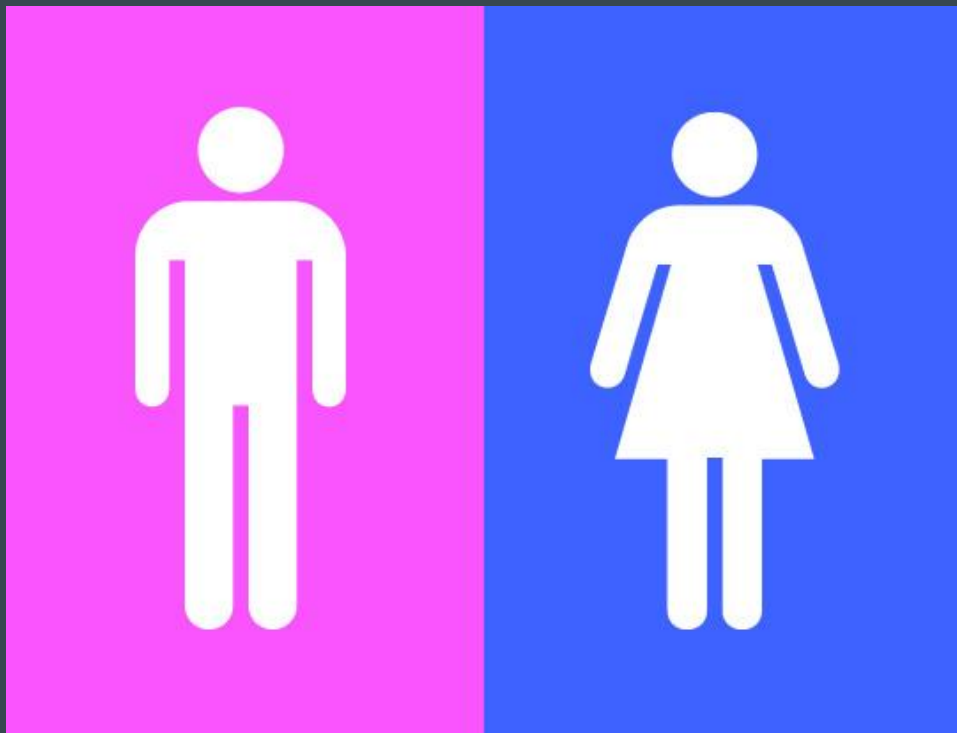


Queerness and the Importance of Belonging



University of Colorado Colorado Springs
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Introduction and Acknowledgements



Hi, I'm Silas.



FORCE
FOR
GOOD



★ Reflecting on the role of Congress in April 2017, **Senator Kirsten Gillibrand** told a reporter, "We're here to help people, and if we're not helping people, we should go the f---k home."

JUST THE WAY YOU ARE

After enduring conversion therapy, **Silas Musick** converted himself—into a gender-justice crusader.

SARAH MUSICK SPENT the first 18 years of her life as the dutiful, overachieving daughter of a Southern Baptist pastor in small-town Virginia. Then she went to college and fell in love—with another woman. After graduating, she spent six intensive months at Colorado's Focus on the Family Institute, trying to pay away her "dirty thoughts" about women. It didn't work. Four years later, guilt and shame led her to try to hang herself, then swallow handfuls of pills washed down with tequila. Following much soul-searching, today Sarah is Silas—proudly and publicly chronicling his transition from female to male. An activist against conversion therapy for people under 18, the happily married father of two has dedicated himself to personal truth and authenticity, inspiring others to own their journey by remaining radically open about his.

IN MUSICK'S WORDS...

"After my suicide attempt I started blogging—really raw, honest, hard stuff about religion, my sexuality, and the fallout with my parents over how different I was from the person they expected me to be. Some of my friends said, 'This is not appropriate.' And yeah, I could have kept quiet, but what would I have gained? Every time I share honestly and vulnerably, almost without fail someone else reaches out with their own story. And for everyone I do hear from, how many more are out there that I don't? That's worth the pushback. Having to be so secretive in college for two years while I was in a relationship was one of the hardest, darkest stretches because everything I experienced, I hid. And maybe I've overcorrected and am now just this gushing spillover—I do overshare as a general practice. But feeling so not authentic for so long took the meaning and purpose out of life. Educating people is so important—like even, *What the hell is happening to my body as I transition? I'm happy to answer questions. I'm definitely willing to be the story. Being trans is becoming more and more public, and in most cases I don't feel tokenized. This is likely just a phase of a society catching up to an idea. It won't be my job to carry this banner my entire life.*"

—AS TOLD TO KIRSTEN AKENS

If You SEE SOMETHING, QUACK SOMETHING

Safer, more equitable streets are just a weird animal noise away.

A MAN CALLS "Hey, sweet cheeks!" at a woman walking down a city street. It's so routine that it almost feels like an acceptable urban nuisance, but it's not harmless. That everyday catcall is public sexual harassment, and it has real emotional consequences. Some anti-street-harassment advocates call it a human rights violation, and a member of French president Emmanuel Macron's cabinet has even proposed that it be made a punishable offense.

Jessica Raven, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit Collective Action for Safe Spaces (CASS), says we shouldn't just accept street harassment as an unpleasant fact of life: "It's everyone's responsibility to speak out." CASS uses public education, workshops, community outreach, and advocacy to create a safer, more decent city, and its tool kit of intervention techniques (partly based on the widely studied Green Dot bystander-training program) may help you stop a harasser in his tracks...

—BRYAN STEVENSON, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative and coauthor of the just-released *A Perfect Storm*

CALL HIM OUT LIKE A CROSSING GUARD

Command "Stop!" with an outstretched arm and open palm. Telling charge cam men and disempower a harasser who anticipated a submissive response.

CREATE A DISTRACTION

If you're witnessing harassment, drop your keys on the ground and interrupt to ask the target, "Are these yours?" Or answer an abnormal act with a discomfultingly abnormal response. Liberate your inner actress and make a strange loud noise. Quack like a duck or sing at the top of your lungs. Those simple moves can derail and deescalate the harassment, so you can make an exit.

LEND AN EAR

If the incident happens too fast for you to respond, or it feels unsafe to intervene, support the targeted person by approaching them afterward and telling them: "I saw what happened, and it wasn't okay. Is there anything I can do to help?" —ANDREA ADLEMAN



Standing up for what's right can be uncomfortable and inconvenient. Biologically, psychologically, human beings like comfort; you can opt for comfort over discomfort for a really long time. But eventually you get pushed to the point where it becomes uncomfortable to stay silent, to keep swallowing acts of oppression or injury. Then you're required—you're compelled—to act. Hope is the thing that gets you to stand up when other people tell you to sit down. I am persuaded that hope is our superpower. It's what allows us to overcome, to endure, then achieve.

—BRYAN STEVENSON, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative and coauthor of the just-released *A Perfect Storm*



Asked by a reporter whether she was worried that her decision to vote against repealing the Affordable Care Act would affect her reelection, **Senator Kira Murkowski** said in July 2017: "We've been to represent the people who sent us here... Every day shouldn't be about winning elections. How about just doing a little bit of governing around here? That's what I'm here for."

Problem

The oppression of **heteronormativity** and how it limits and tries to “fix” leadership roles.

Purpose

Qualitatively explore if and how transgender queer leaders perform **androgynous** leadership as an extension of their gender transition.

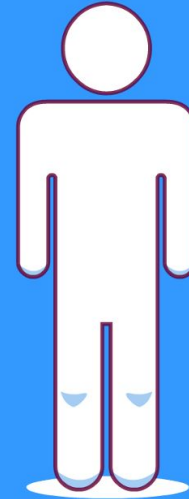
Significance

Investigates the lived-experiences and self-perceptions of transgender queer leaders to see how **gender** and **leadership** interact.

Feminine - collaborative,
emotional, verbal, etc.



Masculine - dominant,
assertive, competitive, etc.



Androgynous Leadership Style moves between based on situations.

Methodology

Scope

The scope of this study is leadership, as perceived by (trans) leaders exploring gender in leadership through in-depth interviews.

Participants

- 6 participants (3 MtF, 3FtM).
- Self-identified leaders in their work places.
- Self-identified gender expression.

Design

- Purposive Sample
- Recruited through online queer networks and professional groups.
- In-depth one-on-one interviews lasting 1-2 hrs.
- Anonymous to protect privacy.

Participants*

- **Mary** (MtF)- age 51, educator. Leadership role 20 years. Publicly transgender 2 years.
- **Jessica** (MtF) - age 34, educator, former military. Leadership role 10 years. Publicly transgender 3 years.
- **Nicole** (MtF) - age 31, manager. Leadership role 15 years. Publicly transgender 5 years.
- **Andy** (FtM) - age 36, director. Leadership role 8 years. Publicly transgender 6 years.
- **Ryan** (FtM) - age 27, director. Leadership role 10 years. Publicly transgender 4 years.
- **Tyler** (FtM) - age 30, military. Leadership role 5 years. Publicly transgender 2 years.

*all participants were given pseudonyms for anonymity.



Results

RQ1: How do queer leaders perform androgynous leadership?

- Queer leaders use their past gender knowledge.
 - Queer leaders are highly self-aware.
 - Queer leaders are contextual leaders.
-

Past gender knowledge:

For all the participants past gender knowledge and experience was often present but not always acted on. Some cited (namely trans women) being mis-gendered when they would use past gender knowledge, skills or styles. Past gender knowledge allowed the participants to acknowledge the other (gendered) approach to handling a given situation, however, this did not always equate to using said knowledge. Usually this was for self-preservation and in settings where use of a gender variation was not accepted.

There were examples of effective use of past gender knowledge as well. The implementation of this past gender often depended on the acceptance of a setting or followers.

Highly self-aware:

“I’ve thought about this a lot – whether I’m a woman, a trans woman, but like my experiences are vastly different from cis women’s experiences. I feel like, yes, I’m a woman, but not in the same way, you know. I’m also not a man. I sort of occupy this third-gender kind of space. But it allows me to know how men think about things. The things that they expect or whatever. I know how to present myself as a leader in that context and like I can turn it off and turn it on. I’m also capable of working with women and leading and organizing. That’s sort of a leadership style as well. I feel like a chameleon or like “Deadpool” I have all the abilities.”

- Jessica

Contextual leaders:

- “...leader in the moment.”
- “What will I notice in that moment?”
- “I developed a relationship with the followers through the tasks.”
- “My leadership approach is super contextual.”
- “I think I’m task oriented but I go to great lengths to do the relational stuff which I think is more effective.”
- “I try to be more relational, but I am certainly someone who likes to execute and get things done.”
- “...it’s really interesting to use this [emotion] as a tactic.”
- “I really have to build up the relational aspect to get the job [task] done.”

**RQ2:
How do queer
leaders do and undo
gender in relation
to their leadership
style?**

- Physicality
- Disruption
- Code-switching

—

Physicality:

- Voice
- Linguistics, vocabulary, syntax, grammar
- Gestures
- Clothing
- Body size
- Hairstyles
- Gender-confirming surgery or not
- Use of physical force

Disruption:

1. Disruption to societal norms
2. Disruption to organizational norms
3. Disruption to the norms of one's historic self

Ryan's leadership role is an exceptional example of all three. To the eye, he is cis-passing, heterosexual male. In reality, he is a transgender, queer male, however, he works predominantly in what he terms, "radical feminist spaces" and unless he outs himself as trans he is very much seen as and treated like a white male, which in such spaces is not favorable.

Nicole manages her team of over twenty-five people, many of whom are "heterosexual white males" who are older than her. She points out how they have difficulty taking orders from an, "openly gay transgender woman of color" and that there are numerous "battles and struggles" with her trans female leadership. Again, disruption is risky and does not always pan out favorably, as was true for Nicole.

Code-switching: specific to gender

In most cases, this means a way to gain access to new spaces, but lose other spaces.

“Silas: It sounds like they [Tyler’s family] made a special space for you, you saying...

Tyler: They really did, even my girl cousins, we would play Barbies, we would play house and I was cool with that, it was like whatever. Then I would go with the guys and we would catch flies and throw them in the toilet then they would piss in the toilet.”

Discussion

- Numerous unique experiences.
- While all participants know how to perform androgynous leadership and how it is useful, they do not all choose to.
 - Self-preservation
 - Self-regulation
- The role of **accepting spaces**.
- Androgynous leadership and queer theory prove much more performative than authentic leadership theory.
 - Careful not to conflate personal authenticity with authentic leadership.

Feminine (Relational)
Leadership Style

Masculine (Task-Oriented)
Leadership Style

Androdynous
(Leadership) Style

Feminine Gender Identity &
Expression

Masuline Gender Identity &
Expression

Resources:

- https://one-colorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/TransResourceGuide_2016.pdf
- <https://www.hrc.org/local-issues/kansas>
- Looking to your school's policies.
- Local human relations commissions.
- Your state's LGBT Advocacy & Policy org = your state's experts.
- Reach out to me: acousticmusick@gmail.com

Questions. Let's Talk this Out.



Opportunities for future research:

- Consider different leadership theories.
- Followers perceptions of queer leaders.
- The role of media representation in the lives of transgender individuals.
- Trans men's role in deconstructing (or upholding) toxic masculinity.
- Next generation of transgender leaders, how it will differ.
- Compare with cis-gender leaders.

Data Analysis:

- Audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Pseudonyms were assigned and specific people or places made anonymous.
- The transcripts were analyzed through multiple deep readings looking for themes which answered the RQs.
- Coding occurred with themes in mind.
- Multiple themes were then grouped together into categories based on similarities.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do queer leaders perform androgynous leadership?

RQ2: How do queer leaders do and undo gender in relation to their leadership style?