioned previously, Doolan includes all staff members in their professional development and strives to provide focused professional development around the three areas their district values most – equity, restorative practices, and mindfulness. In addition to his own staff, Doolan attempts to positively impact the professional growth of other educators. For example, Doolan told the researcher, "I lead a professional learning community for our local 31 school districts. And it's a place where queer people and allies can come and develop more skills to create more inclusive schools" (Interview, February 9, 2022).

The value that Doolan places around collaboration is evident through his work with teachers and also supports his belief that teachers are incredibly important team members. Doolan utilizes collaborative goal setting to ensure that teachers are involved in making decisions about their work. Teachers have autonomy and are leaders in their classrooms and then work collaboratively to establish and maintain schoolwide expectations in communal spaces. Additionally, Doolan prioritizes sending staff to trainings aligned to topics they are passionate about and giving them opportunities to lead

trainings on their campus. For example, one of Doolan's teachers was interested in

technology, so their team "added 10 minutes to all of our staff meetings, which is her

doing a tech talk. So she's being valued for her contribution and getting to build her skills

in professional development and . . . being seen as a leader" (Interview, February 9,

2022).

A final area in which Doolan's philosophical beliefs and principles are evident is

his ability to be mindful and reflective about his work. Doolan believes in the importance

of mindfulness and supports his staff and students in the practice. They promote their

belief in the practice on their district website. The site displays the following:

> On campus we practice mindfulness, gratitude, self regulation, and awareness of
> others. In addition to teaching Common Core aligned academic and critical
> thinking skills, we teach our students to recognize their social and emotional
> needs, as well as a range of skills for meeting those needs effectively and
> responsibly. (Peninsula Union, n.d.a)

Doolan has built wellness into every staff meeting by embedding it into their agendas,

thus ensuring that they aren't just telling students to try mindfulness, but they are actually

practicing it themselves. Also, through his own reflective practice, Doolan has worked to

create a culture where staff members feel safe to share feedback and where cultural

humility is a norm. Additionally, Doolan told the researcher, "I try to be really strategic

about my asks, and do capacity checks with my staff, and be honest about my own

capacity" (Interview, December 29, 2021).

Ultimately, the analysis of the interviews with Doolan as well as other artifacts

showcasing him and his work, affirm that Doolan's belief system significantly impacts

his work as an educational leader and the values and beliefs of his school district. Doolan

told the researcher,

> I think I've been really influential to those values and beliefs. I don't think that's how my school was before I came. I've hired every single person who works there. I've taken 8th graders to China for spring break; I've made a lot of curriculum, generated relationships with our local tribes, worked on bringing in outside speakers, and changing the whole way we go about hiring so that we're not posting in the same places where we get the same applicants, but instead, reaching out to Black Humboldt and reaching out the NAACP, and like, really starting all of our job hunts from a place of reaching out to populations that have less access to the systems that are created that keep things status quo. And by supporting professional development for my staff in these areas. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

While Doolan selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to most of the items in the

Philosophical Beliefs and Principles section of the OLEI, he marked "Strongly Disagree"

to two of the items: (a) Adherence to tradition, and (b) Emphasis on collegiality. The

researcher asked Doolan to clarify his responses during the follow-up interview and

Doolan provided an explanation of his selections. Regarding "Adherence to tradition,"

Doolan told the researcher,

> It's not tradition itself, it's the traditions that our school systems tend to have. So, our school systems have historically been very effective at maintaining class structures that are harmful to different races. Our schools have traditionally been really, really damaging to queer people. Our schools traditionally have included Indian boarding houses. Right? And so, when it comes to tradition in a school district, I think it's important to be very discerning about what the traditions are, where they came from, why they exist, and how relevant they are for the current moment. There might be aspects of them that need to be updated, or other traditions that need to be shifted. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

When Doolan first began working at Peninsula Union School District, the school

held a Santa's Workshop before the winter break. Doolan noticed that some staff had

Christmas trees up and students did art projects and played games around Christmas

themes but no other religion other than Christianity was represented. And Doolan noted

that it was a tradition in the district, but he encouraged the staff to examine what parts of

the tradition were the most important and consider how they could make the tradition

more inclusive. The staff determined that the most important part of the tradition was

providing their students with an opportunity to make items that could be given to their

family members as gifts since many of the students' families did not have resources

outside of school for gift giving. Thus, they shifted the tradition to become a winter fair,

without the religious nuances and still meeting the needs of their students. Doolan told

the researcher, "We created our own tradition that draws on some of those things, but is

non-denominational . . . we celebrate wintertime, with fun games, activities, and art

things . . . we did not adhere to the tradition, we evolved the tradition to be better"

(Interview, February 9, 2022).

Relying on his values and beliefs of equity and valuing all humans, Doolan

believes it is more important to be inclusive and thoughtful than to strictly stick to

tradition. Doolan told the researcher,

> I think traditions can often be coded language for maintaining systems of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy. And so, whose tradition? I think it's just important to be really thoughtful about tradition. Really mindful of what traditions we create, maintain, and bring forward. But like, strict adherence to tradition, I don't think that's helpful, unless the tradition is one of equity and inclusion and belonging. Which isn't the case in most school traditions that I have seen . . . so as we build traditions, update traditions, amend traditions, evolve traditions, we need to really be mindful of everyone and how we make sure that all of our students are able to access this tradition in a meaningful way. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Doolan also provided clarification around the second item for which he selected

"Strongly Disagree" on the OLEI: "Emphasis on collegiality." Doolan told the

researcher, "I think my 'strongly disagree' comes from my experience with other superintendents. The emphasis on collegiality to me references fitting in the box. Not disrupting things. Not naming that something is offensive. Not holding one another accountable, like disrupting the status quo" (Interview, December 29, 2021).

One example of a time when Doolan disrupted the status quo was in a meeting of superintendents where there were about 10 people in the room, and it was half women and half men. Doolan described how he noticed that it was mostly men who were talking during the meeting, and he wanted to address it. Thus, Doolan utilized a website, AreMenTalkingTooMuch.com, to monitor who was talking during the meeting because he said, "I was feeling bothered that men were taking up all the space but I was like, let's check my data, right?" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan's results showed men were talking 95% of the time in that meeting and Doolan decided to share the data with the others in that meeting. He eventually raised his hand to speak and said, "Hey, I know we talk about equity as a group, and I have some data I want to share" and Doolan said the facilitator had a really disproportionate emotional reaction and "freaked out" out on him (Interview, December 29, 2021). The other men in the meeting also showed a lot of defensiveness in the moment and Doolan was accused of not being collegial. And Doolan sees that as a problem. He stated,

> I'm gonna bring it up kindly and gently and thoughtfully and hyper-vigilantly to avoid negative outcomes as much as possible. But like, I'm not just gonna let that slide. And the pressure not to do that is so massive, and the punishment for doing it is so massive, and so for me, I think when I see emphasis on collegiality, I think of that as being kind of pressure to not disrupt the status quo. And different from like, you know, being really committed to a kind, compassionate, human centering work environment. I think of those as being different. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

When asked to describe his relationships with other superintendents, Doolan expressed that there are some superintendents with whom he virtually has no relationship. There are 31 superintendents locally across the county with whom Doolan is connected. Doolan is one of the more longstanding superintendents in their region, as superintendent turnover tends to be high. Doolan said he does not have relationships with well over half of those superintendents and states that it is not for a lack of him being available for it. He told the researcher, "Some have been very clear about having no interest in having a relationship with someone like me. One looks utterly disgusted if I reach out my hand to shake his hand . . . he avoids touching me . . . and I think that is clearly transphobic" (Interview, February 9, 2022). When around those superintendents who Doolan does not have a relationship with, he said most are polite when they have to be. However, he recognizes a difference in how he was treated as a woman superintendent. Doolan told the researcher, "[it] is really distinctly different than my first year, when I presented as a woman and was not noticeably queer, and people were really warm and welcoming. Right? I remember what that felt like. And that was a rather abrupt shift" (Interview, February 9, 2022). And while some superintendents do not welcome Doolan as freely as they used to before he came out as a trans guy, there are several superintendents in his region who do welcome and include him. Doolan spends time with these superintendents at monthly meetings, and end of the year parties, and at each other's houses. Doolan told the researcher,

> I have much better relationships with my local regional group. It tends to be a more open-minded group, it tends to be a more collaborative group; it tends to be a little less misogynistic in my region. And there are a few superintendents in my region who I'm really close to. Like, we're friends. If something's wrong at

school, I can reach out to them. They reach out to me. They are warm relationships. So there are a few of those. And then there are a few what I would consider pretty normal professional type relationships. I would also say that there are times where I seem to be cut out of the loop in ways that are . . . questionable. Haha. But then there are times where . . . because I'm visible and out, and, you know, clearly a champion of equity, intersectionality, not just sexual orientation, or gender, but also race, and religion, and ability, and all these other topics, there are people who specifically are just really proactive about reaching out to me, and who are, you know, kind of extra, you know, inclusive of me because of their own personal reasons or their respect for the work that I'm doing. So it's a bit of a mix. (Interview, February 9, 2022)

Aspects of the Four Factors of the SLT in the Leadership Experiences of a

Transgender Superintendent

This study sought to understand if a leadership theory that was developed with a binary understanding of gender could provide a backdrop for the work of an educational leader whose gender identity does not fit within a gender binary. In this case study, the four factors, leadership behaviors, organizational structure, external forces, and attitudes, values, and beliefs, are interactive. Thus, the researcher is able to answer the second research question: *Does the SLT offer a reasonable explanation of how a transgender superintendent does his work?*

Doolan's leadership experiences reflect an alignment of the four factors of the SLT. Doolan's leadership behaviors aligned to the values and beliefs of the district. Doolan's philosophical beliefs and principles also impacted the organizational structure of the district and influenced the way in which Doolan worked and collaborated with external forces.

Leadership Behaviors

The evidence from the study indicated that Doolan employed a number of leadership practices that are consistent with SLT. Doolan successfully managed the nuts and bolts of the business operations of the school district. Doolan used collaborative goal setting to involve staff and students in important decision making about work and learning. He recognized that he has been an authentic leader who values the humanity of every member of his school community. He also has employed a reflective nature that has allowed him to model cultural humility. Doolan has placed an emphasis on high quality professional development to implement and sustain ongoing learning around the district's core values –restorative practices, mindfulness, and equity. In addition, he created opportunities for staff to develop their leadership skills, investing in his people and their passions in order to better serve the community. Doolan's leadership style shifted from authentic to transformational as the needs of the district changed, and then again to servant leadership when the pandemic hit. However, Doolan's purpose remained the same–to best serve the students of Peninsula Union School District and significantly impact their lives in a meaningful way.

Organizational Structure

When Doolan began working in Peninsula Union School District, he recognized an organizational structure that was disjointed and ineffective. He significantly disrupted the system at the beginning of his tenure in the district. Doolan's vision for a collaborative and supportive community influenced the organizational structure.

Doolan's personal values and beliefs impacted his vision for a better-functioning school system, supporting the alignment of the four factors of the SLT.

Doolan exhibited leadership behaviors aligned to characteristics from the OLEI. He placed significant value on the humanity of every member of the school community, which is aligned to the OLEI Organizational Structure item *Values members as individual human beings*. In addition, he supported individuals' passions and growth and prioritized learning and professional development. This behavior is aligned to the OLEI Organizational Structure item *Commitment to employee growth*. Lastly, Doolan supported self-care practices and took care to consider the well-being of his staff, which is aligned to the OLEI Organizational Structure item *Promotes nurturing and caring.* Thus, the data in the case study indicated that Doolan's organizational structure and leadership behaviors were congruent with characteristics that are consistent with behaviors recognized in the SLT.

External Forces

Superintendents or leaders have no control over the outside influences of an organization but are required to work within the boundaries and power of external forces (Irby et al., 2002). Educational leaders have to know their communities and the external forces that impact the functions and operations of their school district. Doolan was aware of the external forces operating amid the school system – the school board, union, staff, parents, and the media. Doolan strategically executed leadership behaviors that are consistent with behaviors recognized in the SLT when he connected with external forces. Additionally, Doolan's attitudes, values, and beliefs impacted how he behaved and

worked with different external forces, reinforcing the alignment of the four factors of the SLT.

Doolan utilized several leadership behaviors with external forces. He employed participative decision making and shared-consensus techniques with his school board, the union, and his staff. He supported teacher and staff growth and development, valued his team members as individual human beings, and promoted a nurturing and caring environment. He communicated strategically and effectively with all external forces and promoted community and cooperation with his staff, parents, and the media. While some experiences with union leadership were negative, Doolan attempted to work with those staff members in a cordial manner and continued to champion significant pay raises for his staff even as union leaders attacked his character. Doolan relied on his values and beliefs to push through an emotional and difficult situation.

Because he is visible and out as a trans guy, Doolan experienced unique challenges from an external force in working with transphobic parents. Doolan encountered many instances of transphobia from parents and these instances often made a mark on student interactions as well. However, Doolan responded to these experiences with poise and dignity. He adhered to his principles and beliefs and addressed transphobia directly and kindly, centering on impact and opting for creating teachable moments for others. Doolan handled such challenges with external forces "through cultivating empathy, through massive amounts of self-care, through being deeply self-reflective" and staying focused on the work rather than the drama (Interview, December 29, 2021).

Philosophical Beliefs and Principles

Doolan's interview and the artifacts indicated that his leadership experiences have been influenced by his attitudes, values, and beliefs. In turn, he has influenced the overall values and beliefs of the school district, creating a strong alignment. The attitudes, values, and beliefs employed by Doolan and evident in the data that are consistent with the philosophical beliefs and principles recognized in the SLT. Doolan placed significant emphasis on being values-aligned and the district's goals and vision statement mirrored his own ideals. He highly valued the humanity of each member of his school community. He sought to hire people with similar values, beliefs and goals to foster harmony within the community and further support the district's goals. Doolan advocated for and celebrated differences, bridging the district's emphasis on diversity with his passion for equity. He focused district energy and resources on restorative practices, mindfulness, and equity to best meet the needs of the students in Peninsula Union School District. Conclusively, the data affirmed that Doolan's attitudes, values, and beliefs significantly impacted his leadership and work as a superintendent and the values and beliefs of his school district.

As the first known openly transgender public school superintendent in the country, Doolan was a unique participant to utilize in order to determine if the SLT provides a reasonable explanation of how a transgender superintendent does his work. Doolan's leadership experiences reflect an alignment of the four factors of the SLT. His lived professional experiences as an educational leader were influenced by both his own and his district's philosophical beliefs and principles. Additionally, he both influenced

and was influenced by the organizational structure and the external forces. Doolan's lived professional experiences demonstrate a synergistic nature of his work and his community. His leadership behaviors impacted the organization as a whole, impacted individual staff members, and impacted external forces. Thus, the SLT provides a reasonable explanation for how Doolan does his work.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

This qualitative case study investigated the lived professional experiences of a

transgender superintendent and the ways in which he does his job through the lens of the

SLT. The participant in this study was the one known openly transgender superintendent

in the U.S.A., Lark Doolan. In the case study, the data presented were from the

interviews with the participant, responses on the Organizational Leadership and

Effectiveness Inventory (OLEI), and artifacts, which included videos available online, a

magazine article published in *People*, and online newspaper articles. The case study

sought to answer two research questions:

1. What are the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent?

2. Does the SLT offer a reasonable explanation of how a transgender

superintendent does his work?

This chapter presents a summary of the lived professional experiences of a

transgender superintendent organized by the four factors of the SLT (leadership

behaviors, organizational structure, external forces, and philosophical beliefs and

principles) and how aspects of those four factors are evident in the leadership experiences

of a transgender superintendent. This chapter also includes a description of implications

for practice and offers conclusions that can be drawn from the application of the SLT to

the work of a transgender superintendent. Recommendations for further study are also

included, and finally, personal reflections of the impact this study will have on my practice as an educational leader.

Lived Professional Experiences & Evidence of the Four Factors

The lived professional experiences of Doolan offer an example of the how the SLT is a plausible lens through which a transgender leader does his work. Doolan's lived professional experiences reflect interactive factors of the SLT. His leadership behaviors aligned to the values and beliefs of the district. Additionally, Doolan's philosophical beliefs and principles impacted the organizational structure of the district and influenced the way in which Doolan worked and collaborated with external forces.

Leadership Behaviors

The data in the case study indicated that Doolan employed leadership behaviors that fall within the range of behaviors recognized in the SLT. Doolan used strong management skills and collaborative goal setting to lead his staff. He valued the humanity of every member of his school community and modeled cultural humility. Doolan implemented high quality professional development to facilitate learning around the district's core values –restorative practices, mindfulness, and equity. In addition, he invested in his people and their passions in order to better serve the community. Doolan's leadership style shifted from authentic to transformational as the needs of the district changed, and then again to servant leadership when the pandemic hit. Doolan led with purpose: to best serve the students of Peninsula Union School District and significantly impact their lives in a meaningful way.

Organizational Structure

The data in the case study indicated that Doolan's organizational structure and leadership behaviors were congruent with characteristics that fall within the range of behaviors recognized in the SLT. Doolan significantly disrupted the organizational structure of the district when he took over as superintendent. He recognized an organizational structure that was disjointed and ineffective. Doolan's vision for a collaborative and supportive community positively impacted the organizational structure. His personal values and beliefs impacted his vision for a better-functioning school system, supporting the alignment of the four factors of the SLT. Doolan exhibited leadership behaviors aligned to characteristics from the OLEI. He demonstrated alignment to the OLEI Organizational Structure item *Values members as individual human beings* by placing significant value on the humanity of every member of the school community. In addition, he supported individuals' passions and growth and prioritized learning and professional development, which is aligned to the OLEI Organizational Structure item *Commitment to employee growth*. Doolan also demonstrated alignment to the OLEI Organizational Structure item *Promotes nurturing and caring* by supporting self-care practices and considering the well-being of his staff.

External Forces

Doolan strategically executed leadership behaviors that fall within the range of behaviors recognized in the SLT when he connected with external forces. Additionally, Doolan's attitudes, values, and beliefs impacted how he behaved and worked with different external forces, reinforcing the alignment of the four factors of the SLT. Doolan

recognized the external forces impacting his school system – the school board, union, staff, parents, and the media – and he utilized several leadership behaviors with those external forces. He incorporated participative decision making and shared-consensus techniques with his school board, the union, and his staff. He supported teacher and staff growth and development, valued his team members as individual human beings, and promoted a nurturing and caring environment. He strategically and effectively communicated with all external forces and promoted community and cooperation with his staff, parents, and the media. Doolan relied on his values and beliefs to push through an emotional and difficult situation when some union leaders attacked his character and attempted to have him removed from his role as superintendent. He continued to work with those staff members in a cordial manner and championed significant pay raises for his staff. Lastly, Doolan experienced unique challenges from an external force in working with transphobic parents because he is visible and out as a trans guy. He adhered to his principles and beliefs and addressed transphobia directly and kindly, centering on impact and opting for creating teachable moments for others. In order to handle the challenges from external forces, Doolan cultivated empathy, implemented self-care, was deeply self-reflective, and stayed focused on the work.

Philosophical Beliefs and Principles

The attitudes, values, and beliefs employed by Doolan and evident in the data fall within the range of philosophical beliefs and principles recognized in the SLT. The interviews and the artifacts indicated that Doolan's leadership experiences were influenced by his attitudes, values, and beliefs. Additionally, he influenced the overall

values and beliefs of the school district, creating a strong alignment. Doolan placed

significant emphasis on being values-aligned and the district's goals and vision statement

mirrored his own ideals. He placed a high value on the humanity of each member of his

school community and sought to hire people with similar values, beliefs and goals in

order to foster harmony within the community and further support the district's goals. He

focused the district on restorative practices, mindfulness, and equity to best meet the

needs of the students. Doolan also advocated for and celebrated differences, bridging the

district's emphasis on diversity with his passion for equity. Overall, the data affirmed that

Doolan's attitudes, values, and beliefs significantly impacted his leadership and work as a

superintendent as well as the values and beliefs of his school district.

Doolan's lived professional experiences reflect an alignment of the four factors of

the SLT. Doolan is the first known openly transgender public school superintendent in

the country. Thus, the alignment of the four factors determines that the SLT can provide a

reasonable explanation for how he does his work as an educational leader. His lived

professional experiences were influenced by both his own and his district's philosophical

beliefs and principles. In addition, he both influenced and was influenced by the

organizational structure and the external forces. Doolan worked within the synergistic

nature of his community and his leadership behaviors impacted the organization as a

whole, individual staff members, and external forces.

Implications for Practice

When developed by researchers in 1999, the SLT added to the existing theories

for application in leadership study, which is the first purpose of the SLT. The theory

includes traditional bureaucratic components as well as a post-modern perspective, females' leadership experiences, male and female applications, and gender, cultural, and political issues (Irby et al., 2002). This study affirmed that the SLT is a plausible lens through which a transgender leader does his work and affirmed that the SLT is a useful tool for examining leaders and leadership regardless of gender identity. This phenomenon is particularly important as the SLT was developed with a binary understanding of gender. Research cited in Chapter 2 indicated that the only studies of the SLT to date had been conducted with cisgender participants. However, Leonard and Jones (2009) noted, "[the] SLT provides a gender-inclusive theoretical framework for leaders to develop and cultivate effective 21st Century leadership" (p. 28). The Review of Literature also revealed nine previous studies that validated the SLT, yet all nine studies had only included cisgender participants.

Queer Theory, one of seven themes of the Review of Literature, supports including the perspective of an educational leader who identifies as transgender and non-binary/non-conforming in academic research in order to incorporate diverse perspectives. Coloma (2009) affirms, "Queer theorizing is a powerful tool in discourses, movements, and research that embrace and celebrate difference, deviance, and defiance" (pp. 274-275). The Review of Literature suggested that researchers "within and beyond the field of educational leadership . . . [conduct] queered research designs that continuously seek out as their starting points that which is marginal, closeted, or silenced within our theoretical and empirical investments" (O'Malley et al., 2018, pp. 584-585). Additionally, the Review of Literature calls for:

> [Researchers] in qualitative educational studies to genuinely explore and take up the robust epistemological and methodological implications offered by queer(er) questions and conceptualizations, and specifically to do so in relation to topics not initially perceived to be queer. . .. Rather than relegating queer resources to the study of queer subjects and topics, the essays collectively assert that queer resources are appropriate for expanding the qualitative inquiry into educational phenomena that are specifically not associated with the queer. The juxtaposition of queer epistemologies and methodologies, for example, with questions of school improvement, educational segregation, equity, or leadership preparation offer fertile possibilities for understanding beyond our current disciplinary, practical, and policy limitations. (O'Malley et al., 2018, p. 588)

Thus, because it is critical to include perspectives and voices of queer folks in educational research, this study of a transgender educational leader gives voice to a queer person as well as expands and enriches the body of academic work around a leadership theory that has not been associated with gender non-conforming/non-binary persons.

A second purpose of the SLT is to enhance the relevance of current theory in leadership programs (Irby et al., 2002, p. 316). Only one relevant study was found in the Review of Literature that supported LGBTQ identities in educational leadership programs, which shows a significant need for more integration of transgender and non-binary/non-conforming people and topics in preparation programs for educational leaders. O'Malley and Capper (2015) state, "Principal preparation programs in institutions of higher education ought to explicitly recruit, hire, and support faculty who have LGBTIQ-related research agendas in order to respond to the limited LGBTIQ research and knowledge base within the field of educational leadership" (p. 322). This study, which investigated the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent and the ways in which he does his job through the lens of the SLT, has practical application for both current and future leaders. Current superintendents and

principals as well as students in educational leadership programs can apply the SLT to their own leadership experiences to analyze the alignment of the four factors. Educational leadership programs can include study of the SLT as a relevant and sound leadership theory to support students' development and influence their practice. Districts looking to support principal and leadership development can utilize this case study and the SLT to analyze and evolve their leaders' skills and promote alignment among the four factors.

This application by educational leaders and students relates to the third purpose of the SLT, which is to "create a framework for describing interactions and dynamic tensions among leadership behaviors, organizational structures, external forces, and attitudes and beliefs" (Irby et al., 2002, p. 316). Trautman (2000) described the best application of the SLT as an awareness of the potential results of the interrelatedness of the four factors. Applications of the SLT can provide practical, tangible practices for educational leaders through an analysis of the alignment of the four factors in case studies such as those in this case study of a transgender superintendent. Thus, current and future educational leaders can use this case study to help them become more purposeful and deliberate in their actions, and therefore, more successful in their leadership. Both novice and experienced leaders can analyze the four factors of the SLT within the context of their own practice to drive their own work and decision-making.

First, the Organizational Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (OLEI) (Irby et al., 2002) can help leaders to reflect over their own practice. This study's findings indicate that the OLEI caused Doolan to identify and reflect on his own leadership behaviors. For example, Doolan clarified his responses to a leadership behavior on the OLEI,

"Compliant," and he indicated to the researcher that he would change his response from "Strongly Disagree" to "Disagree" after reflecting on the behavior. A leader's awareness of their leadership behaviors can help them be collaborative, empathetic, inclusive, and empowering. Additionally, understanding their leadership behaviors can help an educational leader know their leadership style and effectively communicate the district's vision, particularly if there is disarray among staff. If there would be misalignment among the four factors of the SLT, an educational leader who understands their leadership behaviors could adjust their practice to counteract any negative impact of the misalignment.

Second, educational leaders can use the Philosophical Beliefs and Principles factor of the SLT to determine their alignment to the district's attitudes, values, and beliefs. If the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the leader and the district are aligned, the leader can utilize leadership behaviors that will enhance the alignment and, therefore, experience continued success. Also, they can use vocabulary from the SLT to reference values and determine whether or not people or groups are values-aligned and, consequently, provide themselves with opportunities to proactively address issues before they become a problem. If alignment doesn't exist, the educational leader can concentrate leadership behaviors to bring about alignment.

Third, educational leaders can use the organizational structure more effectively if they understand that it should be aligned to the values of the district and their own leadership behaviors. Thus, the organizational structure factor is practicable to an educational leader to identify the best structures to cultivate alignment among all four

factors in their district. They can use or rearrange existing structures or disrupt ineffective structures and create new structures to meet district goals.

Fourth, educational leaders can use the SLT to reflect on their relationships with external forces. Doolan utilized several leadership behaviors with external forces that impacted his school system and relied on his philosophical beliefs and principles to ensure symbiotic connections as well as to work through difficult challenges caused by some external forces. An educational leader can use the OLEI to identify their philosophical beliefs and principles as well as their leadership behaviors and then can analyze how those factors influence their relationships with external forces. Such analysis can advise them on how to proceed in working with external forces to best create alignment and in turn, positive relationships with others.

This study focused on how the SLT can be a lens through which the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent can be examined. The SLT was developed with a binary understanding of gender, however, it can be applied to leaders whose gender identity does not fit within a gender binary. Good leadership is good leadership, regardless of one's gender identity. The superintendent in this study is the first known openly transgender public school superintendent in the country. Doolan's lived professional experiences reflect an alignment of the four factors of the SLT. Thus, the alignment of the four factors determines that the SLT can provide a reasonable explanation for how he does his work as an educational leader. Doolan's lived professional experiences were influenced by his philosophical beliefs and principles. He both influenced and was influenced by the organizational structure and the external forces

of the district. Doolan worked within the synergistic nature of his community and his leadership behaviors impacted the organization as a whole, impacted individual staff members, and impacted external forces. All four factors were interconnected in Doolan's work as an educational leader, demonstrating that the SLT provides a reasonable explanation for how a transgender superintendent does his work.

In addition to the implications surrounding the SLT, there are significant implications connected to Doolan's lived professional experiences as a transgender superintendent. For example, Doolan experienced relationships with other superintendents in his region who were disrespectful toward, dismissive of, or uncomfortable with him. Doolan attributed the negative interactions and reactions of those superintendents to his gender identity as a trans guy. Doolan discussed that those superintendents treated him differently before he transitioned publicly and when he still presented as a woman. Doolan told the researcher their treatment of him as a trans guy was "really distinctly different in my first year, when I presented as a woman and was not noticeably queer and people were really warm and welcoming" (Interview, February 9, 2022). Additionally, Doolan told the researcher he confronted a group of superintendents about the fact that men were doing most of the speaking in a meeting even though they talk about and promote equity as a group. The negative and emotional responses of the male superintendents point to an underlying disconnect between their public beliefs and their actions. All public school districts that receive federal funding have policies prohibiting discrimination and most incorporate remarks about respect, diversity, inclusion, and equity in their mission statements. Thus, those superintendents present a

dichotomy between their public beliefs of being inclusive and supporting equity and their actions when they treated Doolan so poorly. This implies that some superintendents' beliefs about diversity and equity are surface level and prompts the question: Do the values and beliefs of superintendents around diversity and equity match their leadership behaviors and actions, including the treatment of others? Forward leading educational leaders know and live their values. It is not enough for superintendents to talk the talk– they have to walk the talk. Doolan understands this and he told the researcher, "Being values-aligned is one of the most important things I look for in any community that I am a part of, especially professionally, but really anywhere I am. If it's not values-aligned, why am I there?" (Interview, December 29, 2021). Educational leaders can utilize this study to learn from Doolan's lived professional experiences and strengthen their own connection between their public beliefs and their actions and treatment of others.

Another implication connected to Doolan's lived professional experiences as a transgender superintendent correlates with work that educational leadership programs can do to equip future leaders with skills to truly be inclusive and supportive of others who identify differently than they do. Many educational leadership programs already incorporate coursework around diversity, equity, and inclusion; however, this study highlights the need for the people leading these programs to ask themselves the following question: Does our program teach future leaders how to confront inequities or poor policies and procedures in order to disrupt the status quo? Doolan was very aware of his disposition toward cisgender superintendents. He acknowledged to the researcher that he would address conflict with other superintendents by "[bringing] it up kindly and gently

and thoughtfully and hyper-vigilantly to avoid negative outcomes as much as possible"
(Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan also connected his experience with other
superintendents to fitting inside the box and said that most of those superintendents
would not disrupt the status quo, or point out when something was offensive, or hold one
another accountable (Interview, December 29, 2021). Doolan was an outlier in his
approach to stay true to his values and beliefs and speak out when needed. He was not
afraid to challenge the status quo. Thus, educational leadership programs can learn from
Doolan's experiences presented in this study and enhance their programs with
requirements for their students to learn to confront their own attitudes and dispositions so
that they can control their behaviors. This would help to ensure educational leaders are
equipped to be inclusive, treat others kindly and respectfully, and also to disrupt the
status quo to truly promote equity and diversity.

A third implication that emerges from this study of Doolan's lived professional
experiences as a transgender superintendent is accountability of implementation for the
professional development around diversity and inclusion. Much professional
development around cultural responsiveness and diversity, equity, and inclusion is
already in place throughout public school districts across the country. However, the
superintendents' negative responses to and dismissiveness of Doolan is an example of the
lack of accountability around implementation of such professional development. Who is
responsible for holding educational leaders accountable for ensuring that they actually do
the things they say are important in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion? It is not
enough for school districts, departments of education, or administrator professional

organizations to provide professional development around these topics, but a system of accountability needs to be incorporated to hold leaders accountable to high levels of integrity around the implementation of the practices learned through professional development.

An additional implication that emerges from this study of Doolan's lived professional experiences as a transgender superintendent is the need for tools and resources for school leaders in order for them to openly transition while holding a leadership role or to be out about their gender identity and openly present their gender identity at work. Doolan's experience highlighted that school leaders need a pathway for how to live their authentic truth at work. He had no representation when he decided to plan his transition and come out in the workplace. Doolan told the researcher,

> When I wanted to come out as a trans guy, I looked far and wide for anyone in my profession, school administrator under the college level, who's ever come out. I couldn't find anyone anywhere in the world that I could learn from, draw from . . . I had to do a lot of, kind of extrapolating from representation that was kind of different. So that was a lot of work. It felt like kind of inventing the wheel within my field. (Interview, December 29, 2021)

Doolan told the researcher, "there was just like nobody who knew of anybody that I could access. And I didn't want anyone else to ever have that experience again. I wanted there to at least be a template of something" (Interview, February 9, 2022). Thus, other educational leaders who do not fall within traditional binary gender roles and desire to live their authentic truth can use Doolan's experiences to have a template from which to work. Additionally, school districts should ensure they have genuine policies and procedures in place to protect their employees from discrimination when they do

transition or publicly present their gender identities that fall outside traditional binary gender roles.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the application of the SLT to the work of a transgender superintendent:

1. The case study provided examples of the four factors of the SLT.

2. The superintendent's leadership behaviors were consistent with leadership behaviors that are easily identified in the SLT.

3. The organizational structure of the superintendent's district was aligned to his leadership behaviors and influenced by his philosophical beliefs and principles.

4. The superintendent's leadership behaviors and attitudes, values, and beliefs impacted his relations with external forces.

5. The superintendent's philosophical beliefs and principles were consistent with philosophical beliefs and principles that are easily identified in the SLT.

6. The four interacting factors are aligned, substantiating the superintendent's success as an educational leader.

7. The SLT offers a plausible and useful lens through which leaders and leadership practice can be studied regardless of gender identity.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for future research include the following:

This study was limited to one participant due to the unique nature of the study. The researcher sought to examine the lived professional experiences of a transgender superintendent and the ways in which he does his job through the lens of the SLT. O'Malley et al. (2018) state, "despite an increasing representation of transgender persons in the news media and pop culture, research in the field of education concerning transgender persons remains limited" (p. 587). The sample size was limited to one participant, as at the time of research, there was only one known openly transgender public-school educational leader in the country. Future research could benefit from a larger sample size. This study could be replicated with other transgender educational leaders as the number of these out and visible leaders increases due to Doolan's representation in the field as well as increased acceptance of transgender persons in society.

Additionally, previous studies found the SLT "is cultural transcendent" (Irby et al., 2013, p. 991). However, women were the only marginalized group examined in previous studies. Doolan's illustration of how his understanding of collegiality was divergent from the SLT is an example of why further research is needed around the experiences of gender diverse and other minoritized individuals. Thus, future research examining the application of the SLT could be extended to include educational leaders in marginalized groups, such as members of racial or ethnic minorities; people who are deaf or hard of hearing, have a visual impairment, speech disorder, or a physical disability; or

members of the LGBTQ community, including those who identify as non-binary; or any combination of the above. Additionally, this study illuminated that the SLT does not address a transgender educational leader's experiences navigating genderism and discrimination. Through his lived professional experiences, Doolan had to work through discrimination as well as genderism–the idea that people need to conform to the gender assigned to them at birth. Including more educational leaders from marginalized groups in future research could help to expand the understanding of the SLT as well as create more knowledge of and opportunities for institutionalized mechanisms for representation across gender identities and systems of accountability to address discrimination.

An additional limitation of this study was that the researcher's gender identity differed from the participant's gender identity. As a cisgender woman, the researcher acknowledged that while she can empathize with a trans person's experiences, she cannot fully understand all things that they encounter. O'Malley et al. (2018) state that "transgender/non-binary activists, advocates, and community educators ought to be accepted as pedagogical allies in the work of learning and creating robust inquiry taking up gender transgression in educational contexts" (p. 588). However, future research of queer educational leaders conducted by researchers who identify outside of the gender binary could add credibility to the academic literature.

The review of literature revealed that a gap in the literature exists regarding P-12 education and how dominant norms and hegemonic environments shape transgender leaders. Additionally, the interview with Doolan didn't glean information relevant to dominant norms and hegemonic environments and, therefore, was not included in the

findings. This substantiates the need for further research about how dominant norms and hegemonic environments shape transgender leaders in P-12 education.

One aspect of Doolan's lived professional experiences included representation, or rather, a lack thereof. According to Dr. Kevin Leo Yabut Nadal (2021), "Representation can serve as opportunities for minoritized people to find community support and validation" (para. 5). When Doolan decided to come out as trans in the workplace, he could not find any other public school administrator who had publicly transitioned or come out at work. Doolan planned his public transition to provide others with an experience from which they could follow, as well as to provide positive representation for the trans community. While this study shared his transition experience and presented his work through the lens of the SLT, additional research on the importance of representation for transgender professionals is needed. Similar to educational research around LGBTQ topics, the majority of studies around representation have focused on LGBTQ youth. Thus, future research could be conducted on why representation in the workplace matters for transgender and gender non-conforming adults.

One implication for practice discussed the dichotomy between some superintendents' public beliefs of being inclusive and supporting equity and their actions when they treated Doolan poorly or were dismissive of him because of his gender identity. As stated earlier in this chapter, forward leading educational leaders know and live their values. Simply stating that they believe in diversity, equity, and inclusion is not enough. Educational leaders need to be sure their actions truly demonstrate their beliefs. Thus, further research could be conducted to answer the following question: Are the

enacted behaviors of cisgender male superintendents aligned with their equity policies and procedures?

Included in the findings of this study was a description of Doolan's relationships with other superintendents in his region. While Doolan had strong, positive relationships with several superintendents, he described some negative experiences with others, attributed to his gender identity and his willingness to speak out when needed. Doolan told the researcher, "Some have been very clear about having no interest in having a relationship with someone like me. One looks utterly disgusted if I reach out my hand to shake his hand . . . he avoids touching me . . . and I think that is clearly transphobic" (Interview, February 9, 2022). Additionally, Doolan described a time when he confronted a group of superintendents with data that showed that men in the meeting were doing most of the talking. He told the researcher that the male facilitator had a really disproportionate emotional reaction and "freaked out" on him and he described other male superintendents as defensive and they accused him of not being collegial (Interview, February 9. 2022). The actions and reactions of the male superintendents described above suggest fragile masculinity, which refers to "anxiety felt by men that believe they are falling short of cultural standards of manhood . . . [developed] out of a fear of being seen as feminine or weak, and it's often used against men who are gay or transgender" (Cotec, n.d.). Doolan's experiences with transphobic male superintendents presents a final area for further research: research focused on how fragile masculinity impacts cisgender male superintendents' leadership behaviors. Such research could lead to more inclusive and

accepting cisgender male leaders and establish educational environments that allow all individuals to live their authentic truth.

Personal Reflections for My Practice

My interest in this study began through my exploration of leadership and feminism. When I came across the SLT, I was intrigued by the theory since it was developed with a feminist perspective rather than traditional male-dominate and androcentric qualities. After my interest was piqued, I began wondering if I could connect this theory that was developed with a binary understanding of gender to those whose gender identity fits outside traditional gender norms. Coming across Lark Doolan was a blessing–not only for this research study but for my own growth as a leader.

Listening to Lark talk about his experiences as an educational leader was powerful. It gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own practices and learn from a great leader. Lark is courageous, brave, knowledgeable, kind, intentional, and passionate. He's collaborative and strategic; he's caring and other-oriented; he's visionary and authentic. Lark models having integrity and walking the talk. As I continue to grow and develop as an educational leader, I strive to embody similar attributes and I have identified four key take-aways that I will integrate into or expand upon my own leadership practice.

Being Values-Aligned

Listening to Lark speak about his values and beliefs and then analyzing them in relation to the three other factors of the SLT reinforced the idea that he is living his authentic truth. He was brave and courageous to transition publicly as a trans guy while

holding a leadership role. But he did so because he knew he needed to be his authentic

self. Lark values diversity and embracing differences, and he has created a community

where students as well as staff can be their authentic selves. He has led the district to

engage in equity work, supporting his vision for a community that prepares students to

"navigate a diverse world with kindness and agency" (Peninsula Union, n.d.a). His values

and beliefs have significantly impacted the district that he runs. As a leader, I want to be

values-aligned and will work to ensure that I influence the schools and districts in which I

work in positive ways that promote my core values. Because, as Lark stated, "If it's not

values-aligned, why am I there?" (Interview, December 29, 2021).

Centering on Humanity

Lark understood the power of valuing every member of the school community

and being intentional about fostering an environment where people can learn, teach, and

grow together. As a leader, I will strive to support staff through high-quality learning and

growth opportunities aligned to their passions and to our community's values.

Additionally, I will work to cultivate a culture of well-being and mindfulness so that

students and staff can not only ensure they are taking care of themselves but one another

as well. Centering on humanity will also help me develop strong relationships with all

members of our school community, which will help to positively impact students' lives.

Fostering and Celebrating a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion

In the initial interview, Lark told me he believes "in the incredible power of

celebrating our differences and building bridges so that we can be deeply connected and

also beautifully autonomous" (Interview, December 29, 2021). One way he fosters a

culture of diversity is through hiring practices. Lark shared that they intentionally incorporate at least two equity questions in their interview process. This helps to ensure that they are hiring the right people based on their values, beliefs, and goals. I love the idea of integrating questions on equity and diversity into the interview process, as it reinforces what an organization values. In addition to incorporating equity questions, Lark intentionally posts job openings "in places where marginalized community members are more likely to see them and access them" (Interview, February 9, 2022). I will utilize both of these techniques to bolster the diversity in the communities in which I work. These two strategies will allow me to deepen my ability to advocate for marginalized people.

Changing the Status Quo

Lark's courage may be the thing that I most admire about him. While he transitioned publicly in order to be true to his own self, he also wanted to provide a template for others, because he had practically no representation on his journey. Additionally, he has experienced transphobia and hate from others for simply being himself. And in spite of really hurtful and painful ordeals, he has persevered to create stronger communities and a better world. Although I cannot fully understand Lark's personal experiences, as a leader I can use my positional power to support other people whose identities fall outside traditional binary gender roles as well as other marginalized groups. There is no one method or approach for this–but rather a culmination of utilizing my leadership skills to ensure that I'm constantly working to disrupt the status quo and foster environments of inspiration where all members can live their authentic truth.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What identities, roles, or social locations do you hold? What are your preferred pronouns? How do you prefer your gender identity to be referenced?

2. What does trans, non-binary, or gender non-conforming mean to you?

3. How do you identify today? What did it take for you to authentically identify as yourself?

4. Throughout your journey, have you had representation? What did that look like?

5. Do you believe that public schools/districts set gender norms for leaders in ways that support or inhibit school leaders?

    a. What have your professional experiences been with traditional binary gender roles or expectations?

6. How have dominant norms or hegemonic environments impacted your professional experiences?

7. Describe the underlying values and beliefs of your school district. How have you been influential to those values and beliefs? How have those values and beliefs influenced you?

8. What is your district's mission statement? Were you a part of creating that mission statement? If so, describe how you were involved and the influence that you had. (If you were not involved, do you anticipate any upcoming revisions? Why or why not?)

9. What leadership behaviors do you utilize to contribute to the success of your school district?

10. What decision-making processes do you utilize in your district to improve student learning/achievement?

11. Describe the successes of your school district. How have you sustained success? (If you have areas in need of improvement, how will you achieve success?)

12. Describe your school district's organizational structure. How has the organizational structure of your district changed under your leadership and how did you influence that change? (If it hasn't changed, please describe why not.)

13. What are the greatest challenges that you have experienced when working with the following groups: the school board, the union (if applicable), parents, your staff, and the media? How have you handled those challenges?

14. Describe why you choose to continue to work for your school district.

15. How is your success as a superintendent linked to how well your values and beliefs align to the district's values and beliefs?

16. How is your success as a superintendent linked to how well your leadership behaviors align to the district's values and expectations of you?

17. Please elaborate on the following responses from the survey:

    a. Emphasis on collegiality - strongly disagree

    b. Adherence to tradition - strongly disagree

    c. High energy - disagree

    d. Impulsive - agree

    e. Analytical - disagree

Appendix B

Follow-up Interview Questions

Follow-up Interview Questions

1. Describe your leadership employment history, including titles and roles and your major job responsibilities in each.

2. In a 2017 article for the Lost Coast Outpost, you stated that you embody an authentic leadership style. Do you still embody this style? Please describe your leadership style.

3. How have you built your other staff members' capacities to lead and work?

4. You shared that you use collaborative goal setting as a decision-making process. Describe the collaborative goal-setting process you use. Could you provide an example or examples?

5. Representation was not readily available for you on your professional journey. As a leader, have you intentionally provided representation for others who identify as trans, non-binary, or gender non-conforming, and if so, how?

6. What qualities or attributes do you look for when hiring staff for your school district? Please explain why.

7. How do you know you have created an environment that is accepting of and celebrates differences and diversity?

8. I'm interested in knowing more about your relationships with the other superintendents in your area. How would you describe those relationships?

9. You mentioned that you have had to deal with a lot of transphobia from your parent population. Have you addressed transphobia and if so, how? If not, please explain why not.

10. Please elaborate on the following responses from the survey:

   ○ Adherence to tradition -Strongly disagree

   ○ Authoritative - Strongly disagree

   ○ Compliant - Strongly disagree

   ○ (Organization) - Promotes nurturing and caring - Agree; (Supervisor) -

   Promotes nurturing and caring - Strongly Agree

Appendix C

Organizational and Leadership Effectiveness Inventory

Organizational and Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (Bamberg, 2004)

Please complete the following survey. There are 6 sections to this survey for a total of 100 items (including demographics). Thank you in advance for your time, energy, and thoughts.

Part I Philosophical Beliefs and Principles

Respond to what extent you believe the following apply to you.

1. Emphasis on professional growth
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
2. Openness to change/diversity
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
3. Adherence to tradition
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
4. Emphasis on collegiality
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
5. Emphasis on character, ethics, integrity
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
6. Importance of programs for at-risk students
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

7. Emphasis on innovation
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
8. Views teachers as leaders
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
9. Emphasis on reflective practice
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

Part II Leadership Behaviors I

To what extent do you agree that the following behaviors reflect your personal leadership style?

10. Leads by example
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree
11. Combines social talk with administrative talk
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree
12. Uses affiliative language
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree
13. Participative
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

14. Inclusive
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

15. Nurturing
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

16. Democratic
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

17. Intuitive
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

18. Ability to "juggle"
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

19. Strong communicator
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

20. Mentor Persistent
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

21. Flexible/adaptable
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

22. Life-long learner
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

23. Community builder
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

24. Cooperative
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

25. Empathetic
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

26. High expectations
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

27. People-oriented
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

28. Compassionate
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

29. Sense of collegiality
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

30. Team player
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
31. Strong interpersonal skills
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
32. Consensus builder
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
33. Strong academic self-concept
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
34. Empowers others
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
35. Networker
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
36. Transformational
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
37. Motivational
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

38. Shares a vision
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

39. "Can do" philosophy (resourceful)
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

40. Persistent
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

41. Dominant (desire to influence others)
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

42. Dependable
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

43. Efficient
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

44. Assertive
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

45. Directive
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

46. Authoritative
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

47. Decision maker
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

48. Risk taker
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

49. Task oriented
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

50. Controlling
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

51. Prefers routine and stability
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

52. Delegating
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

53. Change agent
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

54. Influencer
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

55. Analytical
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

56. Strong need for power
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

57. High energy
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

58. Achievement oriented
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

59. Emotionally stable
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

60. Self sufficient
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

61. Resourceful
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

62. Effective time manager
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

63. Tolerant of stress
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

64. Organized
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

65. Persuasive
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

66. Compliant
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

67. Tolerance for ambiguity
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

68. Receptive to new ideas/change
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

69. Interactive
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

70. Emotionally expressive
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

71. Alert to social environment
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

72. Impulsive
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

73. Responsive to needs of faculty/staff
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Part III Leadership Behaviors II

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

74. I am an effective leader.
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

75. I know what I need to do to improve my leadership.
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

76. I often reflect on the impact of my leadership.
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

77. It is easy to get others to see my point of view.
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

78. I am good at finding out what my constituents want.
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

79. My school board shares my vision for the organization.
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Part IV Organizational Structure I

Respond to what extent you agree that the following characteristics apply to your organization.

Then, respond to what extent you believe that your supervisor would agree that the following characteristics are important.

80. (Organization) - Participative decision making
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

80.1 (Supervisor) - Participative decision making
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

81. (Organization) - System of rotating leadership
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

81.1 (Supervisor) - System of rotating leadership
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

82. (Organization) - Recognizes ability or expertise rather than rank or position
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

82.1 (Supervisor) - Recognizes ability or expertise rather than rank or position
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

83. (Organization) - Arrives at goals through consensual process
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

83.1 (Supervisor) - Arrives at goals through consensual process
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

84. (Organization) - Values members as individual human beings
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

84.1 (Supervisor) - Values members as individual human beings
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

85. (Organization) - Commitment to employee growth
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

85.1 (Supervisor) - Commitment to employee growth
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

86. (Organization) - Power sharing
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

86.1 (Supervisor) - Power sharing
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

87. (Organization) - Promotes community and cooperation
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

87.1 (Supervisor) - Promotes community and cooperation
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

88. (Organization) - Promotes nurturing and caring
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

88.1 (Supervisor) - Promotes nurturing and caring
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

89. (Organization) - Promotes subordinate empowerment
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

89.1 (Supervisor) - Promotes subordinate empowerment
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Part V Organizational Structure II

Indicate where you think your organization falls on the following scale:				
90. Formalization				
Few Rules				*Many Written Rules*
0	1	2	3	4
91. Specialization				
Overlapping				*Separate tasks/roles*
0	1	2	3	4
92. Hierarchy				
Flat hierarchy of authority (few layers of administrators)			*Tall hierarchy of authority (many layers of administrators)*	
0	1	2	3	4
93. External Environment				
Unstable (many unpredictable changes)			*Stable (few changes)*	
0	1	2	3	4
94. Culture				
Ambiguous norms & values			*Clear norms & values*	
0	1	2	3	4
95. Professionalism				
Low professional training			*High professional training*	
0	1	2	3	4
96. Goals				
Goals not defined				*Well-defined goals*
0	1	2	3	4

Part VI Demographics

Providing this information is optional.

These data will not be used for a discriminatory purpose.

97. Ethnicity
   ● American Indian and Alaska Native
   ● Asian
   ● Black or African American
   ● Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
   ● Two or more races
   ● White
   ● Prefer not to respond

98. Gender Identity (select all that apply)
   ● Woman
   ● Man
   ● Transgender
   ● Non-binary/non-conforming
   ● Prefer not to respond

99. Years of experience in present position
   ● 1-3
   ● 4-6
   ● 7-9
   ● 10-12
   ● 13-15
   ● 16-18+
   ● Prefer not to respond

100. Please add any additional comments regarding organizational structure, external forces, attitudes and beliefs, and leadership behaviors. You might consider the ways in which you do your work as an educational leader and how it relates to these four factors.

Appendix D

Recruitment Email/Preliminary Introduction

Nebraska UNIVERSITY OF
Lincoln _____

Hello Superintendent/Principal Doolan,

My name is Rachel Bruce and I am a fellow educator currently serving as an assistant principal at a middle school in Council Bluffs, Iowa. I am also a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am passionate about LGBTQ rights and providing students with role models and representation to help them pursue education and career (as well as personal and social) goals in their future. Throughout my 14-year career in education, I have worked with students who identify in many different ways. Last year, a mentee of mine, who is a bi-sexual Latina student, took on an active role in ensuring that her high school offered a bathroom for transgender students as well as working toward making the school a more inclusive environment for students who identify LGBTQ. Her work at 17 inspired me to research educational leadership within the scope of leaders who identify as transgender. To date, little academic research exists and I am looking to expand that body of research.

Thus, my doctoral work and my passion for expanding the scope of role models for my students (and all students) are the reasons for which I am contacting you. I am interested in writing my dissertation on a gender-neutral leadership theory called the Synergistic Leadership Theory through the lens of a transgender educational leader. As an openly transgender superintendent and principal, as well as a staunch advocate for LGBTQ youth, I believe that our connection could make an impact on both the world of academia and public education.

If you would be so inclined to hear a little more about the dissertation study I hope to produce, I would love to speak with you over the phone or face to face via a Zoom meeting. Please let me know if such a conversation would be something you could set aside 10-15 minutes for in the next few weeks.

I look forward to hearing from you and I hope that your school year is off to a great start!
Best regards,
Rachel

Rachel Bruce, M. Ed.
Doctoral Candidate, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Email: rbruce@huskers.unl.edu

Appendix E

Reminder Email/Invitation

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Hello Superintendent/Principal Doolan,

This is a follow-up email from our previous communication (Sept. 2019) seeking your interest in participating in a proposed dissertation study regarding a transgender educational leader and the Synergistic Leadership Theory. As I mentioned previously, I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln conducting research on the experiences of a transgender superintendent through the lens of the Synergistic Leadership Theory.

The purpose of this study is to examine the professional experiences of an educational leader (principal/superintendent) who is transgender through the lens of the Synergistic Leadership Theory (SLT). By utilizing a qualitative descriptive case study, I seek to investigate if the ways in which a transgender educational leader describes his work are consistent with the SLT. Little research exists regarding transgender educational leaders and no research exists that explores transgender people's leadership experiences in connection to the SLT. Thus, an examination of the professional experiences of a transgender educational leader and whether how he describes his work is consistent with the SLT is warranted.

Would you be willing to participate in an online survey regarding your work and practices as an educational leader? You would also be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. The survey will take approx. 30 minutes to complete and you may complete it from your personal computer. The semi-structured interview will last approx. 30-45 minutes via video-conferencing. There are no known risks involved and participation is voluntary.

If you are willing to participate, I will send you more information about this research project including an informed consent form. Do you have any questions about this project? May I send you an informed consent form and a suggested date range for the survey and interview? You may contact me at [phone number] at your convenience for any questions or concerns. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Nick Pace at [phone number]. If you prefer to speak with someone else, call the UNL Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 402-472-6965.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rachel Bruce, M. Ed.
Doctoral Candidate, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Email: rbruce@huskers.unl.edu