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Representations and Impacts of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Ideals in Children's Literature for Young Children

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REPRESENTATIONS AND IMPACTS OF TRANSGENDER AND GENDER
NONCONFORMING IDEALS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE FOR YOUNG
CHILDREN

by

DAVID B. FORESMAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Elementary Education
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Sherron Killingsworth Roberts

ABSTRACT

Children’s literature plays a critical role in shaping how children view themselves and the world around them. This is especially true in regards to outgroups such as the transgender and gender nonconforming communities. Transgender individuals have been gaining increased visibility in the past few years. The misconceptions surrounding these topics are not exclusively found outside the classroom. Title IX was expanded to include gender identity as recently as 2014. Yet, much confusion and apprehension is present when discussing the topic of transgender and gender nonconformity, especially in the elementary school classroom. To address these misconceptions, inclusion of these outgroups into culturally inclusive curriculum is critical. With the power that children’s literature has on empathy, attitudes, and comprehension, classroom libraries should consider including transgender and gender nonconforming titles into teacher resources and classroom libraries. Many positives can come from the power of children’s literature, but there also lies the chance to fall into new and/or unique pitfalls that affect the elementary classroom, such as gender stereotyping. Therefore, this thesis analyzed transgender and gender nonconforming titles for elementary classrooms for trends and themes. 30 titles total were analyzed with 21 being selected to represent the ideals found in transgender and gender nonconforming children’s literature.

DEDICATION

For my daughters, the youngest of which came home crying because she thought she was wearing a “boy’s shirt.”

For my son, who will hopefully grow up in a world more inclusive than my own.

For my professors, who have believed in me from the moment I became their student and have inspired me to do the same for my future students.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The desire for a more inclusive society has been increasing steadily, although not rapidly, alongside the increasing visibility of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals (LGBT). Understanding and acceptance of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community has come a considerable way from the times of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) (1994-2011) in the U.S. military and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) (1996-2013) (H.R. 3396, 1996) (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). Progress is still being made both politically and socially creating an environment that is ever changing and adapting. One group of the LGBT community that is often neglected and still highly misunderstood is the one labeled transgender. Just two years ago, April 29, 2014, the Office for Civil Rights within the Department of Education declared that Title IX, a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on sex, applies to transgender individuals (Margolin, 2014). Florida's Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida (2016) states that teachers should not discriminate on the basis of many different characteristics. Gender identity and gender expression are often not included in the long list of characteristics protected against harassment or discrimination. In fact, North Carolina held a special session in March, 2016 to rush a bill to law that not only targets transgender individuals by forcing them to use bathrooms aligned with their sex at birth, but also prevents local nondiscrimination laws to include gay and transgender people (Kopman, 2016).

Diversity in the classroom is growing more important as classrooms becomes more and more diverse. More preservice teacher education programs are identifying the need for providing diversity instruction. A focus on transgender and gender nonconforming individuals is

often barely covered or overlooked all together. This leaves teachers ill-equipped to handle the unique challenges that may occur with families and students of these individuals. The notion that elementary teachers will never have to encounter transgender and gender nonconforming children lessens the pressure to make them a focus. However, some believe that allowing the concepts of transgender and gender nonconformity during elementary school is important because elementary age children are at an age where their views and attitudes are constantly shifting.

Children's literature has always played a crucial role in how children view themselves and the world around them (Smolkin & Young, 2011). Although the benefit of reading outside school is tremendous, much of a child's exposure to literature is done in the classroom setting with the help of a teacher. Therefore it is crucial to analyze the content of children's literature for use in the classroom and how that content impacts children. There is an abundant amount of research on gender in literature, but very little of that has delved into the realm of transgender representation. Both gender expression and gender identity need to be discussed as the visibility of both transgender and gender nonconforming children increases. With bullying, a shortage of supportive staff, and a lack of understanding being a problem, children's literature allows for a way to address these issues through an increase in empathy and knowledge. Children's literature that features transgender and/or gender nonconforming characters has the capacity to both improve attitudes towards the outgroups, but also the self-image of the individuals reading about them.

The purpose of this thesis was to perform a content analysis of current children's literature for elementary age children that contains a strong transgender and/or a gender nonconforming character. Then, by using the patterns observed from this in-depth analysis, a

series of related lesson plans containing appropriate discussion questions will be constructed and provided. The potential benefit of these materials are highlighted by including studies that show how children's literature positively affects attitudes, empathy, knowledge, and self-image in both teachers and students. The necessity of positively molding these characteristics is shown through the review of related research literature including studies that report the current hostile environment often surrounding transgender and/or gender nonconforming that children have to experience while at school. An analysis of available material is critical as these characters are often lacking in multicultural textbooks, children's literature textbooks, and generally throughout preservice education materials and textbooks. Hesitation to include transgender and gender nonconforming literature in the classroom, especially elementary, stems from a view that young children are too innocent and the concept of transgender is too mature and complex for children to understand. Combine this with teachers and staff who also misunderstanding the intricate relationships among gender, sex, and sexual orientation. Because gender and sex are often incorrectly clumped together with interchangeable definitions, an association between them and sexual orientation are created when that is actually not the case.

The following chapter will provide a strong review of the research literature covering a variety research topics from gender identity, gender expression, and children's literature. These topics tie together my research which is detailed in Chapter Three and Four. Chapter Five will take the results of my research with the analysis of Chapter Two's research literature and discuss trends, research limitations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to perform an effective content analysis of children’s literature for elementary age children that contains a strong transgender and/or a gender nonconforming character, a review of research literature is essential. A review of the research literature on transgender and gender nonconforming individuals highlights the stigma and lack of understanding that surrounds them. This fog is likely thicker when discussing these concepts in the classroom setting, growing thicker the lower the grade of the students being exposed to these concepts. The majority of research focuses on acceptance of transgender and gender nonconforming characters. The hurdle of unsafe environments and negative attitudes must be overcome. Much less research exists in the area of going past the social struggle that these individuals have. The following review of literature concentrates first on important definitions, then on gender stereotypes versus gender stereotype flexibility, current attitudes towards transgender and gender nonconforming individuals, the availability of transgender and gender nonconforming children’s literature, and the possible impact that children’s literature has on children while highlighting the negative view of these individuals and the possible reasons why those views exist.

Answering “What is Transgender and Gender Nonconformity?”

To fully understand what transgender means, the concepts of gender identity and gender expression must be discussed. Gender expression is how we show our gender. This could be shown through adopting traditional masculine or feminine characteristics, such as only girls wear dresses. Gender identity is the gender, boy or girl, which a person identifies with internally. Gender identity, and thus gender expression, is typically imposed on an individual starting at birth. It should be noted that gender is referred to as either boy or girl, while sex is referred to as male or female and is based purely on sexual anatomy. These are two concepts that are

commonly mistaken to be the same. The relationship across gender identity, gender expression, and sex is complex. The relationship among the three are affected by the dominant cultural group's presumption about sex and gender and "that there is an expected 'congruent' relationship between one's sexed body and their gender identity and expression" (Rahilly, 2014, p. 341). This connection between sex and gender strengthens the notion of the gender binary, the view that there are only two genders, because there are only two sexes, male and female. Strict expectations of gender and sex creates the opportunity to transgress from those expectations. It is far easier to transgress from two polar positions than it is from a fluid spectrum of gender and sex. If an individual is born as one sex but feels they align more with the gendered characteristics assigned by society for the other sex, that person could be considered transgender. Transgender should not be confused with transsexual. While transsexuals typically seek genital surgery, transgender individuals usually have little to no intention of pursuing genital surgery (Nagoshi et al., 2014). This is reflected in the book *I am Jazz!* (Author, YR) which tells the true story of Jazz Jennings, a transgender boy who transitioned to a girl at an early age.

A stigma and a cloud of misunderstanding surround the concepts of both gender nonconformity and transgender. Still today, many transgender individuals are diagnosed with gender dysphoria, formerly gender identity disorder, which is a psychological disorder with its own set of symptoms, causes, and treatments. The labeling of nontraditional gender identity as a disorder by psychologists creates a negative connotation. The visibility or presence of transgender individuals, especially children, is difficult to measure. According to Boskey (2014), gender identity is not included in national surveys of the United States. Not many resources are being directed towards identifying people who identify as transgender. This combined with the negative backlash or recent laws cause individuals not to express their gender identity and makes

it difficult to accurately know how many people within the United States identify themselves as transgender. No national survey or resources going towards the identification of individuals that express themselves in a nonconforming way (Boskey, 2014). This may change, however, with many celebrities coming out publicly as transgender, gender nonconforming, or both. Caitlyn Jenner, previously known as Bruce Jenner, had her transition publicized, criticized, and celebrated. However, she was already famous for being an Olympic track gold medalist and reality television star. After her transition, she was featured on the cover of *Vanity Fair*, received ESPY's Arthur Ashe Courage Award, and was awarded *Glamour's* Woman of the Year Award (Lee, 2015). The nation's response to *Glamour's* decision made news headlines with many congratulating her and many extremely outraged at the idea. Her choice to announce that she was transgender divided the nation with those who viewed her in ways such as disgusting, weird, and confused and those who viewed her in ways such as inspirational and courageous. Public figures are not necessarily perceived and received in such a way, especially when those figures are male. Jaden Smith, Will Smith's son, was hired to represent Louis Vuitton's women's wear. Of course, Jaden Smith is not the first celebrity to push the boundaries of gender nonconformity, yet society's response to such transgressing from traditional roles is not the same as when done by females. Female celebrities such as Lady Gaga and Madonna were mild in comparison to the public's reaction to a boy wearing a skirt. Even Jaden Smith's dad reportedly had difficulties at first accepting his son wearing a dress (Verhoeven, 2016).

Gender Stereotype and Gender Stereotype Flexibility in Children

Attitudes towards gender expression and identity that fall outside the normative set by society are formed at an early age. According to Banse et al.(2010), by age three, children are already freely distinguishing between male and females while also assigning an association of

gender to objects (e.g. girls play with irons while boys play with trucks). Children are not born with a genetic predisposition to associate objects to one gender or another (Banse et al., 2010). This view on gendered items is a result of outside influences and changes as they interact with those around them. As much as gender stereotypes exist at such an early age, so does gender stereotype flexibility, defined as the ability to challenge and reject social stereotypes. Gender stereotype flexibility increases significantly between the ages of 5 and 11 and starts declining after 12 (Banse et al., 2010). However, society's enforcement of the gender binary works against children's ability to use their heightened gender stereotype flexibility to accept a more fluid concept of gender identity and expression. The idea of boys being all masculine and girls being all feminine are often reinforced by parents, teachers, and even the literature offered for reading at home and in our schools. When these gender role expectations are not only not challenged but are often eagerly accepted, they may strengthen and persist into adulthood. This creates an issue when introducing the concept of transgender into the discussion of gender stereotype knowledge and flexibility. Transgender individuals are still labeled in society as one gender or another within the binary which allows them to exist only within the two fixed gender identity possibilities (Lester, 2014). Little acceptance for any identity or expression lies outside of these two societal norms. Perhaps, allowing individuals to express themselves on a gender spectrum could lead to less individuals identifying themselves as alternative genders aligned with their biological sex.

Current Attitudes Towards Transgender and Gender Nonconforming

The majority of a child's exposure to outside influences occurs in the school setting. Since these outside influences are critical in the shaping of a child's commitment to gender stereotypes, how schools view these stereotypes is an important issue to monitor. According to a

study by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) of K-12 students, 72% of students reported hearing sexist remarks “frequently” and 65% reported derogatory homophobic remarks at school (Kosciw et al., 2008). Both sexist and homophobic comments are an issue with gender nonconforming and transgender individuals. Gender and sex are often associated with a specific sexual orientation, and transgressing from one often causes the perception of transgressing from both. The presence of negative comments and bullying is a reoccurring issue that students, teachers, and administrators have to mitigate. Schools are very aware of the negative effects of harassment and bullying in schools. Various methods have been tried to lessen these effects. These methods, however, do not seem to be achieving the desired results. The study by Kosciw et al. (2008) showed that not only did only 28% of students reported frequent teacher intervention for homophobic remarks, 49% heard sexist remarks and 39% heard homophobic remarks directly from teachers or other school staff. The lack of intervention promotes the idea that these comments are acceptable and comments by the teachers and school staff themselves reinforce that the statements are true.

Sometimes, often, the combination of actions, taken by teachers, school staff, and fellow students creates a hostile environment. Kosciw et al. (2008) surveyed students and found that 51% reported “feeling unsafe in school because of a personal characteristic, such as their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or race/ethnicity.” It is key to note that the feeling of being unsafe was created by not only actual characteristics, but also by perceived characteristics. This shows the impact of associating sexual orientation with gender identity and gender expression.

To reduce the amount of derogatory comments and unlikelihood of intervention, the causes of these issues must be taken into consideration. Multicultural education textbooks exist

for the purpose of preparing teachers and preservice teachers to teach a diverse student population. Jennings and Macgillicray's analysis (2011) states that in many of these multicultural education textbooks, the concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity were either incorrectly defined, blended together, or both. How teachers are prepared to teach transgender and gender nonconforming individuals is affected by many aspects, such as policies and exposure, which varies among the states. Disparities in the level of attention given to teaching about gender identity and expression in the classroom occur even from university to university, and professor to professor, within the same state. Nearly half of teachers in the United States may receive little if any information on sexual orientation and/or LGBT families during their preservice training (Jennings & Sherwin, 2008). In addition to lack of training, teachers also face other challenges in regards to teaching transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. Combining the idea of LGBT individuals within an elementary school setting can cause outrage within a community. Teachers fear that being perceived as either LGBT or as an advocate, often known as an ally, can lead to them becoming a victim of personal attack or violence (Allan et al., 2008). Since transgender is often associated with sexual orientation, advocating for transgender individuals breaks the asexual characteristics society places on children. Misconceptions, lack of training, and fear of backlash all work against the creation of an inclusive and accepting school environment. With all of these factors stacked against teachers, the opportunity to seek professional development through teacher resources is necessary.

Presence of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Literature

Teachers wishing to positively impact their views of, attitudes towards, and treatment of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals and families might turn to literature in the field of multicultural or diversity teaching. Therefore, researchers studied the availability and

accuracy of such material should be examined. One analysis by Smolkin and Young (2011) found that LGBT-related topics in top-selling children's literature textbooks were inconsistent, scattered, sometimes hidden, and even sometimes missing completely. Erasure of LGBT individuals reflects the often dismissive attitudes of society, and do not go unnoticed by LGBT individuals themselves. Publishers, focused on making a profit, influence textbook authors and sometime lead the authors to include LGBT-related topics in the form of stealth inclusions, which is inclusion that is not easily found by looking in a table of contents or index (Smolkin & Young, 2011). Gender nonconformity was not a topic highlighted by this study. However, the lack of representation of gender nonconforming individuals can be inferred from the absence of research on the topic of gender nonconformity inclusion into multicultural textbooks.

Another aspect important to understanding transgender and gender nonconforming individuals is through fictional literature. In 2008, the American Library Association (ALA) created an annual bibliography of notable books, named the *Rainbow Book List* (The Rainbow Book List, n.d.), of books with LGBT content for youngsters between birth and 18 years old. A study by Williams and Deyoe (2015) showed that over the course of five years (2008-2013) only 237 titles made the *Rainbow Book List* with only 12% of books being elementary titles. A greater percentage of elementary books with LGBT content would take advantage of a child's increased stereotype flexibility during that time. However, the small amount of *Rainbow Book List* books at the elementary level is overshadowed by the fact that these books often do not find their ways into the libraries of institutions tasked with teaching future teachers. According to Williams and Deyoe's study (2015), 46.6% of universities with National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation had less than 10 of the 273 *Rainbow Book List* titles within their juvenile literature collection.

The ALA also created an award called the *Stonewall Book Award* (Stonewall Book Awards List, n.d.) in 1986 to recognize books that include gay topics. However, not until 1999 did this award cover the topic of transgender, and not until 2010 that it expanded to also cover books for children and young adults, birth to 18 years old. Books that fight the gender binary and discuss the topic of gender nonconformity have yet to get their own national award. Much has been accomplished in regards to recognition of high quality books that highlight transgender individuals but much can still be done in both the areas of transgender and gender nonconformity. The necessity for credible sources aimed at highlighting children's literature discussing the topics of gender nonconformity and transgender emphasizes the power that children's literature has on children.

The Power of Children's Literature

The availability of children's literature with transgender and gender nonconforming characters becomes increasingly important when one considers the power of reading children's literature. According to research, empathy can be produced by reading stories about individuals belonging to stigmatized groups or outgroups (Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005). Transgender and gender nonconforming characters qualify as an outgroup; thus, reading about them likely promote empathy. According to Johnson's study (2012), transporting readers into the story greatly increases affective empathy for the characters in the story which almost doubled the reader's likelihood to engage in prosocial behavior. The influence reading has on a reader is not only affected by how much the reader is transported into the story but also what characters they can relate to. In Vezalli's study (2015), readers who identified with Voldemort, the main villain, while reading the *Harry Potter* series also were aligned with more negative attitudes toward

outgroups. How readers view groups that are not like them is not the only possible positive impact children's literature has (Smolkin & Young, 2011).

What children read also influences how a child views themselves, their level of comprehension, and their motivation to read. Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd state (2001) that "one primary motivation for reading fiction involves the pleasure that can be taken in relating to characters, their lives, their problems, and their experiences (p. 810)." If this is true, then the shortage of transgender and gender nonconforming children's literature greatly affects the motivation to read in children who can relate to and identify with the characters within the text. Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd continues (2001) by stating "when readers do not encounter characters who are like them, reading is likely to be frustrating rather than pleasurable (p. 810)." The importance of ensuring that reading is pleasurable to students has led to many teachers to use motivation and interest surveys to try and improve a student's ability to read. Having relatable characters in text goes beyond motivation to read. It also affects a child's ability to comprehend what they are reading. Bell and Clark's study (1998) found that although when readers read text that featured characters with whom they shared their cultural background, the ability to recall information was not affected. However, comprehension greatly improved the more the characters in the book mirrored the sociocultural traits of the reader.

The following chapter will provide details regarding the methodology used in my research and will be followed by the findings of the research in Chapter Four. Then, in Chapter Five, the concluding remarks, educational implications, and future research will be addressed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine transgender and gender nonconforming standards present in children's literature for young children. These ideals represent transgender and gender nonconforming individuals and impact both them and those outside the group. This study used a qualitative content analysis that focuses on the themes and main ideas of the selected elementary children's literature (Mayring, 2000). Because the goal was "establishing the existence and frequency of concepts," a conceptual content analysis was selected as the most effective approach (Busch, 2012). Many aspects should be considered when using a conceptual content analysis. These include choosing what concepts, how many concepts to code, and whether to look for the existence or frequency of a concept, and how to distinguish among concepts (Busch, 2012).

Selection of Concepts to be Examined

The purpose of this study is to highlight and assess trends and themes observed in the selected children's literature. As stated earlier, children responded more positively to literature containing characters who reflect the reader's own characteristics (Bell & Clark, 1998). The availability of literature with diverse characters is needed to match the diversity of potential readers. Therefore, the character concepts selected for examination cover a broad view of reader demographics: gender, race, and family status. In addition to annotating trends in character characteristics, more imbedded concepts were selected to be analyzed. An author's word choice impacts the way their story is received. The prevalence of loaded words such as "sissy" was added to the list of concepts being observed. Within the selection of characters and author's word choice is how these two concepts are presented via the story's plot. The final concept that was selected relates to the actions the characters take by observing the protagonist's family and

how they reacted to his or her being either transgender or gender nonconforming. As the researcher read and summarized each book, these concepts were annotated and a category for books containing multiple similar concepts was created. The presence of these concepts in the selected book are detailed in the next chapter under findings.

Selection of the Target Population of Children's Literature

The focus of this study was to examine children's literature appropriate for K-6 students with various reading levels and formats because gender stereotype flexibility, defined earlier as a child's ability to reject gender stereotypes, is highest between the ages 5 and 11 before declining, which are elementary school ages (Banse et al., 2010). The selected children literature books was identified as having a transgender and/or gender nonconforming character. Various resources exist for highlighting children's literature with LGBT content, few focus on transgender and gender nonconforming content. In order to find children's literature that contained the required content, the American Library Association's *Rainbow Book List* was referenced. Since the *Rainbow Book List* covers 2008 to present, children literature experts were consulted for titles published before 2008, with a focus on 2000 to present. Having books dating before 2008 served as a reference point to be able compare how these topics were handled then versus now.

Selection of books started with children's literature that had won either a *LAMBDA Literacy Award* (LAMBDA Literacy, n.d.) or a *Stonewall Book Award*, awards for books that contain LGBT content, and broadened to contain books that had not received awards. These awards are referenced and detailed in Appendix B. Search engines, the Children's Literature Comprehensive Database (CLCD), and reference librarians offered much assistance in the selection of books.

Selection of books then had to be narrowed from the original 30 books to the coded 21 to provide a more accurate insight into how children's literature represents gender nonconforming and transgender ideals. Children's books that represent girls in stereotypical male jobs such as Andrea Beaty's *Rosie Revere, Engineer* or Lane Smith's *Madam President* are impactful in their own way, but do not reflect gender nonconformity or transgender in a sense. Historic fiction that covers gender nonconforming stories such as Shana Corey's *You Forgot Your Skirt*, *Amelia Bloomer!* can be greatly beneficial, but were not included in the final scope of this research in order to focus on what is considered to gender nonconforming currently. *You Forgot Your Skirt*, *Amelia Bloomer!* tells the powerful story of women being able to wear pants, something that is not presently considered gender nonconforming. Gender swap stories provide a good talking point for gender roles with children as in Mary Pope Osborne's *Kate and the Beanstalk* and *Sleeping Bobby* and Babette Cole's *Cinder Prince*, but they typically do not address the topics of gender nonconformity. Strong female characters represent an ideal in children's literature, but do not necessarily represent the gender nonconforming or transgender community (such as Robert Munsch's *Paper Bag Princess* and Babette Cole's *Princess Smarty Pants*). The same is true for male characters who are sensitive or who express a range of emotions other than anger such as in Mem Fox's *Tough Boris*. From a beginning of 30 books (found in Appendix A), this study narrowed to 21 children's books (found in Chapter Four).

The following chapter will display the findings of the analysis of these 21 books while Chapter Five will use these results to examine the trends and themes, limitations of research, opportunities for further research, and the educational implications of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter will provide an in-depth look at the selected books and the presence, or lack of presence, of the selected concepts. An annotated bibliography is provided to detail the selected books beyond the coded concepts. It is important to be aware of the books as a whole before analyzing the individual concepts that exist as a common feature across these books or are uniquely found in certain titles. This is accomplished with the provided side-by-side table of books and the coded concepts they contain (Figure 1).

Selected Books with Summaries

The following annotated bibliography is in order by the sequence in which these books were selected. An alphabetical annotated bibliography of the coded books along with earlier referenced books that were not included can be found in Appendix A. The first book chosen was based on what got me interested into researching this topic in the first place. My journey into researching this topic started when a school wished to read *I am Jazz* (AUTHOR, YR), but was met with strong opposition (Emechebe, 2015). I chose to read the book for myself to see why it was surrounded by controversy. I was expecting parts to allude to sex, and therefore would not be age appropriate, some pushy propaganda, or something similar. *I am Jazz!* contained none of this. It was merely an age appropriate biography of a transgender boy who transitioned to a girl that focused on the child's feelings and acceptance of individuals that are different. After this, my search started with award winning books from notable sources such as the American Library Association (ALA) and the Lambda Literary Foundation. The next books that were selected were to see if these same sorts of topics were present in earlier children's literature. Finally, the selection of books was rounded out with popular and even some touchstone books with earlier

copyright dates in regards to transgender and gender nonconformity concepts. The books selected for analysis are categorized by the order they were selected and annotated below.

Initial Book:

Herthel, J., & Jennings, J. (2014). *I am Jazz!* New York, NY: Dial Books.

Jazz Jennings tells you her story of transitioning from a boy to a girl including her experiences at the doctors, her parents' reaction, and some of her favorite colors and toys. Rainbow List (2015).

Award Winners:

Gino, A. (2015). *George*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

George has an outer appearance as a male but knows herself to be a girl. After being denied a female role in the school play, George starts to express her identity to her closest friend and family. Kirkus Book Award Nominee (2015). Cybils Awards Nominee (2015). Goodreads Choice Awards Nominee (2015). Stonewall Book Awards (2016).

Classics:

DePaola, T. (1979). *Oliver Button is a sissy*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Oliver is called a sissy at school because he doesn't like the things other boys are "supposed to." Bullying gets worse after Oliver's mom sends him to dance school where he learns tap dancing. Oliver is accepted by his classmates after showing off his tap dancing at a school talent show. Laura Ingalls Wilder Winner (2011). IRA-CBC Children's Choice.

Zolotow, C. (1972). *William's doll*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

William wants a doll for a gift which causes him to be teased by other kids and his brother. His father buys him a basketball and train instead, but William keeps asking for a doll. His grandmother eventually buys him a doll, so he can practice being a good father.

Redwood Children's Picturebook Award (1985).

Other Selected Books:

Baldacchino, C. (2014). *Morris Micklewhite and the tangerine dress*. Toronto, CA: Groundwood Books/House of Anansi Press.

Morris likes to wear a tangerine dress because he likes the color and the way it sounds.

This leads to teasing from his classmates when he wears it to school. Morris's confidence eventually leads his classmates to play alongside him when he is wearing his dress.

Stonewall Book Award Honor (2015). Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award Finalist (2015). TD Canadian Children's Literature Award Finalist (2015).

Bergman, S. B. (2012). *Backwards day*. Toronto, CA: Flamingo Rampant.

On a fictional planet called Tenalp, there is a day called Backwards Day. This is

Andrea's favorite day because she gets to live as a boy, which she always wanted to be.

This Backwards Day, she does not change. The next day she wakes up as a boy. He stays that way and his family celebrates.

Bone, J., & Bone, L. (2014). *Not every princess*. Washington, DC: Magination Press.

A young princess wearing a Viking helmet sits in a tree and observes a world where gender is challenged such as mermaids can wear swimming trunks. Accompanied with

the book is a “Note to Parents and Caregivers” about gender expectations and child development written by the authors who are also psychologists.

Bradley, K. B. (2006). *Ballerino Nate*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Nate wants to be a ballerina because he loves to dance. His older brother, Ben, constantly makes fun of him and tells him only girls are ballerinas. Nate becomes sad until he sees a real ballet. Nate gets to talk to a man who likes to dance, and this man tells him of ballerinos.

Carr, J. (2010). *Be who you are*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.

Nick was born a boy but identifies as a girl. Nick’s family is very supportive and reminds him to “Always remember to be who you are.” Nick and his family find other families in similar situations for support.

Davids, S. B. (2015). *Annie's plaid shirt*. Miami, FL: Upswing Press.

Annie loves her plaid shirt so much that she wears it everywhere. Things get complicated when her mom tells her that she has to dress up for a wedding. Annie feels sad that she has to wear a dress. She ends up turning the dress into a tuxedo and everybody goes to the wedding happy.

Ewert, M. (2008). *10,000 dresses*. Salem, OR: Triangle Square.

Bailey, a male boy who identifies as a girl, likes to dream of dresses. During the day, Bailey tries to gain acceptance from her family. Bailey is unsuccessful until she meets Laurel, a girl who likes to design dresses. Lambda Literacy Award Nominee for Transgender (2008), Stonewall Honor Book (2010).

Fierstein, H. (2014). *The sissy duckling*. New York, NY: Little Simon.

Elmer is a boy duck who loves things other boy ducks don't like: baking, castles, puppets. His papa tries to teach him baseball instead of accepting him. After running away, Elmer eventually is accepted after he saves his injured father. Lambda Literacy Award Finalist (2002). Storytelling World Resource Award (2010).

Gruska, D. E. (2007). *The only boy in ballet class*. Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith.

Tucker enjoys ballet and avoids things like football. This causes the kids to pick on Tucker and for his uncle to push him into football. Not until Tucker shows everybody how his ballet skills make him good at football, people finally accept him. Paterson Prize for Books for Young People (2008).

Hoffman, I., & Hoffman, S. (2014). *Jacob's new dress*. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.

Jacob plays dress-up with his friend, Emily. Jacob, wanting to be a princess, wears a dress. Jacob's mother says he can wear dresses but only at home.

Hall, M. (2015). *Red: A crayon's story*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.

A blue crayon goes through life with a red crayon label which causes the crayon to go through challenges relating to its identity. The crayon does not seem to be able to do anything right. After all the other school supplies try to help him, the crayon finally realizes it is a blue crayon when asked to draw an ocean. Soon after, the crayon's confidence and acceptance sky rocket.

Kiernan-Johnson, E. (2012). *Roland Humphrey is wearing a what?* Boulder, CO: Huntley Rahara Press.

A boy likes to dress up in pink, bows, and butterflies. This causes issues at school with some of his female classmates. Roland expresses his concerns with his parents. Roland is finally accepted at school by the other kids and help him stand up to bullies.

Kilodavis, C. (2011). *My princess boy: A mom's story about a young boy who loves to dress up*. New York, NY: Alladin.

A four year old boy enjoys dressing up as a princess and loves the color pink. Both the boy and his brother who plays baseball and soccer are accepted by their parents. Readers' Favorite Book Award (2011). Readers' Favorite Illustration Award (2011).

Newman, L., & Moore, C. (2004). *A fire engine for Ruthie*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.

Ruthie and Nana spend time playing together. During this time, Ruthie keeps wanting to play with the same kind of toys that the neighbor boy Brian has. Her grandmother keeps denying her and pushes her to "girl" toys. Nana eventually decides to not only allow Ruthie to play with Brian and his toys, but Nana also plays along with them.

Pomranz, C. (2014). *Made by Raffi*. London, GBR: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

Raffi is a shy boy who gets teased sometimes. Raffi finds a passion for knitting but is worried that it is too "girly." The kids make fun of Raffi's knitting until he saves the day by knitting a cape for the lead prince to use in a play.

Walton, J. (2016). *Introducing Teddy: A gentle story about gender and friendship*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA Childrens.

Thomas, Errol's teddy bear, is sad one day until he tells Errol that he feels in his heart that he is not a boy teddy a girl teddy. Formerly named, Tilly cleverly turns her bow tie into a head bow and plays happily with Errol and his friend.

Yolen, J., & Stemple, H. E. (2010). *Not all princesses dress in pink*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

This book covers many girls who have interests and dress in a variety of ways. Some of these ways are stereotypically masculine like playing sports or getting dirty.

Selected Books with Coded Concepts

The table below lists all the items I coded while reading, rereading, and analyzing the selected books. These codings are broken down into the following categories: male protagonist, white protagonist, the presence of a negative father figure or an absence of one, books that contain insulting names such as "sissy," whether or not a great act by the protagonist was needed in order to be accepted for who they are, and a special column for books with a negative father figure and white male protagonist (Figure 1). If a book contained any of the coded concepts, it was annotated in a running record that was later consolidated.

	Coded Concepts					
Book	Male Protagonist	White Protagonist	Negative/Absent Male Figure	“Sissy” and Like Terms	Great Deed Needed	White/Male/Negative Dad
<i>10,000 dresses</i> (2008)	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
<i>A fire engine for Ruthie</i> (2004)	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
<i>Annie’s plaid shirt</i> (2015)	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
<i>Backwards day</i> (2012)	NO	N/A	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>Ballerino Nate</i> (2006)	YES	N/A	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>Be who you are</i> (2010)	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>George</i> (2015)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>I am Jazz!</i> (2014)	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>Introducing Teddy</i> (2016)	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
<i>Jacob’s new dress</i> (2014)	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
<i>Made by Raffi</i> (2014)	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
<i>Morris Micklewhite and the tangerine dress</i> (2014)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>My princess boy</i> (2011)	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>Not all princesses dress in pink</i> (2010)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>Not every princess</i> (2014)	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO

Book	Coded Concepts					
	Male Protagonist	White Protagonist	Negative/Absent Male Figure	“Sissy” and Like Terms	Great Deed Needed	White/Male/Negative Dad
<i>Oliver Button is a sissy</i> (1979)	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
<i>Red: A crayon’s story</i> (2015)	YES	N/A	YES	NO	YES	NO
<i>Roland Humphrey is wearing a what?</i> (2012)	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>The only boy in ballet class</i> (2007)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>The sissy duckling</i> (2014)	YES	N/A	YES	YES	YES	NO
<i>William’s doll</i> (1972)	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES

Figure 1

Figure 1: Selected books with coded concepts

Coded Concept Analysis and Findings

In Figure 1, the shaded cells are the areas of interest. A male protagonist was found in 16 out of the 21. Out of the remaining books, there was one genderless crayon and four female protagonists. A white protagonist was found in 15 out of the 21 books. Out of the remaining six books, four protagonists were not human, one was a humanoid alien, and one had many different races in the case of *Not all princesses dress in pink*. Either a negative male paternal figure or no male paternal figure was found in 12 out of 21 books. The remaining nine books had a positive male paternal figure present. Loaded words such as “sissy” were found in 6 of the 21 books. A requirement that the protagonist perform some great deed, such as saving a school play in both *Made by Raffi* and *George*, in order to gain acceptance by his or her parents, peers, or both was found in 7 out of 21 books. The remaining 14 books either have the protagonist gain acceptance without any special act or acceptance was a constant theme throughout the book. A trifecta of coded concepts of having a protagonist that is both white and male along with containing a negative or absent male paternal figure was found in 8 out of 21 books.

The last chapter will provide a conclusion for this thesis and discusses the trends and themes found in the 21 books in this study. Limitations and related future research are also found in Chapter Five. The chapter is concluded with educational implications that utilize the findings in Chapter Five to create teacher resources to help teachers use the selected books to discuss gender nonconformity and transgender topics in the classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This thesis focused on the significant role that children's literature plays in shaping how children view themselves and the world around them. This is especially true in regards to outgroups such as the transgender and gender nonconforming communities. This thesis's purpose was to examine how transgender and gender nonconforming concepts were portrayed in children's literature for young children and to highlight the possible impacts of the trends and themes embedded within these books.

Transgender individuals have been gaining increased visibility in the past few years. Title IX was expanded to include gender identity as recently as 2014. Yet, there is still much confusion and apprehension when discussing the topic of transgender and gender nonconformity, especially in the elementary school classroom. The misconceptions surrounding these topics are not exclusively found outside the classroom. To address these misconceptions, inclusion of these outgroups into culturally inclusive curriculum is critical. With the power that children's literature has on empathy, attitudes, and comprehension, classroom libraries should consider including transgender and gender nonconforming titles. Many positives can come from the power of children's literature, but there also lies the chance to fall into new and/or unique pitfalls that affect the elementary classroom, such as gender stereotyping. Therefore, this thesis analyzed transgender and gender nonconforming titles for elementary classrooms for trends and themes. 30 titles total were analyzed with 21 being selected to represent the ideals found in transgender and gender nonconforming children's literature.

Thoughts and/or Reflections from the Researcher

Throughout the research and coding process, I reevaluated the purpose and scope of my findings. Although the topics of transgender and gender nonconformity are important issues, I

viewed them through the lens of a future educator and a current father. A child's ability to see a reflection of themselves in the books they read is crucial to their attitude towards and ability to read. This fact had me paying close attention to the trends and themes present in the literature I was coding. It is my experience that children tend to pick up on very subtle aspects of the books they read that go unnoticed by the adults who read the same books. This is why focusing on these aspects is important for researchers of children's literature, so that we fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of the books that we select to share with young children. Addressing important issues such as transgender and gender nonconformity individuals holds great possibility for providing avenues of including outgroups.

With these significant topics, fairly new, and controversial, a small pool of children's literature is available to pull from. This served as a great restriction to the scope of research that was able to be accomplished and left ample room for further research. The lack of available literature made the presence of trends and themes more significant. The themes and trends found are listed and discussed below in their own section.

Trends and Themes

Trends and themes are found throughout children's literature. These can range from the overt to the subtle. Many times, these subtle themes and trends are embedded in children's literature that has been categorized as diverse or progressive. Children's literature with transgender and gender nonconforming themes fall under this umbrella of being both diverse and progressive. We must be aware of the early trends seen developing in these books on transgender and gender nonconforming concepts. As stated earlier, a student who is able to see themselves in the books they read benefits greatly from that reflection (Smolkin & Young, 2011). Protagonists in children's literature are an important aspect to critical of when looking at

books because students identify most with main characters. The trends found during my research illuminated an issue that often develops in diverse books. Small groups within outgroups are often overlooked, both in society and children's literature. In this case, a majority of the protagonists in the selected books were either gender nonconforming boys or boys that had transitioned to girls. This may be a symptom of how strong the gender binary is each of the genders. No research is present that indicates that there are more gender nonconforming or transitioning boys than there is girls. So, the more abundant presence of boy protagonists hints that this issue may affect boys more severely than girls.

Another aspect of these books to look at is the protagonist's race. Research is available that tracks the presence of different races in children's literature. There are even awards solely dedicated to spotlighting quality literature that contains racially diverse characters. The small number of culturally diverse in children's literature becomes especially impactful when looking at it through the scope of gender nonconforming and transgender themes. No research indicates that there is more of one race or another that are gender nonconforming or transgender. Therefore, children's literature with gender nonconforming and transgender themes should have diverse representation in its characters. The research done in this thesis showed a trend of gender nonconforming and transgender books focusing on white protagonists. An abundance of white protagonists becomes especially impactful when the fact that the characters which are both white and male that make up the majority of representation in these books. White male representation in children's literature is far from a shortage. Such over representation neglects to provide children's literature that allows for other individuals within the group to have books where they see a reflection of themselves. This means that they are also being denied the many benefits, both emotional and cognitive, that come from representation.

Beyond the protagonist lies many important characters who bring with them trends as well. Within children's literature, parents play an important role in many stories. In the selected books, parents were especially important as the protagonists went through challenges. My research surfaced a trend related to the parents that may be overlooked because of its subtleness. In 12 out of 21 books, the father of the protagonist either plays a negative and unaccepting role or was not present at all, such as in *George* (AUTRO, YR). This ties in with the notion that the gender binary plays a more critical role in the life of boys and when they grow up, men. The picture that is painted because of this trend is that women are more likely to be accepting and loving towards their children if their children are gender nonconforming or transgender, or in the case of *William's Doll*, their grandchildren. A gender stereotype is imbedded in what is supposed to be progressive literature about gender. The unsupportive male parental figure paired with the understanding and caring female parental figure becomes the stereotypical archetype common to children's literature discussing gender nonconforming and transgender topics.

These trends were not isolated. When one was present, it more likely that multiple were present. In many of the books three very impactful trends, a protagonist that is both white and male along with containing a negative or absent male paternal figure, were present, creating a trifecta of negative trends within one book. Instead of a diverse group of books within children's literature about gender nonconforming and transgender individuals, a white male protagonist with a non-supportive father figure becomes the standard. Not only white males make up this outgroup, who are marginalized by those around them, or need representation.

Limitations

The limitations of my research starts with the lack of available children's literature that covers the theme of gender nonconforming and/or transgender. This could be a result of the

previously discussed issue that gender and sex are often associated with each other and society is fighting to keep our elementary school-age children as asexual as possible. The lack of available children's literature was compounded with the fact that many libraries don't carry many of these titles. This is no exception for the youth collection at many NCATE accredited schools. I was fortunate enough to have access to a youth collection that carried more than ten titles which set them apart from the 46.6% that do not. While I was guided and facilitated by my chair and committee, all four of whom teach children's literature courses, I was the sole reader and coder. If the scope of this research was to be broadened, a single reader and coder would perhaps limit the amount and the veracity of research that could be accomplished. Hopefully this becomes an issue in the future because of an increase in quality children's literature that represents both gender nonconforming and transgender individuals.

Future Research

Research on gender in the classroom and children's literature is extensive and continually growing. Research on transgender and gender nonconforming themes in children's literature does not have the same luxury. Vast room is available for expanding the research on these topics in relation to the classroom and children's literature. As stated earlier, youth collections of NCATE accrediting colleges are not carrying much in children's literature when it comes to these topics. Research also indicates that these topics are also not included in professional literature for children's literature and/or multicultural education. If preservice training is lacking in the amount of transgender and gender nonconforming children's literature and teachers aren't being exposed to these topics in their professional literature, research should extend to the schools themselves. The first stop should be elementary school libraries to see what they have accessible in the area of children's literature with gender nonconforming and transgender

themes. Merely giving access to these books to students is a step towards exposing them to the benefits of reading such literature. Another aspect that would benefit greatly from research would be the amount and effectiveness of multicultural education for teachers in regards to transgender and gender nonconforming children, their families, and children of transgender and gender nonconforming parents. Both of these aspects, libraries and multicultural education, have an impact on education, for teachers and students alike.

Educational Implications

Transgender and gender nonconformity both have educational implications, in some areas of the country more than others. These issues are growing to more public on the federal and local level. Policies that discuss transgender and gender nonconforming individuals are being implemented, changed, and challenged. This is evident with presence of these topics in the media steadily increasing. Simply reading a children's book that contains these topics is meet with controversy as shown by the news article that started this research (Emechebe, 2015). The fact that the topics of transgender and gender nonconformity are controversial does not stop the increasing amount of children that identify as such or related in some way to somebody that is.

How to effectively approach a diverse classroom is the key concept behind multicultural education. That is why multicultural education that addresses all of the many cultures is necessary, even if they are considered a controversial outgroup. Smolkin and Young's research (2011) shows that LGBT topics are not strongly present in top-selling children's literature textbooks. Relatedly, Jennings and Macgillicray's study (2011) reveals that many multicultural education books contain inaccurate information on gender identity and expression or no information at all. While both Smolkin and Young's research and Jennings and Macgillicray's study highlight the lack of LGBT topics in available resources, Williams and Deyoe's study

(2015) shows the shortage of LGBT material for preservice teachers at NCATE accredited colleges. Exposure to LGBT children literature titles during preservice education could potentially increase their comfort with and likelihood to use these titles in the classroom.

The lack of resources and materials that accurately discuss LGBT and gender nonconforming topics is concerning. Such absence is a disadvantage to both teachers and students when you take in the factor the power of children's literature has on students. Whether it's building empathy towards outgroups, promoting a positive relationship with reading, or increasing comprehension potential, children's literature that contain transgender and gender nonconforming characters has a resounding effect on those who read it (Bell and Clark, 1998; Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005; Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). Providing this opportunity to both students who are transgender and/or gender nonconforming and those students who are not transgender is important as the known presence of transgender and gender nonconforming students increases. Understanding the power of children's literature, I designed a teacher resource guide to discussing transgender and gender nonconformity topics in the classroom utilizing children's literature. The Teacher Resource for Discussing Transgender and Gender Nonconformity in the Classroom Utilizing Children's Literature is located in Appendix C.

APPENDIX A: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX A: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baldacchino, C. (2014). *Morris Micklewhite and the tangerine dress*. Toronto, CA: Groundwood Books/House of Anansi Press.

Morris likes to wear a tangerine dress because he likes the color and the way it sounds.

This leads to teasing from his classmates when he wears it to school. Morris's confidence eventually leads his classmates to play alongside him when he is wearing his dress.

Stonewall Book Award Honor (2015). Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award Finalist (2015). TD Canadian Children's Literature Award Finalist (2015).

Beaty, A. (2013). *Rosie Revere, engineer*. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams.

This story follows the story of Rosie Revere, whose aunt is Rosie the Riveter. Rosie Revere is a brilliant inventor. Her aunt, Rose, helps her stay motivated after a failed invention.

Bergman, S. B. (2012). *Backwards day*. Toronto, CA: Flamingo Rampant.

On a fictional planet called Tenalp, there is a day called Backwards Day. This is

Andrea's favorite day because she gets to live as a boy, which she always wanted to be.

This Backwards Day, she does not change. The next day she wakes up as a boy. He stays that way and his family celebrates.

Bone, J., & Bone, L. (2014). *Not every princess*. Washington, DC: Magination Press.

A young princess wearing a Viking helmet sits in a tree and observes a world where

gender is challenged such as mermaids can wear swimming trunks. Accompanied with

the book is a "Note to Parents and Caregivers" about gender expectations and child development written by the authors who are also psychologists.

Bradley, K. B. (2006). *Ballerino Nate*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Nate wants to be a ballerina because he loves to dance. His older brother, Ben, constantly makes fun of him and tells him only girls are ballerinas. Nate becomes sad until he sees a real ballet. Nate gets to talk to a man who likes to dance, and this man tells him of ballerinos.

Carr, J. (2010). *Be who you are*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.

Nick was born a boy but identifies as a girl. Nick's family is very supportive and reminds him to "Always remember to be who you are." Nick and his family find other families in similar situations for support.

Cole, B. (1997). *Prince Cinders*. New York, NY: Putnam.

This is a retelling of the classic Cinderella story with Prince Cinders replacing the role of Cinderella.

Cole, B. (1997). *Princess Smartypants*. New York, NY: Putnam & Grosset.

Princess Smartypants's parents pressure her to get married but she enjoys being independent. She puts her suitors through impossible tasks.

Corey, S. (2000). *You forgot your skirt, Amelia Bloomer: A very improper story*. New York, NY:

Scholastic Press. Amelia Bloomer, an early women's rights activist, invents bloomers with a short skirt over them. She does so to liberate women from oppressive clothes. The story focuses on all the stuff women can do now that they have pants to wear.

Davids, S. B. (2015). *Annie's plaid shirt*. Miami, FL: Upswing Press.

Annie loves her plaid shirt so much that she wears it everywhere. Things get complicated when her mom tells her that she has to dress up for a wedding. Annie feels sad that she has to wear a dress. She ends up turning the dress into a tuxedo and everybody goes to the wedding happy.

DePaola, T. (1979). *Oliver Button is a sissy*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Oliver is called a sissy at school because he doesn't like the things other boys are "supposed to." Bullying gets worse after Oliver's mom sends him to dance school where he learns tap dancing. Oliver is accepted by his classmates after showing off his tap dancing at a school talent show. Laura Ingalls Wilder Winner (2011). IRA-CBC Children's Choice.

Ewert, M. (2008). *10,000 dresses*. Salem, OR: Triangle Square.

Bailey, a male boy who identifies as a girl, likes to dream of dresses. During the day, Bailey tries to gain acceptance from her family. Bailey is unsuccessful until she meets Laurel, a girl who likes to design dresses. Lambda Literacy Award Nominee for Transgender (2008), Stonewall Honor Book (2010).

Fierstein, H. (2014). *The sissy duckling*. New York, NY: Little Simon.

Elmer is a boy duck who loves things other boy ducks don't like: baking, castles, puppets. His papa tries to teach him baseball instead of accepting him. After running away, Elmer eventually is accepted after he saves his injured father. Lambda Literacy Award Finalist (2002). Storytelling World Resource Award (2010).

Fox, M. (1998). *Tough Boris*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace.

A boy travels to see Tough Boris and his band of pirates, who are like ALL other pirates. The boy's view changes when he sees Tough Boris cry over his dead parrot. You can be tough and cry.

Gino, A. (2015). *George*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

George has an outer appearance as a male but knows herself to be a girl. After being denied a female role in the school play, George starts to express her identity to her closest friend and family. Kirkus Book Award Nominee (2015). Cybils Awards Nominee (2015). Goodreads Choice Awards Nominee (2015). Stonewall Book Awards (2016).

Gruska, D. E. (2007). *The only boy in ballet class*. Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith.

Tucker enjoys ballet and avoids things like football. This causes the kids to pick on Tucker and for his uncle to push him into football. Not until Tucker shows everybody how his ballet skills make him good at football, people finally accept him. Paterson Prize for Books for Young People (2008).

Herthel, J., & Jennings, J. (2014). *I am Jazz!* New York, NY: Dial Books.

Jazz Jennings tells you her story of transitioning from a boy to a girl including her experiences at the doctors, her parents' reaction, and some of her favorite colors and toys. Rainbow List (2015).

Hoffman, I., & Hoffman, S. (2014). *Jacob's new dress*. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.

Jacob plays dress-up with his friend, Emily. Jacob, wanting to be a princess, wears a dress. Jacob's mother says he can wear dresses but only at home.

Hall, M. (2015). *Red: A crayon's story*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.

A blue crayon goes through life with a red crayon label which causes the crayon to go through challenges relating to its identity. The crayon does not seem to be able to do anything right. After all the other school supplies try to help him, the crayon finally realizes it is a blue crayon when asked to draw an ocean. Soon after, the crayon's confidence and acceptance sky rocket.

Kiernan-Johnson, E. (2012). *Roland Humphrey is wearing a what?* Boulder, CO: Huntley Rahara Press.

A boy likes to dress up in pink, bows, and butterflies. This causes issues at school with some of his female classmates. Roland expresses his concerns with his parents. Roland is finally accepted at school by the other kids and help him stand up to bullies.

Kilodavis, C. (2011). *My princess boy: A mom's story about a young boy who loves to dress up.* New York, NY: Alladin.

A four year old boy enjoys dressing up as a princess and loves the color pink. Both the boy and his brother who plays baseball and soccer are accepted by their parents. Readers' Favorite Book Award (2011). Readers' Favorite Illustration Award (2011).

Munsch, R. N. (1980). *The paper bag princess.* Toronto, CA: Annick Press.

Elizabeth is set to marry Prince Ronald who is stolen by a dragon. Elizabeth, wearing a paper bag, stands up to the dragon and ends up tricking it to save Prince Ronald. Ronald and Elizabeth argue about her un-princess like appearance and end up not getting married.

Newman, L., & Moore, C. (2004). *A fire engine for Ruthie.* New York, NY: Clarion Books.

Ruthie and Nana spend time playing together. During this time, Ruthie keeps wanting to play with the same kind of toys that the neighbor boy Brian has. Her grandmother keeps denying her and pushes her to “girl” toys. Nana eventually decides to not only allow Ruthie to play with Brian and his toys, but Nana also plays along with them.

Osborne, M. P. (2005). *Kate and the beanstalk*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.

This story is a retelling of the classic "Jack and the Beanstalk." The protagonist has been swapped for a female heroine named Kate who climbs a beanstalk to kill the Giant.

Osborne, W., & Osborne, M. P. (2005). *Sleeping Bobby*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

This is a retelling of the classic Sleeping Beauty fairy tale with Prince Bobby replacing the sleeping princess. He is awakened by a brave princess.

Pomranz, C. (2014). *Made by Raffi*. London, GBR: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

Raffi is a shy boy who gets teased sometimes. Raffi finds a passion for knitting but is worried that it is too “girly.” The kids make fun of Raffi’s knitting until he saves the day by knitting a cape for the lead prince to use in a play.

Smith, L. (2008). *Madam President*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

A little girl imagines what it would be like to be president and what qualities make a good president. The story goes through her election to executive orders and cabinet selection.

Walton, J. (2016). *Introducing Teddy: A gentle story about gender and friendship*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA Children’s.

Thomas, Errol's teddy bear, is sad one day until he tells Errol that he feels in his heart that he is not a boy teddy, but rather a girl teddy. Formally named Thomas, Tilly cleverly turns her bow tie into a head bow and plays happily with Errol and his friend.

Yolen, J., & Stemple, H. E. (2010). *Not all princesses dress in pink*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

This book covers many girls who have interests and dress in a variety of ways. Some of these ways are stereotypically masculine like playing sports or getting dirty.

Zolotow, C. (1972). *William's doll*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

William wants a doll for a gift which causes him to be teased by other kids and his brother. His father buys him a basketball and train instead, but William keeps asking for a doll. His grandmother eventually buys him a doll, so he can practice being a good father.

Redwood Children's Picturebook Award (1985).

**APPENDIX B: LIST OF TRANSGENDER AND GENDER
NONCONFORMITY AWARDS**

APPENDIX B: LIST OF TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMITY AWARDS

Lambda Literary Awards (“Lammys”):

The Lambda Literary Award was created by the Lambda Literary Foundation to highlight books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender content. The award was created in 1988 and has continuously expanded to include more categories. LGBT Children’s or Young Adult is one category among many that receive awards.

Rainbow Book List:

The Rainbow Book List was created by the American Library Associations’ Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table. The Rainbow Book List was first started in 2008. The Rainbow Book List Committee releases an annual annotated bibliography of books with LGBT content for individuals from birth to eighteen years of age.

Stonewall Book Awards:

The Stonewall Book Awards is sponsored by the American Library Association’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table. The first award was awarded in 1971. It later became an official American Library Association award in 1986. It wasn’t until 1999 that this award included transgender in its title. In 2010, the Stonewall Book Award was expanded by adding a Children and Young Adult Literature Award (Stonewall Book Awards List, n.d.).

**APPENDIX C: TEACHER RESOURCE FOR DISCUSSING
TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMITY IN THE
CLASSROOM UTILIZING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

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Teacher Resource Guide

For this resource guide, I used Groundspark’s *It’s Elementary* (Chasnoff & Cohen, 2008) and *Teaching Tolerance* as benchmark resources. *Teaching Tolerance* is a project by the Southern Poverty Law Center, a non-profit organization that provides educational resources “dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences” (*Teaching Tolerance*, n.d.). *It’s Elementary* detailed talking about gay issues with students in elementary schools. As stated before, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation are often confused to be extremely interrelated. Because of this, starting with LGBT resources already proven to be successful in the classroom is an effective place to start when making resources for teachers in regards to gender nonconformity and transgender issues.

Assigned Gender: The gender an individual is given at birth. This is usually based on the individual's biological sex (*Teaching Tolerance*, n.d.).

Gender Identity: An individual's "innermost concept as male, female, a blend of both or neither." This can be the same or different from that individual's sex and/or assigned gender (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions. n.d.).

Gender Expression: The external appearance of an individual's gender identity. This can be expressed through activities, traits (such as clothes or haircut), and possessions (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions. n.d.).

Gender Transition: The process an individual goes through to align their gender identity with their sex (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions. n.d.).

Transgender: An individual whose gender identity and sex do not align. Does not reflect sexual orientation and should not be changed to "transgendered" (*Teaching Tolerance*, n.d.).

Cisgender: A term that refers to an individual whose sex and gender align (*Teaching Tolerance*, n.d.).

Preferred Personal Pronouns: An individual's preferred pronoun when addressing them. He/him, she/her, they. One should ask what an individual's preferred personal pronoun is (*Teaching Tolerance*, n.d.).

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Creating a Gender-Inclusive and Transgender Welcoming Classroom

1. Know yourself

In order to create a gender-inclusive and transgender welcoming classroom, it is essential to know where you, as the teacher, stand on these issues. You can start with asking yourself a

Examples of Questions

1. *Have I ever experienced discrimination based on my gender?*
2. *Have I ever been excluded from activities based on my gender?*
3. *Do I have any gender biases?*
 - *Do I have different or have I seen “teacher talk” when addressing students of different genders (McCormick, xxxx)?*
 - *Do I have or have I seen different expectations for students depending on their gender?*
 - *Have I or have I seen somebody use harsher punishments for students of a certain gender?*
4. *Do I, and other teachers, feel comfortable talking about gender identity with the parents of our students?*
5. *Does my classroom, or school, have gendered spaces where certain genders don't feel welcome or encouraged to go?*

few questions in regards to gender.

2. Know Your School

Examples of Questions

1. *What is my district or school's policy on bullying?*
 - *Does it include gender identity and/or gender expression?*
2. *Does my school's curriculum positively mention LGBT topics?*
3. *Does my school have a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA)?*
 - *Does my GSA advocate for gender-inclusion?*
4. *Does my school have a policy on gender expression and/or gender identity?*
 - *Controversial policies include bathroom use.*

Making the Jump: Talking About Gender Nonconformity and Transgender Topics in the Classroom

It's Elementary states that “almost any response is better than ignoring the situation” (p. 55, Chasnoff & Cohen, 2008). Teachers are many times the only facilitator that can address the misconceptions students have about topics. Controversial topics such as transgender and gender nonconforming individuals are no different. In fact, addressing the misconceptions of these topics may be even more crucial with the stigma that surrounds them. In *It's Elementary*, a student associated the word “gay” with Nazis during a word association activity (Chasnoff & Cohen, 2008). Students develop these misconceptions through exposure to media and personal experiences. These misconceptions can be dangerous if left unaddressed.

Many do not want to make the jump into discussing such topics as transgender and gender nonconformity with elementary aged children. One factor of this is the desire to view children as asexual as possible combined with the mixing of the ideas of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Sexual orientation is already a concept that finds its way into the classroom through teachers responding to certain situations between students with “she likes you” and “he must like you.” Such responses imply a child is heterosexual which is reflective of them having a sexual orientation to begin with. It is also possible to discuss the topics of gender nonconformity, transgender individuals, and sexual orientation in age appropriate ways.

Using Read Alouds to Spark Discussion

Read Alouds are a staple in most elementary classrooms, especially in the earlier grades. They serve a strong way to introduce topics such as gender nonconformity and transgender to students without it feeling like you're trying to lecture them on these topics. It may not be ideal

to start with books such as *I am Jazz!* since it has a precedence of being met with opposition (Emechebe, 2015). For this teacher resource guide, I have chosen to use *Red: A crayon's story* by Michael Hall for discussing gender identity and *Morris Micklewhite and the tangerine dress* by Christine Baldacchino for discussing gender expression. These books serve as good starting points for their respective topics. *Red: A crayon's story* discusses gender identity without overtly discussing gender as it narrates the story of a crayon whose outer appearance doesn't match its inner appearance. A discussion that bridges this with the ideas of gender identity can and should be done. *Morris Micklewhite and the tangerine dress* explicitly talks about gender expression which is needed when discussing gender nonconformity and the bullying that surrounds it.

***Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* Read Aloud**

Standards:

National Curriculum Standard for Social Studies Theme 5: Individuals, Groups and Institutions – Experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions

National Curriculum Standard for Social Studies Strand 4: Individual Development and Identity – Exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals and groups are alike and how they are unique.

Lesson:

This read aloud is separated into three sections: before reading, during reading, and after reading.

Before Reading:

Before any read aloud, the teacher should familiarize themselves with the book. They should also think of possible questions the students may have and rehearse how they will respond to those questions. They should also review the “Know the Jargon” section of this resource guide. Telling a student that you will get back to them if you don’t know the answer is far better than simply ignoring or brushing it the side.

About the Book:

Morris likes to wear a tangerine dress because he likes the color and the way it sounds. This leads to teasing from his classmates when he wears it to school. Morris’s confidence eventually leads his classmates to play alongside him when he is wearing his dress. Stonewall Book Award Honor (2015). Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award Finalist (2015). TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award Finalist (2015).

During Reading:

Examples of Discussion Prompts

1. *What things did Morris do that surprised you?*
 - *How did the kids in the book act to this thing that surprised you?*
 - *How did it make Morris feel?*
2. *What made Morris feel better about being picked on?*
 - *Have you ever been picked on because of something you wore?*
 - *How did it make you feel?*
 - *Have you ever been told you can't do something because you were a boy or a girl?*
 - *How did it make you feel?*
3. *How do you think Morris felt wearing his tangerine dress?*
4. *What are some of the ways Morris's mom was helpful when Morris got teased?*
 - *What should you do if you see somebody get teased?*
5. *Is there such thing as 'boy clothes' or 'girl clothes'? How about 'boy colors' and 'girl colors'?*

During reading, stop at preselected areas to present discussion prompts.

After Reading:

Choose a prompt and further discuss it. “Is there such thing as ‘boy clothes’ or ‘girl clothes’?” and “Is there such thing as ‘boy colors’ and ‘girl colors’?” is a good prompt for extension. Having students categorize, possibly through a Venn diagram, colors into ‘boy colors’, ‘girl colors’, or ‘both’ can be used to emphasize that there is no such thing as gendered colors. The same can be done with clothes or jobs. Extend the topic by discussing gender stereotypes and gender roles. Books that help do so include *Madam President* by Lane Smith or *Rosie Revere, Engineer* by Andrea Beaty.

***Red: A Crayon's Story* Read Aloud**

Standards:

National Curriculum Standard for Social Studies Theme 5: Individuals, Groups and Institutions – Experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions

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About the Book:

A blue crayon goes through life with a red crayon label which causes the crayon to go through challenges relating to its identity. The crayon doesn’t seem to be able to do anything right. After all the other school supplies try to help him, the crayon finally realizes it is a blue

crayon when asked to draw an ocean. Soon after, the crayon's confidence and acceptance sky rocket.

During Reading:

During reading, stop at preselected areas to present discussion prompts.

Examples of Discussion Prompts

1. *What problem is Red having?*
 - *Why is Red having this problem?*
2. *How do the other crayons and school supplies react to Red's problem?*
 - *How does this make Red feel? Why did it make Red feel this way?*
 - *Do they accept him?*
 - *Has anybody ever not been accepted for who they were?*
 - *Has anybody ever done something other people didn't understand? Maybe they made fun of you. How did that make you feel?*
3. *What made Red happier?*
 - *What kind of things make you happier?*
4. *Near the end of the book, red is called blue. Why do you think they started calling the crayon blue?*
5. *How does blue feel to be accepted as a blue crayon?*
 - *Should we try and accept people for who they are or try and change them?*
 - *What are some ways we can show that we accept people for who they are?*

After Reading:

Choose a prompt and further discuss it. Extend reading by reading titles such as *I am Jazz!* by Jessica Herthel or *Introducing Teddy: A Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship* by Jessica Walton. Both of these books explicitly deal with gender identity. A word association for gender identity or transgender would make strong extension activities. Referencing the gender

role and gender stereotype discussion for the read aloud of *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* would tie the two concepts, gender expression and gender identity, together.

Proactive Versus Reactive Responses

The optimal type of response to issues related to gender expression and gender identity is proactive. Knowing how to be proactive to certain issues can prevent them from becoming a problem. No teacher can catch everything though. So, knowing how to properly react to certain issues is also key. I have divided the next portion into sections: peer exclusion, gendered activities, traits, or possessions; and biased judgements.

Peer Exclusion:

Proactive	Reactive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain to students why somebody should not be excluded based on gender • Don't pair or group students by gender (assigning mixed gender groups builds cross-gender relationships and respect) • Don't call on somebody because of their gender ("I just called on a girl, let me here from a boy.") • Teach how to be an ally to people going through peer exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saying "You can't say 'boys can't play'" after you hear students say it • Pushing a student into a gendered group to keep it from being all one gender • Reprimands or loss of privileges

Gendered Activities, Traits, and/or Possessions

Proactive	Reactive
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain to students there is no such thing as ‘boy things’ or ‘girl things’ (such as color)• Do not assign colors to genders (such as pink means the girl’s area)• Mix up gendered areas. Put stereotypical ‘boy toys’ in the kitchen area and stereotypical ‘girl toys’ near outside areas such as sandboxes or tool/handyman areas• Teach the harm in saying “that’s so gay”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Say “there is no such thing as ‘boy colors’ and ‘girl colors’” only after you hear students saying something gendered• Reprimand or students lose privileges

Biased Judgments

Proactive	Reactive
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teach about gender stereotypes and ways to spot them• Do not say things like “math is harder for girls” even if you’re trying to encourage students• Provide examples of strong women in stereotypical male roles such as sports or engineering and examples of strong men in stereotypical female roles such as bakers, caretakers, nurses, and teachers.• Encourage students to dress up as all types of jobs (especially outside ones that align with the gender roles) during skits, dress-up, or imaginative play	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Correct gender stereotypes like “you throw like a girl” when you hear them• Reprimand or students lose privileges for saying gender stereotypes like “you throw like a girl.”

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