

December 15, 2025

Members of the GSWS/FQT Search Committee
Fisher-Bennett Hall
3340 Walnut Street
Suite 345
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

I am thrilled to apply for the position of Postdoctoral Fellow in Trans Studies within the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program (GSWS) along with the Center for Research in Feminist, Queer, and Transgender Studies (FQT) at the University of Pennsylvania. I will complete my PhD in Adolescent, Post-Secondary, and Community Literacies at The Ohio State University by May 2026. Aligned with your program and center's shared histories and vision, my work is deeply committed to interrogating and improving the K-12 schooling experiences of marginalized students through exceptional teacher education, scholarly inquiry, and sustained community partnerships. To this end, I employ critical qualitative methodologies and culturally sustaining teaching practices to bridge theory, research, and pedagogy through an interdisciplinary lens informed by my lived experiences, multifaceted theoretical orientations, and investment in education as a liberatory practice.

Informed by my experiences as a Black trans queer disabled scholar-educator working with historically marginalized youth and teachers, my research utilizes critical, interdisciplinary, community-centered qualitative methodologies to explore the relationships among power, place, personhood, and literacy within a U.S. sociohistorical context. My dissertation, a critical ethnographic study, fills gaps in literacy scholarship and K-12 pedagogical recommendations by exploring eight Black adolescents' conceptualization and embodiment of identities, literacies, and community in an LGBTQ+-affirming high school in the Deep South. Informed by Southern legacies of racism and slavery, the dominant discourse regards the Deep South as unlivable for LGBTQ+ folks, particularly Black LGBTQ+ youth. With attention to situatedness, this project troubles notions of what and who is possible within literacy classrooms and communities in the Deep South (and other conservative regions). Currently, I am writing my findings chapter using a theoretical framework informed by Black geographies, queer and trans of color theories, and embodied literacies. As an the Postdoctoral Fellow in Trans Studies at University of Pennsylvania, I will extend this work in teaching and research, and dialogue with Penn students and faculty, exploring: 1) the personal and professional experiences that inform youth and teacher conceptualizations of gender, race, and literacies; and 2) how place, space, and histories impact one's orientations toward pedagogy, community-building, and societal change.

Through both independent and collaborative work, I explore the question: *What does it mean to engage in qualitative inquiry with deep conviction and orientations toward a more just and equitable educational landscape?* My dissertation builds on a vast array of research experiences through which I have cultivated expertise in critical and culturally sustaining qualitative methodologies. As a member of grant-funded teams at both Ohio State and Boston University, I have worked with senior scholars to conduct community-based inquiries to determine the impact of policy, community initiatives, and organizational support on the educational trajectories of minoritized students. With a commitment to bridging gaps between the academy, K-12 schools, and communities, I intentionally choose to disseminate my research through traditional forums (journals, academic conferences) as well as community workshops, zines, podcasts, and professional blogs.

As an interdisciplinary scholar, teaching and designing community-centered learning experiences are central to my identity. My approach to designing teacher education courses is deeply informed by my K-12 teaching experience and my commitment to bridging gaps between teachers, students, and communities. In addition to

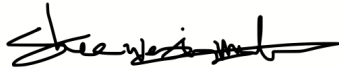
classroom teaching, I have served as a school-based instructional coach and nationally recognized literacy consultant, partnering with educators and organizational leaders to create more equity-centered, inclusive learning spaces for minoritized students. At the university level, I have taught both undergraduate and graduate students in face-to-face and fully online environments where I created holistic, community-centered, and asset-based learning experiences. While teaching university courses such as *Diverse Texts and Comprehension* and *Literature for Adolescents*, I fostered engaging learning spaces where students engaged in necessary dialogue, text engagement, and reflection designed to help make connections between literacy, society, and classroom application. As an educator, my work has been recognized not only through exemplary student evaluations at the university level but also through awards such as the 2023 LGBTQIA+ Advocacy & Leadership Award and the 2023 Bill Konigsberg Award from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Given my teaching expertise and pedagogical orientation, I am excited to contribute to discussions around feminist, trans, and queer pedagogies within and outside of traditional learning spaces at the University of Pennsylvania.

My research and potential as a scholar of literacy and English education have been supported by the Cultivating New Voices among Scholars of Color (CNV) Fellowship, sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the premier professional organization in English education. At Ohio State, I have received several travel grants, the Department of Teaching and Learning's 2024-2025 Dissertation Fellowship, and the 2025-2026 Presidential Fellowship, the most prestigious graduate award. Overall, this funding has allowed me to establish significant and enduring research programs with students and teachers of color, relationships I will continue to nurture in my future work. I see my time at the University of Pennsylvania as a continued opportunity to add nuance and complexity to my already necessary work while also contributing to the larger community through research partnerships, additional secured funding, and teaching.

Alongside my research and teaching, my service reflects a sustained commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and community action in pursuit of educational justice. Nationally, I serve as a member of the LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee within the National Council of Teachers of English, where I help design professional learning for teachers and advise the organization on position statements related to gender and sexuality in literacy education. I have also contributed to the field through service on Research in the Teaching of English's Desk Review Committee, as an advisory board member and guest editor for *English Journal*, and as a reviewer for multiple education and gender studies journals.

I am drawn to the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program (GSWS) along with the Center for Research in Feminist, Queer, and Transgender Studies (FQT)'s joint commitment to critical, nuanced interrogation of societal issues, interdisciplinary focus, and desire to extend its work beyond classrooms and campus. I believe my research, teaching, and service will positively contribute to this mission as the Postdoctoral Fellow in Trans Studies. I am excited about this opportunity, and I look forward to discussing how I can contribute to your work and the larger Penn community. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



shea wesley martin, M.Ed. | Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Teaching and Learning
College of Education and Human Ecology
The Ohio State University
martin.4313@osu.edu | (571) 319-3402

shea wesley martin

martin.4313@osu.edu | sheawesleymartin.com

EDUCATION

- 2021 - The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH**
Ph.D., Teaching and Learning, Expected 2026
Concentration: Adolescent, Post-Secondary, and Community Literacies
Graduate Minor: Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- 2021 Boston University, Boston, MA**
M.Ed., Education Leadership and Policy
- 2015 George Mason University, Fairfax, VA**
B.A. with the highest distinction in English
Concentration in World Literature
Minor in African and African American Studies
Honors Thesis: “‘Wherever You Go, I’ll Go’: Examining Female Bonding as Womanist Resistance in the Book of Ruth and *The Narrows*”
Dean’s List: 2013-2015
- 2011 Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale, VA**
A.A. with distinction in Liberal Arts
Dean’s List: 2009 - 2011

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Queer literacies, queer pedagogies, queer of color critique, race and diaspora studies, literacy education, Black trans studies, gender and sexuality, educational policy, anti-racist education, teacher development, family and community education, digital pedagogies

PUBLICATIONS

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

martin, s.w., Mattern, C., Miller, H.C. (2025). How We Survive: LGBTQIA+ Young Adult Literature as Maps for Literacy Educators’ Grieving, Teaching, and Resisting. *The Dragon Lode*, 43 (2).

martin, s.w. (2024). “Who All Gon Be There?": A Theoretical Meditation on Blackness, Transness, and K-12 Pedagogies for [Black] Trans Futures. *Journal of Queer and Trans Studies in Education*.

martin, s.w. & Miller, H.C. (2024). Like a Love/Hate Story: Reckoning with Adultism and Youth Critique in Intergenerational LGBTQ+ Literacy Spaces. *English Journal*, 113(6), 67-77.

martin, s.w., Shelton, S.A., Durand, S., Hendrix-Soto, A. (2024). From the Guest Co-Editors. *English Journal*, 113(6), 11-13.

martin, s.w., Jimenez, I., Reid, S., Islam, A.Q., Rodriguez-Astacio, R. (2024). "I've Seen Literacies Move Mountains": A Queer of Color Critique as a Guide toward Reading and Teaching beyond What We Know. *English Journal*, 113(6), 16-24.

martin, s.w. & Miller, H.C. (2022). The Category Is "Pandemic Queer": Reading, Connecting, and Reimagining Literacy with LGBTQ Youth in the Age of COVID-19. *Radical Teacher*, 124, 13-23.

martin, s.w. & Lifshitz, J. (2022). Chasing Rainbows in Stormy Weather: Reading and Discussing LGBTQ+ YAL as Liberatory Professional Development during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *English Leadership Quarterly*, 45(1), 1-4.

martin, s.w. (2021). "What Do We Do with the White [Cis] Women?": *Juliet Takes a Breath* as the Blueprint for Reimagining Allyship in Literacy Instruction. *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*, 4(1).

BOOK CHAPTERS

martin, s.w. (forthcoming, March 2026). Toward a more queeruptive literacy pedagogy: Lil Nas X's "Industry Baby" Music Video as Sample for Imagining Alternative, Pleasure-Filled Learning Spaces for Queer Kids of Color. In E. Richardson, T. Lindsey, and G. Pough (Eds.), *Hip Hop Studies in Queer Black Feminisms*. (peer-reviewed)

Blackburn, M.V. & **martin, s.w.** (2024). Queer literacies. *Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* (2nd ed.). Wiley. (peer-reviewed)

martin, s.w. (2024). Three notes on world-ending/bending/building methodologies. In P. Pasque and R. McMillian (Eds.). *Advancing Qualitative Inquiry Toward Methodological Inclusion*. Routledge. (peer-reviewed)

martin, s.w. (2024). The fat kid who flew. In T. Jewell (author), *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School*. HarperCollins.

martin, s.w. (2022). The poetics of queerness: Exploring the use of verse in Dean Atta's *Black Flamingo*. In P. Greathouse and C. Miller (Eds.). *Queer Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the English Language Arts Curriculum* (2nd ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.

BOOK REVIEWS

martin. s.w. & Blackburn, M.V. (2024). *Youth Fiction and Trans Representation* by TOM SANDERCOCK, New York: Routledge, 2023, US\$170.00 (hardcover), 210 pp. *Journal of LGBT Youth*.

REPORTS AND BRIEFS

Kearney, A., Giddings, A., Jones, K. A., Wallace, E., **martin, s.w.**, & Pasque, P. A. (2024). *The Campus Experience of Black Campus Change and Transfer Students – Centering the Student Voice in a Multi-Campus University Innovation Alliance Initiative: A Research Study and Report on the Black Student Success Initiative*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University.

Varga, S.M., Cheng, A., Skubel, A., Huang, Y., **martin. s.w.**, & Zaff, J. (2021), *Choices and Challenges: Florida Parents' Experiences with the State's McKay and Gardiner Scholarship Programs for Students with Disabilities*. Boston University, CERES Institute for Children & Youth.

CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES

Martin. s.w. & Mattern, C. (2025). *Bless the Blood: A Cancer Memoir*. Educators Guide with Wahela Nehanda, distributed through Penguin Random House.

martin, s.w. (2024). *Everything I Learned About Racism I Learned in School*. Educators' Guide with Tiffany Jewell, distributed through HarperCollins.

martin, s.w. (2023). *Punished for Dreaming*. An Engagement Guide with Dr. Bettina Love, distributed through St. Martin's Press.

martin, s.w. (2023). *America Redux*. Educators' Guide with Ariel Aberg-Riger, distributed through HarperCollins.

martin, s.w. & Qaroni, N. (2023). *Only this Beautiful Moment*. Educators' Guide with Abdi Nazemian, distributed through HarperCollins.

martin, s.w. & Qaroni, N. (2022). *The Chandler Legacies*. Educators' Guide with Abdi Nazemian, distributed through HarperCollins.

martin, s.w. & Miller, C. (2020). *Like a Love Story*. Educators' Guide with Abdi Nazemian, distributed through HarperCollins.

SELECTED WEB-BASED PUBLICATIONS

martin, s.w. (October 2022). *It's Lit: Queer Youth on an Online Book Club That Became Family*. *Autostraddle*. Available at

<https://www.autostraddle.com/its-lit-queer-youth-on-an-online-book-club-club-that-became-family/>

martin, s.w. (February 2021). Wrestling With Kamala and Beyond: Reckoning With Blackness, Womanhood, and What Comes Next. *Autostraddle*. Available at <https://www.autostraddle.com/to-kamala-and-beyond-reckoning-with-blackness-womanhood-and-what-comes-next/>.

martin, s.w. (December 2020). 8 Young Adult Novels in Verse that Brought Me Back to Life in 2020. *Electric Literature*. Available at <https://electricliterature.com/8-young-adult-novels-in-verse-that-brought-me-back-to-life-in-2020/>.

martin, s.w. (November 2020). Wild, Fat, Queer, and Black: How I Became Free In The Mountains And Never Left. *Autostraddle*. Available at <https://www.autostraddle.com/shear-martin-mountains-fat-queer-black/>

martin, s.w. (November 2020). I Made a Blueprint for Breathing. *Human Parts*. Available at <https://humanparts.medium.com/as-the-world-burns-a-blueprint-for-breathing-2f305d86c31c>

martin, s.w. & Miller, C. (October 2020). *Like a Love Story* and Teaching LGBTQ History. National Council for Teachers of English: Blog. Available at <https://ncte.org/blog/2020/10/teaching-lgbtq-history-activism-like-love-story/>

martin, s.w. (August 2020). A Syllabus for the Uprising. *Electric Literature*. Available at electricliterature.com/what-to-read-to-get-ready-for-the-queer-black-revolution/.

martin, s.w. (November 2019). A Burro Learns to Breathe. *Identity, Education, and Power*. Available at medium.com/identity-education-and-power/a-wild-burro-learns-to-breathe-b7d5b83430ba.

martin, s.w. (October 2019). I'm Coming Out as a Queer Educator (who will no longer do this work alone). Heinemann Publishing: Blog. Available at blog.heinemann.com/im-coming-out-as-a-queer-educator-who-will-no-longer-do-this-work-alone.

REFEREED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

martin, s.w. (forthcoming). "I'm Not a Dreamer, I Just Imagine A Lot:" Black Youth's Queer World-Building as Maps toward Survival, Revision, and Joy in the Deep South [Paper presentation]. In J. Hermann-Whitmarth & R. Schey (Co-Chairs), *Queer and Trans Literacies and Pedagogies of Care:*

Centering Queer and Trans Humanity, Joy, and Connection in Painful Times. NCTE Assembly for Research (NCTEAR) 2026 Annual Conference, Columbia, SC.

martin, s.w. (forthcoming). *Black Queer Youth Literacies as Maps of Resistance, Reclamation, and Revision in the Deep South* [Paper presentation]. In A. González Ybarra (Chair), *(Re)Shaping Our Educational Futures Through Literacies of Resistance*. American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2026 Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA.

Gonzalez, A., Regelado, Y., cooper, m., **martin, s.w.**, Mustafa, R., Qiu, T., Thakurta, A. (November 2025). *Freedom Dreaming: Teaching with Care, Solidarity, and Resistance* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English 2025 Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

martin, s.w., Saddler, E., Flores, J., Touchstone, J., Munger, J. (November 2025). *We Promise It's Possible: Dreaming, Teaching, and Affirming LGBTQIA+ Youth in Deep South Literacy Classrooms* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English 2025 Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

martin, s.w. (November 2025). *Black Queer Youth Literacies as Maps of Resistance, Reclamation, and Revision in the Deep South* [Poster presentation]. In Cultivating New Voices Poster Session. National Council of Teachers of English 2025 Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

martin, s.w. (February 2025). *"The Magic Kind of Makes it a Little Lighter": Black Queer Reading as A Map Toward Imaginative Sensemaking in Literacy Education* [Paper presentation]. In K. Abdi (Chair), *On Space and Literacy*. National Council of Teachers of English's Assembly on Research (NCTEAR) 2025 Annual Conference, Columbus, OH.

martin, s.w. (December 2024). *"Should I Be Hopeful About That?": Examining (Im)possibilities of Queer of Color World-Making in Teacher Education* [Paper presentation]. In R. Schey (Chair), *(Im)Possible Spacetimes of Politics and Resistance: Queering Empowerment and Agency in Literacy Research*. Literacy Research Association (LRA) 2024 Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA.

martin, s.w. (November 2024) *Taking Turns: LGBTQ+ YA Literature as a Map toward Disrupting Hierarchies in Professional Learning* [Poster presentation] In Cultivating New Voices Poster Session. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2024 Annual Meeting, Boston, MA

martin, s.w., Aberg-Riger, A., Jaber, S. (November 2024). *Beyond Hope: Storytelling, Freedom-Dreaming, and Curricular Design as Pedagogies of Resistance* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2024 Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.

martin, s.w., McBride, A., Timmons-Long, L., Thomas, E.E., Toliver, S. (November 2024). *Black to the Future: Black YA Speculative Fiction as Maps of Possibility* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2024 Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.

Mattern, C., **martin, s.w.**, Miller, H.C. (November 2024). *Literacies for Broken Hearts: Grieving, Organizing, and Surviving while Reading and Teaching the World* [Paper presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2024 Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.

martin, s.w. (December 2023). *We Deserve More: Using LGBTQ+ YA Literature to Reimagine Professional Learning for Queer and Trans Educators of Color* [Paper presentation]. In R. Schey (Chair), *Queering Hierarchies: Breathing New Life into Literacy Research through Queer and Trans Studies*. Literacy Research Association (LRA) 2023 Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA.

Thompson, J., **martin, s.w.**, Miller, C., Mattern, C. (November 2023). *The Group Chat as Radical Care in Pandemic-Era Teaching: Rethinking Professional Learning and Connections in the Literacy Profession* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2023 Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH.

martin, s.w., Miller, C., Blackburn, M.V., Lifshitz, J. (November 2023). *High School Matters--The Future Is Queer . . . If We Fight for It: Creating New Bonds and Connections with LGBTQ+ Texts* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2023 Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH.

martin, s.w., Jimenez, I., Reid, S., Timmons-Long, L., Adeniji, D., Islam, A., Acevedo, G., Rodriguez-Astacio, R. (November 2023). *More Than Representation and Texts: The Necessity of Queer of Color Critique in Literacy Instruction and Research for a New Generation* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2023 Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH.

Jewell, T., Ho, J., Le, M., **martin, s.w.**, Maldonado, T., German, R. (November 2023). *Everything We Learned about Racism We Learned in School* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2023 Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH.

Kim, J., Miller, C., Hines, C., **martin, s.w.**, Rodriguez-Astacio, R. (November 2023). *We Can Be Heroes: Queerness and Graphic Novels* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2023 Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH.

martin, s.w. & C. Miller. (November 2022). *The Category Is Queer Lit and the Future is Bright: Exploring Lessons from a Fiercely Magical LGBTQ+ Book Club* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2022 Annual Meeting, Anaheim, CA.

Kleinrock, L., Lifshitz, J., **martin, s.w.**, Miller, H., Minor, K. (November 2023). *The North Star: Centering Antibias and Antiracism in Your Classroom and School Community* [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2022 Annual Meeting, Anaheim, CA.

martin, s.w., Mattern, C., Mathews, J. (July 2022). *There's No Place Like Home: Place-based Pedagogies of Resistance and Change* [Panel presentation]. Presented at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) ELATE Homecoming Conference. Louisville, KY.

Hines, C., **martin, s.w.**, Miller, C. (July 2022). *We All Have Origin Stories: Leveraging Comics, Storytelling, and Multimedia in Literacy Instruction* [Panel presentation]. Presented at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) ELATE Homecoming Conference. Louisville, KY.

Schey, R., Haskey-Valerius, B., Jiménez, I., Jiménez, L., McInnis, D., **martin, s.w.**, Oviatt, R. *Working toward Queer and Trans Liberation in and through English Education* [Panel Presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) ELATE Homecoming Conference. Louisville, KY.

Kleinrock, L., Lifshitz, J., **martin, s.w.**, Miller, H., Minor, K. (November 2021) *Turning Anti-Bias and Anti-Racist Theory Into Classroom Practice*. [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Meeting, online.

Ahmed, S., Ebarvia, T., Everett, C., Garza, J., Jewell, T., Johnson, A., Lifshitz, J., **martin, s.w.**, Osborn, A., Ribay, R., Silvas, T. (November 2021). *Becoming an Antiracist Educator: Celebrating (and Interrogating) our Literacy Practices*. [Panel presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Meeting, online.

Kleinrock, L., **martin, s.w.**, Miller, H., Minor, C. (November 2020). *The Confluence of Antibias and Antiracist Theory and Practice* [Panel presentation]. Accepted for presentation at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2020 Annual Meeting. Denver, CO. Canceled due to COVID-19.

Ebarvia, T., **martin, s.w.**, et. al. (November 2020). *Becoming an Antiracist Educator: Lessons in Agitation* [Conference presentation]. Accepted for presentation at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2020 Annual Meeting. Denver, CO. Canceled due to COVID-19.

martin, s.w., Kleinrock, L., Strack, N., Timmons-Long, L. (November 2020). *Queer Is Lit: Honoring the Confluence, Brilliance, and Resilience in Queerness through Liberatory Literacy Instruction* [Panel presentation]. Accepted for presentation at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2020 Annual Meeting. Denver, CO. Canceled due to COVID-19.

martin, s.w. (November 2019). *#Selfie Game Strong: Recentering Students in Culturally Responsive Classrooms* [Paper presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2019 Annual Meeting. Baltimore, MD..

martin, s.w. (April 2015). *"Wherever You Go, I'll Go": Exploring Female Bonding as Resistance* [Paper presentation]. Annual Undergraduate Research Conference. Butler University, Indianapolis, IN.

martin, s.w. (October 2014). *"Ain't No Sissies Here": Examining the Black Community's Suppression of Human Sexuality* [Paper presentation]. Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference of Undergraduate Scholarship. Sweet Briar College, Lynchburg, VA.

INVITED LECTURES, PRESENTATIONS, AND WORKSHOPS

martin, s.w. (March 2025). "Mapping Literacies in Unlivable(?) Places," WGSS 8800 (Trans & Queer Theories), The Ohio State University [Guest Lecture].

martin, s.w. (May 2023). "I Got What They Waiting For...": Sampling Lil Nas X's "Industry Baby" in a Queer of Color Critique and Meantime Reimagining of Literacy Pedagogical Interventions and Possibilities," Hip Hop Literacies Conference, The Ohio State University.

martin, s.w. (February 2023). "White Teachers as Allies in Literacy and What Young Adult Literature Offers: A Close Reading of *Juliet Takes a Breath*." EDUTL 7364 (Multicultural Literature in Education), The Ohio State University [Guest Lecture]

martin, s.w. (June 2022). "Black Pride: Promoting Academic Excellence for Black LGBTQI+ Students: Connector Roundtable," *The White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans*. [featured panelist]

martin, s.w., Miller, C., Nazemian, A. (October 2020). "Making Historical Fiction Relevant: Teaching LGBTQ+ History and Identity in Secondary Classrooms." NCTE Member Gathering. National Council for Teachers of English. Virtual.

martin, s.w. (August 2020). "Dreaming in Darkness: How to Teach While the World is on Fire." Better Together: Anti-Racist Education in the Classroom, MASSCUE. Virtual. [Keynote]

martin, s.w. (August 2020). "Queer is Lit: On Queering the Revolution and our Classrooms." Presented at Panel for #NCTE Build Your Stack. National Council for Teachers of English, Virtual.

Kleinrock, E., **martin, s.w.**, Minor, K., Wickham, K. (July 2020). "So You Want to Do ABAR Work?": Investing and Sustaining Anti-bias/Anti-racist (ABAR) Work in Schools and Communities. Liberate and Chill. Virtual.

martin, s.w. (June 2020). "Queer-ing Classrooms: Supporting All Students through LGBTQ+ Inclusive Education." SEL Symposium: Creating Everyday Brave Voices. Austin Independent School District, Austin, TX.

martin, s.w. (June 2020). "Undoing Selfie Pedagogy: Recentering Students in Our Practice." SEL Symposium: Creating Everyday Brave Voices, Austin Independent School District.

martin, s.w. & Fortin, E. (April 2020). Dreaming and Working Toward Liberation: A Module for Educators. Liberate and Chill. Virtual.

martin, s.w. & Fortin, E. (January 2020). Dreaming and Working Toward Love-Filled Liberation in Schools. EduCon 2020. Philadelphia, PA, 2020

martin, s.w. (November 2015). "To Be or Not to Be in the Closet: LGBTQ+ Educators in the Classroom." Panel presented at Northeast LGBTQ+ Summit. Teach for America, Washington, D.C.

martin, s.w. (May 2015). *Communion: Black Sexuality, Community, and Reconciliation* [Paper presentation]. Celebration of Scholarship, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA.

martin, s.w. (May 2015). "Wherever You Go, I'll Go": Examining the Womanist Revolution in the Fiction of Ann Petry and the Book of Ruth [Poster presentation]. Celebration of Scholarship, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

FEATURED MEDIA COVERAGE

The Ohio State University's College of Education and Human Ecology. (March 2022). "Spotlight: International Trans Day of Visibility." *Office of Equity, Diversity, and Global Engagement: News*. Interview. Available at <https://edge.ehe.osu.edu/2022/03/25/international-transgender-day-of-visibility/>.

Bertrand, C. & K. Porcher (March 2022). "Black Lives Don't Matter" if We Don't All Matter: Loving & Supporting Black LGBTQ+ Folx." *Black Gaze Podcast*. Interview. Available at <https://anchor.fm/black-gaze/episodes/Black-Lives-Dont-Matter-if-We-Dont-All-Matter-Loving-Supporting-Black-LGBTQ-Folx-e1fphkb>.

The Ohio State University's College of Education and Human Ecology. (November 2021). "LGBTQ students: Authentic and Daring to be Free" *Inspire Podcast*. Interview. Available at <https://ehe.osu.edu/podcast/lgbtq-students-authentic-and-daring-be-free>

Singer, N. (November 2020). "Teaching in the Pandemic: 'This is Not Sustainable.'" New York Times. News Feature. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/30/us/teachers-remote-learning-burnout.html>

Barocas, B., & Lacy, J. (August 2020). "The pandemic is an extraordinary opportunity to reform US education." Vox Media. News Feature. Available at [vox.com/2020/8/7/21358422/school-closure-covid-19-gap-year-standardized-tests](https://www.vox.com/2020/8/7/21358422/school-closure-covid-19-gap-year-standardized-tests)

Teague-Bowling, H & Jensen, A., (June 2020). "Liberate & Chill - Embracing a Mindset of Possibility." *Interchangeable White Ladies*. Channel 253. Podcast. Available at podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/ep-72-liberate-chill-embracing-a-mindset-of-possibility/id1262284899?i=1000476179117

Teague-Bowling, H & Jensen, A. (March 2020). "Working Toward Liberation with shea martin." *Interchangeable White Ladies*. Channel 253. Podcast. Available at podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/ep-69-working-toward-liberation-interview-shea-martin/id1262284899?i=1000471681061

Roberts, K. & Roberts, M. (June 2019). "Being a stronger ally with shea martin." *Beyond the Letters*. Heinemann. Podcast. Available at blog.heinemann.com/being-a-stronger-ally-shea-martin

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS RECEIVED

- 2025 Presidential Fellowship, The Ohio State University
- 2024 Dissertation Fellowship, Department of Teaching & Learning, The College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University
- 2024 Cultivating New Voices among Scholars of Color Fellowship Program, National Council of Teachers of English
- 2022 Edward J. Ray Travel Award for Scholarship and Service, The Ohio State University
- 2021 Graduate Enrichment Fellowship, The Ohio State University
- 2015 Undergraduate Research Scholars Program, George Mason University
- 2014 University Scholarship Travel Fund, George Mason University

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2025 Black Queer Visionaries Summit, ACLU Alabama
- 2024 Marsha P. Johnson Civil Rights & Civic Leadership Scholarship (Ohio State)
- 2023 LGBTQIA+ Advocacy & Leadership Award (NCTE)
- 2022 Bill Konigsberg Award, Assembly on Literature for Adolescents (NCTE)
- 2021-2022 Graduate Enrichment Fellowship, The Ohio State University
- 2019-2020 Holmes Scholar, Boston University
- 2017 Rising Star Teacher Spotlight for DCPS' Real Schools, Jacksonville, FL

- 2015 Dennis-Weathers Award for University Service, George Mason University
- 2015 The Charisse Renee Cecil Scholarship Award, George Mason University
- 2015 Outstanding Graduating Senior in English Honors, George Mason University
- 2015 Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Arts and Research's (OSCAR) Student Excellence Nomination
- 2015 OSCAR Undergraduate Scholars Research Program Fellow, George Mason University
- 2014 Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education Vision Award for Academic Achievement

LANGUAGES

Fluent in English

Proficient in Spanish

UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2022-2023 **The Ohio State University**
Diverse Literature and Comprehension: Early Childhood Education (3 credits)
Literature for Young Adults (3 credits)

PK-12 TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2024 - **Magic City Acceptance Academy**
Instructional Coach
Adjunct Humanities Teacher
- 2018-2020 **Boston Collegiate Charter School**
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator
English Teacher
- 2015-2018 **Duval County Public Schools**
English Teacher
- 2011 **Horton's Kids**
Summer Classroom Co-Teacher

RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMING EXPERIENCE

- 2023-2025 **EHE Seed Research Project: *Understanding the psychosocial and behavioral health benefits of providing culturally informed services and housing to sexual and gender-diverse youth experiencing homelessness***
Graduate Research Associate
Principal Investigators: Dr. Allen Mallory; Dr. Mollie Blackburn
- 2023-2024 **QualLab, The Ohio State University**
Graduate Research Associate
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Penny Pasque

2021	Institute for Racial Equity Literacy Facilitator
2019-2021	CERES Institute for Children and Youth, Boston University Graduate Research Assistant Faculty Advisors: Dr. Jonathan Zaff, Dr. Shannon Varga - Supported and collaborated with research teams to conduct funded qualitative and mixed-methods research with local, national, and international projects related to community research partnerships, program evaluation, family involvement in special education, and building anti-racist pedagogy - Supported the research team in the development of robust literature reviews, participant recruitment protocols and management, interview/focus group protocols, qualitative analysis plans, and communications for institute projects
2016-2018	Teach for America Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator (2018) Teacher Educator Advisor (2017) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Facilitator (2016)
2014-2015	African & African American Studies Department, George Mason University Resource and Research Assistant Faculty Advisors: Dr. Wendi Manuel-Scott, Dr. Mika'il Petin
2013-2015	College of Humanities and Social Sciences, George Mason University Development Assistant
2013-2014	Rebuilding Together AmeriCorps Program Coordinator
2010-2011	National 4-H Council Development Associate

LEADERSHIP

2023-2024	OSU EHE Graduate Student Advisory Council
2020	AACTE Holmes Advisory Board, Master's Representative
2018-2020	Boston Collegiate Charter School Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
2016-2017	Teach for America Jacksonville Alumni Board
2015-2016	Teach for America National LGBTQ Advisory Board

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2023-	Desk Review Committee, <i>Research in the Teaching of English</i>
2023-	Editorial Board, <i>English Journal</i>
2022-	Member, NCTE LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee
2023-2024	Guest Co-Editor, <i>English Journal</i> Special Issue (July 2024)

2022 Reviewer, *The Journal of Literacy Research*

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

2024- International Literacy Association (ILA)
2023- Literacy Research Association (LRA)
2019- National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE)
2015- Phi Beta Kappa
2019-2021 American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)

SELECTED COMMUNITY-BASED WORK AND ACTIVISM

2022- Founder/Co-Organizer, The Unicorn Express: LGBTQ+ Book Distribution
2021-2024 Founder/Facilitator, “Yours, Truly” Writing Workshops for Educators
2021-2024 Founder/Facilitator, Rainbow Summer, an LGBTQ YA Lit Book Club for Educators
2020-2022 Curator, The Anonymous Teacher Speaks Project
2020-2022 Co-Founder and Lead Organizer, Liberate and Chill, a professional
development community for antiracist educators
2020-2022 Co-Organizer, Fresh Air, a virtual affinity space for Black educators
2020-2023 Co-Founder, Love & LiteraTea, an online literacy space for LGBTQ+ youth
2020-2021 Facilitator, Institute for Racial Equity Literacy, Heinemann Publishing
2019-2022 Founder, The Mountaintop Retreat, a retreat for DEI leaders in education
2017-2018 Organizer, SPACE, a gathering space for teacher-activists, Jacksonville, FL
2013-2015 Volunteer, Fall for the Book, George Mason University, fallforthebook.org

Research Statement

Informed by my experiences as a Black trans queer disabled scholar-educator working with historically marginalized youth and teachers, my research employs a critical, interdisciplinary, community-centered qualitative methodology to explore the relationships among power, place, personhood, and literacy within a U.S. sociohistorical context. Three interconnected strands guide my research: (1) examining how place, identity, and sociohistorical realities shape marginalized youth's literacy practices, (2) exploring community-centered, identity-driven teacher learning as a pathway to more affirming, reflexive pedagogies; and (3) employing critical qualitative methodologies that are purposefully asset-based, relational, and justice-oriented. Together, this research advocates for more nuanced, asset-based, possibility-oriented orientations to teaching and learning that center youth agency and sensemaking.

Youth Literacy Practices: Critical Literacies, Place-Making, and Pedagogical Possibilities

My primary strand of inquiry explores forms of resistance, creativity, and sensemaking within the literacy practices of marginalized youth. In this strand, I explore the following questions with conviction and deep curiosity: *How do Black queer and trans youth's literacy practices contribute to their survival, resistance, and thriving in violent, death-dealing systems and structures? How do place, space, and identity impact how Black queer and trans youth read and compose themselves and the worlds in which they live?* A key example of this inquiry is my dissertation, in which I use critical ethnography to examine how sociohistorical context, place, and identity shape the literacy practices of seven Black high school students at an LGBTQ+-affirming school in the Deep South. As an embedded researcher, teacher, and coach in the research site, I constructed a robust corpus of data designed to deeply understand how the particular schooling structure and local context interact with students' personal identities and experiences to inform their everyday literacy practices. Drawing on queer literacies (Blackburn, 2003; Pritchard, 2017), Black geographies (McKittrick, 2006; Eaves, 2017), and critical social theory, I plan to present my findings through portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), a methodology that offers a holistic view of the tensions, possibilities, and pedagogical insights in students' negotiations of place, time, and self.

I have also written about the impact of LGBTQ+ young adult literature (YAL) and queer literacy spaces on LGBTQ+ youth's agentive literacy practices, identity development, and world-building. Using practitioner inquiry and critical content analysis, this collaborative work explores the possibilities within pandemic-era queer pedagogies (martin & Miller, 2022) and positions YAL as an invitation to disrupt adultism, prioritize student critical literacy engagement, and make space for asset-based, community-centered dialogue within literacy learning spaces (martin & Miller, 2024). My dissemination of this work has focused on bridging the academic and public spheres and included publications in *English Journal* and *Radical Teacher*, along with dozens of presentations, conference papers, webinars, and invited blog posts.

Teacher Learning: Young Adult Literature (YAL) as a Vehicle for Reflexivity and Connection

Recognizing the importance of teacher education in advancing equity and justice, my research also explores the impact of community-centered, identity-driven learning spaces on teachers' development of more reflexive, culturally-sustaining pedagogies. Within the line of inquiry, I have explored how YAL might serve as a vehicle toward creating more holistic, critical professional learning. Through my graduate research apprenticeship under Dr. Mollie Blackburn, I conducted a qualitative study in which I studied the impact of reading YAL in racial affinity learning spaces (Kohli, 2019) on queer and trans educators of color's (QTEOC) pedagogical orientations, identity development, and sense of belonging as they participated in a YAL-centered book club. In three conference papers and a manuscript under review, my findings show that teachers exhibited a great

desire for more representation, differentiated teacher education opportunities, and community to sustain their presence and support their holistic development within the profession.

Additionally, my co-authored article on Rainbow Summer, an online learning space for educators and caregivers, introduces a three-pronged framework designed to share the multifaceted benefits of using YAL in non-traditional teacher education. Published in *English Leadership Quarterly*, this article takes up arguments I made in an earlier sole-authored critical content analysis published in *Research on Diverse Youth Literature* that used *Juliet Takes a Breath* (Rivera, 2018) to explore allyship and antiracist literacy pedagogical development within a predominantly white teaching profession. This work in teacher learning contributes to larger necessary conversations around teacher retention, diversity, and developing more culturally-informed, critically-engaged teachers.

Methodological Commitments: Justice-Oriented, Community-Centered, Critical Inquiry

Through research experience and coursework, I have developed a passion and expertise as a qualitative methodologist committed to using research to critically interrogate social problems, disrupt inequitable systems of schooling, and imagine new pedagogies alongside the communities I serve. With theoretical grounding in Black Trans Studies and Black Critical Studies in education, I take up the call to “sit with the suffering” (Dumas, 2018) within educational systems and work collaboratively to disrupt it. As an early-career methodologist, I have designed, implemented, and presented projects using critical ethnography, advanced qualitative inquiry, portraiture, discourse analysis, case study, and critical content analysis while also collaborating on several mixed-methods research projects. Using these methods, I am deeply committed to being “in right relation” (Grey, 1989; Perry, 2025) with the peoples and places whose sensemaking, histories, and lives inform my work. I extend this commitment not only through my research design, analysis, and intentional decision to engage in both academic and public scholarship.

In my role as a Graduate Research Associate at Ohio State’s QualLab, I designed and facilitated public scholarly dialogues open to the public, focused on the tensions and possibilities of using critical methodologies in educational research. Through both independent and collaborative work, I consistently explore the question: *What does it mean to engage in qualitative inquiry with deep conviction and orientations toward a more just and equitable educational landscape?* Most recently, I addressed this question alongside four other queer literacy scholar-educators of color in a kitchen-table dialogue published in *English Journal* exploring the possibilities of applying a Queer of Color Critique to literacy research and teaching. As a university-based researcher, I consider the complexities of authorship, belongingness, and power imbalance inherent in employing critical methodologies in education. In response, I am always thinking about what it means to engage in relational, reciprocal research practices that always center the needs of the folks with whom I work.

Future Research

Building on previous work, my future research will examine how Black queer and trans youth’ agentive literacies – rooted in subversion, resistance, and situated knowledge – can inform more covert, future-oriented, and justice-driven pedagogical shifts in today’s K-12 educational landscape. This ethnographic work will map historical and social patterns to confront the enduring tension between reforming a historically violent schooling system and imagining more liberatory approaches to literacy education. I plan to seek external funding to support this work, such as research grants from the Spencer Foundation and the William T. Grant Foundation, and intend to share my findings through a book-length narrative project and peer-reviewed articles in leading journals. Ultimately, my research aims to fuse critical literacy, Black studies, and teacher education – offering timely and impactful insights for educators, policymakers, and scholars committed to advancing equity and justice in education.



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"Who All Gon Be There?": On Blackness, Transness, and K-12 Pedagogies for [Black] Trans Futures

shea w. martin
The Ohio State University, martin.4313@osu.edu

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Keywords

Black trans studies, Black trans youth, trans pedagogies, trans studies, K-12 schooling

Cover Page Footnote

I am grateful to Dr. Mollie Blackburn, monét cooper, and Em Bowen for their guidance, encouragement, and feedback on this article. Above all else, this one is for Black trans kids – past, present, future, and beyond.

“Who All Gon Be There?": On Blackness, Transness, and K-12 Pedagogies for [Black] Trans Futures

shea wesley martin¹

¹*The Ohio State University*

Abstract: Grounded in trans-of-color critique and Black trans studies, this theoretical meditation reckons with the impossibility of Black trans safety, recognition, and futurity within our U.S. K-12 educational landscape. Situated in a “post-Transgender Tipping Point” sociopolitical landscape, I explore how these limitations contribute to Black trans youth’s disparate experiences in today’s schools, particularly with attention to the [in]effectiveness of existing queer and trans pedagogies. In an attempt to locate what is deemed possible for Black trans youth in imagined educational futures, I discuss trends within select K-12 trans pedagogical scholarship through which I explore questions related to authorship, reflexivity, and intersectional approaches to understanding transness. In this, I interrogate the impact of power and privilege on what (and who) is possible in our pedagogies and futures.

Keywords: *Trans-of-Color, Black Trans Studies, LGBTQ+ Youth, Trans Pedagogies, Black Trans Youth, Queer Pedagogies*

Tipping Off: A Black Trans Woman’s Cover Story and Directive

In June 2014, Laverne Cox graced the cover of *Time Magazine*. At 5’11, a caramel-skinned Cox stands eloquently in a navy dress and heels. Her expression reflects pride, courage, and poise. The accompanying cover story, “The Transgender Tipping Point,” was written by cisgender journalist Katy Steinmetz, who traces trans rights history for readers. Cox, a Black trans actress, is featured throughout the article, her story and words are used to show both the nuances of transness and the progress made within the trans rights movement. At the end of the article, Steinmetz (2014) conveys an emotional moment during a Q&A session following a speech delivered by Cox. During the Q&A, the facilitator of questions reads a note from a six-year-old trans girl about being bullied. The small girl meets Cox, who offers her words of affirmation. The cover story ends with a directive from Cox: “We need to protect our children...and allow them to be themselves” (Steinmetz, 2014). Over the past decade, many queer and trans scholars have addressed this tipping point and Cox’s appearance on the cover (Weerawardhana, 2020; Ellison et al., 2017; Hayward, 2017; Snorton, 2017; Malatino, 2016). As a Black trans scholar-educator, I am mostly interested in how educational scholars have taken up Cox’s directive via trans pedagogies in the decade that has passed since the “Tipping Point.”

To Be Black, Trans, Alive, and Hunted

In 2014, I was neither “shea” nor “trans” yet. I did not quite have the words or courage to articulate my gender to myself or

others. As an early career educator, my teaching experience was limited to summer camps, community workshops, and small-group tutoring for Black kids struggling to succeed in grossly underfunded schools. A lot has changed in the past decade – for all of us. Today, as a Black trans scholar-educator, I often carry the burden of educating those around me about Blackness, transness, and allyship. This burden is not unusual; Kohli and Pizarro (2022) discuss the responsibility often felt by BIPOC educators to support the learning of their white counterparts. That weight can become heavier for educators who hold multiple marginalized identities as they often face intersectional oppression (Crenshaw, 1991), particularly within a white, cisheterosexist, patriarchal educational landscape. As a result, I am acutely aware of the current stakes of teaching and learning while Black and trans in this moment. The urgency and criticality with which I engage in teaching, learning, research, and organizing reflect this. However, this commitment to “showing up” is not without cost.

In Spring 2023, I joined a virtual panel designed to help educators support transgender students in schools. The online event dragged on like most introductory diversity sessions – introductions, terms, contexts, scenarios, conversations, and a screenshotted group photo. I logged off exhausted and doubtful the training would lead to meaningful change. A few days later, a social media user tagged me and linked to an article that would ignite a trauma-filled summer of sleepless nights, sadness, rage, and fear. The linked article revealed a UK Tabloid had obtained access to and recorded the online training. The article was full of misconstrued comments about supporting trans kids and included photos, videos, and information about session panelists and attendees. Popular right-wing accounts shared the story and it gained traction on social media. First came the news stories and trolls.

Screenshots followed; my face and information were plastered over right-wing blogs and tabloids. Threats and insults flooded my social media and email inbox for weeks.

The educational organization that hosted the event reached out to their legal department, who advised them to handle it quietly – no statement on trans folks’ humanity, no clear communication to participants, no follow-up conversations. Instead, they alerted the police and ignored the issue online. The organization rebounded, cut my check, and worked to plan their next session – never looking back. I did not sleep. I avoided leaving my home and checking the internet. I shaved my head and bleached my hair. I bought a personal safety alarm. I developed an emergency plan. I thought about leaving this world on my own terms but decided otherwise. No amount of allyship soothes the feelings that accompany being Black, trans, and hunted in this world.

Months later, what remained at the forefront of my memory is not the right-wing blogs, comments, or death threats. Instead, it is the continued failure of institutions to protect the interests, bodies, and futures of folks like me – Black, trans, and trying to stay alive in an ever-violent world. As we approach the decade mark since Cox’s cover story, I sit in an urgent curiosity, wondering how scholars have taken up Cox’s directive to “protect our [trans] children” and thus the trans adults they grow up to be (Steinmetz, 2014). More specifically, I wonder what existing K-12 educational scholarship has to offer Black trans youth as maps toward survival in this world rife with anti-trans legislation, policies, and violence impacting transgender folks within and outside of traditional schools. The essay that follows, then, is an attempt to provide some clarity on the scholarly ideas and perspectives that currently inform how we show up for Black trans youth (and adults). In it, I shy away from neither the legacies of violence present in schools nor the harsh realities of surviving as a Black trans person in today’s world. To do so would be an affront to the truths that permeate my existence (and that of many other Black and trans folks). Instead, I embrace the grieving (Snorton, 2017) and rage (Malatino, 2019; Lorde, 1997) that feels inherent to my existence as a Black trans person. In the pages that follow, I sit with that grief – asking questions of the scholarship, reckoning with the limits of schooling, and desperately attempting to locate hope in a wretched world. I begin by attending to the intertwined relationship between Blackness and transness and its incongruity with K-12 schooling in the United States, noting the work of schooling in the larger context of state-sponsored violence. Following this contextualization, I address both Black trans youth’s disparate experiences in schools and the limits of existing general pedagogical recommendations for supporting LGBTQ+ youth in schools. To map how K-12 educational scholars are theorizing with Black trans youth in mind, I present a discussion of 11 articles focused on trans pedagogies that have been published since the “Tipping Point.” Following this

analysis, I end with reflections on my own writing, reckoning, reconciliation, and our journey ahead in the field of education.

Blackness, Transness, and Fugitivity

To understand the inherent incompatibility between traditional schooling and Black trans existence in a U.S. context, we must go back to what Spillers (1987) deems the “beginning” (p. 447) – in the bowels of a slave ship crossing the Atlantic. It is within this “nowhere” between two continents, amidst the dual projects of conquest and colonization, that enslaved persons become ungended and thus stripped of identity and agency. Spillers contests, “under these conditions, one is neither female nor male, as both subjects are taken into ‘account’ as quantities” (p. 452). By attending to the quantification of Black flesh and violence enacted on “human cargo of a slave vessel,” Spillers purports that the Middle Passage’s absence of domesticity allows for an ungending of Black female bodies – and, by extension, Blackness (p. 452). Tracing this inextricable link between the dehumanization of Black bodies vis-a-vis enslavement and the settler colonial¹ project commonly known as the United States of America, Spillers demonstrates the necessity of Black ungended flesh to the establishment of societal norms, expectations, and progress – all of which are forever out of reach for those who can trace their lineage back to the “nowhere” of the Atlantic. While Spillers’ (1987) foundational essay invites analysis of the Black female’s ungended body in relation to American society, trans studies scholars have extended this further to articulate the connections between Blackness and transness. In *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, Snorton (2017) argues the stripping from body to “captive flesh” within the Atlantic Slave Trade creates a foundation for a “critical genealogy for modern transness as chattel persons gave rise to an understanding of gender as mutable and as an amendable form of being” (p. 57). Thus, the co-constitution of Blackness and ungending of Black bodies is essential to understanding not only the permutations of both Blackness and gender throughout American history but also how those co-constructions continue to shape who is deemed legible and livable within society.

Anchoring their analytic of trans necropolitics, Snorton and Haritaworn (2013) argue that “the un-gendering (or perhaps trans-gendering) of blackness under slavery serves as a generative ground for understanding black trans subjectification and their relationships to contemporary biopolitics” (p. 307). Consequently, to truly grasp the inevitability of violence experienced by Black trans individuals (Snorton & Haritaworn, 2013; Westbrook, 2020) in today’s society, one must also attend to the connection to the overall projects of gender, race, and (non) humanness within a settler colonial context on a global scale. It might then be understood how Black ungended (and transgender) bodies can be both instrumental in the preservation of the state power

¹ When using this term, I rely on Wolfe’s (2006) understanding of settler colonialism as unique from colonialism via a “logic of elimination” that intentionally creates a perpetual system of the erasure of indigenous peoples (p. 388).

and also remain the most expendable and killable within the death worlds (Mbembe, 2003) we inhabit.

The work of queer and trans scholars of Color is invaluable in unpacking the intricacies of Black trans subjectification, institutional progress, and the solidification of hegemonic norms. Ferguson's (2004) *Aberrations on Black* offers an "epistemological intervention" (p. 3) in how we understand the projects of racialization, citizenship, and heteronormativity and their impact on the American political economy. Likewise, Snorton and Haritaworn's (2013) trans necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003) offers an orientation that explores the politics and vitality of the deaths of trans folks of Color in the continued development of modern society. Attending to the complicated histories of gender, Blackness, medicine, and archival, Snorton (2017) and Gil-Peterson (2018) offer narrative analyses that illuminate the inextricable links between gendered violence, (in)visibility of Black un/transgendered flesh, and archival erasure. Addressing notions of systemic erasure, visibility, and Black transness livability, other scholars (Gossett and Huxtable, 2017; Gossett, 2017) have questioned the complexity and dire costs of trans visibility as a vehicle toward progress, particularly when contextualized within compounding structures of violence such as racism and classism. For example, Gossett (2017) addresses this notion of visibility as a balm for the twinned lineage of colonialism and Black queer/trans subjugation, writing, "the violence...through which Black, queer, and/or trans identities have been forged, cannot be addressed through the politics of trans visibility" (p. 183). Together with the work of trans studies scholars (Chen, 2019; Gossett et al., 2017; Hayward, 2017), these inquiries call attention to how Blackness and ungending have been used to confer on Black trans folks a status of "living dead" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 40), or a life encapsulated by a compounded "social death" (Moten as cited in Sexton, 2016) associated with Blackness and trans existence in the afterlife of slavery (Hartman, 1997). This simultaneous dehumanization and instrumentalization of Black bodies lay a foundation for who is considered human within society.

There is no doubt about it – in the eyes of the state projects of settler colonialism, economic progress, and (un)being (Wynter, 2003), the Black subject has never been fully legible, intelligible, or even human. When we read public schooling as a vehicle of the state's goals, this intentional misalignment of Blackness, transness, and humanity impacts who we consider to be worthy of learning and teaching in schools. This is not to say that Blackness or transness are always markers of physical death, instead, it marks necessary attention to how Blackness and transness have been used to demarcate Black trans youth as less-than-human. In this, however, scholars² suggest that this demarcation also signals fugitivity found in both (Bey, 2019; Snorton, 2017). By naming fugitivity, I invoke not only Snorton's (2017) articulation of the transitivity (Colebrook, 2015) and transversality of Blackness and transness, but more

specifically, how the ungending of captive flesh and coinciding fungibility opened doors for escape, movement, and freedom. In this understanding of fugitivity, I also consider integral Bey's (2019) articulation of the transness of Blackness, which rests "in the in-between...of light, of escape...from the confines of ontological pinning down" (p. 279) along with an explicit attention to "trans*" as "like blackness...provoking ontologization by moving beneath it and to the side of it and through it" (p. 286). This is to say that my conceptual understanding of Black trans existence within this world, particularly in K-12 schooling, rests on a fundamental acknowledgment that Blackness and transness are both incompatible with and inherently resistant to capture, control, and assimilation required of uncompromised livability. This acknowledgement of fugitivity thus requires we reckon with the structures from which Blackness and transness continually evade.

The Limits of K-12 Schooling in Death Worlds

Locating the institution of K-12 public schooling within the larger context of the state's web of apparatuses remains foundational to queer and trans pedagogical scholarship. In this same vein, it is necessary to highlight that the same ideologies that created (and maintain) the dehumanization and un/transgendering of Black bodies also created (and maintain) the very foundations of K-12 public schooling in the United States. To ground my articulation of the limits of K-12 schooling, I must begin with my understanding that K-12 schooling, as it functions in the U.S. context, is an ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1970) designed to aid in the reproduction of productive forces (working class) and reinforce the dominance of the ruling class. Given the histories and realities within this context, I also take up bell hooks' (2003) observations of "imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchal values" that permeate our K-12 curricula, pedagogies, and expectations of learners (p. 1). As a tool of social reproduction (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) and ideology, schooling has dire impacts on the livability and learnability of all learners. Building on Foucault's (2003) notion of biopower, Bourassa (2017) offers an explication of educational biopolitics, or the systematic "making and taking of educational life" through which student access to success and probability failure is engineered as a means of social control. When considering how ideologies drive decision-making, representation, and resource allocation, we must acknowledge not only the thread between the state's assimilationist goals and (im)possibilities of public schooling but also take note of the trans necropolitics (Snorton & Haritaworn, 2013) at work in Black trans youth's schooling and living. How else might we account for the twin realities of decades of DEI initiatives, interventions, and professional development and the ever-expanding disparities in Black trans youth schooling and lifelong outcomes?

² In his 2017 essay, Bey uses trans* and trans*ness instead of transness. However, for the sake of consistency and clarity, I have chosen not to use that spelling here.

In my accounting of these twin realities, I consider schools to be heterotopias, spaces that function both to control and manage difference within/outside of larger society. In the 1984 translation of “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” Michel Foucault defines two categories of heterotopias – (1) of crisis, and (2) of deviation. In outlining principles for heterotopias, Foucault asserts each heterotopia has a “precise and determined function” (p. 5) in a particular society; is “structured and distributed in a relatively complex fashion” (p. 6), must be entered in a “compulsory” way (p. 7); and to “create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (p. 8). Offering real-world examples of heterotopias, Foucault lists boarding schools, Jesuit colonies with bells that dictate individuals’ activities, and psychiatric hospitals. Considering Foucault’s arguments alongside Snorton’s (2017) discussion of heterotopias through a Black Studies lens, I draw attention to the structured, compulsory nature of schooling, meticulously designed to attend to the crisis of growing up and facilitating what Hil Malatino calls the “neoliberal management of difference” (Malatino, 2015, 398-399). This management of difference is essential to understanding the aforementioned twin realities of DEI initiatives and continued disparities in Black trans youth schooling and living. Within the context of late liberalism, DEI initiatives and representational politics ensure that “cultural and social difference is recognized, but only in order to tame and manage these differences” (p. 398). Diversity and inclusion thus become not vehicles toward freedom but instead tools of entrapment and control. Thus, within this progressive management of difference, it is clear which students get to be fully human and, in turn, fully students worthy of an affirming education. Van Asselt, (2019) argues,

Progress is...embodied and perpetuated by the white student [...who] also greatly benefits from the status of being fully human, which translates to the status of being fully a student—a subject that is “teachable” and considered a “knower” (608). Whereas [queer and trans] students of Color, as they have been relegated to the status of subhuman, are constructed as nonstudents and uneducable (p. 609).

Given this underlying context and the grave realities of being an LGBTQ+ kid in today’s society, it is unsurprising that most K-12 queer and trans pedagogical projects have centered around the affirmation of queer and trans humanity. Survival is necessary. However, abolitionist trans scholars warn us against relying on carceral systems to shift understandings and ensure safety (Spade, 2015/2023; Ellison, 2016). Snorton and Haritaworn (2013) assert,

It is necessary to interrogate how the uneven institutionalization of women’s, gay, and trans politics produces a transnormative subject, whose universalized trajectory of coming out/transition, visibility, recognition, protection, and self-actualization largely remains uninterrogated in its complicit and convergences with biomedical, liberal, racist, and imperialist projects. (p. 67)

Thus, we must contend with how politics of representation permeate many K-12 pedagogies that, in turn, require disclosure, visibility, and assimilation as currency for promises of safety and inclusion. What we know is that increased representation and visibility will never result in guaranteed safety or affirmation within K-12 schools that have historically existed as violent spaces for most students, especially Black trans students (Truong et al., 2020). As a result, we must acknowledge how the neoliberal project of difference management and legibility diminishes the complexities, nuances, and magic-making of Black trans existence.

Complications of Trans Negativity and Opacity in Pedagogical Recommendations

The project of trans (in)visibility, particularly when paired with Black trans existence, further disrupts many of the pedagogical interventions and goals offered within K-12 queer and trans pedagogical scholarship to date. Trans visibility rarely results in the inclusion we hope for, particularly for Black trans people. Gossett (2017) argues, “One of the traps of trans visibility is that it is premised on invisibility: to bring a select few into view, others must disappear into the background, and this is always a political project that reinforces oppression” (p. 183). Those disappeared within transgender histories, movements for rights, and stories are often those whose bodies and ways of existing are most illegible to the state. Despite being disappeared both in society and within the larger trans movements, the deaths of Black trans folks are often used as hollow data points to drive calls for action. Consider for a moment whose faces, names, and stories drive the fight for trans youth’s rights in today’s media.

In 2015, Gavin Grimm, a white transgender high school student, became the trans rights poster child after suing a Virginia school board for disallowing his use of the boys’ bathroom; his Supreme Court decision was lauded as a huge win for trans youth (Dwyer, 2021). Kai Shippley, a white trans girl from Texas, was named a Time Magazine Kid of the Year Finalist for her testimony before the Texas Senate and related advocacy for trans youth (Carlisle, 2022). Dylan Brandt, a white trans teenager in Arkansas, is the face of the ACLU’s fight against House Bill 1570, an Arkansas law that would prohibit healthcare professionals from providing or even referring transgender young people for medically necessary healthcare (Demillo, 2022). At the same time, Black trans youth continue to struggle in and outside of schools (Truong et al., 2020), with their multifaceted needs going largely unaddressed by educators/scholars seemingly engaged in more “accessible” fights – book bans and bathrooms. It is hard to have hope in the trickle-down rewards for Black trans youth in a fight for trans whites/rights.

In the trans rights movement at large, Black trans death is often mobilized to demonstrate an intersectional approach and illuminate the urgency of the calls to action (without truly centering the needs or desires of Black trans folks). My argument builds upon that of Hayward (2017), who unpacks the requirement of Black trans death for the progress of trans

rights movements, arguing that visibility (for Black trans folks) also makes one killable. Trans negativity, then, “turns against liberal (white) transgender projects about visibility, accessibility, and progressivism, to expose how these political logics are predicated on racialized humanism” (Hayward, 2017, p. 193). In many ways, negativity, then, is not an act of invisibility but instead an act of intentionally shifting to whom/when one is visible with Black trans liberation in mind. Relatedly, Nicolazzo (2019) discusses queer and trans students of Color’s use of willful opacity (Samayoa, 2019 cited in Nicolazzo) to enact the change necessary in their higher education institutions. In this instance, students’ use of purposefully opaque language allowed their aims to be achieved without necessarily requiring their fullness to be visible to their college. Both opacity and negativity operate as subversive tactics of survival and progress without relying on the institution to render one’s existence legible or acceptable. In both, the needs and desires of those employing the tactics are centered without having to articulate oneself for consumption and judgment by violent systems and structures. In this, perhaps we see less evidence of systemic progress or mindset shifts among non-trans folks. Admittedly, however, youth application of these tactics in a K-12 setting is trickier given children’s lack of autonomy and rights in schooling and society. With this in mind, it becomes even more necessary to ask ourselves – what is the goal of a queer (or even trans) pedagogy?³ Is it the inclusion and affirmation of queer and trans sensemaking, bodies, and dreams in the existing institutions? Is it the critical interrogation of the systems in which we exist?

In my own conceptualization of queer pedagogy, I consider both Britzman’s (1995) and Luhmann’s (1998) essays to be “points of departure” for all following queer pedagogical scholarship and shifts. I take up Britzman’s call for queer pedagogies that are “larger than simply an acknowledgment of gay and lesbian subjects” that “call into question the geography of normalization” (p. 152). Additionally, I follow Luhmann’s (1998) location of queer pedagogy, “where the desire for knowledge interferes with the repetition of both heterosexual and lesbian/gay normalization” (p. 141). A project of de-normalization, these queer pedagogies innately refuse and think beyond the limiting project of inclusion as a remedy to homophobia and heterosexism. Similarly, my understanding of trans pedagogy is primarily informed by Keenan’s (2017) articulation of a critical trans pedagogy that prioritizes unlearning scripts of gender, resisting essentialism, and embracing the complexity of self and structures. Central to both (my understanding of) queer and trans pedagogies is intentional disruption and interrogation of hegemonic norms that dictate what and who is possible in learning spaces. Noticeably, however, most pedagogical shifts that purport to

center LGBTQ+ youth instead focus on representation, diversity, and affirmation. Often relying on LGBTQ+ youth’s disclosure and visibility for implementation, these pedagogical shifts offer minimal movement toward equity in exchange for the safety and security that may accompany institutional illegibility. Reckoning with this dangerously uneven exchange necessitates our acknowledgement of the violence associated with institutional recognition. Writing about the danger of visibility, Nicolazzo (2019) asserts that “the project of visibility... (will) always be riddled with the scars of normalization, with the harms of attempts to categorize and count how many are amongst our ranks so as to assert our importance” (Nicolazzo, 2019, p. 124). Attempts of categorization and quantification potentially enact further violence on the ever-expanding, fugitive existence of Black trans youth struggling to survive in schools. Given this possibility, perhaps we might take seriously the pushback against trans visibility as a remedy for transphobia and a marker of progress.

This acknowledgment necessitates consequential attention to the Black trans youth’s situatedness within schooling as a state-sponsored project of assimilation, surveillance, and production. The robust landscape of scholarship conveys a Black youth schooling experience marred by disproportionate rates of school-sanctioned discipline in schools. Paired with the realities of inequitable resource allocation (Baker, 2014; Adamson & Darling, 2011), the continued lack of pro-Black curricula and policies (Ladson-Billings, 2023; Love, 2019), and the shortage of Black educators (Carr, 2022; Coles & Stanley, 2021; Mosely, 2018), one can assume that schooling is not designed to prioritize complex engagement with Blackness (or any other marginalized identity). The intersection of these racialized projects and (cis)gender identity has been well-documented, theorized, and explored by educational scholars and organizations focused on equity and justice through schooling (Smith-Purviance, 2021; Bryan, 2020; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Morris, 2016).

The experiences of Black trans youth are often overlooked within these projects of gendered and racialized violence within schools. If they exist, they are included as additives for implications or sample size (ex., Black girls *and* gender nonconforming youth). In the past decade, however, several reports have confirmed the anticipated violence facing Black trans youth in schools and communities across the United States. Data from GLSEN’s 2017 National Climate Survey illuminated Black LGBTQ+ youth’s⁴ negative experiences at school. More than half of the students surveyed reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, with forty percent reporting feeling unsafe due to gender expression (Truong et al., 2020). Further, Black LGBTQ+

³ While I acknowledge that queer pedagogy is not synonymous with trans pedagogies, I do understand them to exist in concert, with earlier queer pedagogical scholarship informing trans pedagogies within the academy (in the same ways that queer studies gave way to transgender studies).

⁴ The sample for this survey included “middle and high school students between 13 and 21 years old” (GLSEN, 2020, xv). This description suggests the Black LGBTQ+ youth participating in this study had to be enrolled in school at the time of completing this study. Thus, it is important to note that this requirement omits perspectives from Black youth who fall outside of the age range and/or do not attend school.

youth respondents reported missing at least one day of school in the last month due to a lack of safety (Truong et al., 2020). These sentiments are echoed in the Human Rights Campaigns' (2019) *Black and African American LGBTQ+ Youth Report*, in which 63% of youth surveyed reported avoiding bathroom usage throughout the school day for fear of violence (Kahn et al., 2019). The long-lasting impact of violent schooling and societal conditions on Black trans folks are routinely shown via news outlets and social media – murder, homelessness, economic insecurity, depression, and suicide. In a survey of 3000 Black trans youth, The Trevor Project found that more than half of respondents had considered ending their lives, and 25% of respondents reported they had attempted suicide (Trevor Project, 2023). These days, photos of Black trans youth and young adults plaster my social media feeds with crowdfunds for survival, calls for justice after murders, and grief for those who left this world too soon. These photos and their accompanying captions are consistent narrative reminders of the realities in which Black trans youth exist – one where growing up, getting old, and achieving your dreams are not guaranteed.

Attacks on transgender youth's access to gender-affirming healthcare, bathrooms, and extracurricular activities have also surged in the past decade. Last year, *Time Magazine* asked Laverne Cox to reflect on her 2014 cover story and the current state of trans rights in the United States. Cox replied, "The backlash is ferocious. It's genocidal" (Mendez, 2023). In 2023 alone, more than 500 anti-trans bills were introduced in 49 states (ACLU, 2023). Of the bills being tracked, the American Civil Liberties Union (2023) reported almost half of those introduced targeted trans youth's rights in education and schools. The content of these bills impacts students' abilities to be called by their pronouns or names, increases parent and institutional surveillance over youth identity exploration, and dictates what can be taught in general health education courses (ACLU, 2023). Across the country, trans youth have been denied permission to engage in traditional extracurriculars such as sports (Barnes, 2023), theater productions (Runnels, 2023), and prom dances (Diaz, 2023). Educators choosing to support trans youth often face a wide range of consequences ranging from online violence (Grant, 2023) to job loss (Kingkade, 2022) and threats of jail time (Natanson, 2023).

Many of the recommendations within queer and trans pedagogical scholarship remain the same – create inclusive and safe spaces for youth, incorporate LGBTQ+ texts, and challenge existing hegemonies in learning environments. Thus, most existing pedagogical scholarship aims to either increase LGBTQ+ kids' sense of belonging or disrupt hegemonic norms that contribute to their ostracization. This is not to say that other aims do not exist. However, this suggests a common understanding in the field of what might better help LGBTQ+ kids thrive in schools. But what do we do when institutional recognition and safety are no longer attainable for anyone? What happens when hanging a trans flag is a fireable offense? How might we engage in trans pedagogies if we cannot even say the words transgender or queer? While the pedagogical recommendations are certainly important and

necessary, the violent complexities within the current context have illuminated the fallacy of depending on institutional policies and existing pedagogies to affirm trans youth, particularly Black trans youth, particularly since many pedagogical recommendations often fail to acknowledge the established violent histories of Blackness, ungendering, and institutional violence.

At this moment, we are witnessing in real-time how transness – trans notions of being and becoming – disrupts teleological notions of progress, which often suggest a required path or end, a fixed state of being (Stone, 1991; Malatino, 2019). In a time of heightened trans representation in TV/film, music, government, and books, we must also face the reality of quotidian violence faced by trans youth and adults. This moment, then, necessitates explicit attention to trans pedagogies committed to both trans liberation and reckoning with the legacies of violence impacting trans youth's livelihood and outcomes.

Exploring Trends in Selected K-12 Trans Pedagogical Scholarship

In an overwhelmingly white, cisgender, heterosexual field of education (de Brey et al., 2019), we must also consider the politics of authorship, identity, and proximity to power in our reading of the ideas and recommendations guiding our conversations about trans youth in K-12 schools. This is, of course, not to say that only Black, trans folks can offer suggestions about Black, trans livability in K-12 schooling. However, I do want us to be clear about how race, proximity to power, and privilege might impact what is deemed possible, ideal, and aspirational in scholarship. As we approach the decade mark beyond Cox's *Time Magazine* cover, I wondered: *How have K-12 educational scholars responded to following the 'Transgender Tipping Point?' Whose voices and pedagogies are being prioritized? What might they offer Black trans youth trying to survive in this world?*

For this essay, I reviewed 11 peer-reviewed articles focused on K-12 trans pedagogies, published since the "Transgender Tipping Point" of 2014. My focus on peer-reviewed articles (instead of chapters or public scholarship) reflects my desire to see whose ideas and pedagogical reflections currently carry the most capital within traditional educational scholarship; it is not a reflection of what I deem most legible, important, or necessary. I located these articles in January 2024 using a variety of search engines and databases, including Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, and JSTOR. I used the following keyword combinations in my searches: (1) "trans" + "youth" + "schools," (2) "trans pedagogy," (3) "trans" + "teaching," (4) "trans" + "students" + "teaching," and (5) "trans + "classrooms." Given my language skill set (monolingual English speaker), location (United States), and my past work with trans youth in secondary schools, I limited my analysis to papers published in English from authors situated in North America who offered arguments with implications for employing trans pedagogies in U.S. secondary schools. For this analysis, articles had to include the words trans or

transgender in either the title or abstract. While I recognize some authors instead choose to use terms like “gender-diverse” or “gender-expansive” to describe trans populations, I was most interested in looking at what authors are doing when explicitly naming transness in their pedagogical reflections and analyses. In my analysis, I focused on two main overarching questions: authorship and intersectional approaches. Table 1 illustrates how I tracked my findings while reviewing the selected articles. Not all authors listed their racial or gender identities in the selected articles. To determine the racial and/or gender identity of authors who did not include positionality statements in their articles, I reviewed supplemental publications and publicly available online resources (i.e., faculty profiles and interviews) to locate the information. I did my best to avoid making assumptions about identities and instead only listed what I could verify via public information. However, identity, particularly gender identity, is elastic and the world of publishing is not. The information included in the table only captures what I found in January 2024. Lastly, following guidance from the National Center for Transgender Equity (2016), I included non-binary individuals under the “transgender” umbrella. However, I acknowledge that not all non-binary individuals identify as “transgender.” Despite this, I think including them within the transgender umbrella for my inquiry helped me locate them alongside other scholars writing from positionality outside of a cisgender identity.

Authorship

Concerning authorship, my inquiry revolved around two overarching questions: (1) Who is making these recommendations?, and (2) more specifically, what are the racial and gender identities of the scholars theorizing trans pedagogies? The questions guiding my inquiry are not designed with categorization or gatekeeping in mind. Instead, I am interested in understanding whose voices, perspectives, and theorizations guide the current conversations around K-12 trans pedagogies. Further, I wonder about how trans pedagogical scholars are engaging in reflexivity as they do research with/on trans youth and theorize about trans futures. In many ways, I read texts wondering of each author: *who you be? Who are your people?* That is to say, “What is your relationship to transness and trans folks? To whom are you accountable?” Positionality statements are becoming increasingly common in social science research (Martin et al., 2022; Holmes, 2020) as a means of mapping one’s orientation to research, theory, and practice as it is informed by sociocultural and historical contexts in which we exist (D’Silva et al., 2016). In working to locate authors’ positionalities in the selected, I hoped to more deeply understand how authors attended to power and privilege and its impact on their assertions concerning trans youth, particularly Black trans youth. Moreover, as a Black trans scholar reviewing the work of colleagues, this analysis is also a public wondering of the politics of power, pedagogy, and publishing – *How might our field engage more collaboratively with Black trans scholars, students, educators, and organizers in our theorization of K-12 trans pedagogies?*

Across the 11 unique publications, 11 authors are represented. Three authors – Wayne Martino, Kenan Omercajic, and Harper Keenan – are each listed as authors of more than one publication. Most notably, Wayne Martino is listed as the first or sole author of four of the 11 publications. All authors have listed white as their racial identity in either the focal publications or other publications and resources. This whiteness permeating the scholarship is unsurprising given the overwhelmingly white faculty demographics in both academia and K-12 education (Irwin et al., 2023). I am less interested in the whiteness of scholars and more interested in how scholars reckon with whiteness in their scholarship, how it might inform their citational practices, and most importantly, how it might impact what they deem most central to developing trans pedagogies. I locate an example of this reckoning in Kennan (2017) on critical trans pedagogy. Reflecting on his journey and privilege as a white trans man, he writes,

Because I am commonly read as a straight white man, I live in a trans body that is granted permission to live. I am at low risk of experiencing the police violence and street harassment that many feminine people of Color face. Instead, my body has been granted access to teaching young children, completing a doctoral program at an elite university, and, currently, educating future teachers. (p. 544)

In this reflection, Keenan addresses the affordances granted by his whiteness and passing within a white patriarchal society and educational landscape. Similarly, Kean (2021) asserts the importance of such an acknowledgment as necessary as a “White non-binary trans person who has benefitted from the work of so many trans people, Black trans women in particular, who have given their lives metaphorically and literally in the fight for gender justice” (p. 262). Here, Kean traces a lineage of Black trans organizing, honoring voices and perspectives that inform not only their understandings but also theories of who/what is necessary to center and include in trans pedagogies. Many authors, however, do not include such an explicit acknowledgment or reckoning in their articles. While most write about diverse trans youth’s experiences with intersectional oppression (see Table 1), they are less concerned with addressing their whiteness on the page. The effects of this seem minimal, particularly given scholars’ attention to intersectionality in their research and analyses. However, this absence of positionality that accompanies their recommendations inadvertently centers whiteness, suggesting that this naming is not necessary given its status as the norm.

Similar trends related to gender identity exist in the selected literature. Six publications are authored by transgender scholars or a combination of cisgender and trans scholars. Five are solely authored by cisgender scholars writing about work with transgender youth or educators. While all cisgender authors address the impacts of cisgenderism or cissexism in education, most cisgender scholars do not comment on their own cisgender identity in their articles. This failure to address one’s own cisgender identity in publications is worrisome as it suggests that scholars may be overlooking how their own identities impact their approach to scholarship, participants,

and recommendations for trans youth. In many ways, this failure to acknowledge one's cisgenderness in an argument for trans pedagogy reinforces much of what they seek to disrupt. By not disclosing their cisgender identity in articles, cisgender authors reinforce societal gender norms that suggest we assume cis unless otherwise informed. This trend is not evident in all literature written by cisgender authors. For instance, Blackburn (2020) offers a model for what it might look like to explicitly address one's cisgenderness on the page. Naming her both whiteness and cisgenderness as limitations, Blackburn writes, "As a cisgender person, I know there are limits to my knowledge based on my lack of experience as a trans person" (p. 778). This notation of limitation positions trans folks, particularly the youth whom Blackburn is engaging, as experts in their own experiences, histories, and futures. Further, this noting of limitations disrupts the hierarchical nature of whose voices, perspectives, and understandings matter established by the academy. In this naming, Blackburn allows space for her analysis and reading of situations to be forever limited by her own lived experience as a cisgender woman. In the naming of such, cisgender scholars (particularly those within the academy) lose only the presumption of their unchallengeable expertise and the power that often accompanies theorizing the "exotic" (Hale, 2009) from an outsider perspective.

In the past five years, there have been pushes for cisgender folks to include pronouns in their email signatures (Kodipady et al., 2023; Friedman & Poole, 2023; Johnson et al., 2021). I typically find this act to be performative, particularly given the lack of trans allyship that often accompanies it. However, the stakes are higher when cisgender scholars are theorizing about trans bodies, livelihood, and liberation in the academy. Cisgender scholars must be as explicit about their privilege on the page as they are about their support of trans youth. They have nothing to lose by doing so. However, trans folks have so much to gain through an author's disclosure of their cisgender identity in publication – it disrupts the assumption of gender and also offers space for trans voices to recognize the unavoidable limits of their recommendations for transgender folks as outsiders.

These noticings raise questions about how publishing, academic structures, and legacies of institutional violence contribute to a body of K-12 trans pedagogical scholarship that is overwhelmingly dominated by white scholars, many of whom are cisgender. Within this, there are many questions for our field to consider about how one's identities, experiences, and interlocutors limit and/or expand what we deem possible for trans youth, particularly Black trans youth. While I do not have sufficient space to answer them here, I hope scholars writing about trans pedagogies continue to reckon with how their identities, power, and privilege impact their influence in the field. More importantly, however, I hope there are efforts made to center, collaborate, and uplift the voices and genius of Black trans scholars and educators.

Intersectional Approaches

Along with authorship, I was interested in whose voices, identities, and experiences are explicitly centered in trans pedagogical scholarship. When examining the literature for attention to intersectionality, I considered two overarching questions: (1) How do authors acknowledge diversity within trans youth's experiences?, and (2) How do authors center Blackness and/or Black trans youth in their pedagogical recommendations? Moreso, I was interested in how authors addressed the disparate realities of Black trans youth in schools, along with how they took Black transness into account in their recommendations for trans pedagogies. To determine this, I read and annotated each article, specifically attending to the mention of Black trans scholars or youth. After doing this, I used the find tool in Zotero to search each article for the following keywords, "intersectionality," "diverse," and "Black." Each time I located one of the keywords, I re-read sections of articles to ascertain the context in which the author was using it. I was lenient with my tracking. For example, if an author mentioned reading "diverse young adult literature" featuring trans characters, I tracked this as "acknowledging intersectional oppression." Likewise, if authors relied heavily on the theoretical writing of Black trans scholars but did not necessarily name Black trans youth in their implications, I still tracked the article in the column for centering "Blackness and/or Black trans liberation." Admittedly, this was an overly optimistic assertion. In it, I consciously chose to give authors grace and engage with an understanding of how peer review or word limits might impact what authors include in final drafts. That being said, I did so as an act of self-preservation because the reality of so many scholars and educators' failure to explicitly attend to what Black trans youth need is often too much for my soul to bear.

Nine articles acknowledge the intersectional oppression experienced by diverse populations of transgender youth. This is unsurprising given the push toward culturally responsive and equitable research and teaching practices over the past two decades. However, two articles (Martino et al., 2022; Sweet & Carlson, 2017) do not explicitly address intersectional oppression or diversity in trans youth's experiences. I attribute this omission less to authors' awareness of diverse trans experiences and more so to the specific context, case, or class about which they write. For example, Martino et al.'s (2022) case study provides insight into "supporting transgender youth in one particular school to draw attention to how discourses of individualisation play out in the articulation of equity as it pertains to addressing trans inclusion" in a singular community (p. 767). The authors note that they have chosen this particular methodology to avoid generalization across a very diverse landscape of schooling in Ontario and note the "specific contexts of varying school communities" throughout the province (p. 768). It is also worth mentioning that this published case study is part of a larger, more diverse project in which authors (and others) explicitly attend to not only intersectional oppression faced by trans youth but, more specifically, to Black trans sensemaking and resistance. On the other hand, Sweet and Carlson's (2017) article, in which they suggest using episodes of *Transparent* to supplement the curriculum focuses solely on gender identity without exploring

intersections with identities such as race, ethnicity, class, or ability. More worrisome, however, is their suggestion that *Transparent*, in which a cis man plays a trans woman, is an acceptable educational resource about transness. The inclusion of such, coupled with the absence of intersectionality, not only replaces actual trans narratives with the performance of a cis man but also sidelines the experiences and voices of trans folks of Color.

Most notable, however, are the articles in which authors engage with Black trans scholarship and experiences to inform their pedagogical recommendations. While my analysis revealed an overwhelming acknowledgment of intersectionality and diversity in trans youth experiences, only four articles center Blackness or Black trans youth in their implications for the field (Keenan, 2024; Martino, 2022; Martino & Omercajic, 2021; Martino et al., 2021). In an attempt to understand trans pedagogical efforts outside of traditional K-12 settings, Keenan (2024) interviewed 11 trans educator-artists, 3 of whom were Black. More than just representation, Keenan illuminates the focal nature of abolition, community, and disruption engaged by LeRoi Newbold, a Black trans man and the founder of Toronto's Freedom School. In this centering of Newbold's pedagogy, Keenan positions Newbold's teaching, experiences, and work as necessary for reimagining trans pedagogies in today's world. In this positioning, Keenan not only explicitly centers Black transness in the conversations of what might be possible within teaching and learning with trans youth in mind but purposefully decenters and imagines beyond traditional K-12 schooling.

Likewise, Martino (2022) illuminates his own pedagogical choices to center Black and Indigenous scholar-educators while teaching a university gender studies course. In this illumination, Martino acknowledges the necessity of "'archives of resistance' (Snorton cited in Martino, 2022) that enrich a pedagogical repertoire for building a threshold knowledge about black trans life" while also explicating the results of doing so in a classroom (p. 31). These archives of resistance include narratives, histories, and stories that disrupt and complicate understandings of transness in society. Through analysis and reflection on Black and Indigenous narratives, theories, and histories, Martino argues for curricular interventions that extend beyond representation and instead make space for "learning about trans lives that are contextualized within a broader examination of the interlocking systems of power and privilege in which all of our lives are enmeshed and intertwined" (p. 34). In doing so, he asserts the necessity for employing critical trans politics to develop a pedagogy that reckons not only cissexism but racialized gender binaries.

Evidence of this commitment to centering Blackness in trans pedagogical orientations is also present in Martino and Omercajic's (2021) articulation of a trans pedagogy of refusal. Building on both Tuck and Yang's (2012) notion of refusal along with Snorton and Haritaworn's (2013) theorization of trans necropolitics, Martino and Omercajic offer three

axiomatic principles of refusal designed to highlight the "impact of cultural cisgenderism and trans ontoformative desubjugated knowledges" (p. 691). By specifically attending to trans necropolitics, Martino and Omercajic highlight the complex intertwined legacies of Blackness, transness, and institutional violence. In doing so, they center Black transness (and trans of Color critique) in their articulation of a trans pedagogy of refusal.

Writing with educators in mind, Martino et al. (2021) analyzed *The Gender Tag Project*, an online archival space facilitated through YouTube by white trans creator Ashley Wylde. Their analysis explored how the prompts, online space, and expectations on the platform inadvertently center whiteness. Despite the benefits of *The Gender Tag Project* as an archival tool for trans youth, Martino et al. (2021) examined the narratives of diverse youth whose videos are included in the project to interrogate *The Gender Tag Project's* "potential as a colonising space of unmarked whiteness in the sense that it is predominantly inhabited by white trans and non-binary youth" (p. 765). Through this analysis, the authors warn of the implicit whiteness that marks the archiving, learning spaces, and resources related to transness and gender-diverse identity. Thus, arguing for attention to the limits of pedagogical tactics such as representation and inclusion when thinking about supporting Black trans youth in learning spaces.

While Blackness and/or Black trans experiences are only centered in four of the 11 articles, I find glimmers of hope and progress toward increased criticality and engagement within the few. Paired with increased research on trans pedagogies and learning spaces outside of traditional K-12 settings, I see an intentional divestment in the violent structures of K-12 schooling as a means toward trans safety liberation. This intentional divestment represents an embrace of the fugitivity and defiance that has always accompanied Black trans existence in this world. Further, I am even more heartened when I situate the aforementioned pieces in a larger body of scholarship focused on Black queer pedagogies of resistance and agency published in the last few years (Reid, 2023; Reid et al., 2022; Johnson, 2017; Pritchard, 2016). As a Black trans scholar-educator, it is easy to feel isolated and hopeless when surveying this educational landscape and world. However, I find hope and connections in the centering of Blackness and transness on the page. For this, I am grateful to be in community with scholars around the world who say, "I see you and yours" through their citational practices and pedagogical practices.

Rage and Refusal

I considered closing this conceptual essay with gratitude, connections, and implications for further study and practice. I reflected upon the journey that brought me here – the death threats, the stories of Black trans youth's suicides, and the heaviness of doing this work as a Black, queer, trans educational scholar. I wrote a conclusion in which I led with grace and appreciation for allyship and progress. Yet, each attempt felt incomplete. Over Zoom one evening, I shared my

hesitations and uneasiness with my writing circle. As I talked, I realized I was engaging in a learned practice of self-censorship. Through my schooling journey, I have learned to placate those with privilege in power – to smile, give grace, and contain my emotions. I have mastered the game of being palatable to white folks. My writing circle named this for me, urging me to lean into both the “uses of anger” (Lorde, 1981) and the healing that accompanies rage. Holding these necessary reminders near, I choose instead to close with honesty, embracing rage as a “moment of shattering, a moment of breaking” (Malatino, 2018).

The truth is – scholars’ failure to name their cisgender identity and whiteness when theorizing about trans pedagogies fills my body and soul with rage. I am incredibly disheartened by the continued centering of whiteness in this theorizing and dreaming, particularly given the continued violence Black trans folks experience in schools. Further, white and cisgender scholars’ failure to demonstrate reflexivity in articles concerning transness is worrisome, given a field so innately concerned with power, privilege, and personhood. I know the capital that publications carry; they will be cited and used to impact the livelihood of Black trans youth. I am angry at how the structural and quotidian violence I experience in this Black trans body impacts my ability to produce at the rates of others who do not share my identities. I am angry with myself for my tendency to do it anyway – to prioritize writing over my own care because I want to make sure there is no path forged without voices like mine. I am exhausted by the ways that whiteness, cisgenderness, and capitalism suffocate and stifle my own development and curiosity as a scholar-educator. Black trans folks in education, particularly youth, deserve better.

As we continue to study, theorize, and teach toward liberated trans futures, I implore scholars to refuse the dilution of what is possible for trans kids in this world, to resist the urge to decenter Blackness in hopes of a more palatable and digestible theorization of trans pedagogies in this educational landscape. Following Ellison et al. (2017), I hope our scholarly community might develop practices of accountability, care, and citations that must accompany the institutionalization of transgender studies in education and, thus, theorizations of trans pedagogies and knowledge production in K-12 schooling. May we move forward with the following two questions in mind: *If writing and engaging with K-12 trans pedagogies, to whom and what are scholars accountable? How do our pedagogies work in concert with the living pedagogies of Black trans folks who are always teaching and learning their way to survival?*

I will not and cannot, in good conscience, conclude by offering considerations for death-dealing structures of teaching and learning. This field is already oversaturated with recommendations for harm reduction and inclusion. This is not to say that Black/trans youth do not deserve the right to use appropriate bathrooms, change their names, and access gender-affirming care. However, when we situate their liberation through Black trans folks’ access to rights and power

in structurally violent systems, we continue to depend on that system for recognition and access. What I offer, then, is a dream of divestment from the aforementioned systems (and related pedagogies) in the name of Black/trans life and liberation. Perhaps we might look to the linking of transness and Blackness as a map of refusal, fugitivity (Bey, 2017), and a rhizomatic (Allen, 2016) approach to what is possible in learning. There is little hope for an educational landscape with little autonomy to separate itself from a state wholly invested in racism and transphobia to sustain its existence. What might serve Black trans youth most effectively and ethically is to run, fly, dream, and never look back.

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Appendix

Trans Pedagogical Scholarship with Implications for Secondary Students in U.S. Schools (2014 - 2024)

Trans Pedagogical Scholarship with Implications for Secondary Students in U.S. Schools (2014 - 2024)				
	Authorship		Attention to Intersectionality	
	Race	Gender	Acknowledges diverse trans experiences and/or intersectional oppression faced by trans youth	Pedagogical implications center Black trans scholarship and/or experiences
Blackburn, M. V. (2021). Pedagogy and pleasure: Trans and gender transgressive students in an LGBTQ-themed literature class. <i>Pedagogy, Culture & Society</i> , 29(5), 773-791.	White	Cisgender	X	
Helton, J. (2020). Trans*/School: Across and beyond Queer-Inclusive Pedagogy. <i>English Journal</i> , 110(1), 25-31.	White	Trans	X	
Kean, E. (2021). Advancing a critical trans framework for education. <i>Curriculum Inquiry</i> , 51(2), 261-286.	White	Trans	X	
Keenan, H. B. (2017). Unscripting curriculum: Toward a critical trans pedagogy. <i>Harvard Educational Review</i> , 87(4), 538-556.	White	Trans	X	
Keenan, H. B. (2024). Learning without subjects?: Considering trans pedagogies in practice. <i>International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education</i> , 1-13.	White	Trans	X	X
Martino, W., & Omercajic, K. (2021). A trans pedagogy of refusal: Interrogating cisgenderism, the limits of antinormativity and trans necropolitics. <i>Pedagogy, Culture & Society</i> , 29(5), 679-694.	White	Cisgender	X	X
Martino, W., Kassen, J., & Omercajic, K. (2022). Supporting transgender students in schools: Beyond an individualist approach to trans inclusion in the education system. <i>Educational Review</i> , 74(4), 753-772.	White	Cisgender / Trans		
Martino, W., Omercajic, K., & Cumming-Potvin, W. (2021). YouTube as a site of desubjugation for trans and nonbinary youth: pedagogical potentialities and the limits of whiteness. <i>Pedagogy, Culture & Society</i> , 29(5), 753-772.	White	Cisgender	X	X
Martino, W. (2022). A Transgender Studies Approach for Educators in Schools: Reflections on “Cissexist Pitfalls,” Bifurcated Frameworks, and Racial Justice. <i>Teachers College Record</i> , 124(8), 17-42.	White	Cisgender	X	X
Miller, S. (2016). Trans*+ ing classrooms: The pedagogy of refusal as a mediator for learning. <i>Social Sciences</i> , 5(3), 34.	White	Trans	X	
Sweet, J. D., & Carlson, D. L. (2017). Teaching trans*: Transparent as a strategy in English language arts classrooms. <i>Occasional Paper Series</i> , 2017(37), 6.	White	Cisgender		

(Un)Schooling Gender, Race, and Space: An Undergraduate Seminar

This undergraduate seminar, *(Un)Schooling Gender, Race, and Space*, examines how gender and race are (de)constructed within K–12 schools as deeply placed institutions. Understanding education as inherently political, the course explores schools as social, cultural, and political spaces shaped by geography, history, policy, and power. Building on this framework, this course invites students to investigate how classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, neighborhoods, and digital learning spaces shape the regulation, negotiation, and reimagining of identities across local, regional, and national contexts both historically and in the present.

Deeply attuned to the impact of legislation, policy, and media narratives on present-day youth's schooling, this seminar makes connections between past, present, and imagined futures employing an abolitionist pedagogical lens. In these connections, this seminar poses the following inquiries: What links can we trace between trans youth resistance today and earlier critical movements? How do young people's defiance, organizing, and space-making practices help us reimagine schooling? What might trans youth's sensemaking teach us about resistance, possibility, and livability in and beyond schools?

Centering the intersection of gender and race, this seminar attends to the relationship between place, power, and the K-12 educational landscape through attending to histories of segregation, migration, settler colonialism, and economic inequities. Through this sociohistorical framing, this seminar explores (1) how school policies and practices discipline and reward bodies and behavior, (2) how race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and language inform definitions of belongingness and success within educational spaces, and (3) how youth, families, and educators resist surveillance, censorship, and restrictions to create alternative educational futures.

Course materials intentionally bridge theory, praxis, and youth lived experiences through an interdisciplinary lens across time and place. Theoretical readings draw from Black trans studies, Black girlhood studies, Latinx feminisms, trans-of-color theory, and Black geographies. Students will also engage with youth-centered texts such as Akwaeke Emezi's *Bitter* (2022), ethnographies of schooling, and youth-created videos, zines, and op-eds, along with historical and contemporary artifacts including policy documents, news articles, and maps. Through readings, discussion, analysis, and creative projects, students will grapple with questions of discipline, autonomy, surveillance, visibility, and educational justice.

In this collaborative learning space, students will apply intersectional frameworks to educational issues, develop informed perspectives on how education both reproduces and challenges social inequality, and leave this space with a deep understanding not only of schools as racialized and gendered spaces but also of how their own experiences intersect with those studied in the course.

Application Forms

Reference Contact Form

Reference 1: Name

Dr. Mollie Blackburn

Reference 1: Email Address

blackburn.99@osu.edu

Reference 1: Institution

The Ohio State University

Reference 1: Title

Professor

Reference 1: How do you know this reference provider?

Dr. Blackburn has served as my advisor for the past four years, as well as serving as the co-chair of my dissertation committee, Principal Investigator on empirical projects, collaborator and mentor on publications

Reference 2: Name

Dr. Shannon Winnubst

Reference 2: Email Address

winnubst.1@osu.edu

Reference 2: Institution

The Ohio State University

Reference 2: Title

Professor

Reference 2: How do you know this reference provider?

Dr. Winnubst serves as a member of my dissertation committee and is familiar with my work through both my engagement in her graduate-level seminar and through our mentor-mentee relationship.

Reference 3: Name

Dr. Cody Miller

Reference 3: Email Address

hmiller@brockport.edu

Reference 3: Institution

SUNY Brockport

Reference 3: Title

Associate Professor

Reference 3: How do you know this reference provider?

Dr. Miller and I have worked together as co-facilitators, co-presenters, and published several co-authored pieces.
