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Searching for Nonbinary and Trans Inclusion: A Call to Action for Leadership Studies

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Abstract

Academic studies of leadership have historically taken a binary view of gender. A literature review was conducted to search for any scholarly work inclusive of trans and nonbinary identities. Across three academic databases and five leadership journals, only 11 such sources were found. These results were reviewed to explore themes across their findings as well as suggestions for future research. The analysis of the 11 sources' findings and recommendations offer guidance for expanding conceptions of gender in leadership; for enhancing leadership education; and for developing a more complete research agenda for gender and leadership studies. Suggestions are also offered for future literature searching. Everyone—including those in leadership roles or not—can take action to support more inclusive approaches to gender and leadership in study and in practice.

Introduction

Exploring relationships between gender and leadership in English-language scholarly literature began as early as 1969 with Megargee's article on sex roles and leadership emergence. The topic of gender and leadership has continued to be of high scholarly interest: A search by Eagly and Heilman (2016) in Web of Science on gender and leadership found 3,000 journal articles since 1970, with 38% dated 2010 or later; their 2016 special issue on gender and leadership received 78 submissions. Most leadership studies have since taken a gender-binary lens (Schueler, 2022), and a recent systematic review offered a research agenda that seems to continue that trend (Shen & Joseph, 2021). There is hope, however. While Eagly and Heilman's 2016 introduction did not mention trans or nonbinary identities at all, in 2019, Eagly and Sczesny noted, "binary gender itself is facing challenge as the two primary sex categories of

female and male yield to accommodate multiple gender and sexual identities, including non-binary identities and transgender status" (p. 1). Broadening ideas about gender and leadership is of critical importance during a time when young leaders are in formation amidst an increasingly multigendered world: over 5% of young adults (ages 18-29) say their gender is different from their sex assigned at birth, and roughly half of adults younger than 50 say they know a trans person (Brown, 2022). Despite a handful of excellent articles in the student affairs literature (e.g., Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2017; Jourian, 2014) and some promising dissertations, the scholarly study of gender and leadership does not yet seem to have adapted to the more visibly emerging multigendered world.

Research questions explored by this paper include: 1) To what extent has the field of leadership studies included trans and/or nonbinary gender identities in academic research of gender and leadership? 2) What themes have emerged in that literature? and 3) What actions are needed in response to the findings? This paper will provide brief contextual information about definitions of gender, historical work on gender and leadership, queer theory and leadership, and the workplace experiences of LGBTQ+ people, then report the results from an interdisciplinary literature search seeking English-language scholarship on any aspect of leadership and trans or nonbinary identities. We hope the findings will inspire scholars of gender and leadership, leaders, and leadership educators to expand and enhance their work to be more inclusive of nonbinary and trans people, as well as to consider how taking a non-dichotomous approach could benefit our understanding of all genders and leadership.

Definitions of Gender

Conceptualizations of gender and the language used to describe gender are evolving rapidly in the United States. However, the assumption of a gender binary remains the dominant

view in many mainstream spaces. The language of this dominant view often conflates sex and gender. In the United States, infants are assigned a sex at birth based on the appearance of their external anatomy. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss how biological sex characteristics do not follow a strict binary (Einstein, 2011), but we think it's important to differentiate sex assigned at birth from gender when it comes to studying gender and leadership.

This paper defines gender as a social and cultural construct consisting of both one's deeply held, innate sense of gender (gender identity) and one's outward behaviors, language, dress, appearance, etcetera (gender expression). According to Lippa (2005), gendered behavior and individual differences are derived from a combination of biological factors, social-environmental factors, and emergent traits. Many aspects of gender are often more fluid and socially constructed than a binary model can handle (Einstein, 2011). Inclusive gender models allow gender to change over time, and appear more like a spectrum or better yet, a four-dimensional field, that can include people who are intersex, nonbinary, genderfluid, bigender, agender, or who otherwise do not fit neatly into a binary model of gender.

This article uses gender as a broad term rather than specifying nuances of gender expression, gender identity, or gender role. In addition, the authors chose to use transgender and nonbinary for our searches rather than a broader umbrella term such as gender non-conforming. The specificity of the terms transgender and nonbinary were found to be advantageous for searching, as well as being more congruent with the positionality and experience of the authors.

The GLAAD definition of transgender (or trans) is simply, "an adjective to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth" (2022b). Being transgender does not depend on physical appearance or medical procedures but on a person's realization that their gender is different than their assigned sex at birth. We like the definition of

nonbinary provided by the WPATH Standards of Care, which includes people whose genders are comprised of more than one gender identity, who do not have a gender identity or have a neutral gender identity, have gender identities that blend elements of other genders, have a gender that changes over time, or combinations of these (Coleman, et al., 2022, p. 580). Nonbinary people may or may not identify themselves as transgender, and transgender people may or may not identify themselves as nonbinary. We refer to people whose gender is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth as cisgender. Like cisgender people, trans and nonbinary people may have any sexual orientation.

In this article we attempted to honor the advice from GLAAD's guides to transgender and nonbinary people and terminology (2022a, 2022b). For terms where no clear preference has emerged in the community (e.g., nonbinary versus non-binary), we chose one term and tried to be consistent. We retained the author's spelling / terminology when quoting directly, and as pronouns were difficult to source, referred to authors by their names only.

Literature Review

This section provides brief overviews of three topical areas that support exploration of trans and nonbinary genders and leadership: gender and leadership; applications of queer theory to leadership; and literature about LGBTQ+ people's experiences in the workplace. Some of this literature was discovered prior to conducting the search for sources addressing trans and nonbinary gender and leadership; some was discovered during the search process; and some was discovered afterwards (e.g., in the bibliographies of the sources found).

Gender and Leadership

Academic study of gender and leadership has heretofore taken a binary view of leadership. Fassinger et al. (2010) noted the lack of attention to what the inclusion of gender

diverse people might bring to the process of leadership. The focus has often been on women, or differences between men and women (Dowding, 2011). Haber-Curran and Tillapaugh (2017) note these characteristics have made the study of gender and leadership "lopsided," adding that studies have often assumed "an unexamined and inherent masculine referent" (p. 13). For example, when providing a quick history of gender and leadership studies in a special issue introduction, Eagly and Heilman (2016) noted initial questions focused on prejudice against and discrimination of women leaders and the resulting obstacles women faced in becoming leaders (Eagly & Heilman, 2016; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2012), and stereotypes about women, men, and leaders (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Vial, Napier, & Brescoll, 2016). As research matured, scholars also began to pay attention to group and organizational contexts and structural features that affect women's experiences (Eagly & Heilman, 2016). Other topics included the potential benefits of "feminine leadership behaviors" and of women leaders' potential to enhance financial success (Desvaux et al., 2017).

Shen and Joseph (2021) offered a recent and comprehensive overview of literature on gender and leadership within a framework based on job performance theory. They organized this large, interdisciplinary topic into four areas: gender differences in leadership outcomes; gender differences in leader behaviors, gender differences in determinants of leader behaviors, and the potential for mediated or indirect relationships between gender and leadership. After a masterful analysis of the literature in these areas, they offered a list of future research directions and relevant theories. However, nonbinary and transgender identities were completely absent from their sources and their proposed research agenda.

Queer Theory and Leadership

Queer theory has been used to analyze aspects of leadership (de Sousa, 2017), and could be useful for taking a more gender-inclusive approach. Queer theory supports the idea of gender identities as fluid and complex (de Souza et al., 2016) as well as how organizations can be understood as processes rather than constructs or outcomes (de Souza & Parker, 2022, p. 78). Using queer theory, Fine (2016) analyzed how Butler's theories of gender performativity could expand the boundaries of leadership "by asking us to incorporate more subjects and roles in considering who is intelligible as a leader" (p. 75). Fine proposed a social change model in which our discourse's vocabulary of gender and leadership influences performativity, in which "anticipation of what is expected" influences our behaviors. Those behaviors are observed by others as gendered practices. Aware of this dynamic, people may reinforce, internalize, and exist within gender norms, or may misperform and disrupt the social script. That disruption may impact the intelligibility of the leader, which will have variable effects on the extent to which discourse changes (or remains the same).

LGBTQ+ People in the Workplace

Several authors have studied how LGBTQ+ people fare in their careers or in the workplace generally, without a particular focus on leadership. This body of work is important for understanding the environments in which gender diverse leaders may emerge, and also how leadership's historic adherence to the gender binary has caused harm to those outside cisnormative and heteronormative paradigms. McFadden (2015) offered a systematic literature review on this topic within the field of human resource development. Davidson (2016) evaluated employment outcomes of trans women, trans men, and nonbinary transgender people, finding that all these groups are more likely to have been denied promotions, and that nonbinary people

of color in particular face major challenges. They also note the EEOC's binary gender reporting classification limits protections for nonbinary people. Mizock et al. (2018) studied how employment stigma affects transgender people in the workplace, finding themes of lack of social support, gender policing, threats to personal safety, barriers to acquisition and advancement, intersectional discrimination, and lack of inclusive policies. In a welcome contribution studying people outside the United States, Baggio (2017) examined workplace and career experiences from interviews with six transgender people in Brazil. Baggio found that ignorance regarding transgender people results in opportunity restrictions, requiring the person to be responsible for their own intelligibility and safety, and variance across organizations. Gut et al. (2018) surveyed transgender people in multiple countries about the human resources support they received when transitioning at work and found similarly dismal results. These studies provide a sobering picture of the environment in which trans and nonbinary gendered leaders operate, and point up the importance for leaders of all genders to foster more inclusive spaces for workers and for emergent leaders.

Other authors have presented guidance for how leaders and teachers can improve gender inclusivity in a workplace, a profession, or in educating future leaders who may have opportunity to lead such efforts. For example, as early as 2013, Miller explained what to do as a campus leader if a transgender student comes out to you. Sangganjanavanich and Headley (2013) reviewed competencies for career development professionals supporting people during gender transitions. Four papers found weaknesses in leadership and management education programs' gender inclusivity curricula, and made recommendations for improvement (Graham & MacFarlane, 2021; O'Malley & Capper, 2015; Robinson et al., 2017; Rumens, 2016). Based on interviews with trans people, Beck (2015) offered practical advice to school leaders who serve as

advocates, learners, and/or allies. Pryor's (2017) thesis offered a framework to reduce heterogenderist practices and improve equity at colleges and universities based on the experience of LGBTQ leaders on two campuses. In 2022, Etengoff et al. (2022) provided a strengths-based approach to recommendations on how higher education administrators can support LGBTQ+ students' Greek Life. Finally, after reviewing top public administration journals, Larson (2022) called on that academic field to increase attention to LGBTQ+ identity groups' history, policies, and services. There is no lack of information for leaders who are ready to learn and to improve workplaces for people of all genders.

In summary, this contextual literature review found evidence that academic studies of leadership have taken a binary approach to gender. Queer theory offers a foundation for escaping such assumptions and approaching gender and organizations as fluid and dynamic. While organizations and educators are more intentionally charging leaders to take responsibility for increasing gender inclusivity, there still seems to be a lack of research on gender diverse leaders themselves. The next part of this paper will describe the authors' process for finding research about trans and nonbinary leaders and leadership, and the results of their searches.

Method

Overview

The first author conducted an interdisciplinary literature search seeking English-language scholarship on leadership and trans or nonbinary people. First, scholarly encyclopedias and Shen and Joseph's (2021) article were explored to provide context and a high-level view of gender and leadership. Next, the academic databases Business Source Complete, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX were searched because they index journals in the fields of applied psychology, leadership, and business/management. More information about each can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Publisher and indexing information for academic databases searched

		Journal Indexing			
Publisher	Database Name	Years	Active Journals	Active Peer-Reviewed	Dissertations
EBSCO	Business Source Complete	1911-present	4,350	3,054	Yes
APA	PsycInfo	1894-present	2,287	2,287	Yes
EBSCO	SocINDEX	1903-present	3,012	2,882	Yes

In December 2022-January, 2023, the following search strings were entered into each database:

- (nonbinary OR non-binary) AND leader*

- transgender* N10 leader*

The * is a truncation operator; for example, **leader*** would find leader, leaders, and leadership. The **N10** search term finds the search terms and any variants within 10 words of one another. The stem **trans*** was not used because of the frequency of words beginning with the stem **transform**. The number of results found for each search is shown in Table 2. The total for the "Retained" column is greater than 11 since some results were duplicates across searches.

Table 2.

Number of results found and retained from each search.

Database Name	Search Terms	Results	Retained
Business Source Complete	Transgender* N10 leader*	37	3
	(Nonbinary OR non-binary) AND leader*	7	
PsycInfo	Transgender* N10 leader*	60	8
	(Nonbinary OR non-binary) AND leader*	25	
SocINDEX	Transgender* N10 leader*	22	3
	(Nonbinary OR non-binary) AND leader*	9	

Titles and abstracts of results were reviewed, and potentially relevant sources were saved to folders in the bibliographic management software Zotero. For example, in APA PsycInfo, 25

results were found for the search **(nonbinary OR non-binary) AND leader***, but only 4 were potentially relevant and saved for further examination. The potentially relevant sources were then retrieved in full text, carefully evaluated, and retained or discarded based on relevance. Common examples of false drops included sources about nonbinary or trans people who were adjacent to or served by some kind of leadership, but were not themselves in a leadership role and sources about LGBTQ+ people that mentioned trans or nonbinary in a list, but that did not focus on gender identity.

The bibliographies of these sources were reviewed for additional literature. Potentially relevant sources were saved to Zotero and evaluated in the same manner. While some theoretical and topically adjacent sources were found from reviewing bibliographies (e.g., about queer theory and leadership), no additional sources were found to directly explore the experiences of nonbinary or trans leaders or leadership.

Across the three databases, eleven sources were found to be directly exploring the topic. These 11 sources were each retrieved using Google Scholar, and the "Cited By" feature was used to identify sources that could potentially also be relevant. All but two of the 11 sources had been cited at least once. The title and snippet of the 1,054 additional results in Google Scholar were examined; of these, 53 were found to be potentially relevant and were retrieved in full text. Of these, 10 were found to be comparably relevant to the 11 found with the academic databases. Due to time constraints,[1] this paper will focus on the original 11 sources. The 10 additional results found with Google Scholar, and relevant sources that cited those, will be examined in a future paper.

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[1] One of the time-consuming issues related to determining a paper's relevance on this topic is that papers on "LGBTQ+" populations may primarily or solely focus on sexual identities or lesbian/gay participants.

To support an examination of specific publications, the journals *Educational Leadership*, *Gender, Work and Organization*, *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, *Journal of Leadership Studies*, and *Leadership Quarterly* were searched directly using the EBSCOhost platform's default settings for the following search strings. The journals' publishers and dates of index coverage are provided in Table 3.

- non-binary OR nonbinary

- transgender*

Table 3

Publishers and dates of index coverage for journals searched

Publisher	Platform	Journal Title	Bibliographic Records
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development	EBSCOhost	*Educational Leadership*	1/1/1985-present
Blackwell	EBSCOhost	*Gender, Work and Organization*	1/1/1998-present
SAGE	EBSCOhost	*Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*	1/1/2002-present
SAGE	EBSCOhost	*Journal of Leadership Studies*	3/1/2009-present
Elsevier	EBSCOhost	*Leadership Quarterly*	9/1/1996-present

The remainder of this paper will present results discussing the success of these search strategies; discuss the characteristics of the 11 directly relevant sources and their topics, methods, findings, and suggestions for future research; and conclude with advice for future literature searches.

Results

The review of scholarly encyclopedias and review articles found a strong tendency to unquestioningly default to a binary, cisnormative conception of gender in leadership studies, with attention to feminist perspectives (see Table 4). For example, the entry "Leadership and gender" in the *Encyclopedia of Power* (Dowding, 2011) focused on the challenges of leadership advancement for women, and contained a section titled, "Do men and women practice different

leadership styles?" Trans and nonbinary genders were not mentioned. Likewise, the systematic literature review by Shen & Joseph (2021) did not mention trans or nonbinary genders. (Note that we do not hold Shen and Joseph responsible for the limited scope of the profession!).

Table 4

Scholarly encyclopedia entries on gender in leadership studies

Author	Date	Entry	Title	Uses of the terms trans, nonbinary, and/or non-binary
Cho	2004	Gender gap	*Encyclopedia of leadership*	0
Clark	2004	Gender and authority	*Encyclopedia of leadership*	0
Dowding	2011	Leadership and gender	*Encyclopedia of power*	0
English	2006	Gender studies in educational leadership	*Encyclopedia of educational leadership and administration*	0

The use of academic databases to search for scholarship inclusive of and/or directly concerning trans and nonbinary people and leadership netted 11 sources—eight journal articles, two dissertations, and a dissertation portfolio (see Table 5). The dates of publication ranged from 2005 through 2022. The academic departments of the authors included management; leadership development; education; social and behavioral sciences; psychology; health, education, medicine, and social care; organization; economics and management; and sociology. The authors affiliated with 12 different academic institutions and one LLC. The eight articles appeared in seven journals (*Leadership* contained two of the sources). Three of the sources were found in Business Source Complete, eight were found in PsycInfo, and three were found in SocINDEX. One source was found ONLY in Business Source Complete, six sources were found ONLY in PsycInfo (including all three graduate student publications), and two were found ONLY in SocINDEX.

Table 6 shows the number of results found in each journal for searches on **non-binary OR nonbinary** and on **transgender***. *Gender, Work and Organization* had 5 and 12 sources

Table 5

Relevant sources found in academic databases concerning trans and nonbinary identities and leadership

Authors	Year	Title	Author Department Affiliation	Author Institution Affiliation	Document Type	Journal Title	Indexed in	Cited By*
Renn & Bilodeau	2005	Queer student leaders: An exploratory case study of identity development and LGBT student involvement at a midwestern research university	Higher, Adult, & Lifelong Education; Office of LGBT Concerns	Michigan State University	Journal Article	*Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues In Education*	SocINDEX	166
Renn	2007	LGBT student leaders and queer activists: Identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identified college student leaders and activists	Higher, Adult, & Lifelong Education	Michigan State University	Journal Article	*Journal of College Student Development*	PsycInfo	408
Fassinger, Shullman, & Stevenson	2010	Toward an affirmative lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender leadership paradigm.	College of Education; NA; College of Social & Behavioral Sciences	California State Unviersity; Executive Development Group, LLC; Northen Arizona Unviersity	Journal Article	*American Psychologist*	BSC, PsycInfo	182
Pastrana, Jr.	2010	Privileging oppression: Contradictions in intersectional politics.	Sociology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice	John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY	Journal Article	*Western Journal of Black Studies*	SocINDEX	23
Muhr & Sullivan	2013	'None so queer as folk': Gendered expectations and transgressive bodies in leadership	Organization; Economics and Management	Copenhagen Business School; Lund University	Journal Article	*Leadership*	PsycInfo	121
Brewer	2016	The social expectations of masculinity and female-to-male transgender leaders: A heuristic study	Leadership Development	Chicago School of Professional Psychology	Thesis	(NA)	PsycInfo	2
Adams & Webster	2017	When leaders are not who they appear: The effects of leader disclosure of a concealable stigma on follower reactions	Management	Marquette University	Journal Article	*Journal of Applied Social Psychology*	BSC, PyscInfo, SocINDEX	11
Gamboa, Ilac, Carangan, & Agida	2021	Queering public leadership: The case of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender leaders in the Philippines	Department of Psychology	Ateneo de Manila University	Journal Article	*Leadership*	PsycInfo	8
Hamilton-Page	2022	Unbound leadership: How gender non-conforming, or non-binary lesbians navigate the workplace from a place of visibility	Social Sciences	Royal Roads University	Thesis Portfolio	(NA)	PsycInfo	0
Lee	2022	How does openness about sexual and gender identities influence self-perceptions of teacher leader authenticity?	Health, Education, Medicine, & Social Care	Anglia Ruskin University	Journal Article	*Educational Management Administration & Leadership*	BSC	1
Schueler	2022	Transgender organizational leaders in the workplace: A generic qualitative investigation	School of Social and Behavioral Sciences	Capella University	Thesis	(NA)	PsycInfo	0

Note: Cited By indicates the number of citations in Google

matching these searches, respectively, but none were on leadership. *Educational Leadership* had four sources matching on **transgender***; these focused on trans students. No results were found in the other three journals, and thus, no new sources were added to the list.

The next paragraphs will identify notable features of each publication in order by date, including highlights from their literature reviews, methodologies, findings, and future research questions.

Table 6

Results found in selected leadership journals

Journal Title	Search Terms	Results
Educational Leadership	non-binary OR nonbinary	0
	transgender*	4
Gender, Work and Organization	non-binary OR nonbinary	5
	transgender*	12
Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies	non-binary OR nonbinary	0
	transgender*	0
Journal of Leadership Studies	non-binary OR nonbinary	0
	transgender*	0
Leadership Quarterly	non-binary OR nonbinary	0
	transgender*	0

Renn & Bilodeau's (2005) article provides an excellent example of how the field of student development is far advanced of some other academic disciplines in examining LGBT identity development and how that affects leader emergence, behaviors, and identities. Their exploratory study interviewing seven LGBT-identified student leaders, including two trans participants, examined the research question, "What is the relationship between involvement in leadership of LGBT student organization and student outcomes related to (a) leadership development and (b) LGBT identity?" (p. 54). While two of the participants identified as transgender, the study generally grouped LGBT identities together, with one short paragraph hypothesizing gender identity development as a parallel process. Thus, while this piece provides valuable context and theory, it does not zero in on the intersection of gender and leadership. The

authors recommend further research be conducted on how the policies of college campuses may promote or inadvertently inhibit identity development processes as part of creating developmental leadership opportunities. They also recommend using models based on interactive processes rather than developmental stages, to avoid suggesting that student activists are "underdeveloped" as leaders (p. 68). They envisioned future studies on how campus involvement might promote resiliency during identity development of student leaders.

Renn (2007) used a grounded theory approach to analyze open-ended interviews with a purposive sample of 15 LGBT-identified student leaders and activists from three Midwest institutions; three participants were transgender. Renn's research questions explored the variations that exist around student leader identities, and the extent to which students experience their LGBT and leadership identities as interactive. Four identity patterns emerged: LGBT Student Leader, LGBT Activist, Queer Student Leader (not observed in the study), and Queer Activist, depending on the students' intention to transform versus leading from established, positional roles, and the different ways they identified as non-heterosexual. Renn's findings illuminate how advisers and mentors could work with students to motivate involvement and engagement, and Renn suggested four questions for future research, including:

1. Why do outcomes in leadership and LGBT or queer identity differ among students?

2. What is the role of multiple identities in shaping LGBT or queer and leader or activist identities?

3. Are there any students who would fit the Queer Student Leader category, holding Queer identities but more positional leadership concepts?

4. What, specifically, can educators do to maximize the educational and developmental potential of the involvement-identity cycle?

Methodologically, Renn encouraged the use of quantitative measures of identity and cognitive development; age cohort effects; multicampus studies and connections to other studies of identity-based leadership (p. 328).

The 2010 article by Fassinger, Shullman, and Stevenson offered an "affirmative model of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender leadership enactment" (p. 205) based on "small fragments of literature" the authors believe "offer promise in exploring LGBT leadership issues" (p. 204). The authors provide a high-level literature review of the past 60 years of leadership models; an exploration of feminist critiques; and a discussion of stigma and marginalization. The authors argue that "LGBT leadership represents a distinctive leadership experience worthy of empirical attention" as is emerging in the college student development literature (p. 207). The resulting model offered by the authors includes three dimensions: sexual orientation, gender orientation, and the importance of followers and the situation in leadership emergence. Their suggestions for future research include:

1. "Under what conditions does LGBT leadership matter?" What are the situations and conditions where LGBT identity is relevant?

2. "How do LGBT leaders' personal attributes interact with situational properties to shape outcomes?"

3. Is LGBT leadership more or less good based on "the ways in which LGBT identity is or is not a core part of the leader's self-consciousness or self-expression?"

4. Can LGBT leaders inform "How can leadership models be reformulated so that they better integrate leadership and followership?"

5. How can LGBT leadership mentoring occur in a context of stigma and hidden identities?

Pastrana's (2010) article examines the literature on role strain and intersectionality based on interviews with 55 leaders of color within LGBT social movements about their racial and sexual identities. While this paper is neither situated in leadership theory nor primarily focused on gender, it includes critical perspectives from leaders of color on how LGBT leaders of color interpret their experiences. Pastrana finds that people can use such identities strategically within structures of oppression. A transgender participant commented that LGBT people of color tend "to be more comfortable talking about racism and ethnocentrism in the White-dominant community than they are talking about homophobia in communities of color" (p. 62). Pastrana suggested these future research questions:

- How do race, gender, and sexual identity matter, and how do their intersections matter?

- How do marginalized identities result in positive benefits for people within systems of oppression?

- How is success and resilience "conceived, birthed, nurtured, and ultimately reproduced"? (p. 62-63).

Muhr and Sullivan's (2013) case study of a transgender woman, Claire, and her workplace found that "the leader's body, presumed gender, and gendered appearance are salient markers that employees use to make sense of leaders and leadership" (p. 429). The authors note the bodily element of leaders is largely ignored by the field. The study illuminated how "the deep roots of gender dichotomies… make it very difficult for both leaders and followers to make sense of the leader and leadership outside the binaries of the heterosexual matrix" (p. 429). The article does not pose future research questions, but generally challenges the field to consider "queer leadership" as a way to "break with the repetition of the 'normalized' gender categories and in this way offer new ways of thinking and speaking about gendered norms" (p. 431). As the

authors wrote, "Because of the way Claire breaks with the repeated style, men and women in Claire's organization … are beginning to shift their thoughts, speech, acts, and interactions in ways that disrupt assumptions of 'normalcy' in leadership" (p. 431).

Brewer's (2016) study explored "how the social expectations of gender and masculinity influence the experiences of female-to-male transgender leaders" (p. 103). The literature review explored the social construction of masculinity and noted the lack of previous studies about transgender men (p. 28). Brewer interviewed 4 trans men who had held an organizational leadership role and who had initiated gender transition at least 5 years prior to the study. Questions surrounded the participants' life experiences that shaped their perceptions of masculinity; their experiences as leaders; the expectations they felt related to being a man and a male leader; the ways their perspective differed because of prior experiences being socialized as female; the benefits of their gender to their leadership; how openness about gender at work influenced the quality of their work life; ways their experiences differed as a male versus when they were perceived as female; and changes in stereotypes they had witnessed about male and female leaders over time. Brewer recommended future research explore the relationship between leadership style and being transgender; trans leaders' multifaced experiences; and how others' perceptions are affected across a physical transition (p. 108).

Adams and Webster's (2017) article included two studies involving 109 and 206 adult employed Amazon Turk participants who read vignettes, with half the sample reading a vignette involving a leader's disclosure of transgender identity (as if the disclosure happened "today") and the other half reading a vignette about the same leader but without any such disclosure. Regression results from the first study found "leader disclosure of a transgender identity led to lower ratings of leader liking and effectiveness," and that disclosure lowered participants'

relational identification with the leader (p. 654). Regression results from the second study found that "leaders who were found out and disclosed in the later stages of the relationship were rated lower on measures of likability and effectiveness compared to leaders who came out voluntarily and disclosed earlier in the relationship" (p. 658). They suggested future research examine "workplace contextual variables" such as diversity climate, policies, and supportive colleagues as potential moderators of the relationship between disclosure and reactions (p. 660); examining a broader range of and more specific disclosure strategies; variability depending on whether the transition involved a trans woman or a trans man; other mediators; and examination of "group-level leader prototypes and group-level identity" (p. 661).

Gamboa et al. (2021) interviewed six LGBT participants, two that identified as transgender, about their leadership identities and practices within the Phillippines—"a collectivistic, religious, and heteronormative culture" (p. 191). Similar to what was found by this paper's literature review, the authors noted that gender studies in public leadership literature has only considered male-female dichotomies and has fixated on gendered styles of leadership rather than examining the role of genders within "masculinist leadership discourses" (p. 192). One theme involved a desire for intimacy between leaders and the people served, which supported empathy, trust, and affinity, yet also the possibility of furthering personal ambition. Another theme highlighted "unique contextual factors" from Philippine culture's collectivistic and religious values that contributed to the "structural marginalization of LGBT issues in the public sector" as well as the "fragmentation and disengagement of the country's LGBT community" (p. 207). Other than the gaps noted in the literature review, the authors do not offer recommendations for future research.

Hamilton-Page delivered a TedX-style talk as part of a project portfolio (2022) exploring a model of "Unbound Leadership" based on semi-structured interviews with 25 gender non-conforming lesbians. Hamilton-Page had noticed research often explored the experiences of people who come out in the workplace, but not the experiences of people who are visibly queer and don't have a choice about being "out." A grounded theory analysis identified that gender identity and sexual orientation were intertwined and that gender-related harassment was often linked to homophobic behaviors as well. Hamilton-Page found that every one of the participants emerged as leaders in the way they engage in "a reflective process of knowing," taking on a leadership role in navigating moments of tension, embodying and navigating paradoxes, and intentionally using their privilege to support clients and other workers. Hamilton-Page called for future research into this emerging model of "unbound leadership" and to explore why our workplaces and environments want to hang on to binaries so tightly.

Writing from Anglia Ruskin University in the UK, Catherine Lee (2022) administered Bill George's Authentic Leadership self-assessment tool to 43 teacher leaders, including 23 teacher leaders self-identifying as either lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender/nonbinary (the latter, numbering 3, were combined into one category). Lee's goal was to explore "the extent to which sexual and gender identity affects the way in which teacher leaders feel able to be their authentic selves in the school workplace" (p. 155). Descriptive statistics were presented, and free-text responses were thematized using emergent coding (p. 149). Lee found that "heterosexual/cisgendered teachers rated themselves as more authentic in four of the five areas identified by George et al. The only exception to this was the Values – Behaviour dimension in which LGBT teacher leaders scored themselves more positively" (p. 152). Lee recommended that future research explore "the extent to which the adversity experienced by many LGBT

teachers equips them with distinctive attributes that are conducive to highly effective school leadership" (p. 155).

The research question of Schueler's (2022) dissertation was "What are the workplace experiences of transgender organizational leaders?" The literature review found no previous studies on this topic with the transgender population (while the present literature generally concurs, we note Brewer (2016) directly investigated the experiences of female-to-male trans leaders). Schueler used generic qualitative inquiry and semi-structured interviews with eight transgender people who were employed full-time in formal leadership or managerial roles, including six male-to-female transgender leaders and two nonbinary transgender leaders with feminine expression. Five themes emerged in how trans leaders described workplace experiences, including discrimination, leadership, the LGBTQ+ community, social identity, and transition. Schueler reports on organizational characteristics that created more positive experiences; the kinds of microaggressions participants experienced; the benefits of having transitioned; the changes in relationship to the LGBTQ+ community in the workplace; and how gender identity did and did not relate to their leadership styles. Schueler's participants recommended that future research should include longitudinal methods to capture changing experiences across multi-year transitions and perspectives. Schueler recommended exploring female-to-male perspectives and conducting quantitative studies about transgender organizational leaders' leadership styles.

Discussion

This section will first discuss the findings relating to the research questions, "to what extent has the field of leadership studies included trans and/or nonbinary gender identities in academic research of gender and leadership?" and "What themes have emerged in that

literature?" Next, the sources' suggestions for future research will be presented. The section will conclude with thoughts on the literature search process and terminology, how future searches might be improved, and advice for authors when reading and writing about the literature. Answers to the final research question, "what actions are needed in response to the findings," will be presented in a subsequent section.

Expanding and progressing gender and leadership studies

The binary approach to gender and leadership described by scholarly encyclopedia entries provided one indication of the invisibility of trans and nonbinary genders to the field of academic leadership studies. Another indication was the absence of literature related to transgender and nonbinary leadership and leaders in the five selected leadership journals searched in this study. Furthermore, none of the 11 sources found in academic databases, or works by their authors, were included among the over 100 citations in Shen and Joseph's 2021 systematic literature review of gender and leadership. While 10 additional sources were found using Google Scholar's "Cited by" feature, to find those 10, the first author had to comb through more than one thousand results. While research including trans and nonbinary people and perspectives is emerging, it remains on the margins of leadership studies.

This dearth would be less disturbing if it had not been pointed out as an explicit oversight by leading researchers in 2010 in an article that has been cited over 180 times (Fassinger et al., 2010). It is also disappointing that studies of student leaders, which have included gender-diverse identities as part of the research farther back than 2010, have not made more of an impact on the wider field of leadership studies.

Why have these identities been excluded? For decades, much needed attention has been focused on uplifting women in leadership positions and addressing discrimination against them.

While we celebrate the progress that has been made, we must also recognize that some feminisms have been, and continue to be exclusionary of trans people (Hines, 2019). The existence of trans people is also seen as threatening in parts of contemporary United States politics and society, and prejudices and stereotypes about trans women in particular pervade mass media (Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018). Finally, treating gender as the complex variable seems more difficult to incorporate into quantitative research (e.g., using checkboxes on surveys).

As a group and individually, therefore, the sources highlighted a need for a more expansive view of gender, the need to be more intentional about terminology, and the need to engage with theories created by and with people of diverse genders. This need is emphasized by the increasing number of adults who say their gender is different from their sex assigned at birth—5.1% of adults aged 18-29 as compared with 1.6% of adults aged 30-49 (Brown, 2022). Furthermore, the nuances of differences between the experiences of trans men, trans women, and nonbinary genders suggest that future research should trend toward gender as a complex variable (Brewer, 2010; Hamilton-Page, 2022; Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Schueler, 2022). In a national study of LGBTQ teens (*N*=17,112), 8% of adolescents identified as transgender boys, 1% as transgender girls, 20.9% as nonbinary trans masculine, and 2.8% as nonbinary trans feminine (Watson, 2020, p. 436).

In contrast to this prevalence of nonbinary people in the U.S. population, the present study found a lack of attention to nonbinary-identified people in academic research. Only 3 of the 11 sources included nonbinary-identified participants, and one of these did not separate out nonbinary from transgender people. Readers who are interested in learning more about

nonbinary genders may wish to consult Dembroff's (2020) essay or Chapter 8 of the WPATH

Standards of Care (Coleman, et al., 2022).

The sources also point up the importance of considering gender as a non-dichotomous

variable that may change over time, and how the history of one's gender journey may have direct

relevance on one's present gender.[2] For a given research topic, it may matter when in their career

people undergo a gender transition. It may also matter whether the leader is "out," and how long

it has been since they came out in the workplace. Brewer's (2010) and Muhr & Sullivan's (2013)

participants had been "out" for at least 5 and 2 years, while in Adams & Webster's (2017)

vignettes, the leader's disclosure of being transgender had happened that very day. It may matter

whether people had first practiced leadership presenting as a male, then later as a female, or vice

versa, or whether and when they may have identified as nonbinary or genderfluid (Brewer, 2010;

Schueler, 2022). Within this concept of gender fluidity, we must also allow for gender identity to

be articulated separately from gender expression, as Muhr and Sullivan unpack in their study on

how a trans woman's body's various gender presentations affected perceptions of her leadership

(2013). Cisgender people, too, may have experienced gender journeys relevant to their

leadership—for instance, through altering their gender presentations in ways that affect their

leadership styles, perceptions, and outcomes (Wessel et al., 2015).

Across the 11 sources, some themes emerged. First, several of the sources pointed out the

ways in which queer theories can be used to expand our thinking about gender and organizations

(Gamboa et al., 2021; Hamilton-Page, 2022; Lee, 2022; Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Renn, 2007).

Second, the sources acknowledged serious problems in workplaces and environments, including

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[2] Consult the *GLAAD media reference guide—Transgender people* (2022a) for best practices for language referring to one person's multiple gender presentations and identities.

gender discrimination, that create barriers for diverse genders that affect leadership dynamics and leader emergence (Adams & Webster, 2017; Brewer, 2016; Fassinger et al., 2010; Gamboa et al., 2017; Schueler, 2022). The literature review for this paper showed that nonbinary and transgender people are more likely to be denied promotions and face barriers to advancement (Davidson, 2016; Mizock et al., 2018), and leaders of all genders have many opportunities to better support inclusive workspaces and campuses for trans and nonbinary employees and students (e.g., Graham & MacFarlane, 2021; Robinson et al., 2017; Sangganjanavanich & Headley, 2013), Adding to this, the study by Adams and Webster (2017) suggests the need for training to help mitigate or eliminate bias against transgender people during performance evaluations, especially those including subordinate ratings. They also describe how mentors or advisors of leaders who are considering disclosure of a stigma might enjoin strategies to mitigate negative effects of that disclosure, such as highlighting similarities that could help enhance relational identification.

A third theme concerned how gender-diverse people may exercise leadership without being recognized as leaders—for example, as student leaders; through activism; and as people who take the lead in fostering inclusive workplaces (Fassinger et al., 2010; Gamboa et al., 2021; Hamilton-Page, 2022; Pastrana, 2010; Renn, 2007; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). Finally, there were several indications that trans and nonbinary leaders—and queer leaders generally—can have distinctive insights that support their practice of leadership (Brewer, 2016; Fassinger et al., 2010; Lee, 2022; Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Pastrana, 2010; Schueler, 2022). These themes carry forward what was presented in the literature review section of this paper into the context of leadership.

Future Research

While some of Shen and Joseph's (2021) research questions can be expanded to be inclusive of trans and nonbinary leaders, so many of them focus on *differences between* genders that they could be tricky to adapt to include people who may embody multiple genders, who are transitioning from one gender to another, or who identify as agender. Haber-Curran and Tillapaugh (2017) advise focusing on how people view and practice leadership *using gender as a lens*, rather than on differences between leaders as a function of gender (p. 17-18).

To add to what Shen & Joseph have proposed, Table 7 offers a list of ideas culled from the sources found in this review. Across all of the ideas, intersectionality—that is, the influence of multiple social identities on individual experiences—may influence leadership (e.g., Heredia et al., 2020) and deserves careful consideration and dedicated attention (Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2017, p. 15). Even in non-intersectional studies, authors should note whether and how their findings are limited by a focus on isolated identities. In addition, the focus of English-language literature also narrows and limits our conceptions of gender. As Gamboa et al. (2021) demonstrated, culture significantly affects gender dynamics. Studies of gender and leadership in a variety of cultural contexts are needed to broaden our understanding of their settings as well as to illuminate the socially constructed nature of both gender and leadership dynamics.

Table 7

Research questions suggested by the 11 sources

Research Question	Relevant Sources
How do gender identity and gender identity development influence leadership identity and leadership development?	(Renn & Bilodeau, 2005)
How do multiple social identities (including gender identities) interact in shaping leadership identities?	(Renn, 2007; Pastrana, 2010)

How can leaders, leadership educators and other teachers maximize the developmental potential for leaders of all genders?	(Renn, 2007; Fassinger et al., 2010)
How does gender identity interact with the situational effects of an organization on leadership, including stereotypes and expectations bound up in the social identity of a workgroup?	(Adams & Webster, 2017; Fassinger et al., 2010)
How does gender self-awareness affect the outcomes of leadership?	(Fassinger et al., 2010; Hamilton-Page, 2020)
How does gender expression relate to leadership experiences?	(Fassinger et al., 2010; Muhr & Sullivan, 2013)
How do marginalized gender identities result in positive benefits for leaders within systems of oppression?	(Pastrana, 2010)
How do gender-diverse leaders find success and resilience in their leadership roles?	(Hamilton-Page, 2022; Pastrana, 2010; Lee, 2022)
What personal and professional growth opportunities are there for co-workers of transgender / nonbinary leaders? What opportunities are there for organizational change?	(Muhr & Sullivan, 2013)
How well do previous leadership theories (e.g., leadership styles) hold up under the lens of the experiences of trans and nonbinary leaders?	(Brewer, 2016)
What do trans and nonbinary leaders' experiences have to teach us about gender and leadership dynamics?	(Brewer, 2016)
How can organizations and their leaders create safe and supportive environments for leadership development of gender-diverse people, including during gender transition(s)?	(Adams & Webster, 2017)
How does the religion affiliation of organizations or of followers affect the experiences of gender-diverse people in leadership?	(Gamboa et al., 2021)
Why do workplaces want to hang on to binaries—including gender and sexuality—so tightly?	(Hamilton-Page, 2022)
What could longitudinal research of people undergoing gender transitions teach us about gender and leadership?	(Schueler, 2022)

When conducting further research, it may also be worth considering the tendencies of existing power structures to resist change, as well as the tendencies of leaders with "advantage bias" to resist or be ignorant of the need to engage in critical reflection about systemic inequities (Fuchs et al., 2018). The ceding of power by members of an ingroup to members of an outgroup has not historically come easily or without multifaceted resistance (Douglass, 1857), often

underpinned by implicit biases (e.g., sexism, racism) (Staats, 2014), and the desire to protect

ingroup members from judgment for past transgressions against or failure to consider outgroups

and their members (Brewer, 1999). One could compare this phenomenon to an Oil CEO's

reluctance to grapple with their own behavioral impact on climate change (Kanter, 2010). The

goal of critically examining power in future research does not aim to cause feelings of guilt in

leaders, but rather to highlight pathways for positive change to leaders who are eager to bring

more diverse perspectives to the table.

The 11 studies found also offered a handful of methodological suggestions (Table 8) that

could enhance further study.

Table 8

Methodological ideas and suggestions from the 11 sources

Methodological ideas	Relevant Sources
Consider models that are dynamic and interactive rather than developmental stage models	(Renn & Bilodeau, 2005)
Explore quantitative measures, including identity, cognitive development, and age cohort effects; conduct multisite studies	(Renn, 2007; Schueler, 2022)
Consider the use of queer theory to explore leadership topics	(Muhr & Sullivan, 2013)
Conduct longitudinal studies to explore experiences across people's gender transitions and leadership	(Brewer, 2010; Schueler, 2022)
When exploring gender, consider the diversity of gender identities within major categories (e.g. transgender women, feminine men, nonbinary agender people)	(Adams & Webster, 2017; Schueler, 2022)

There are studies that include nonbinary/transgender identities as an option for gender

demographic questions but that set aside responses from those identities due to small numbers of

responses. While exploring that corpus was outside the scope of this paper, it could be useful to

examine how and why researchers have made those choices and what the impact of such choices

is on their research questions and on the net effect of those choices on the field. Such an

exploration could also challenge *why* one is breaking down data by gender and whether that is being done in a meaningful way.

Readers interested in more holistic observations about ways to improve the study of gender as a variable and of doing leadership research with LGBTQ+ populations may wish to consult Morgenroth & Ryan (2018) and Ilac (2021), respectively.

The authors of this paper find the question, "How well do previous leadership theories (e.g., leadership styles) hold up under the lens of the experiences of trans and nonbinary leaders?" particularly compelling. As we found almost no research on the topic, we are also interested in explorations of nonbinary people's leadership experiences. However, the immediate next steps on our research agenda will be to examine the 10 additional results found with Google Scholar, and relevant sources that cited those, to complete the current work. We may also explore search strategies as discussed in the next section. Given the fact that gender-diverse leaders may be sharing their ideas outside academia, we are also interested to explore non-academic sources in a future project.

Thoughts about the Literature Search

Choosing keywords to search library catalogs and academic databases can sometimes mean using outdated or even offensive terms. The next part of this discussion takes a pragmatic approach that we acknowledge also brings up terms that may no longer be used by the communities to which they refer.[3]

While the search strategies taken seemed well-balanced between precision and recall, future searches could consider more related terms, depending on the topic. While such additions

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[3] Readers interested in emerging best practices for library and information professionals to work toward inclusive metadata involving trans and gender-diverse people may be interested in the work of the Trans Metadata Collective (Burns et al., 2022).

may not always bring additional results, they also can be constructed not to reduce precision

unduly. For example,

- **(transman OR transmen OR "trans man" OR "trans men" OR "trans woman" OR "trans women" OR transmasculine OR transfeminine OR "trans masculine" OR "trans feminine") N10 leader*** retrieved an additional 4 results in the three databases (none were relevant)

- **(genderqueer OR genderfluid OR "gender queer" OR "gender fluid") N10 leader*** retrieved 2 results in the three databases, one of which seems relevant.

As the latter search retrieved a potentially relevant result, the authors will likely include

all these word variants in future academic database searches. As the Google Scholar search did

not suffer from lack of recall, the many transgender term variants would likely not be helpful to

add in Google Scholar; however, genderqueer and genderfluid will be added to future search

experiments.

Including the broader terms LGBT or queer is also a judgment call; because most results

with those terms in indexed fields did not end up including transgender or nonbinary people

unless the term(s) transgender or nonbinary were also used, we don't plan to include those terms

in near-future searches. For literature focusing on the broader aspect of LGBTQ+ populations, a

tip for reviewing results with a gender lens is to use "Find in Document" for terms such as **trans**,

binary, **gender**, and/or **participant**.

Additional ideas to test include employing the terms **manage*** and **admin*** to

complement the **leader*** term. It could also be interesting to test searches in education and

health-related databases such as ERIC, Education Research Complete, CINAHL, and Health

Source: Nursing Academic, since these fields are engaged with gender-related policy issues and have their own sub-fields of leadership scholarship.

The fact that 9 of the 11 sources were found only in one of the three academic databases points up the need to cast a wide net. Researchers should also use Google Scholar to supplement academic database searching on this topic. The fact that almost all the 11 sources were cited in Google Scholar and that 10 additional relevant sources were found citing them indicates a growing niche of scholarly interest. This breadth also leaves the corpus somewhat disconnected. For this reason, researchers will need to review bibliographies of sources found; conduct citation searching; and contact authors studying gender-diverse leadership.

Future literature searches should also explore sources on the public web such as social media, blogs, and discussion forums. By relying on academic databases and a scholarly search engine that uses algorithms rewarding popularity (Fagan, 2017, p. 15), this literature search leaves out critically important perspectives by thinkers and scholars who have been barred from, do not have access to, or who do not wish to participate in so-called "mainstream" academia. How might our collective understanding of gender and leadership be enhanced by widening our consideration of the sources of authority on this topic? This search also focused on English-language sources, yet as both gender and leadership are cultural phenomena, the paper urges the field to develop a globally and culturally informed research agenda involving nonbinary and trans identities and leadership. While gender expression and gender identities, and indeed, leadership dynamics vary greatly by culture, that very fact should influence what questions are asked and how we think about gender and leadership.

When *reading* the literature, authors should be advised that selection and definition of gender terms in academic literature is neither consistent nor contemporary with today's

terminology. We noticed some sources conflating sexual identity and gender identity. (While sexual and gender identities may be interrelated, it is important to be clear that "transgender" and "nonbinary" are not subcategories of sexual identities, but gender identities.) As the words we use shape underlying constructs, and vice versa, when researchers *write*, they should consult community organizations' guidance (e.g., https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender) to update their vocabularies and learn how and why terms may change over time.

Authors can also help support more effective literature searches by considering their writing and publishing practices. Some advice to authors and potentially, graduate student advisors who want their work to be more visible, includes:

- submit dissertations directly to relevant academic database publishers for indexing consideration

- check whether and where journals are indexed before choosing venues for submission

- when writing titles and abstracts and entering author-supplied keywords, consider what keywords might be used by searchers

- opt for journal articles over book chapter publication when possible, and/or only publish book chapters for which you will be permitted by license to post the full text online

- consult a librarian for additional suggestions on how to make your work visible.

A Call to Action

What do these studies and the supporting literature suggest that leaders, leadership educators, leadership scholars, and others do to support more inclusive approaches to gender and leadership in study and in practice?

1. Everyone can undertake a **personal learning journey** to expand the way they conceptualize gender and gendered styles of leadership, and to "critically unlearn the

ways that gender has been socialized in their lives" (Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2017). This could mean reading a book like *My New Gender Workbook*, by Kate Bornstein (2013); taking a workshop, or engaging in peer mentoring, just to name a few ideas.

2. Leaders can continue that journey by examining their **leadership style** with a gender lens. How do their leadership behaviors relate to gendered expectations or stereotypes? What changes would leaders make if they felt freer from gendered assumptions and stereotypes?

3. Anyone in a leadership dynamic—including those in a positional leadership role and those in a "follower" role—can foster **more inclusive spaces for leaders of all genders to flourish** (Miller, 2013; Sangganjanavanich & Headley, 2013).

4. Leaders can raise awareness of gender as an aspect of the way they already help **make group power dynamics visible**—when they speak publicly; when they are facilitating meetings; or through dedicated interventions like mentoring conversations, workshops, or retreats.

5. Leadership educators have multiple opportunities to work toward more inclusive understandings of gender **in the classroom** (Robinson et al., 2017). Of primary importance is to be critical consumers of leadership literature. Are the authors of readings inclusive in their approach? What groups are missing in the research? Do readings uphold gender binaries (Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2017)? Including personal experiences of transgender and nonbinary leaders can help remove focus from a binary focus on gendered leadership styles, and open up conversations about how marginalized identities create challenges when navigating leadership dynamics (Lee, 2022).The experiences of transgender leaders offer inherent and distinctive value to perspectives on gender that

may be lacking in the classroom (Brewer, 2010, p. 107) and could connect with students who have marginalized gender identities or are questioning their gender. Educators can also help students explore how their gender role expectations can shape their views of leadership and affect how they view others as leaders.

6. Leadership scholars, especially those using gender as a variable, should review theoretical works written by members of gender-diverse communities, and update methodologies (Ilac, 2021; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). As discussed earlier, when writing about gender, it is important to consult the latest guidance from community organizations for vocabulary considerations.

As with other aspects of leadership, those currently in power have a responsibility to support and to find positive pathways toward change in support of those with less power. They are in an advantaged position with greater access to resources, networks, and information to support this important work.

Conclusion

This literature review showed that trans and nonbinary people have received little attention from academic studies of leadership. Also, the sources found suggest that binary gender assumptions are problematic for most studies of the human experience of leaders and leadership, and that queer theory has potential to support more inclusive workplaces for gender-diverse people, including developing leaders. More research is needed with gender-diverse populations and to address research questions that allow for gender diversity. Leaders, leadership educators, and scholars can all work to create and nurture a culture where gender is made visible as both a personal identity to celebrate as well as a social construction demanding actions to support equity and justice for all.

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