ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

WHAT ARE YOU HAVING?: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GENDER CREATIVE

PARENTING

BY

SKYLER TODD

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF THE

MASTER OF COUNSELLING

FACULTY OF HEALTH DISCIPLINES

ATHABASCA, ALBERTA

NOVEMBER, 2023

Athabasca University
Faculty of Graduate Studies

Approval of Thesis

The undersigned certify that they have read the thesis entitled

WHAT ARE YOU HAVING?: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GENDER CREATIVE PARENTING

Submitted by

Skyler Todd

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Counselling

The thesis examination committee certifies that the thesis
and the oral examination is approved

Supervisor:
Dr. Emily Doyle
Athabasca University

Committee Member:
Dr. Paul Jerry
Athabasca University

External Examiner:
Dr. Margie Edwards
Athabasca University

November 30, 2023

Dedication

To my Sunny, the one who brightens my day and keeps me on my toes. You are the inspiration for us taking up gender creative parenting. You are the reason for this research.

To my Quinn, thank you for the many hours you have spent reading, editing, and discussing this research with me. My forever partner in crime, they won't catch me and you.

To all the children of gender creative parents, know that your parents are doing all that they can to cultivate a world where you get to be who you are.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

From birth onward, children are sorted and guided based on binary gender/sex expectations. The vast landscape of gender socialization research indicates that most children, transgender and cisgender alike, are socialized in ways that uphold the gender/sex binary, inhibiting their gender health. A movement known as gender creative parenting aims to disrupt the harms done through binary gender/sex socialization by refraining from assigning their child a gender/sex at birth. Through semi-structured interviews, this narrative inquiry explores the personal, practical, and social knowledge of eight gender creative parents navigating the tension of honouring their child's authentic sense of gender within a world where the gender/sex binary is ubiquitous. Three overarching and interrelated themes fundamental to the gender creative parenting experience are explored: (1) perspectives (2) practices (3) supports and barriers. This research stands to advance both counselling and transdisciplinary conversations around how best to promote children's gender health.

Keywords: gender creative parenting, gender creative parent, gender neutral parenting, gender health, gender/sex binary, gender binary, gender socialization, trans affirmative parenting, feminist parenting, compulsory cisgenderism, gender self-determination, narrative inquiry

Table of Contents

List of Terms

The following definitions are intended to provide clarification on gender-related terminology used through this thesis proposal.

Agender	"A person who identifies as having either no gender or a neutral gender identity" (Egale, 2021, p. 3).
Bad Medicalization	When healthcare practitioners overstep their authority by taking political and social problems and casting them as medical issues (Paren, 2013).
Cisgender	"An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity and gender expression align with sex assigned at birth; a person who is not [transgender or gender diverse]" (APA, 2015a, p. 863).
Cisnormativity	The assumption that anyone born with a penis is and will live out their life identifying as male and that anyone born with a vulva is and will go on to identify as a female (Rydstrom, 2020).
Conversion Therapy	Conversion therapy is a type of treatments that "seek to suppress or change a person's sexual orientation or gender" (Wright et al., 2018, p. 1).
Degendering	An approach to eliminating gender/sex division by minimizing the importance of gender/sex (Lorben, 2021; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020).
Disorder of Sexual Development	"Disorders of sexual development (DSD) encompass a group of congenital conditions associated with atypical development of internal and external genital structures. These conditions can be associated with variations in genes, developmental programming, and hormones" (Feldman Witchel, 2018, p. 1)
Essentialism	Dates back to the philosopher Aristotle who believed every concept had necessary or "essential" set of defining features (Haslam et al., 2000).
Field	Relational space between researcher and participants (Clandinin, 2013).
Field Text	Understood in other methodologies as "data", it refers to the records reflective of the experiences of the inquirer and participants (Clandinin, 2013).
GCP Units	Used to count the number of participants, in that each unit is either one individual parent or one couple/multi-parent family.

Gender	The cultural and social associations made to a person's sex, and a person's self-categorization (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020).
Gender Bending	Resisting gender norms as a form of experimentation (Dea, 2016).
Gender Dysphoria	"Discomfort or distress related to an incongruence between an individual's gender identity and the gender assigned at birth" (APA, 2015a, p. 861).
Gender Expression	"The way gender is presented and communicated to the world through clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice and/or the de-emphasis of body characteristics and behaviours" (Egale, 2021, p. 2).
Gender Health	"A child's opportunity to live in the gender that feels most real or comfortable to that child and to express that gender with freedom from restriction, aspersion, or rejection" (Hidalgo et al., 2013, p. 286).
Gender Hedging	A person's efforts to curb gender atypical behaviours and uphold the gender/sex binary in favour of gender/sex normativity (Rahilly, 2015).
Gender Identity	"A person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is not necessarily visible to others, and it may or may not align with what society expects based on assigned sex. A person's relationship to their own gender is not always fixed and can change over time." (Egale, 2021, p. 2).
Gender Identity Disorder	A now-discredited diagnostic category, Gender Identity Disorder (GID) was first adopted by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1980 in the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) and retained in the fourth edition of 1994 (DSM-IV). It is now replaced by gender dysphoria in the DSM IV (Stryker, 2018).
Gender Literacy	Use to equip individuals with inclusive understandings of gender and bodies, actively break down gender stereotypes, and build resiliency (Rahilly, 2015).
Gender Non-conforming	"An adjective used as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender expression or gender identity differs from gender norms associated with their assigned birth sex" (APA, 2015a, p. 862).
Gender Reveal Party	An event where expectant parents along with their family and friends find out the sex of the fetus through a surprise display of something pink for a girl or something blue for a boy (Jack, 2020).

Gender Roles	A set of expectations for behaviour based on one's gender (Stryker, 2018).
Gender Schematic Theory	First introduced by Sandra Bem (1981), the theory builds on the principles of social learning theory by positioning children as active agents in their development in that they organize gender behaviours and traits into categories called *schemas*. This theory argues that children, through the process of self-definition, seek out cognitive consistency and are motivated to be prototypical members of their gender group (Spears Brown et al., 2020).
Gender/sex Binary	"A dominant cultural presumption about sex and gender: namely, that there is an expected "congruent" relationship between one's sexed body and their gender identity and expression—that is, babies assigned "male" grow up to be "boys" and babies assigned "female" grow up to be "girls," and without many options in between. I use "male" and "female" to refer the sexual anatomy that is coded at birth, and "boy" and "girl" to refer to the gender identities that are presumed of bodies assigned as such" (Rahilly, 2015, p. 341).
Giving Gender	The invisible, interpersonal labour a person engages in to produce another's gender identity (Ward, 2010).
Heteronormative	Perspective of sexuality as necessarily procreative in that all individuals are and should be attracted to the opposite gender/sex (Warner, 1991).
Hijra	"Third gender people found on the Indian subcontinent, in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal" (Dea, 2016, p. 76).
Hysteria	"A common nineteenth- and twentieth-century psychological diagnosis often made of women based on a wide range of symptoms. The diagnosis is now largely discounted" (Dea, 2016, p. 179).
Interim Text	Partial texts provided to the participants to allow the researcher and the participants to "further co-compose storied interpretations and to negotiate the multiplicity of possible meanings" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 47).
Intersex	"The state of being born with biological sex characteristics that vary from what is typically thought of as exclusively male or female" (Griffiths, 2018, p. 125).
Multigendering	An approach to eliminating gender/sex division by drawing attention to genders/sexes outside of the binary (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020).
Normalization	A term first introduced by Foucault (1991), meaning the construction of an idealized norm of conduct (Feder, 2014).

Patriarchy	"A system of gender-based hierarchy in which men hold primary power" (Costa Biermann & Gonçalvez Farias, 2021, para. 1).
Research Puzzle	A narrative inquiry term that replaces what might typically be called the "problem statement" in other methodologies (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000).
Sex	"Biological systems involving the X and Y chromosomes, pre- and postnatal sexual differentiation, and hormones that influence sexual differentiation of the external genitals" (Hyde et al., 2019, p. 172).
Sex Assigned at Birth/ Assigned Sex	"The biological classification of a person as female, male, or intersex. It is usually assigned at birth based on a visual assessment of external genitalia" (Egale, 2021, p. 2).
Sexual Orientation	"A component of identity that includes a person's sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behavior that may result from this attraction" (APA, 2015b, p. 22).
Social Constructivist Theory	Individuals learn through the identifications, modelling, messaging, and reinforcement of others (Bussey and Bandura, 1999).
Social Determinants of Health	The way a number of factors inclusive of but not limited to income, living conditions, education levels, employment rates, housing, and social support, can compound to either enhance or limit an individual's health (Collins, 2018).
Stereotype	A set of beliefs about the characteristics of a group, whereby members of that group are assumed to have specific qualities, based solely on their membership (King et al., 2021).
System Justification Theory	Within this theory, individuals tolerate and justify inequality as doing so reduces feelings of insecurity and uncertainty by bolstering up a shared sense of reality (Morgenroth et al., 2020).
Transgender	"An adjective that is an umbrella term used to describe the full range of people whose gender identity and/or gender role do not conform to what is typically associated with their sex assigned at birth. Although the term "transgender" is commonly accepted, not all TGD people self-identify as transgender" (APA, 2015a, p. 863). While not all gender identities can be listed here, some of the identities that may identify with the term include those who are non-binary, genderqueer, agender, bigender, two-spirit.
Transgender and Gender Diverse (TGD)	"A term intended be as broad and comprehensive as possible in describing members of the many varied communities globally of people with gender identities or expressions that differ from the gender socially attributed to the sex assigned to them at birth. This

	includes people who have culturally specific and/or language-specific experiences, identities or expressions, and/or that are not based on or encompassed by Western conceptualizations of gender, or the language used to describe it" (Coleman et al., 2022, p. 55).
Transnormativity	A one-size fits all framework applied to the gender experiences and presentations of all transgender and gender diverse folk which legitimizes those who seek to move from one binary gender to another, and those who pursue medical interventions to affirm their identity (Johnson, 2016).
Two-spirit	"An English umbrella term to reflect and restore Indigenous traditions forcefully suppressed by colonization, honouring the fluid and diverse nature of gender and attraction and its connection to community and spirituality. It is used by some Indigenous People rather than, or in addition to, identifying as [2SLGBTQI]" (Egale, 2021, p. 5).
2SLGBTQI	"An acronym that stands for Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, and Intersex. This acronym is often used as an umbrella term to encompass a much wider range of identities and experiences related to sex, gender, and attraction that fall outside the dominant norms of heterosexual and cisgender identities. It is often intended to capture terms beyond what the initials suggest. Many variations of this acronym exist" (Egale, 2021, p. 2).

List of Figures

Chapter. 1 Introduction

In 1972, a story by Lois Gould titled Baby X: A Fabulous Child's Story was published in *Ms. Magazine*. The fable featured a child named X, who as part of a science experiment, was not assigned male or female at birth. In the story, people struggled to interact with X without knowing the child's sex - those close to X's family felt ashamed and withdrew, others called X names and did not want to be around them. The story comes to a head when other children at school see how happy X is to be themselves and follow suit by dressing, playing, and acting however they want despite societal gender rules. A group of parents, infuriated by X's bad influence, demand something be done about "The X Problem" calling on X's parents to reveal the child's sex and force them to behave accordingly. In response, it is decided that X be tested by the Superpsychobiometer machine to determine once and for all if "X [was] mixed up - or everyone else [was]" (Gould, 1972, p. 4). The story ends with expert assessment concluding X as having a healthy sense of gender identity and to be "the least bit mixed up child [they have] ever Xamined" (Gould, 1972, p. 4)!

The story of Baby X illuminates how people cling to, impose, and police the master narrative of the *gender/sex binary.* Rahilly (2015) defines the gender/sex binary as a dominant cultural framework that reinforces the notion that there are only two genders, that a child's sex and gender always align, and that babies assigned male at birth will grow up to be and act like boys and that babies assigned female will grow up to be and act like girls. Embedded within the gender/sex binary are the essentialist views that gender and sex are two distinct, unchanging, natural, and pre-discursive categories (Hyde et al., 2019; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020; Skewes et al., 2018).

The perspectives within the gender/sex binary bolster cisgender, heterosexual, and gender conforming lives as "normal" and "healthy." Inversely, they deem those who live outside the gender/sex binary such as 2SLGBTQ+, intersex, and even cisgender people who take on gender non-conforming roles and expressions as "abnormal" and "unhealthy." Essentialist perspectives operate to create a gender hierarchy wherein those living outside the gender/sex binary face social, economic, and sometimes physical consequences (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Despite the misalignment of essentialist perspectives with contemporary research (Hyde et al., 2019; Skewes et al., 2018), these perspectives continue to operate unquestioned in the ways we raise our children.

A child's first encounter with a gendered world occurs through their parents (Halim & Ruble, 2010). As mediators of the gender/sex binary, parents make countless decisions that influence their children's *gender health,* defined by Hidalgo et al. (2013) as a "child's opportunity to live in the gender that feels most real or comfortable to that child and to express that gender with freedom from restriction, aspersion, or rejection" (p. 286). With the acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of gender inequalities within the second wave feminist movements of the 1960s, parenting approaches emerged that were designed to disrupt the harms done by gender/sex stereotypes. While there has been a spectrum of parenting approaches aimed at dismantling the gender/sex binary (Bem, 1983; Greenberg, 1979; Lucas-Stannard, 2012; Pogrebin, 1980; Spears Brown, 2014; Statham 1986), a growing movement known as Gender Creative Parenting (GCP) appears to be bringing the story of Baby X to life.

Apart from an open-source master's level thesis by Max Davies (2020) titled *Raising Theybies: Navigating within a Gendered World* no published academic research has been done on GCP. In turn, to define the GCP philosophy we must look to what has been published in the

popular media. Like feminist parenting models of the past, those practicing GCP actively make parenting decisions that seek to eliminate gender-based oppression (Myers, 2020). Yet unique to this new wave of parenting, is the *multigendering* approach many are taking to disrupt the gender/sex binary. This multigendering perspective is exemplified by sociologist and gender creative parent Kyl Myer's (2020) perspective on the purpose of GCP: "The aim is not to eliminate gender - the goal is to eliminate gender-based discrimination, disparities, and violence. My aim isn't to create a genderless world; it's to contribute to a gender*full* one" (p. 2). Rather than attempting to abolish gender, the model seems to be applying multigendering practices that embrace and celebrate the genders and sexes that live outside of the binary (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020).

Also unique to the GCP model is that those who practice the philosophy typically choose not to assign a child a gender at birth and do not disclose the reproductive anatomy of their child to most people (exceptions may be made to healthcare practitioners or additional carers of the child) (Morris, 2018). Many gender creative caregivers use gender neutral pronouns to refer to their child - these may include they/them, neopronouns like ze/zir, alternating between pronouns, or simply using the child's name in place of a pronoun. Differing from feminist parenting models of the past (Bem, 1983; Greenberg, 1979; Lucas-Stannard, 2012; Pogrebin, 1980; Spears Brown, 2014; Statham 1986), GCP disrupts the embedded assumptions of the gender/sex binary by intentionally holding space for the possibility that a child's gender identity might fall under the transgender and gender diverse (TGD) umbrella. By choosing to let their child self-determine their gender identity, GCP becomes a form of proactive gender health care (Myers, 2020).

With roots in transgender health, the field of psychology is continuously developing the notion of what constitutes a healthy sense of gender (Keo-Meier & Erhensaft, 2018). The

concept of gender health was adopted by the gender affirmative model (GAM) of care and reflects a positive shift on the part of the health field to discontinue the framing of transgender identity from a position of disorder and illness (Bocking et al., 2010, Brown et al., 2020, Ker et al., 2021). The GAM, originally designed to support TGD children, can be universally applied as a model to support all children's gender health, including cisgender children. Tenants of the GAM, which directly counter the master narrative of the gender/sex binary, are as follows:

> (a) no gender identity or expression is pathological (b) gender presentations are diverse and vary across cultures, requiring our cultural sensitivity; (c) according to current knowledge, gender involves an integration of biology, development and socialization, and culture and context, with all of these bearing on any individual's gender self; (d) gender may be fluid, and is not binary, both at a particular time and if and when it changes within an individual over time; (e) any pathology that is present is more often caused by cultural reactions to gender diversity (e.g., transphobia, homophobia, sexism) than by internal psychological disturbances within the child. (Keo-Meier & Erhensaft, 2018, p. 14)

This perspective of gender seems to underpin many of the positive parenting practices that caregivers are adopting in the raising of TGD children. And whether consciously or unconsciously, it also seems to be the foundation for the GCP model. However, it is difficult to determine the beliefs and values of those practicing GCP because, as previously mentioned, minimal academic research has been undertaken on this new wave of parenting. Given the unique position that gender creative parents are in, they can offer personal, practical, and social knowledge on navigating the tension of honouring a child's gender health within a world where the gender/sex binary is ubiquitous. Their experiences of raising children within the GCP model

could provide greater insight on the best ways to promote a child's gender health, regardless of a child's gender identity. Therefore, the purpose of this research will be to investigate the lived experiences of caregivers using the gender creative parenting philosophy.

Research Puzzle

Unique to narrative inquiry, the methodology that underpins this research, is the use of the term *research puzzle* to replace what traditional studies might call the "problem statement." Best explained by narrative inquiry's founders, Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000), "problems carry with them qualities of clear definability and the expectation of solutions, but narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of a search, a "re-search", a searching again" (p. 124). Using the term research puzzle emphasizes that each narrative inquiry begins with curiosity "rather than thinking about framing a research question with a precise definition or expectation of an answer" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 42). Positioned as the inquirer, I enter this puzzle with a sense of wonder about how gender creative caregivers are living and the constituents of their everyday existence.

While I have chosen to employ a methodology that valorizes the lived experiences of gender creative parents, this does not mean I will focus solely on the personal, but instead seek to understand how participants experience these greater macrosocial forces. Specific to this research puzzle, I will narrow in on how the concepts of gender health and the gender/sex binary are negotiated as social, cultural, and institutional narratives that are understood, expressed, and enacted within GCP experiences. Narrative inquiry is positioned as a holistic exploration of a chosen phenomenon that is focused on depth and breadth of experience not previously researched in academia (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). Accordingly, I am organizing this research puzzle around the question: What are the lived experiences of caregivers practicing gender

creative parenting? I am purposefully beginning this narrative inquiry with a broad and open-ended research question to hold space for the stories that gender creative parents believe are most important to share.

The Research Puzzle's Importance

Typically speaking, researchers are implored to make explicit the scholarly relevance of and practical use for their research. Narrative inquiry extends this research imperative by calling on researchers to take a multilayered approach when answering the questions "So What?" and "Who Cares?" regarding the significance of our studies (Clandinin, 2013). In honouring the methodology's traditions, I will unpack the social, practical, and personal justifications for the proposed research puzzle (Clandinin, 2013).

Social Justification

The broadest level of justification that narrative inquiry calls on researchers to consider is a social one, articulating what difference their inquiry might make to theoretical understandings of how to create a more socially-just world (Clandinin, 2013). The psychological field has a history of casting social and political issues as individual problems (Thrift & Sugarman, 2019). As will be further discussed in chapter two, the health fields have and continue to play a significant role in the oppression of women, intersex individuals, and 2SLGBTQ+ folk. Thus, as suggested by Winslade (2018), counsellors have an ethical responsibility to move beyond individual therapeutic interventions and attend to collective well-being through social justice. Specific to this research, health care professionals (HCP) must commit themselves to dismantling the gender/sex binary through the promotion of the gender health of our communities.

Across research, the health disparities experienced by TGD individuals are well-documented (Bariola et al., 2015; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; Klein & Galoub, 2016; Pariseau et al., 2019; Pflum et al., 2015; Testa et al., 2015; Yadegarfard et al., 2014). In response, the academic and public communities have focused their efforts on how best to support TGD folk. However, this conversation is being reactionarily framed, meaning the bulk of the research undergone is on family members' responses after a child starts embodying gender non-conforming behaviours or "comes out" as TGD. The existence of the GCP philosophy calls attention to a new way of supporting and affirming TGD identities; a proactive approach. As previously mentioned, gender creative caregivers do not assign a gender identity to their child, and instead make space for expansive possible gender identities and expressions by supporting their child in self-determining their gender identity and expression. This parenting philosophy has the potential to revolutionize the way we conceptualize gender health and in doing so, save lives.

The application of GCP as a proactive model does not end at advancing the health of the TGD community but has the potential to advance the gender health of cisgender individuals as well. As mentioned, the concept of gender health based on the GAM originated in TGD academia and, to my knowledge, has never been applied outside of this community. However, when looking to the vast landscape of gender socialization research, it becomes clear that many children, TGD and cisgender alike, are being socialized in a way that sustains the gender/sex binary and inhibits their gender health. By choosing to parent in favour of gender/sex expansive possibilities, GCPs seem to take issue with the current gender climate and its consequent health disparities (Myers, 2020). Gaining a greater understanding of the lived experiences of those

using the GCP approach, has the potential to transform the ways we raise and care for the next generation by advocating for a more colourfully gendered world.

Practical Justification

A study's practical justification refers to the difference the research might make to practice within the field (Clandinin, 2013). This particular research puzzle is aimed at providing a foundational understanding of the gender creative parenting experience. Hopefully this research will underpin future transdisciplinary research around topics of gender health and childhood gender socialization which could include a focus on the field of counselling psychology.

It is imperative for a narrative inquirer to be mindful of the bordered discourse their research puzzle occupies within different academic communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Therefore, perspectives and practices on how best to support an individual's gender health is a temporal, social, and cultural conversation that is pertinent to many social science disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, and gender studies, to name a few. Pertinent to our modern context, gaining perspectives of how GCP caregivers promote a child's gender health has the potential to advance an ever-growing body of research around gender affirming care; a topic which contemporarily spans across all "helping" disciplines inclusive of the fields of medicine, counselling, social work, education, and more (Coleman et al., 2022; Ducheny et al., 2017). However, the benefit of this knowledge need not be unidirectional.

Ensuring all the aforementioned fields understand the gender creative parenting philosophy is likely to also positively impact the type of care that gender creative families, inclusive of their children, receive. With a better understanding of the lived experiences of gender creative parents, including the barriers they face, these institutions can act to foster GCP

affirmative environments, policies, and practices. Finally, it goes without saying that this research stands to impact the discipline of parenting, if you can call it that, by advancing old and new conversations around how to best support children's gender development (Hidalgo et al., 2013; Erhensaft, 2018; Keo-Meier & Erhensaft, 2018; Spears Brown, 2014).

Personal Justification

This brings me to my personal justification for undertaking this research. Out of a desire to best foster our child's gender health, my partner and I opted to raise our child using the GCP philosophy. Now with a 17-month-old, at the time of this writing, and still at the start of our parenting journey, we are all too aware that we are walking the road less travelled. Unlike the parents in the Baby X story, we were not provided an instruction manual. Apart from the memoir titled *Raising Them* by Kyl Myers (2020) that provoked us to take up this approach, and a few GCP Facebook support groups, there is little information available to help us navigate this unfamiliar landscape. Further, we are the only people we personally know utilizing this approach and so have little by way of community.

I enter this research puzzle genuinely excited to sit and connect with others, albeit virtually, listen to their GCP stories, and to learn more about the constituents of their GCP experiences. Based on my own position as a gender creative parent, it may go without saying that I believe that those who practice GCP are "onto something" when it comes to how best to promote a child's gender health. I hope to illuminate the experiences of those practicing gender creative parenting for both the benefit of our community, but also for the benefit of the gender health of future generations of children.

Narrative Beginning

When my partner and I were pregnant, we were continuously asked the question "What are you having?" We were disturbed with others obsession with this question and knew we had to approach gender through parenting differently. During this time, I came across Kyl Myer's (2020) memoir titled *Raising Them* which detailed their family's journey raising their child, Zoomer, without an assigned gender. Alongside navigating typical parenting milestones, the book spoke to the complexities and nuances of parenting in a way that deconstructs the interpersonal and institutional barriers that uphold the gender/sex binary. Side by side in our bed, my partner, Quinn, and I took turns reading chapters out loud to one another. It was Myers (2020) and their partner's hope for their child's future, that most caught our attention:

> [We] want more than half the world for [our] child. [We] want all the clothing and toy aisles, not just one section. [We] want all the colours and activities and books for [our] child. [We] want all the adjectives for [our] child. [We] want [our child] to have all the positive experiences and all the opportunities. [We] want to raise a well-rounded, healthy, happy, compassionate, adventurous, creative, emotionally intelligent, confident, kind, clever, assertive child - and [we] don't need a gender binary to do that. (p. 6)

We wanted the same for our child. Finally, there was language to access and a pathway forward, for all the scrambled thoughts that had been whirling around in my head for years. We knew instantly that we would follow suit and adopt the GCP approach in raising our future child. Just as soon as it was decided, I began the work of unravelling my own experiences of the gender/sex binary.

Personal Interweavings of Gender/Sex

Like all others, the way I conceptualize and perform gender depends on the intersectional spaces that I occupy (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). My gender identity and expression cannot be

explored in isolation from other elements of my identity (Robbins & McGowan, 2016). I am the child of multiple generations of white rural farmers, who immigrated from various parts of Europe in hopes of a better future but in doing so built a new life on lands that were ripped away from Indigenous peoples who had stewarded them for hundreds of years. I am privileged to be the first person in my immediate family to enter post-secondary studies, yet my perspectives of gender are laced in colonialist and working-class understandings of the gender/sex binary. I am committed to spending a lifetime untying these knots. From my sexual orientation to my marriage, my education to my career as a teacher, and now to the parenting of my child - nothing has been untouched by gender/sex.

I identify as queer. To clarify, I outwardly and proudly identify as queer. While some well-intentioned heterosexual individuals may look at my 2SLGBTQI+ identity with sympathy, and much of the "positively framed" queer research bolsters self-acceptance (Camp et al., 2020), my outlook expands these positions; I view my queer identity as a gift imbued with freedom, joy, and wisdom. Even with all of the strides made in Canadian human rights laws, I live out my queer identity knowing full well that within this social and historical moment, society would still rather me be straight. Knowing full well that my existence confuses, upsets, inconveniences, and even scares others. Before coming out, I was terrified I would lose my family and friends, the plans I had for the future, and society's respect. Even when I thought life was threatening to take everything from me, I still came out. Although, I don't want to discredit the inner strength that came with this act, I didn't realize it at the time, but I was able to come out as I was protected by multiple veils of privilege, including my whiteness and my socio-economic status. I knew I would always have somewhere to live, access to employment, food to eat, and so I can't pretend that tapping into my inner strength was all that was at play. However, being able to walk away

from the pillars of heteronormativity and all that they uphold and find a life of happiness and fulfillment outside of them, gave me permission to question all other societal and institutional narratives that demand to be carried, including the other facets of the gender/sex binary. I feel set free to grow in whichever way I please, which in itself is a privilege.

In 2019, I married my best friend who is many things. One of those things being, a gender/sex explorer. Assigned female at birth, Quinn grappled with their own gender/sex issues from a young age. In their early twenties, they experienced some extreme mental health issues, tried to commit suicide, and were institutionalized more than once. Parallel to these struggles was their decision to transition to male. It hurts me to think of someone whom I hold so close and who fills the world with so much good, being another TGD statistic (Clark et al., 2018; Lefevor et al., 2019; Reisner et al., 2015; Taliaferro et al., 2019). With the support of their family, they chose to affirm their gender journey by going by their middle name, asking to be referred to with he/him pronouns, taking testosterone, and getting top surgery. In doing so, they began having doubts about whether they wanted to move from one binary identity to another. They felt like they were replacing one set of gender/sex rules for another set of gender/sex rules. Yet, the *transnormative* narrative of being "trapped in the wrong body," requiring them to move from one binary gender to another, is the only story of TGD existence they knew (Fiani & Han, 2019; Johnson, 2016). A couple years later, Quinn discovered the term non-binary and has since used this label to identify their gender and now opts to use they/them pronouns.

Walking alongside my non-binary partner, I bear witness to the joy they experience when someone uses gender neutral pronouns or is confused by their gender identity - they personally love the androgynous space they exist in. I also bear witness to the discrimination they experience. The invalidation. Confrontation. The moments their existence is denied. The

constant misgendering. The times they are called "delusional." Being required to be evaluated by a psychologist or doctor to change the gender marker on their ID to X. Having to choose between female or male clothes, the female or male washroom. The list goes on and on. Sadly, none of these experiences of being non-binary are unique to them personally (Fiani & Han, 2019; Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2018; Johnson et al., 2019; Lefevor et al., 2019; Lykens et al., 2018; McLemore, 2019). In our wedding vows, I wrote that Quinn is "brave beyond measure" and they are, as they are brave enough to question the current status quo offered up by the gender/sex binary. But on the days when it is just easier to default to a gendered washroom or ignore someone who is misgendering them, I want to be their strength when they are exhausted from battling the gender/sex binary.

As a teacher of over 10 years, I have seen first-hand the ways in which children live out the gender/sex binary. From the gender segregated play (Hilliard & Liben, 2010; Shutts et al., 2013; Xiao et al., 2019) to the policing of other children's gender expression (Jewell & Brown, 2013; Zosuls et al., 2016; Xiao et al., 2019), children take so seriously the rules that have been set out for them. These enthusiastic and curious little beings want so badly to "get it right." Education has made some recent theoretical shifts away from the purpose of schooling being solely to develop a child's academic abilities towards an institution that aims to develop the whole child - their mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being (Chafouleas & Lovino, 2021). From my lens, the concept of gender/sex bridges all of these facets of a child's health and must be included in this holistic approach to educating our children.

Over the last couple of years, I have committed myself to educate the elementary students I have been lucky enough to teach directly about the limits and harms of the gender/sex binary. The students I have worked with are well-versed in the differences between sex assigned at birth,

gender identity, and gender expression. Knowing the importance of representation to foster diverse role models (Ijoma et al., 2022; Mocarski et al., 2019), they know the names of people like Alok Vaid-Menon and Jazz Jennings, and other gender expansive folks living their truths. While the media purports a transphobic fear of children being too young for these conversations, in my experience, students are eager to unpack conversations around gender and already enter these discussions with concrete examples of how the gender/sex binary infringes on their childhood.

A Journey of Reparenting

It has been said that parenting is a process of reparenting your own inner child (Capacchione, 1991). In wanting to provide my child with a gender expansive and affirming environment, I have no choice but to turn inward and consider whether I, as their role model, am allowing myself these same freedoms. While I understand gender development is a complex constellation of biology, the brain, socialization, culture, and more (Erhensaft, 2014) and it is unlikely I will ever find concrete answers for my wonderings, I continuously find myself contemplating which qualities, behaviours, and thoughts of mine are a product of the requirements of my social location as a child assigned female at birth. Take my thoughtful and considerate nature – something I have always prided myself on. How much of these qualities are "authentically" me? Or are they a part of my genetic code passed down from generations? To what degree do I have to thank the early socialization of little girls who are encouraged to take care of everyone around them so much so that they are self-sacrificing? Are these qualities something I should hold in such high regard or is me doing so another way or perpetuating the oppressive messages of the gender/sex binary?

I have salient memories as a child of being told to "quit being so bossy." Now as an adult, I have a difficult time determining when, how, and to what degree to be assertive. I wonder if I would be different if I was socialized to be the bold, self-confident, leader that many boys are encouraged to be? Based on my present appearance this world reads me as female and both strangers and loved ones alike are quick to take up she/her pronouns when referring to me. Yet, how would I identify if I lived in a world with gender expansive possibilities and where I was able to self-determine my gender identity? What would my life be like if my own parents had practiced GCP?

As a child, I seemed to have a fascination with *gender bending*, described as resisting gender norms as a form of experimentation (Dea, 2016). In fact, I have memories of wanting to be called "Chris" in my early elementary days. While I am not quite sure what prompted this pseudonym, I distinctly remember liking the name because I thought of it as more androgynous. I had friends that were both male and female and felt satisfied that I seemed to fit in nicely within both worlds. In those days, I also made it well understood that I hated pink. Green was my colour of choice, and I was proud of it. In fact, I was so annoyed at the blind adoption of pink as the favourite colour of most girls of my age, that I started a club called "Green Gals" where I recruited other girls in my grade away from that colour preference.

As a child, I loved to dance and perform, and would jump at any chance to play the male role; one time I played Aladdin, another time Danny from Grease. I basked in the glory of being able to unapologetically "try on" the strong and stoic role. My favourite movie to this day is Penny Marshall's (1992) *A League of Their Own*. I have never watched any other film as many times as I have that one. Although I have never been much of an athlete, I wanted to be those characters breaking the mold of what it meant to be female. I still do. Reflecting on my

childhood experiences, my understanding of gender was firmly rooted in a binary understanding. How could it have been any other way? Growing up in Regina, Saskatchewan in the 90s, there were little by way of alternatives to the "boy" path or the "girl" path. Not unique to my upbringing (Fiani & Han, 2019; Johnson et al., 2019), there were no examples of gender creativity in the media and no real-life, visible TGD folks to look to. I wasn't the first, and certainly won't be the last, female child to denounce the colour pink. While a little girl's decision to turn their back on the colour pink seems quite juvenile and even a bit comical, I see it as an unequivocal act of rebellion against the gender/sex binary in the best way my younger self knew how to. Embedded within the choice to take up gender creative parenting, was the decision to give myself permission to unlearn the regulative teachings of the gender/sex binary and to creatively explore gender and gender expression. Since becoming a parent, I have begun using they/them pronouns and self-identifying as genderqueer as both represent a tangible means of undoing the gender/sex binary's hold on my history and re-inventing my relationship with gender moving forward.

Negotiating the Gender/Sex Binary through Parenting

Like many parents, I hope to cultivate a good life for my child. This is what brought Quinn and I to the gender creative parenting philosophy. However, the motives and purpose behind the gender creative parenting model and the lived experiences of those practicing it are two very different things.

Now that we have started down this GCP path, I can't unsee the ways the gender/sex binary continues to rear its head in my family's day to day existence. Truly, gender/sex seems to be embedded within everything aspect of life. From the "Himama" app at our child's daycare that implicitly assumes every child has or should have a mama and that it is the primary

responsibility of that mama to check the app for information and updates about their child. To the signs on public transport that display an image of a mother holding their infant calling to passengers to give up their seat implying that a mother might be the only caregiver travelling with a baby. To strangers calling our child "he" or "she" depending on their hair length and outfit as if a child with long hair can only be a she or a child wearing a shirt with trucks can only be a boy.

My partner and I are continuously negotiating how to parent in a way that dismantles the gender/sex binary. Do we speak up about the app or let it go? Do we write a letter to the city about the transportation signs? When our child is too young to voice their preferences, how do we decide what hair style our child should have and what they should wear? Do we strive for balance in how they are perceived? Is striving for balance only furthering the tenants of the gender/sex binary? No one is immune to implicit gender biases, with this in mind, what role does knowing our child's genitalia play in how we make choices for them?

I enter this research puzzle wondering how other GCP caregivers perceive, negotiate, and dismantle the gender/sex binary in favour of their child's gender health. I wonder how caregivers from other socio-cultural identities shape and are shaped by their GCP experiences. I have interests around what brought these parents to the approach - what their own gendered childhoods looked like and their gender experiences as an adult. I wonder how each parent conceptualizes a healthy sense of gender and what approaches they take on an intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional scale to affirm it. Like us, I wonder what barriers they are coming up against and how they navigate those obstacles. I wonder in what ways they feel affirmed in their choice to use the GCP philosophy. Even though I am living the GCP approach, I enter this inquiry with more questions than answers.

Thesis Organization

Within this chapter of my thesis, I oriented the reader toward the need for and potential impact of the research puzzle to which I will inquire. In the next chapter, I will provide the reader with a review of the current literature around three primary concepts: the gender/sex binary, gender health, and gender socialization in childhood. Exploring these themes is necessary to understand how the gender creative parenting movement has the potential to revolutionize the way to we support children's gender health. The third chapter will provide an overview of my chosen research paradigm and methodology and how these underpinnings have influenced the research methods and ethical considerations I have made. Centering the eight participants' language, within the fourth chapter I provide a synthesis of the key research findings of the gender creative parenting experience presented in three interrelated themes: (1) perspectives, (2) practices, and (3) supports & barriers. Finally, within chapter five I analyze the research findings alongside the feminist and trans parenting research. This chapter also highlights implications of this research study, its limitations, and potential future research directions. The reader will also notice the definition sections and list of figures placed before this introductory chapter and all pertinent appendices at the end of this thesis.

Chapter. 2 Review of the Literature

Throughout this literature review, I seek to problematize the gender/sex binary as narrowing human possibilities and reinforcing gender/sex inequality. By exposing the cultural narrative's limits, I intend to open a space where we can begin to question the taken for granted assumptions embedded in our contemporary gender/sex landscape. To understand the means with which the gender/sex binary has been essentialized, I then explore the historical inner workings of the cultural framework within the health fields and the shifting understandings of gender care from an approach of normalization to personalization and affirmation. In universalizing current gender affirmative practices, I then bolster the concept of gender health as an important pursuit for all members of society, including but not limited to transgender and gender diverse (TGD) folk. Finally, as parents act as the origins of the gender/sex binary, I expose current gender socialization parenting practices as hindering children's gender health and introduce gender creative parenting (GCP) as a philosophy and practice for "re-doing" gender/sex (West & Zimmerman, 2009).

Figure 1

Concept Map for Literature Review Chapter

| Gender/Sex Binary | Parental Gender/Sex Socialization | Children's Gender Health |

The Gender/Sex Binary

In the introduction chapter, I defined the gender/sex binary as a dominant cultural framework that reinforces the notion that there are only two genders, that a child's sex and gender always align, and that babies assigned male at birth will grow up to be and act like men and that babies assigned female will grow up to be and act like women (Rahilly, 2015). To move

forward in exploring the influence of the gender/sex binary, it is necessary to unpack a number of assumptions that bolster up this ubiquitous societal narrative. Before doing so, I will comment on the choice to use the language "gender/sex binary," instead of the "gender binary" which is arguably a more recognized term.

The term *sex* typically refers to the "biological systems involving the X and Y chromosomes, pre- and postnatal sexual differentiation, and hormones that influence sexual differentiation of the external genitals" (Hyde et al., 2019, p. 172). Whereas *gender* can refer to both the cultural and social associations made to a person's sex, and a person's self-categorization (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Like others who advocate for the use of the term gender/sex binary (Hyde et al., 2019; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020), my choice to use this language is to recognize that these two terms are biologically and socio-culturally inseparable (van Anders, 2015) and in doing so call attention to the pervasive societal belief that sex exists outside of history and culture (Moulin de Souza & Parker, 2022). The notion of sex as a social construct will be articulated in more detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Figure 2

Visual Representation of the Gender/Sex Binary – Adapted from the 'Pillars of Heteronormativity' Visual found in Jonathan Katz's November 20th, 2014 article in New Voices Magazine.

SEX ASSIGNMENT

IT'S A BOY   IT'S A GIRL

GENDER IDENTITY

MAN   WOMAN

GENDER EXPRESSION

MASCULINE   FEMININE

ATTRACTION

TO WOMEN   TO MEN

GENDER ROLES

ACT LIKE A MAN   ACT LIKE A WOMAN
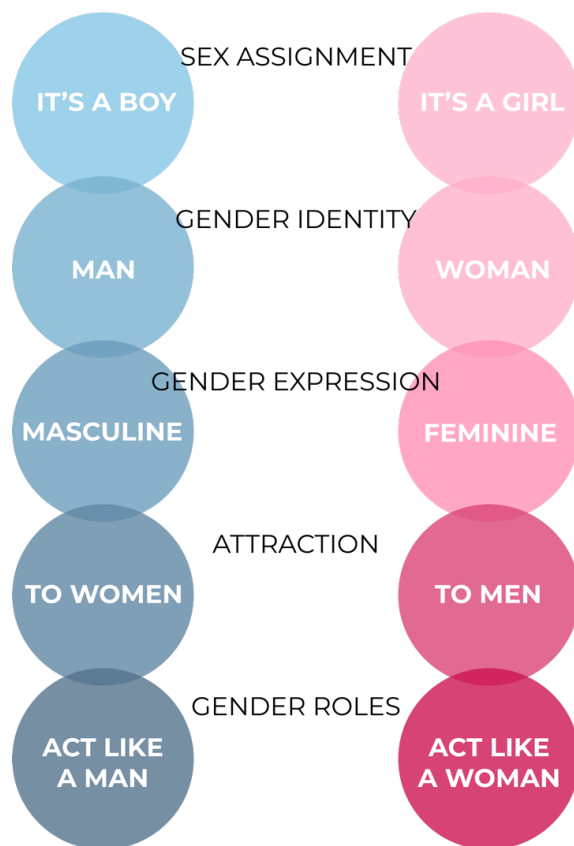
Lives as Livable: Whose Existence is Included in the Gender/Sex Binary?

At the basis of the gender/sex binary lies essentialist views of sex and gender. The notion of *essentialism* dates back to the philosopher Aristotle who believed every concept had a necessary or "essential" set of defining features (Haslam et al., 2000). When applied to the concept of gender/sex, essentialism refers to the belief that sex and gender are comprised of two discrete, fixed, natural, and pre-discursive categories: male or female (Hyde et al., 2019; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020; Skewes et al., 2018). Within mainstream society the concepts of sex and gender are often used interchangeably (Dea, 2016), as embedded in the gender/sex binary

framework is the belief that sex determines a person's gender (Morgenroth et al., 2021). As the only two possibilities within the gender/sex binary, the categories of male and female are considered internally consistent and in opposition with the other (Brannon, 2017). Within essentialist views, gender/sex is also believed to be innate, static, and uninfluenced by relational and environmental influences (Hyde et al., 2019). As mentioned, gender/sex is widely assumed to have existed before culture and its interpretations (Butler, 1990).

The essentialist views that underpin the gender/sex binary uphold normative narratives that dictate whose lives are worthy. Typically, within industrialized societies, when a baby is born, a medical professional visually inspects a child's external genitalia in order to assign them to one of the two gender/sex categories (Tate et al., 2019). Embedded in this act, is the concept of *cisnormativity*, the assumption that anyone born with a penis is and will live out their life identifying as male and that anyone born with a vulva is and will go on to identify as a female (Rydstrom, 2020).

Further, from the perspective that gender follows sex comes a set of expectations for behaviour based on one's gender, otherwise referred to as *gender roles* (Stryker, 2018). The expectations set out by the gender/sex binary for what is deemed "feminine" and what is deemed "masculine" are far reaching. Gender roles include the activities people engage in, the clothes they wear, their grooming practices, the attributes we ascribe to them, who they should be attracted to, and much more (Dea, 2016). To speak to the latter point, the gender/sex binary presupposes a *heteronormative* perspective of sexuality as necessarily procreative and that all individuals are and should be attracted to the "opposite" gender/sex (Warner, 1991). A person born with a penis is a man and will be attracted to women, and a person born with a vulva is a woman and will be attracted to men. Conceptualizing human beings as falling into distinct,

essential categories, necessitates reflection on whose existence is deemed liveable under the gender/sex binary and whose is not (Tate et al., 2019).

Lives as Invisible: Whose Existence is Left out of the Gender/Sex Binary?

The gender/sex binary is both prescriptive and proscriptive, asserting how the concepts of sex, gender, gender roles, and expressions relate and who should and should not exist (Morgenroth et al., 2021). The issue with the gender/sex binary is that the essentialist beliefs that underpin it are pervasively accepted as truth, yet they do not align with contemporary science (Hyde et al., 2019; Skewes et al., 2018) or our social reality. To decenter the taken for granted nature of this cultural framework, the following section will be used to refute the tenants of the gender/sex binary by pointing to the scientific evidence and lived realities that challenge its assumptions.

Deconstructing Sex Essentialism

Contrary to popular belief, the concept of sex and its borders, have been widely debated across time and societies. According to historian Thomas Laquer (1992), the gender/sex binary is a relatively new concept as prior to the 18th century, sex was not considered dimorphic but instead it was widely believed that there existed only one sex. Scientists and doctors who were greatly influenced by Aristotle and Galen, understood the body as having one basic, idealized structure: male (Laquer, 1992). All bodies were considered to have the same genitals and organs, only some were underdeveloped and inside the body - what we presently consider the female anatomy, while those whose genitals and organs were outside the body – presently deemed male anatomy, were considered fully developed (Laquer, 1992). In fact, the testicles and ovaries were not given distinct names until the 19th century (Laquer, 1992).

While our move to the two-sex model may seem indicative of societal advancement, even the contemporary understanding of sex does not live outside our socio-temporal context. As an example, in one culture a genital tubercle of a certain size would be labeled as a penis and in another it would be labeled a clitoris (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). We can also see how sex is socio-culturally constructed by looking to the changing expectations in the sporting world on what determines a person's eligibility to compete in the male or female categories. Prior to 1968, female Olympians were required to prove their femininity by showing their breasts and vulva to a board of examiners (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Now considered demeaning and not wholly accurate, the Olympics relies on the measurement of testosterone levels to determine who competes in the female category (Elsessor, 2021). Notably, such measures are not taken in the male categories (Elsessor, 2021).

To further deconstruct essentialist views of sex, there is considerable scientific research that the biological systems underpinning the basis of sex, including chromosomes, hormones, and genitalia are not binary in nature (Morgenroth et al., 2018). The existence of *intersex* individuals, defined as "the state of being born with biological sex characteristics that vary from what is typically thought of as exclusively male or female" (Griffiths, 2018, p. 125), is evidence that sex cannot be divided into two discrete categories. While there are many conditions that fall under the intersex umbrella, some examples include having atypical chromosomes, inconsistency with external and internal reproductive organs, over or under production of sex hormones, or having ambiguous external genitalia (Intersex Society of North America, 2008).

Even amongst those who would be medically considered "typical" males and females, research across multiple fields asserts sex as more of a spectrum or mosaic than a binary (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Hyde et al., 2019). Neuroendocrine research has disproven the assertion that there

that are male and female sex hormones (Hyde et al., 2019). Instead, all human bodies produce

the commonly gendered androgens and estrogens of testosterone, progesterone, and estradiol

(Hyde et al., 2019). Further, the levels of these hormones are understood to overlap significantly

despite someone's sex, as well as vary across a person's lifespan depending on social and

environmental influences (van Anders, 2015). Neuroscience has also debunked the myth of the

"male brain" and a "female brain," and instead research has found brain features to be

overlapping and not internally consistent for features deemed male and female (Hyde et al.,

2019). This is not to say there are no average differences in structure and function between male

and female brains, however the assumption that these differences are pre-programmed, stable,

and uninfluenced by context warrants questioning (Joel & McCarthy, 2017).

Deconstructing Gender Essentialism

Originating from the Latin word *genus* which means "kind" or "type," gender is the

socio-cultural organization of bodies into distinct categories of people (Stryker, 2018). With

roots in gender/sex binarism, contemporary Western culture organizes people into these different

categories based on sex (Stryker, 2018). However, gender categories have varied tremendously

across time and from one culture to another. Traditionally, Indigenous cultures from

Mesoamerica to sub-Arctic regions developed complex social and cultural systems that made

space for gender and sexual blending and avoided using anatomy to mark gender (Smithers,

2022). Indigenous people have been known to embrace multiple genders or have a gender system

defined by fluidity and spirituality (Roscoe, 2019), which is embodied in the term *two-spirit*.

Historically, two-spirit individuals were valued for their work as shamans, healers, and ceremony

leaders (Smithers, 2014; Smithers, 2022).

Another cross-cultural representation of gender outside the gender/sex binary is the *hijra* community, who have more recently gained legal status as a third gender in the countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, & Nepal (Dea, 2016). Hijras have a long history in the South Asian regions and are even portrayed in Indian historical and mythological text (Reddy, 2007). Gender representations outside of the gender/sex binary, including two-spirit and hijra communities, have suffered much oppression at the hands of European colonization which brought a firm allegiance to the gender/sex binary (Majumder et al., 2020; Smithers, 2022; Tompkins, 2015). Through Christianity and under the guise of modernity, gender fluidity was deemed deviant and sinful, and in turn colonizers tried to change, remake, and destroy two-spirit, hijra, and other gender blending people (Smithers, 2022). Yet those efforts failed, and now there are renewed movements to restore traditional practices and gender-fluid roles (Smithers, 2022).

Even within Western culture, there are ample examples of the existence of gender diverse people throughout much of recorded history (Hicks Anderson, 2018). As previously mentioned, the gender/sex binary assumes that a person's internal experience of gender aligns with their sex, which is referred to as a *cisgender* gender identity (Egale, 2021). However, the very existence of transgender and gender diverse (TGD) folk, an umbrella term that describes all individuals who self-identify with a gender that does not align with their assigned sex, challenges the assumption that sex is a perfect predictor for how people will self-identify (Coleman et al., 2022).

In fact, a growing number of young people are rejecting their birth assigned categories (Meerwijk & Sevelius, 2017; Nolan et al., 2019) as alternatives become less stigmatized (Morgenroth et al., 2020). While the number is likely to expand, at the time of writing this the number of labels a person can use to self-identify their gender well exceeds two, with Wikipedia listing 92 possible genders on its *Gender Identities* page (Wikipedia, 2022). Further, the

gender/sex binary asserts that everyone has a gender, however there are some people who define themselves as having no gender at all, such as those who identify with the term *agender* (Egale, 2021). Interestingly, one study conducted by Joel et al. (2014) found that even some cisgender individual's gender identity and sex do not completely align, with at least at least 35% of cisgender participants feeling, to some extent, like another gender.

Deconstructing Gendered Codes of Behaviour

Like the other facets of the gender/sex binary, expectations of how each gender ought to behave cannot be separated from socio-historical influences. Looking across time and culture, there is great variability in gender roles. After conquering Egypt in the 4th century BCE, the Greeks were shocked to discover the elevated status of women (Kent, 2020). At the time, Egyptian women possessed many of the legal rights afforded to men, including the right to own property, the ability to divorce, and testify in court, all of which was quite different from Grecian society where women had minimal freedoms (Kent, 2020). Perspectives of sexuality have greatly varied across time as well; few cultures projected any moral concern onto same–sex relations before what was known as the Mosaic Laws, the laws believed to be given by God to the Israelites through Moses beginning with the Ten Commandments (Naphy, 2004). In fact, the gods and goddesses of many non-monotheistic religions engaged in various forms of same-sex activities (Naphy, 2004). While there is no question that certain cultural and temporal moments forced 2SLGBTQI+ people into hiding, there is not a single period within history where you cannot find evidence of 2SLGBTQI+ lives. This community's very existence, both then and now, challenges the gender/sex binary's promotion of compulsory heterosexuality.

Gender expression, a component of gender roles, is "the way gender is presented and communicated to the world through clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice and/or the

de-emphasis of body characteristics and behaviours" (Egale, 2021, p. 2), and has differed vastly across history. Prior to the dress reform movement of 19th century Europe, it was a criminal act for women to wear pants in public (Drover, 2017; Stryker, 2018; Vincent, 2009). Further, contrary to current perspectives on colour, in pre-World War II America, it was suggested that boys should be dressed in pink as it was considered a more masculine colour and girls in feminine alternatives like blue (Paoletti, 2012). We need only look to the media to find contemporary examples of diverse expectations for gender presentation. At the time of writing this, an Iranian revolution is taking place calling for an end to the rules of hijab, which mandates that women must wear loose clothing and while outside the home must cover their hair with a headscarf (Bayat & Hodges, 2022). There exist plenty of contemporary popular cultural examples of individuals presenting themselves in gender colourful ways, including non-binary public figures Alok Vaid-Menon and Jonathan Van Ness, who are calling for a renewed understanding of fashion and beauty as genderless.

Even with a multitude of examples establishing gender roles as socio-culturally influenced, the gender/sex binary works to naturalize an essential "code of behaviour" for each gender. Yet there is ample evidence, both historically and currently, of human beings across every gender identity, behaving in gender non-conforming ways (Hicks Anderson, 2018). While the gender/sex binary bolsters up a narrative of men as the more analytical and logical gender, we see a growing number of women entering the typically male-dominated STEM fields (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Despite the gender/sex binary's supposition of women being best suited towards childrearing, we can still find families who have stay-at-home parents of other gender identities. In fact, there is a growing body of research that shows a large overlap between men and women in terms of traits, behaviours, abilities, and interests, thus calling into question what

is deemed "feminine" and "masculine" behaviours (Hyde et al., 2005). When looking at the vast diversity of the human population, it becomes apparent that very few peoples' identities and expressions align with the gender/sex binary (Morgenroth et al., 2020). This begs the question, if the framework of the gender/sex binary is serving so few people, how did it become such a fundamental way of understanding our world?

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: The Gender/Sex Binary as a Reinvention of the Patriarchy

The construct of the gender/sex binary, just like each of its embedded assumptions, did not come to be organically, nor is the framework neutral in its existence (Butler, 1990; Kent, 2020). There are several explanations for why harmful cultural frameworks such as the gender/sex binary remain in place, including that they serve the interests of a powerful social group (Heise et al., 2019). Judith Butler (1990), one of the most influential gender theorists of our time, argues that underpinning the gender/sex binary is a system of political, social, cultural, and economic power structures that are patriarchal in nature. The *patriarchy*, defined as "a system of gender-based hierarchy in which men hold primary power" (Costa Biermann & Gonçalvez Farias, 2021, para. 1), dates back to the development of settled agricultural communities around 3000 BCE in which men were considered heads of the household and of the states and were entitled to absolute control over women (Kent, 2020). While our contemporary Western way of life may vary considerably from these ancient societies, the patriarchy has continued to reproduce and sustain itself throughout time (Butler, 1990) to justify its oppression of women and other sexual and gender minorities (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020).

When in human history did the patriarchy begin? While it would be difficult to uncover an exact starting point, male domination can be traced back as far as early Greece, a society greatly influenced by the ideas of Aristotle. As previously mentioned, Aristotle believed in a

one-sex model and understood the female body to be underdeveloped as it failed to attain the

standard paternally reflective form for all offspring (Dea, 2016). In his work titled *Politics,*

Aristotle asserts "male by nature is superior, and the female inferior, one rules and the other is

ruled; this principle of necessity extends to all of mankind" (Femenias, 1994, p. 166). Femininity

was considered close to animality, and animality was understood to be in opposition with

humanity, thus throughout Athens, women and men lived largely segregated lives so that men

could achieve their highest degree of virtue and manliness (Kent, 2020).

Early Christianity had the potential to revolutionize the world's gender/sex framework

with its beliefs that all people were beloved to Christ and that heaven did not differentiate

between different genders (Kent, 2022). Yet, as exemplified by the ideas of St. Augustine, the

early principles of Christianity were quickly engulfed by the deeply misogynistic cultural climate

of the time (Kent, 2020). Not dissimilar to Aristotle, St. Augustine's perspective on gender/sex

relied on an argument of a rational division of labour with a woman's body predisposing it to

attend to lower, practical matters, whereas a man's body was more suited to attend to elevated

ideas (Dea, 2016). Thus, it was believed that while men were created in God's likeness, women

reflected the image of God only when they were married and fulfilling their responsibilities to

their husband (Dea, 2016).

The Industrial Revolution and the large-scale city migration of the 18th century brought

with it the concepts of The Enlightenment and new struggles for power and position (Laquer,

1992). During this time, intellectuals of The Enlightenment began to debate the moral

justification for the prevailing gender/sex hierarchy (Connell, 1987). The widely accepted belief

of contemporary social organization as descending from transcendental order or God's will

corroded (Laquer, 1992) and religion's position as the highest social authority gave way to

science (Stryker, 2018). With the rise of science and reductionist thinking, the physical and in turn, the biological, began to matter (Laquer, 1992).

From this point forward, biology was then used as a tool by men to rationalize female subordination through investigation of the human body, thus the "second sex" was created (Laquer, 1992). Female reproductive anatomy, once considered the same as male, only internal rather than external (Dea, 2016), was studied independently and body parts that had not been labeled, such as the vagina, were given a name (Laquer, 1992). It was during this time that the gender/sex binary began to take root, with biological findings used to justify a construction of the female body as opposite and incommensurable to the male body (Laquer, 1992). During this time, differences beyond the physical, including the behavioural, political, and moral, became grounded in anatomy (Moulin de Souza & Parker, 2022). Not only used to invalidate claims for the social and political emancipation of women, the science of physical difference was also applied to justify the oppression of Jews, working-class labourers, and people of colour (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

While the landscape has shifted for many of these equity-seeking groups, the patriarchy maintains itself in the widely held essentialist beliefs within the gender/sex binary (Butler, 1990). Infamous feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir argued that while the gender/sex binary is positioned as two poles symmetrical in nature, it is in reality a center and a bias (Dea, 2016). Beauvoir asserted that men are seen as absolute and natural, positioned as "The One," while all other genders, including women and TGD folk, are positioned as "The Other" (Dea, 2016). From this perspective, the patriarchy continues to advance itself in the unstable and unsettled gender/sex binary, regulating those who defy its agenda to socially, economically, and politically subordinated roles. The various forms of discrimination faced by those living outside the

gender/sex binary create powerful pressures to conform (Heise et al., 2019). This is not to say that men are unequivocal victors of the patriarchy, as asserted by sociologist Raewyn Connell (1987), "even the beneficiaries of an oppressive system can come to see its oppressiveness" (p. xiii).

If so many people from diverse walks of life are oppressed within our current gender hierarchy, why then is it still in place? *System Justification Theory* provides one possible explanation for the scientific and public defence of the gender/sex binary, in that justifying current political and social structures makes people feel better about the status quo (Morgenroth et al., 2020). Within this theory, individuals tolerate and justify gender/sex inequality as doing so reduces feelings of insecurity and uncertainty by upholding a shared sense of reality (Morgenroth et al., 2020). While the structure of the patriarchy continues to reshape itself, those living outside of the parameters of the sex/gender binary continue to face real, everyday consequences.

The Gender Hierarchy

As discussed in the previous sections, the gender/sex binary acts as a cultural ideology that produces some lives as valuable while stigmatizing or positioning other lives as invisible. In fact, researchers have asserted that the essentialist views underpinning the gender/sex binary serve to justify contemporary gender inequalities (Skewes et al., 2018). These beliefs sustain a gender hierarchy in which women are oppressed and those violating the gender/sex binary such as intersex, queer, and TGD folk are socially, economically, and sometimes physically punished (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). As we will read below, it also encourages harmful behaviour in the male population (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). These assertions concretize when glancing at the endless examples of contemporary gender disparities. Within this section I intend to give a broad

overview of the current landscape of the gender hierarchy, but it will by no means provide a complete picture of the gender gaps that exist.

Looking first to economics, a 2019 study by Patterson and Pelletier, analyzed data from 1998 to 2018 and found that even with years of progress, the gender pay gap in Canada is still evident with female workers aged 25 to 54 earning $0.87 cents for every dollar earned by men, which equates to on average $4.13 less per hour. The researchers equate the gap to the unequal distribution of genders across industries and an over representation of women in part-time work (Patterson & Pelletier, 2019). A contributor to these differences is likely to be due to the continued unequal division in domestic labor and childrearing (Van Brenk, 2020). According to UN Women (2022), females carry out over 2.5 times more unpaid household and caretaking than men. Research found that one unprecedented social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was a return to more traditional gender roles, with female's work more typically disrupted by childcare and that women were more likely to give up or lose their positions (Carli, 2020).

When considering the employment of other genders, transgender individuals were found to be 11% more likely to be unemployed when compared to their cisgender peers and 14% more likely to be in poverty (Carpenter et al., 2020). According to a 2017 Canadian and American study, 25-40% of homeless youth identify as part of the 2SLGBTQI + community (Abramovish et al., 2017). Investigating education, Canadian men are less likely than women to pursue tertiary education at 56% of the population vs. 73% of women (OECD, 2021). Transgender students make up only 0.8% of the post-secondary student population (Burczycka, 2020). Finally, inadequate representation is also found in Canadian governmental leadership and decision-making. As of 2021, 29.4% of federally elected Members of Parliament identified as female (Statistics Canada, 2021) and 2%, at 8 MPs identified as 2SLGBTQI+ (Lenti, 2021).

As set forth by the United Nation's *social determinants of health* framework, all these aforementioned factors, including but not limited to income, living conditions, education levels, employment rates, housing, and social support, can compound in ways that either enhance or limit an individual's health (Collins, 2018). In terms of cisgender individuals, there is ample evidence regarding the health disparities between women and men. In a summary of Canadian police reported data in 2019, women were 3.5 times more likely than men to experience domestic violence, populating 79% of the data collected (Conroy, 2021). According to Statistics Canada, 87% of sexual assaults are committed against women (Conroy & Cotter, 2017) with 30% of Canadian women over the age of 15 having been sexually assaulted (Cotter & Savage, 2019). The 2016 United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC) Global Report found that the majority of human trafficking victims, at 71%, were women (UNODC, 2016). When looking toward mental health, women are more likely to receive a mental health diagnosis for most issues, including depression and anxiety (Brannon, 2017).

This is not to say men do not suffer within the gender/sex binary as they too experience some alarming health disparities. In 2019, men made up 94% of the Canadian incarceration rate (Correctional Service Canada, 2019). Further, men are 1.1 to 1.6 times more likely to than women to die from preventable diseases such as heart disease, chronic lower respiratory diseases, stroke, kidney disease, and pneumonia to name a few (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). According to the 2019 World Health Organization (WHO) Global Suicide Estimates, the age-standardized suicide rate was 2.8 times higher in Canadian men than women (WHO, 2019). Men are also significantly more likely to battle substance abuse issues with rates at almost double that of women at 10.8% versus 5.8% according to the 2013 U.S. National Survey of Drug Use (NSDUH, 2013). The APA (2018) suggests that traditional

masculinity under the gender/sex binary restricts men from seeking physical or emotional help for fear of being seen as weak. With so little research being done around intersex folk, little is known about their health outcomes. Yet, what does exist points to intersex adults having reported a number of physical and psychosocial health issues, including depression and anxiety (Rosenwohl-Mack et al., 2020).

It is well known that the TGD community is disproportionately affected by health disparities. The research demonstrates TGD individuals are at an increased risk for mental health challenges including depression, anxiety, somatization, and personality disorders (Bocking et al., 2013; Goldberg et al., 2019; Lefevor et al., 2019). Within this community, the data also shows increased levels of alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco consumption (Bradford et al., 2013; Clark et al., 2018; Olson et al., 2015), and greater risk of violence (Bradford et al., 2013), self-harm and suicide (Clark et al., 2018; Forcier et al., 2020; Lefevor et al., 2019; Resiner et al., 2015; Talia ferro et al., 2019). The research finds that those falling under the non-binary umbrella are at an even greater risk of health disparities when compared to their binary transgender peers (James et al., 2016; Lefevor et al., 2019).

When considering the health inequities among those of varying gender identities, we cannot view gender in isolation from other facets of one's identity (Robbins & McGowan, 2016). It is necessary to apply an intersectional framework by considering that each individual's experience of health is determined by multiple socio-cultural positionalities, inclusive of one's race, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and more (Bowleg, 2012). In turn, it is worth noting that certain gender identities, such as two-spirit populations, are largely absent from the research (Kinitz et al., 2022). This is likely to indicate an increased vulnerability to health risks as this community also experiences discrimination based on their racialized identity. Gender

disparities are widespread, pervasive, and deeply ingrained into our society. How then should we work towards dismantling the gender/sex binary in favour of promoting the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual health of all genders? Looking back to medical and psychological history is necessary to drive towards a future of gender health.

Gender Health

After reading the previous section, some might still argue that those who fall within the gender/sex binary are living healthy and "normal" lives, while those who fall outside are not. Within this next section, I will explore the health field's history of control and domination through their conceptualization of natural human variation as pathological or disordered. I will then reveal how push back by those considered unwell has led to more affirmative models of care based on self-determination and personalization, all of which has brought about a conceptualization of gender health. Finally, we will analyze how the concept of gender health has solely been applied to TGD folk and the transformational potential it has when applied not only within, but beyond that community.

The Power of Medicalization

The rise of scientific authority within the 19th century brought with it a shift to the health care professional's (HCP) role being one of supporting a patient's judgment of their "health" to being one positioned as an objective expert on "normativity" authorized to evaluate and treat a patient as set out by prevailing standards (Feder, 2014). Across the health fields, what was common was determined to be normal (Slagstad, 2021). To this day, HCPs and institutions are given the social authority to construct potentially neutral forms of human variance into oppressive social hierarchies by setting the parameters for what is deemed pathological versus normal, or sick versus healthy (Stryker, 2018). Bioethicist Erik Paren (2013) refers to this

phenomenon as *bad medicalization,* when HCPs overstep their authority by taking topics and populations deemed political and social problems and casting them as medical issues.

The health fields have played a central role in the construction of an idealized norm of conduct, what Foucault refers to as *normalization* (Feder, 2014). In terms of gender/sex, the normative ideal became one of a healthy and moral life depending on a person being unambiguously gendered and sexed against the binary (Stagstad, 2022). As asserted by Riggs et al. (2019), "the struggle to define and control some of the most marginal members of society is always also a struggle for dominance and authority among its most privileged" (p. 12). As such, it comes as no surprise that the normalization of gender/sex through diagnostic decision-making has been made by white, cisgender, heterosexual men (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012). We need only look back in time to see societal and institutional shifts in what was considered a healthy sense of gender/sex and what, or more importantly who, was deemed sick or pathological.

Prior to the two-sex model, intersex individuals were not automatically assumed to be objects of medicine (Feder, 2014; Linton; 2022). With the 19th century modernization of medicine, mastering knowledge of the human body and its functions was foregrounded, giving rise to the idea that all people had a "true sex" as either male or female (Feder, 2014). Of course, intersex people posed problematic to the binary sex model. For a period of time, physicians attempted to discover an individual's true sex through surgical investigations of gonadal tissue (Dreger, 1998). With the lack of efficacy of gonadal examination, advances in surgical techniques and endocrinology, and developmental psychologists' invention of the term gender identity, gender and sex were separated and attitudes towards intersex individuals shifted (Kessler, 1998).

By the mid-century, intersex bodies were considered a pathology and something that hindered healthy development, in turn it became commonplace for bodies of intersex babies to be surgically and hormonally reconstructed as male or female (Dea, 2016). Despite ambiguous genitalia rarely posing a health risk (Kessler, 1998) and many intersex activists sharing experiences of psychological and sexual suffering because of these sex re-assignment surgeries (Dea, 2016; Linton, 2022), this practice is still alive today (Linton, 2022). Further, while many intersex scholars and activists reject the term, an intersex condition is classified as a *Disorder of Sexual Development (DSD)* within the clinical community, thus implying intersexuality as a malady (Dea, 2016).

Under the gender/sex binary there exists a long history of the normalization of femininity, with women labelled as mentally ill when they conform too closely or stray too far away from female stereotypes of the time (Riggs et al., 2019). This is exemplified in the diagnosis of *hysteria* which dates back to the ancient Egyptians of 1900 BC (Tasca et al., 2012) and is believed to have been reconceptualized multiple times even within each iteration of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) under the guise of alternative names and symptoms (Brannon, 2017; Jimenzez, 1997; Showalter, 1997). In fact, in the opinion of most 18th century HCPs, most women had been inflicted by hysteria at some time (Meek, 2012). The far reach of hysteria is best exemplified in the following quote by Mark Micale (1995) author of *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and its Interpretations*:

Throughout its long career, the disorder has been viewed as a manifestation of everything from divine poetic inspiration and satanic possession to female unreason, racial degeneration, and unconscious psychosexual conflict. It has inspired gynecological, humoral, neurological, psychological, and sociological formulations, and it has been

situated in the womb, the abdomen, the nerves, the ovaries, the mind, the brain, the psyche, and the soul. It has been construed as a physical disease, a mental disorder, a spiritual malady, a behavioral maladjustment, a sociological communication, and as no illness at all… As Gerard Wajeman has observed, 'There doesn't seem to be anything that medicine hasn't said about hysteria.' (p. 285)

Throughout history, peak moments of feminism seem to be met with resistance from scientific experts to reassert dominant values about gender (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Jimenzez, 1997). When Western women began demanding equal rights through voting and educational and economic opportunities, some doctors argued that granting women such privileges would ruin their health and lead to sterility (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). To this day, researchers continue to claim consistent gender bias in DSM diagnoses (Garb, 2021). Interestingly, HCPs demonstrate a tendency to overrate female psychological distress while under-rating those of men, yet more often consider men's symptoms to be more serious than women's (Brannon, 2017). Feminist psychologist Sandra Bem (1993) argued that women will always be understood as less psychologically healthy, as within any system men constitute the standard for what is deemed mentally healthy. Under the gender/sex binary, the same notion could be asserted for TGD health when cisgender identity is normalized as the standard for a healthy existence.

Medicine's social power to normalize certain bodies and genders has had a long-lasting effect on the TGD community (Stryker, 2018). Historically speaking, while a handful of HCPs studied TGD patients, it was Karl Ulrich who first conceptualized the gender of the mind and sex of the body as two separate concepts (Stryker, 2018). With the advancement of medical and surgical treatments by the 1920s, TGD individuals began to undergo treatments that would align their gender conceptualization with their physical body (Hicks Anderson, 2018; Drescher, 2010).

However, not long after, HCPs began to wonder if it would be more valuable to intervene to change a person's mind rather than a TGD person's body (Slagstad, 2021). Thus, psychology emerged as a central force for understanding TGD identity (Riggs et al., 2019) with the intention to correct or find a cure for the "perversion" (Hicks Anderson, 2018), now commonly referred to as *conversion therapy*.

Transgenderism and homosexuality were intertwined and inseparable within the health fields in the late 19th and early 20th century. However, in 1973, due largely to the gay liberation movements of the 60s, homosexuality was removed from the DSM under the argument that it was congenital and a natural facet of human variation (Slagstad, 2021). In its subsequent edition, the DSM III, the term *Gender Identity Disorder* (GID) was introduced and with it a set of procedures for medically managing TGD health (Stryker, 2018). Some welcomed a label to explain their experience and took comfort in believing they could be cured with proper treatment, however many TGD folk resented having their identity labelled as disordered (Stryker, 2018). In 2013, with the advent of the DSM V, the label of GID was dropped and replaced by the term *Gender Dysphoria*, with the intention of managing the distress arising from gender diversity rather than pathologizing TGD identity (Rigg et al., 2019).

What has yet to completely shift is the paternalistic, gatekeeping role that those in positions of power play in granting a TGD person access to gender affirming interventions (Dea, 2016; Linton, 2022). Research demonstrates that many HCPs are applying a narrative of *transnormativity*, a one-size fits all framework of gender experiences and presentations to all TGD folk (Bradford et al., 2013; Bradford & Syed, 2019; Fiani & Han, 2019; Johnson, 2016; Lykens et al., 2018; McCullough et al., 2017; Testa et al., 2015). This framework legitimizes the experiences of TGD who embody gender dysphoria and seek to move from one binary gender to

another by pursuing medical interventions to affirm their identity (Johnson, 2016), yet fails to acknowledge the diversity of TGD experiences (Chang et al., 2017; Dominguez et al., 2019; Fiani & Han, 2019; Matsuno, 2019; Matsuno & Budge, 2017; James et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2019; Kuper et al., 2018; Richards et al., 2016; Robbins & McGowan, 2016; Tatum et al., 2020). With dire consequences to those who seek care from an HCP, these transnormative narratives are another example of how even under the guise of progress, the gender/sex binary continues to reshape itself. While history provides ample examples of HCPs pushing an agenda of normalization, examples can also be found of health practitioners listening to the needs of their patients and lending their expertise to provide person-centered care (Slagstad, 2021).

From Normalization to Personalization

People whose bodies, identities, and behaviours do not fit within the gender/sex binary have and continue to push back against their own pathologization by asserting agency and claiming self-definitions to shape gender/sex knowledge and practice (Lorben, 2021; Slagstad, 2021). Previously, gender/sex health hinged on the belief that for individuals to have good lives, sex, gender, and gender roles must be congruent (Stagstad, 2022). However, the gender/sex health landscape appears to be shifting with many HCPs moving from a narrative of normalization to personalization. This is in part due to the increased collaboration between medical and mental health organizations and activist groups leading to greater support for informed consent processes and affirmative care models (Cundill, 2020). Further, due to the recognition of gender/sex as a complex interplay of biology, psychology, and social factors, gender/sex health has become increasingly recognized as an interdisciplinary endeavour calling on collaboration between primary care providers, psychologists, psychiatrists, surgeons, endocrinologists, urologists, geneticists and more (Coleman et al., 2022; Ducheny et al., 2017;

Lee et al., 2006). In their book *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics*, Fausto-Sterling (2000) hopes

for a future when healthcare has been placed at the service of gender and sex non-conforming

individuals. Now, over twenty years later, their imagined future seems much more in reach in

many ways. Yet when considering the dramatic rise of anti-trans legislation in the U.S., the fight

for trans rights, including gender affirmative care, is far from over.

Intersex activists have also made some gains from their advocacy work. While not

without struggles, starting in the 2000s, collaborative efforts between intersex advocacy groups

such as Alliance Accord for InterACT for Intersex Youth and medical experts began to take

place to implement the *Consensus Statement on the Management of Intersex Disorders* (Stryker,

2018). Updated in 2016, the Consensus Statement is positioned as the current optimal guidelines

on the clinical management of intersex conditions (Garland et al., 2021). Also developed in

consultation with intersex stakeholders, *The Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender*

and Gender Diverse People Version 8 (SOC-8), just released in September 2022, similarly

published a statement of recommendations for intersex care (Coleman et al., 2022).

Differing from common practice in the past when parents were pressured into facilitating

sex re-assignment surgeries on their babies (Reis, 2009), both guidelines stipulate that doctors

practice from a position of informed consent where they communicate clearly and transparently

about a child's intersex condition (Dea, 2016). When it comes to cosmetic surgery, the

Consensus Statement, as well as the SOC-8, recommend an approach of self-determination in

which procedures are deferred until intersex patients are able to make the decision for themselves

(Coleman et al., 2022; Dea, 2016). Interestingly, while the current iteration of the Consensus

Statement also recommends that all babies receive a gender assignment (Garland et al., 2021),

the SOC-8, suggests supporting intersex individual's gender exploration throughout their lifetime

(Coleman et al., 2022). While neither set of guidelines have been universally adopted, they have begun to produce improvements in intersex care (Dea, 2016). In fact, a 2018 systematic review of international intersex health literature by Jones (2018) points to shifting intersex nomenclature. The review found that the number of sources that promoted community-centered information that honoured the perspectives of intersex people's bodily autonomy now equaled the literature of practitioner-centered, interventionist, and pathologizing views of intersex individuals (Jones, 2018).

Not dissimilar to the progress made in intersex care, TGD health care has also begun to center an affirmative care model supported through informed consent and self-deterministic approaches. With the depathologization of transgender identity in 2013, TGD existence has begun to be recognized as a natural facet of human diversity (Coleman et al., 2022). With the understanding of TGD experience as authentic, there began to be a push on the part of the TGD community and TGD scholars (Currah et al., 2006; Katri, 2017; Stanley, 2014) for self-deterministic care approaches in which TGD individuals are positioned as experts of their own experiences (Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2022). This perspective, coupled with the rise of the informed consent model, in which a HCP's role shifts from a gatekeeper who evaluates a TGD individual's readiness for gender-affirming interventions to a position of evaluation based solely on the TGD individuals' ability to consent to such procedures (Matsuno, 2019), has endorsed a gender affirmative approach to care.

As exemplified in the recent version of the SOC, gender affirmative care has become the preferred approach for TGD adults (Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2022). Turning our focus to children and youth, it is clear that the model is not without its opponents (Bonfatto & Crawnow, 2018; Churcher Clarke & Spiliadis, 2019; Spilidas, 2019). We need only look to the current media

landscape to read up on the recent gender affirming care bans for minors popping up across the

U.S. Elsewhere however, the gender affirmative approach has started to ascend as the preferred

model for supporting TGD children and youth (Keo-Meier & Erhensaft, 2018), specifically

within gender specialty clinics in Canada (Sansfaçon et al., 2019). The tenants of the gender

affirmative model (GAM) for children, first articulated by Hidalgo et al. (2013) and later

minimally revised by Keo-Meier and Erhensaft (2018), are as follows:

> (a) no gender identity or expression is pathological (b) gender presentations are diverse
>
> and vary across cultures, requiring our cultural sensitivity; (c) according to current
>
> knowledge, gender involves an integration of biology, development and socialization,
>
> and culture and context, with all of these bearing on any individual's gender self; (d)
>
> gender may be fluid, and is not binary, both at a particular time and if and when it
>
> changes within an individual over time; (e) any pathology that is present is more often
>
> caused by cultural reactions to gender diversity (e.g., transphobia, homophobia, sexism)
>
> than by internal psychological disturbances within the child. (p. 14)

The tenants of the GAM distinctly oppose the gender/sex binary's essentialist perspective

which normalizes the alignment of sex, gender, and gender roles. Instead, the GAM was

established with the intention of promoting the *gender health* of TGD children and youth,

defined as "a child's opportunity to live in the gender that feels most real or comfortable to that

child and to express that gender with freedom from restriction, aspersion, or rejection" (Hidalgo

et al., 2013, p. 286). Taking a gender affirmative approach to the promotion of children's gender

health is validated by emerging evidence of the positive practices of many parents of TGD

children (Hidalgo et al., 2013). To understand the impact of the promotion of children's gender

health, we must investigate how and with what results, has the GAM been applied within TGD parenting?

The Parenting of Transgender and Gender Diverse Children

Through the existence of their children, parents of TGD kids have been thrust into a position where they need to decide how to, or if they will at all, negotiate the gender/sex binary as a flawed cultural ideology. Despite expressing initial struggles (Rahilly, 2015), many parents arrive at a place where they aim to foster their child's gender health by trusting their child to self-determine how to describe, define, and express their gender in a personally authentic way (Aramburu Alegría, 2018). Promotion of their child's gender health has been demonstrated to come in a variety of forms, including allowing their child the freedom to express their gender however they choose, as well as honouring their chosen name and pronouns, and by using gender affirming language (Durwood et al., 2017; Hale, 2021).

Supportive parenting behaviours include simply being emotionally available and compassionate (Andrzejewski et al, 2021; Hale, 2020). Parents of TGD children also engage in varying degrees of *gender literacy,* where they equip their children with TGD-inclusive understandings of gender and bodies, actively break down gender/sex stereotypes, and prepare their children for potential discrimination to build resiliency (Rahilly, 2015; Ryan, 2016). Another important aspect of gender affirmative parenting is ensuring gender diversity is visible in a child's life through picture books and in person playgroups and family meetups (Ryan, 2016). TGD parents also advocate for their children's gender health by practicing gender literacy with other important people in the family's life, as well as within public institutions such as schools and health care settings (Alegria, 2018; Hale, 2021; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015; Rahilly, 2015). Across the research, parents describe utilizing what Malpas (2011) refers to as a

"both/and" stance where they navigate the tension of taking actions to affirm their child's authentic gender identity while also helping their children understand the demands of a world where the gender/sex binary is pervasive (Gray et al., 2016).

Approaching caregiving through the GAM with the intention of promoting a child's gender health has been demonstrated to have a significant impact on other aspects of their child's health. A systematic literature review from 2019, which covered 46 studies over 8 countries, found consistent evidence of the health benefits of caregiver affirmation and support (Westwater et al., 2019). This same review also confirmed lack of family support to be positively associated with adverse life outcomes and poor mental health (Westwater et al., 2019).

More specifically, studies point to lack of family support, including parental control or disapproval of gender non-conforming behaviour being associated with anxiety and depression (Bariola et al., 2015; Pariseau et al., 2019; Pflum et al., 2015; Yadegarfard et al., 2014), substance use (Klein & Galoub, 2016), and suicidal ideation (Testa et al., 2015; Yadegarfard et al. 2014) and attempts (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; Klein & Galoub, 2016). Conversely, some researchers have made the claim that parental support is the greatest protective factor against mental health challenges for TGD individuals (Bariola et al., 2015; Veale et al., 2017). Parental support has been linked to higher life satisfaction (Simons et al., 2013), improved self-esteem (Katz-Wise et al., 2018; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Olson et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2010; Travers et al., 2012), lowered or normal levels of depression and anxiety (Katz-Wise et al., 2018; Olson et al., 2015; Olson et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2010; Russel et al., 2018; Simons et al., 2013), PTSD (Wilson et al., 2016), substance abuse (Ryan et al., 2010), self-harm behaviour (Bauer et al., 2015; Katz-Wise et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2010; Russel et al., 2018; Veale et al., 2015) and greater levels of resiliency (Katz-Wise et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2016). In fact, research has

shown that when parents allow their children the freedom to behave in gender non-conforming ways, they have the same mental health outcomes as children who are not gender diverse (Olson et al., 2016).

Despite its positive effects, to date no research has taken place that applies the GAM to the gender health of all children. Solely applying the concept of gender health to TGD children, assumes a cisnormative perspective that those who are cisgender would not benefit from gender affirmative practices as they, inherent to their cisgender identity, already live in a fixed state of gender health. Yet, as discussed earlier in this chapter, cisgender individuals' gender health is also in danger under the gender/sex binary. Repositioning the GAM of care as principles to support all individuals' gender health regardless of their gender identity or expression, has the potential to dismantle the gender/sex binary and advance our collective societal well-being. If one can assume a parent's primary role is to nurture a healthy child, in every sense of the word health, it is necessary to explore the ways contemporary Western parenting practices are promoting or inhibiting children's gender health.

Gender/Sex Socialization through Parenting

As conduits for and mediators of the gender/sex binary, parents make countless decisions that promote or diminish their child's gender health. Even before a baby is born, parents contemplate their child's gender and envision what that means for their child's future. Parents make decisions regarding who their child will become and what is possible in their child's world. These assumptions set into motion how a child will be socially perceived, managed, and encouraged and discouraged to behave (Hyde et al., 2019). Caregivers decide what to name their child, what pronouns to refer to them by, how to decorate their room, which clothes and toys to choose, which restrooms to take them into, what activities to sign them up for, and which

friendships to encourage. This process, referred to as *parental gender socialization*, refers to all the intentional and unintentional ways parents teach their children the social expectations of gender (Portegen et al., 2023). Sociologist Jane Ward (2010) referred to the labour of these interpersonal practices of producing another's gender identity as *giving gender*.

Gender development has been explained from multiple perspectives including evolutionary (Travers, 1971), cognitive-developmental (Kohlberg, 1993), and information processing (Martin & Halverson, 1981) theories, to name a few. As explained by the call for interdisciplinary care, and enacted in one of the GAM tenets, at present gender is understood to be formed through a combination of chromosomes, hormones, sex characteristics, the brain, the mind, socialization, and culture (Erhensaft, 2014). For this research, social learning theory and social constructivism models provide most useful as they emphasize the important role various social agents, including parents, play in children's development. In accordance with *social learning theory,* parents impose their own beliefs, hopes, and agendas on their children, and do so through their own identifications, modelling, messaging, and reinforcement to teach their children how to perform gender/sex (Bussey and Bandura, 1999). However, parents do not act as independent translators as they too are social actors constrained by accountability to the societally dominant discourse of the gender/sex binary. This is not to say that gender/sex is solely learned, as this does not explain the resistance on the part of TGD children to defy the social engineering of socially accepted gender roles (Erhensaft, 2018). Further, while this research will focus on caregiver influence on a child's gender health, this is not to position children as passive recipients of the gender/sex binary. *Gender schematic theory* asserts that through the process of self-definition, children are active agents that organize behaviours and traits into *gender schemas* that are modified and personalized as they interact with different

contexts (Bem, 1991). Within this research, I move forward with an understanding of children as co-constructors of their gender/sex conceptualization.

Parental Gender/Sex Socialization

Gendered childhoods are ubiquitous, and caregivers reinforce the gender/sex binary through a myriad of practices. Even before a baby is born, parents show an interest in wanting to find out the sex of the fetus (Shipp et al., 2004; Bauman et al., 2008). The most common way to determine a fetus' sex around week 12 or after is by an ultrasound technician searching for the presence or absence of a penis and assessing the direction of the genital tubercle (Odeh et al., 2009). Embedded in this act is the gender/sex binary's assumption that gender follows from sex, meaning parents believe prenatal sex to be indicative of their unborn child's character (Montei, 2021). This is exemplified in a statement made by Christy Olezeski, director of the Yale Gender Program, who explains that finding out a child's prenatal sex is like "solving a mystery, a piece of comfort and way to have an answer about a being [parents] have yet to know and learn about" (Montei, 2021, para 5). Sometimes parents will ask a doctor to write down the fetus' sex and seal it in an envelope which is then passed on to a loved one or professional to plan what is typically called a *gender reveal party* (Jack, 2020). The idea of a gender reveal party is that expectant parents, along with their family and friends, will find out the sex of the fetus through a surprise display of something pink for a girl or something blue for a boy (Jack, 2020).

Not all parents choose to find out the sex of the baby in advance of the baby's arrival, with one study indicating the most common reason, at 93.9%, for not seeking this information was wanting the fetal sex to be a "surprise at birth" (Kooper, 2012). In alignment with the ultrasound practice, once a baby is delivered, the examination of external genitalia is the primary method for determining a baby's sex (Tate et al., 2019). Notably, even with the belief that

biological sex is comprised of several components (Hyde et al., 2019), an investigation of other components of sex, such as internal genitalia, hormone levels, or chromosomes is rarely done (Tate et al., 2019). Missing from these practices of basing a child's gender around one of two binary sexes, is the possibility that parents may give birth to an intersex child, which is suggested to occur within 0.2% or 1.7% of the population (Blackless et al., 2000; Sax, 2002). By rendering intersex existence as invisible, parents who are expecting a boy or a girl typically experience shock and distress when their child is born with an intersex condition (Coleman et al., 2022).

Subscribing to the gender/sex binary's assumption that gender follows from sex, the research indicates that from gender assignment onward, parents give gender in ways that align with the parameters of the gender/sex binary. Even with significant cultural shifts to more egalitarian attitudes on gender roles (Scarborough et al., 2019; Thijs et al., 2019), the research demonstrates that many parenting decisions continue to be founded in gender stereotypes (Morawska, 2020). A *stereotype* is defined by King et al. (2021) as a set of beliefs about the characteristics of a group, whereby members of that group are assumed to have specific qualities, based solely on their membership. An observational study by Mesman & Groeneveld (2018), found that while parents rarely explicitly teach gender stereotypes to children, such as the commonly held beliefs that boys don't cry or pink is for girls, the gender/sex binary is most present in the implicit practices parents undertake. These can take the form of direct implicit practices such as determining a name and pronouns, exposing a child to certain items, and encouraging certain behaviours (Mesman & Groenveld, 2018). They can also look like the indirect implicit messaging conveyed to a child, such as gender role modelling or the evaluation of other's gendered behaviours in the presence of the child (Mesman & Groenveld, 2018). As we will come to see, few aspects of childhood are untouched by the gender/sex binary.

Looking to children's physical environments, research undertaken by Macphee and Prendergast (2019) replicated a study done in 1975 to determine if societal trends to more egalitarian gender roles were reflected in the toys and furnishings of children's rooms. The results indicated just as much gender-stereotyping in children's rooms as decades prior (Macphee & Prendergast, 2019). Several studies have also examined parental influence on toys (Boe & Woods, 2018; Etaugh & Liss, 1992; Fisher-Thompson, 1993; Kollmayer et al., 2018; Lytton & Romney, 1991; Peretti & Syndeny, 1984; Raag & Rackliff, 1998; Robinson & Morris, 1986; Weisgram & Bruun 2018, Wood et al., 2002). Across the years, research indicates parents prefer and encourage their children to play with stereotypically gendered toys (Etaugh & Liss, 1992; Kollmayer et al., 2018; Lytton & Romney, 1991; Peretti & Syndeny, 1984; Raag & Rackliff, 1998; Weisgram & Bruun 2018, Wood et al., 2002). Research also indicates that children show preference for toys they are exposed to in the home (Boe & Woods, 2018), a decision often made by the parents. Interestingly, the research points to a double standard in what is being offered to boy versus girl children. Boys have been demonstrated to have significantly less exposure, or no exposure at all, to items that were deemed more stereotypically female, such as dolls or the colour pink (Boe & Woods, 2018; Fisher-Thompson, 1993; Raag & Rackliff, 1998; Robinson & Morris, 1986; Wood et al., 2002). This is of interest as it has been argued that stereotypical masculine toys promote different skills and interests in children, such as competitiveness, aggression, and agency while stereotypical female toys and more likely to encourage beauty, nurturance, and communal roles (Blakemore and Centers, 2005). Playing predominantly with what has been deemed same-gendered toys has the potential to limit children's physical, cognitive, and social development (Dinella & Weisgram, 2018; Kollmayer, 2018).

Gender stereotyping does not cease at a child's environment, the research also presents evidence that parents interact with their children differently depending on their assigned gender. In one popular study by Mondschein et al. (2000), parents were found more likely to overestimate their son's crawling abilities and underestimate their daughters. In another study of parental relationships with their children, research found mothers more likely to have greater levels of social proximity with their female versus their male infants (Lindahl & Heimann, 2002). Similarly, research demonstrates that parents are more physical in nature with their male preschoolers (Lindsey & Mize, 2001; Mascaro et al., 2017) and engage in more gentle and pretend play with their female children (Lindsey & Mize, 2001). One study found that when children engage in more gender stereotypical play rather than counter stereotypical play, parents tend to be more responsive (Lytton & Romney, 1991).

Another topic often explored in the research is parents' influence on speech and language development. Some studies suggest that parents speak more to female children than to those assigned male (Brachfeld-Child et al., 1988; Clearfield & Nelson, 2006; Leaper et al., 1988). Additionally, gender seems to influence how parents respond to their children's emotions. The research indicates that parents are more likely to use a greater number and variety of emotions when conversing with their female children (Adams et al., 1995; Anzar & Tenenbaum, 2015). Caregivers also appear more willing to engage certain types of emotions depending on the gender of their child, such as sadness for girls and anxiety and anger for boys (Mascaro et al., 2017; Root & Rubin, 2010; van der pol et al., 2015). While the research is clear that parents socialize their male and female children differently, it is worth noting the majority of the studies are formulated in a binary way and that children who are transgender, non-binary, and intersex are largely missing from the research (Spears Brown et al., 2020).

From the emerging literature on TDG parenting, it is apparent many caregivers struggle to strike down the gender/sex binary in favour of affirming their child's TGD sense of self. The Human Rights Campaign (2018) found that 64% of TGD youth have been made to feel bad about their identities. When faced with a child's gender non-conforming behaviours, many parents overtly reject these behaviours, shame their child's gender expression, and never arrive at a place where they can accept and support their child's gender identity (Erhensaft et al., 2018; Grossman et al., 2005). These responses imply caregivers are parenting with the cisnormative assumption that gender is tied to sex and should be stable across time, thus denying the possibility of having a TGD child.

Even parents that ultimately come around to their children's TGD identity, struggle early on with acceptance and engage in what Rahilly (2015) articulates as *gender hedging*; a parent's efforts to curb their child's gender atypical behaviours and uphold the gender/sex binary in favour of gender/sex normativity. This behaviour, found in studies of both TGD children and cisgender children, can look like policing atypical gender/sex behaviour and restricting access to gender/sex non-conforming clothing or products for certain places and times (Bhattacharya et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2016; Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Kane, 2012; Railley, 2015). In one study of trans and gender non-conforming children, researchers found an increased level of behaviour and emotional problems in the children of parents who held tightly to gender stereotypes (MacMullin et al., 2021). Additionally, the only research of its kind, a study undertaken by Karin Martin (2009) sought to determine whether caregivers apply a heteronormative lens to parenting. Her research found that most parents assume their children will grow up to be heterosexual and use heterosexual language to describe romantic adult relationships, thereby invisibilizing queer

identities (Martin, 2009). Parents unwillingness to reject the master narrative of the gender/sex binary and affirm their child's gender health does not come without its consequences.

Caregiving through the Gender/Sex Binary: Not without its Consequences

Through a process of socialization heavily saturated in the gender/sex binary, children come to understand gender/sex as the most salient aspect of their identity and move through the world accordingly. Research suggests that infants are attuned to gender/sex very early and begin to label themselves and others at anywhere from 18 months to 24 months in age (Campbell et al., 2004; Diamond, Pardo, & Butterworth; 2011; Poulin-Dubois et al., 1998; Stennes et al., 2005; Zosuls et al., 2009). Interestingly, a recent study by Olson et al. (2015), found that both cisgender and transgender children understand their gender equally clearly and consistently. With a child's emerging understanding of gender/sex, we begin to see children utilize gender stereotypes themselves. Studies of both cisgender and transgender preschoolers reveal that at this age children begin to make decisions stereotypically associated with their own gender rather than other genders (Martin et al, 2017; Olson & Gülgöz, 2018; Shutts et al., 2013; Wong & Yeung, 2019).

Initially, gender stereotype application concerns more concrete and literal dimensions (Jaxon et al., 2019). Within preschool, children demonstrate a thorough understanding of which toys (Freeman, 2007; Weisgram & Bruun, 2018), clothing (Halim et al., 2014; Halim et al., 2018), and activities (Shutts et al., 2013) are appropriate for each binary gender. Yet not long after, children begin to apply gender stereotypes to more abstract dimensions, such as ability and status (Jaxon et al., 2019). The research indicates that the more salient gender/sex is in an environment, meaning the more often gender labels are used and children are sorted by gender, the more likely children are to use gendered language and negatively rate and decrease play with

peers of another gender (Hilliard & Liben, 2010; Xiao et al., 2019). It is during this time, we begin to see an increase in gender stereotypical play (Zosuls et al., 2009; Zosuls & Ruble, 2018) and a preference for same gender playmates (Martin et al., 2013; Shutts et al., 2013).

Research has found that gender/sex essentialist views are associated with attitudes and behaviours that reinforce the perspectives of the gender/sex binary (Skewes et al., 2018). This is reflected in the evidence that as children and youth become versed in the practices of the gender/sex binary, they begin to restrict and reject the gender health of others. Early on, children begin to show a preference for gender conforming rather than gender non-conforming peers, rejecting those who display counter-stereotypical behaviour (Blakemore, 2003; Braun & Davidson, 2017; Martin, 1989). They also engage in their own forms of gender mediating by enforcing gender/sex norms on their peers (Skočajić et al., 2019; Xiao et al., 2019). One study of preschoolers, found that boys were more likely to project stereotypes and more likely to be penalized by their peers for not enacting those stereotypes (Mulvey & Killen, 2015, Skočajić et al., 2019)

This is further supported by research that indicates children who are gender conforming are more likely to be popular (Jewell & Brown, 2013) and receive positive praise from peers (Kwan et al., 2020). Those who display gender atypical behaviour are more likely to be teased and harassed (Jewell & Brown, 2013; Zosuls et al., 2016). The extent of bullying and discrimination faced by TGD children and youth is well evidenced in the research (Johnson et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2016; Roberts et al., 2013; Taliaferro et al., 2019; Witcomb et al., 2019). It is unsurprising that many children and youth begin to repress and hide their TGD feelings and identities (Levitt & Ippolito, 2014).

As mentioned, as children grow older the gender/sex disparities expand, and the nature of their gendered associations become more sophisticated (Sinno & Killen, 2009). Gender stereotypes influence interests, motivations, and performance, with potentially long-lasting consequences (Jaxon et al., 2019). Again, far from providing a complete picture, I will provide an overview of how the gender/sex binary constrains and alters the development of children and youth.

Within childhood and adolescents, we begin to see some problematic gender disparities take hold. A 2004 meta-analysis on childhood aggression, found that male children across all ages and cultures sampled were more physically aggressive (Archer, 2004). Studies also indicate different attitudes toward risk-taking, with boys finding greater enjoyment in taking risks and being more impressed by other boys' risk-taking behaviour and girls being more likely to find risk-taking stressful or unenjoyable (Byrnes et al., 1999; Kerr & Vlaminkx, 1997). Another meta-analysis on children's emotional expression uncovered continued gender differences, with boys showing more externalizing emotions, such as anger, across all ages studied and girls demonstrating more positive emotions in middle childhood and adolescence (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). Other research on emotion demonstrates that boys are more likely to avoid discussing or displaying emotions because they are stigmatized and they see these acts as feminine (McCormack, 2013; Way, 2013). The disparities continue in youth's self-perceptions. The research indicates girls are more likely to report they are dissatisfied with their bodies (Bearman et al., 2006) and are more likely to rate themselves less attractive than their peers (Gabriel et al., 1999). Boys are more likely to overestimate their physical looks (Gabriel et al., 1999), as well as how interesting their lives are to other people (Grijalva et al., 2015).

Apart from the wide range of disparities in troublesome behaviours, disparities can also be found in children's competence beliefs. One study found that many parents hold the stereotype that girls are better readers than boys (Muntoni & Retelsdorf, 2019). Sons of parents who most strongly held this belief were less likely to be motivated to read and held lower reading-related competence beliefs (Muntoni & Retelsdorf, 2019). Conversely, most children endorse the stereotypes of girls being less equipped for and interested in math (Cvencek et al., 2011), politics (Bos et al., 2022), computer science, and engineering (Master et al., 2021). When looking to intelligence, several studies have been done around the *gender brilliance stereotype*, the belief that brilliance is a male trait (Bian, Leslie, & Cimpian, 2017; Jaxon et al., 2019). One of these studies found a divide in children's beliefs about their intellectual abilities, with girls as young as six believing their gender group is less likely to be brilliant or "really, really smart" when compared to male children's beliefs about their gender (Bian, Leslie, & Cimpian, 2017). A second study around the gender brilliance stereotype, considered the intersecting influence of race on this stereotype, with all children, no matter their race, associating white men with brilliance and with most children considering black men to be the least brilliant after white women then black women (Jaxon et al., 2019). The internalization of these gender stereotypes is likely to have an impact on a child's academic development and personal and vocational aspirations (Kollmayer et al., 2018).

Finally, a 2016 meta-analysis of 82 studies that spanned across 29 countries over thirty years researched the gender attitudes of adolescents and found that across all studies, youth hold many gender stereotypical believes that endorse the gender/sex hierarchy (Kagesten et al., 2016). The systematic review found that young men associate the masculinity norms of toughness, physical strength, and dominance with violence, substance use, delinquency, unsafe sexual

behaviour, higher fertility aspirations, perpetration of intimate partner violence, and lower engagement in household labour and caregiving (Kagesten et al., 2016). This same review found that young women felt pressure to conform to femininity stereotypes of female subordination, restricting their voice, and backing away from sexual and social decision-making (Kagesten et al., 2016). As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, these childhood and youth gender disparities do not simply fade away once an adolescent reaches adulthood. Instead, these gender disparities become further normalized and act as the building blocks for lifelong constraint and gender/sex inequality (Kane, 2012). With an abundance of evidence pointing to the construction of gender stereotypes and attitudes associated to parents' gendering practices (Antoniucci et al., 2023; Dawson et al., 2016; Endendijk et al., 2018; Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016; Kagesten et al., 2016), it is now essential to explore actions parents have taken to dismantle the gender/sex binary within childhood.

Parenting Against the Gender/Sex Binary: What's been tried?

The 1960s consciousness-raising groups of second-wave feminism brought about an increasing awareness of the incompatibility of traditional gender/sex roles with social equality (Statham, 1986). Liberal feminists began advocating for parenting practices that resisted gender stereotyping children in favour of parenting practices that encouraged parents to rethink what children played with, how they dressed, what they read and watched, and the roles that they themselves modeled (Martin, 2005). Historically referred to as *non-sexist*, *feminist*, and *gender-aschematic*, there have existed various iterations of parenting approaches aimed at dismantling the gender/sex binary (Bem, 1983; Greenberg, 1979; Pogrebin, 1980; Statham 1986).

Over the years, several parenting guides aimed at doing gender differently have been produced including Selma Greenberg's (1979) *Right from the Start: A Guide to Non-sexist*

Childrearing and Letty Cottin Pogrebin's (1980) *Growing Up Free: Raising your Child in the 80's.* More recent gender expansive-styled parenting guides also include Paige Lucas-Stannard's (2012) *Gender Neutral Parenting*, Christia Spears Brown's (2014) *Parenting Beyond Pink & Blue: How to Raise your Kids Free of Gender Stereotypes,* and Tavi Hawn's (2022) *The Gender Identity Guide for Parents.* The same magazine that published the Baby X story, *Ms. Magazine,* launched its first issue in 1972 with an essay titled "On Raising Kids without Sex Roles" (Martin, 2005). Throughout its existence, the magazine continued to publish stories and columns advocating for parents to raise their children in a "non-sexist" way (Martin, 2005). According to Martin (2005), who studied the evolution of parenting without gender stereotypes through texts, nothing popularized these gender expansive parenting models more than Marlo Thomas' (1972) New York Times best-selling book, TV show, and record titled *Free to Be You and Me*. Other than guides and media, there have been a few noteworthy studies that expose the practices of those using what I will refer to as gender expansive parenting approaches. Below I will summarize each.

Sandra Bem (1983), feminist psychologist and the founder of gender-aschematic parenting, purported a model of androgyny based on the premise of combining socially constructed male and female attributes in the raising of all children. She claimed the goal of gender-aschematic parenting was to raise a gender-liberated child and "inoculate them early enough and effectively enough against the culture" (Bem, 1998, p. 103). In her book *An Unconventional Family*, a biographical book about the rearing of her own children, she shared the fundamental principles of the gender aschematic parenting model which included delaying gender education, advancing sex education, and instilling critical thinking skills (Bem, 1998).

To delay their gender education, Bem (1998) speaks about her and her husband taking on egalitarian roles to sever a correlation between gender/sex and behaviour, exposing their children to both male and female experiences and items, and censoring and modifying the gender stereotypes their children were exposed to. Within her model, sex education meant teaching her children about their bodies early on. This is exemplified when she writes "A boy, we said again and again, is someone with a penis and testicles; a girl is someone with a vagina, a clitoris, and a uterus" (Bem, 1998, p. 107). Finally, Bem (1998) emphasizes the importance of teaching her children to view the world through a critical feminist framework to support them in questioning and reframing conventional messages of culture. Importantly, she shares that teaching her children to be critical thinkers was not enough, but that instead an essential aspect of gender-aschematic parenting is to teach children that certain cultural messages, such as sexism and homophobia, are not simply different or outdated, but are inherently wrong (Bem, 1998).

In 1986, June Statham wrote a book titled *Daughters and Sons: Experiences of Non-sexist Childraising,* where she followed 30 families in their journey of parenting without gender stereotypes. Like other GCP models, the parents in her study described a desire to open more opportunities for their children (Statham, 1986). Consistent with Bem's (1983) philosophy, parents emphasized children's roles as active contributors in their gender development. Statham (1986) notes that the parents in the study saw their role less as one of controlling their child's environment and behaviours, but instead as one of building a critical awareness of gender stereotypes and allowing freedom of choice, even if their choices were gender atypical. Parents in the study were overall conscious of the parent-child relationship, prioritizing the development of their child's sense of self and autonomy over censoring their child's behaviour. Interestingly, parents in the study spoke about putting the ideals of non-sexist child rearing into practice

differently with male and female children (Statham, 1986). Specifically with sons, parents seem to take a more non-interventionist stance in encouraging gender atypical behaviour (Statham, 1986).

Another notable study was undergone by Emily Kane (2012) in her seminal work titled *The Gender Trap* in which she interviewed 42 parents of varying socio-cultural identities regarding their gendered parenting beliefs and practices. The aim of her study was to understand how the "gender trap," an alternative name for the gender/sex binary, influenced parents' childrearing approaches in ways that inhibit social equality (Kane, 2012). In her research, she identified five groups of parents who she differentiated by their beliefs of childhood gender behaviour as biologically or socially constructed and through their actions as reproducing or resisting cultural gender/sex expectations (Kane, 2012).

Across her research, she found one group of parents who viewed gendered childhood as a natural and positive process and another who viewed gender as primarily socially constructed but still had a positive view of and comfortably promoted childhood gender practices. She also identified other groups of parents that resembled closer configurations to previous models of gender expansive parenting, who she indicated expressed little to no belief in biological determinism and more actively resisted gendered structures (Kane, 2012). Some of these latter groups of parents shared concern over the role that power, societal structure, and intersectionality play in gender division (Kane, 2012). These parents made a concerted effort to reroute gender typical behaviour and embrace gender non-conforming behaviour (Kane, 2012). Still, Kane (2012) found that even the most politically minded of parents conceded to the "gender trap" by caving to the pressure of gender normativity, especially in the rearing of their sons (Rahilly, 2015).

Finally, the most recent research examples of gender expansive-styled parenting I could find are within the trans-affirming practices of modern-day parents. Both Tey Meadow's (2018) book tiled *Trans Kids: Being Gendered in the 21ˢᵗ Century* and Rahilly's (2015) study titled *The Gender Binary Meets the Gender Variant Child: Parents Negotiation with Childhood Gender Variance* offer invaluable insights into the various ways parents negotiate the gender/sex binary. Of particular interest to this research, I came across a 2016 study on trans-affirming mothering conducted by sociologist Krysti N. Ryan titled *"My Mom Says Some Girls Have Penises": How Mothers of Gender-Diverse Youth Are Pushing Gender Ideology Forward (and How They're Not)*.

Ryan (2016) sorted their participants into two groups: gender-expansive mothers and gender-subversive mothers. The gender-expansive mothers, those who came to understand TGD identity through the existence of their child were found to unintentionally perpetuate gender/sex binary ideology and logics (Ryan, 2016). An example of this is one gender-expansive mother coaching their child that it is okay for boys to like "girl things," perpetuating the essential belief that there are typical ways to exist in each gender (Ryan, 2016). Conversely, those labelled gender-subversive parents understood TGD identities to varying degrees prior to becoming a parent and from conception approached gender in a more gender expansive way. Ryan (2016) found that children of gender subversive parents were given fewer lessons around gender as instead diversity in gender expression and identity was weaved into the child's social networks and within home environments designed for gender exploration. However, not unlike Kane's (2012) research around the gender trap, Ryan (2016) found that even gender-subversive parents held more traditional parenting roles regarding responsibility for childcare and division of household labour. With each iteration of these historical parenting models, it is clear that gains

have been made by way of gender expansion in childhood. Equally clear is that in other ways

each model left the gender/sex binary in place.

A Stalled Revolution?

      After analyzing a variety of 21st century parenting guides, sociologist Karin Martin

(2005) describes the gender expansive parenting movement as a "stalled revolution" that has yet

to be integrated into contemporary parenting practices (Rahilly, 2015). Sadly, research has found

that intentions to lessen gender constraints in childhood, even among well intentioned actors,

have a history of being less effective than intended (Kane, 2012, Kissane & Winslow, 2016;

Ridgeway, 2011, Ryan, 2016; Trumpy & Elliot, 2016). Building on the opinions of researchers

past (Martin, 2005; Rahilly, 2015), I believe there are two rationales for this lack of success in

dismantling the gender/sex binary in that the movement has a history of: (1) solely

deconstructing gender roles and ignoring the normalization of sex and gender (2) decentering its

focus on social equity in favour of raising "gender-free" children (3). Both features of gender

expansive parenting models unintentionally maintain the gender/sex binary framework. To

analyze these missteps, it is necessary to consider the cultural and temporal context that gave

birth to the gender expansive parenting movement.

      Early second wave feminism, was primarily white, middle-class, and heterosexual in

orientation (Stryker, 2018). As discussed, during this time, homosexuality had just been removed

from the DSM and transsexualism introduced (Stryker, 2018). Feminists were focused on

dismantling women's oppression by changing the stereotyped gender roles that were promoted

through "agencies of socialization" such as the mass media, schools, and families (Connell,

1987). By no means have Western societal gender expectations been erased, however feminist

perspectives have brought about some change by way of gender roles, as exemplified in

women's employment outside of the home and by more men participating in childrearing. That being said, by solely focusing on dismantling essentialist perspectives of gender roles, early gender expansive parenting models neglected the other socially constructed facets of the gender/sex binary: gender and sex.

Gender expansive parenting approaches of the past failed to deconstruct essentialist perspectives of sex and gender, and in doing so centred a perspective of gender health as cisgender and heterosexual in nature. As argued by Martin (2005) many of the earlier gender expansive parenting approaches associated gender non-conformity and homosexuality. This is exemplified in Greenberg's (1979) book *Right from the Start* which mentions that fathers "whose relations are positive, warm, and nurturing do not tend to have sons who grow up to be adult homosexuals" (p. 46).

Rahilly (2015) takes Martin's (2005) argument of 2SLGBTQI+ prejudice further by asserting that historical gender expansive parenting models rendered transgender identity as unintelligible, by assuming cisgender identity as the only possibility for a child. At the time of gender expansive parenting's rise, its feminist founders did not question the realm of biological sex, nor did they question the assumption that gender followed from sex (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Dea, 2016). Rahilly points to Bem's (1998) gender aschmetic parenting model where she explicitly teaches her children that the difference between male and females were their physical sex characteristics (Rahilly, 2015). Even in more recent gender expansive parenting studies, such as Kane's 2012 research, which included both heterosexual and homosexual couples, the parents make no mention of the possibility of a transgender child (Rahilly, 2015). Further to this point, other than Ryan's (2016) trans-affirming mothering study, there is no evidence of parents proactively disrupting the relationships between gender and sex from birth. Instead, only in

reaction to their children's gender diverse identity, do parents seem to deconstruct the gender/sex binary's essentialist perspectives on gender and sex (Alergia, 2018; Hale, 2020; Rahilly, 2015).

This last point calls attention to the second reason set forth for why gender expansive parenting principles have not been taken up within mainstream parenting: the decentering of gender equity. To gain widespread acceptance, gender expansive parenting models of the past became positioned as an approach that raises gender-free children by following their lead (Kane, 2012; Martin, 2005). Gender/sex scholars would likely identify this as a *degendering* approach, as it aims to remove gender/sex division by minimizing the importance of gender/sex (Lorben, 2021; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Martin (2005) argues that this shift muted the gender expansive parenting movement's original call for gender equity through social change. This perspective is backed by the assertion that by decreasing the importance of gender/sex, de-centering strategies have been found to leave the binary system of gender/sex unquestioned (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020).

Kane (2012) points to a tension between self-determination and deconstructing the gender/sex binary, asserting that by exclusively following a child's prerogative, parents are at greater risk for mistaking the societal narrative of the gender/sex binary as a child's authentic gender preferences. This argument is of particular interest when positioned against the current gender affirmative climate, one that supports a perspective of gender health as one of freedom to identify and express one's gender authentically (Hidalgo et al., 2013; Keo-Meier & Erhensaft, 2018). Despite the movement's shortcomings, a community of modern parents, who may or may not be aware of gender expansive parenting models of the past, are taking up the call to dismantle the gender/sex binary within childrearing.

Gender Creative Parenting Rebranded: Raising Theybies

Although it is likely the most recent iteration of gender expansive parenting originated before this date, the first documentation of a child not being assigned a gender was a 2011 story published in the *Toronto Star* in regard to the parenting of a child named Storm (Poisson, 2011). Parents Kathy Witterick & David Stoker's decision was thrust into the spotlight of international media and became the object of much criticism that their child would have a troubled sense of identity or suffer irreversible psychological damage (Morris, 2018). Ten years later, this approach seems to be gaining momentum through the parenting practices of sociologist Dr. Kyl Myers, who believes reading the comment section of the Storm news article showed them just how necessary it was to practice what they coined the *gender creative parenting* philosophy with their child Zoomer (Myers, n.d.).

In 2020, Myers released a memoir titled *Raising Them,* which details their family's journey in raising Zoomer without an assigned gender and the complexities and nuances of deconstructing the interpersonal and institutional barriers that uphold the gender/sex binary. Since then, the gender creative parenting model continues to gain traction with GCP social media accounts, Facebook groups, and playgroups popping up all over the world. While there exists a spectrum of parents attempting to raise their children without gender stereotypes, there is a subset of gender creative parents who, like Myers, are raising what are playfully named *theybies*. Parents of theybies use they/them pronouns when referring to their child, have chosen not to disclose the reproductive anatomy of their child to most people, and who make parenting decisions to actively disrupt the gender/sex binary (Morris, 2018).

This contemporary form of GCP significantly differs from previous iterations of gender expansive parenting. The act of not assigning a gender to a child disrupts the gender/sex binary assumption that gender and sex are essential and that they always align. By not assuming their

child is cisgender, gender creative parents intentionally hold space for the possibility that a child may have a TGD identity. With all gender possibilities open, the intention is that this will minimize any feelings of gender dysphoria and the child may avoid having to "come out." Thus, GCP becomes a form of proactive, rather than responsive, gender health care (Myers, 2020).

Another difference in this modern day GCP model is that it seems to be enacted as a through a *multigendering* strategy for deconstructing the gender/sex binary. Multigendering strategies aim to disrupt the gender/sex binary by drawing attention to genders/sexes outside of the binary (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). This multigendering perspective is exemplified by Kyl Myers (2020) perspective on the purpose of GCP, "The aim is not to eliminate gender - the goal is to eliminate gender-based discrimination, disparities, and violence. My aim isn't to create a genderless world; it's to contribute to a gender*full* one" (p. 2). That being said, little is known about how this multigendering and proactive gender health care parenting approach is understood and enacted by those applying the model. In fact, to date there exists only one piece of academic research around the topic of gender creative parenting, a master's level dissertation thesis by Max Davies (2020).

In their research titled *Raising Theybies; Navigating with a Gendered World*, Davies (2020) compared the gendered experiences and discourse of seven gender creative parents with that of five non-gender creative parents who made up a validity group. While parents of both groups differentiated between gender and sex and most were open to the idea of their children changing gender identities, they navigated gendered parenting quite differently (Davies, 2020). Most of the caregivers in the gender creative parenting group supported their child in making choices and freely expressing their gender (Davies, 2020). Alternatively, those in the validity group described their children as too immature to navigate their own gender identity and

expression (Davies, 2020). Further, some of the parents in this latter group, specifically fathers, engaged in the policing of their children's gender behaviour as they felt social conformity is better needed for their child to navigate society (Davies, 2020). Unsurprisingly, those who were not practicing gender creative parenting received little pushback from families or institutions on their parenting practices (Davies, 2020). Conversely, those practicing gender creative parenting experienced pushback from family members and various institutions and expressed regularly having to educate others on their practices (Davies, 2020). From Davies research, it is apparent that given the position gender creative parents are in, they live in a unique space navigating the tension between mediating the pitfalls of the gender/sex binary and honouring their child's gender health.

As HCPs, it is our responsibility to advocate for the cultural change necessary to end gender/sex-based oppression and promote the gender health of our community (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). As I have articulated, within contemporary parenting practices, the assumptions of the gender/sex binary lives on threatening the gender health of all children, with grave consequences that span beyond childhood. Thus, our focus as HCPs, both within our practice and outside of it, must shift to how we can best create an environment that enables our societal gender health. The knowledge produced by gender creative parents could prove fundamental to a "re-doing" of gender/sex (West & Zimmerman, 2009). Understanding the lived experiences of gender creative parents, inclusive of their identities, perspectives, and practices, could offer us invaluable insight on how best to disrupt the gender/sex binary in favour of promoting all children's gender health.

Chapter. 3 Methodology

This research puzzle exploring the lived experiences of gender creative parents was undertaken using a methodological framework grounded in narrative inquiry. This chapter stands to provide an overview of narrative inquiry as an approach to qualitative research and will detail the tenets of this methodology, why it was chosen, and how it informs the design for conducting the study. Foundational to narrative inquiry is the ontological proceeding of relational ethics (Clandinin et al., 2018), and this positionality is placed at the forefront of all design decisions made. For the analysis portion of my research design, I will demonstrate how I will integrate Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis (TA) alongside narrative inquiry's recommendations for analysis. Finally, included at the end of the chapter, is what may be considered potential design limitations, as well as the plans I have made for mediating these design constraints.

Philosophical Underpinnings of Narrative Inquiry

A narrative approach to research has been taken up across multiple disciplines including in literature, anthropology, sociology, education, and psychology, to name a few (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This relatively recent research shift, sometimes referred to as the *narrative turn*, stemmed from the realization that narrative methodologies could more sufficiently address issues of complexity, multiplicity, and human-centredness than traditional research methods (Mertova & Webster, 2020). While the use of narrative forms of research is quite varied, what most narrative research has in common is the value of story as a fundamental way of understanding human experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

In the late 1980s/early 1990s, Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly began to make important distinctions between narrative research and a new research methodology they were developing called narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2013). The two founders developed narrative

inquiry out of the perspective that story is the means with which people enter the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally and socially meaningful (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Underpinning narrative inquiry is the belief that the central way to understand experience is through the ways humans story their lives through narrative (Poole, 2021). The methodology is understood as "an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honouring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (Clandinin, 2013, p.17). To better understand the difference between narrative inquiry and other uses of story in research, it is important to turn to the philosophical underpinnings in which narrative inquiry is rooted.

Experience as Knowledge

Working from different philosophical paradigms, researchers employ different values, utilize different research designs, and pursue different ends to come to different understandings of the world (Gergen, 2020). The philosophical foundation of narrative inquiry is situated in John Dewey's theory of experience, which has roots in pragmatic philosophy (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Unlike other philosophers at the time, Dewey argued for a practical, bottom-up approach to inquiry that was rooted in life itself rather than metaphysical discussions on the nature of truth or reality (Hildebrand, 2008; Morgan, 2014). Narrative inquiry proceeds from the Deweyan perspective that experience is the ontological category from which all research puzzles advance (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). What this means is that immediate human experience is understood in narrative inquiry as the first and most fundamental reality that exists (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). The inseparable nature of knowledge and experience makes visible that knowledge is common, and in the words of Caine et al. (2022) "is living amidst the ordinary" (p. 18).

This ontological perspective is foundational to narrative inquiry's epistemological stance that experience is knowledge for living (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In line with social constructionist perspectives, narrative inquirers do not enter their research searching to find a transcendent human experience and challenge the idea that there is one true discoverable reality (McNamee, 2020). Nor do they seek to uncover pre-existing social discourses (Poole, 2021). This is not to say that narrative inquiries focus just on individual human experiences ignoring macrosocial influences on individuals' lives. As richly expressed by Plummer (2019):

> No one arrives in a world without stories. Every day we tumble into a deep labyrinth of *narrative realities*. So while people certainly can make their own stories, they rarely do so under conditions of their own choosing. And such powerful narrative structures often reach back deeply into long-standing (even archetypal) forms and histories. We can rarely, if ever, live in narratives entirely of our own making (p. 26).

Knowing a singular narrative does not exist, narrative inquirers are called on to explore the ways human experiences are relationally situated within social, cultural, familial, institutional, linguistic, and political narratives (Caine et al., 2022; Mertova & Webster, 2020).

Experience as Relational

Another element of Dewey's ontology of experience is his view of experience as relational, meaning that humans interact with the world to know the world (Clandinin, 2013). While some historical philosophers have conceptualized experience as a perception had privately by a subject (Hildebrand, 2008), narrative inquiry understands this relational approach as signifying "the relationship between knower and what is known, between knowing and action, between how one knows what one knows" (Clandinin et al., 2018, p. 18). Unique to narrative

inquiry, the researcher imagines these relational interactions occurring along three interwoven, dimensional commonplaces: place, temporality, and sociality (Caine et al., 2013).

Understanding these commonplaces as integral to experience, is guided by Dewey's ecological account of experience, where nature is not understood as external to experiencing subjects (Hildebrand, 2008). With this perspective, all human experiences, as well as our attempts to understand them, must be viewed as inherently occurring within the larger context of an individual's life (Morgan, 2014; Poole, 2021). Narrative inquirers have a relational responsibility, not only to their participants, which will be spoken about later in the chapter, but to be awakened to the multitude of relations the participant carries across the three commonplaces (Clandinin et al., 2018).

Experience as Woven Among 3 Commonplaces

When turning our intention to each of the three commonplaces, it may be of interest to the reader to note that place was not identified as a dimensional commonplace in Clandinin and Connelly's earlier understandings of narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2022). Through their work with Indigenous students the founders came to understand place as a dimension of intricately linked to our daily life (Caine et al., 2022). This research utilizes Agnew's (1987) definition of place as an interplay of location: a fixed point in space - including the natural and built environment; locale - a material setting within a location which may include human, cultural, spiritual, and natural characteristics; and a sense of place - the meaning attributed to location and locale (Butler & Sinclair, 2020). Place could also include virtual spaces such as websites, social media, and online communities (McKenzie, 2008), which is where all the participant recruitment was be done.

In other types of research outside of narrative inquiry, place is assumed to be separate from people. Some researchers are also troubled by the inclusion of place as a position to be explored within experience as they believe it reduces a study's generalizability (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Yet as expressed by Caine et al. (2022), "We can understand experiences narratively only when we place them within places, both home places, community places, and imagined places" (p. 116).

The second commonplace, temporality, refers to the understanding that experiences evolve out of an experiential past and lead to an experiential future (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). This research operates with a perspective that reconceptualizes time beyond clock time, referred to by Walter Benjamin (1940) as *homogenous empty time*, with each moment thought to be equal and progressing in a way that erases the last (Barad, 2016). Building on Barad's (2016) understanding of time, experience is understood as weaving the past, present, and future together and expanding in multiple directions (Gavin, 2022). Within narrative inquiry, experience cannot be understood as separate from all other moments that came before, and all other moments that will come after (Caine et al., 2022). It is always in the making, being structured and restructured with every new encounter (Caine et al., 2022; Mertova & Webster, 2020). For the narrative inquirer, experience is more than a researcher can ever know, which challenges other research methodologies that understand a phenomenon as fixed and unchanging throughout an inquiry (Clandinin, 2013).

Finally, the sociality dimension refers to both the personal and social conditions that influence experience (Clandinin, 2013). Personal aspects of experience include identities, emotions, hopes, moral dispositions, memory, and more (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). As pointing to earlier, the social refers to the cultural, historical, familial, linguistic, institutional,

and relational narrative conditions of experience (Clandinin, 2013). In line with social constructionist perspectives, narrative inquiry recognizes the material world exists, but the way we come to narrate and re-narrate it is a by-product of social negotiation (McNamee, 2020). Of particular importance, another central aspect of the sociality commonplace, the space where reality comes into existence (Poole, 2021), is the relationship between researcher and participant.

With this perspective, narrative inquiry can be understood as both a methodology and phenomena, where in which researchers are required to enter the field of experiences intentionally, both their own and their participants', and to live out the research puzzle alongside the lived stories of all involved (Caine et al., 2013). Narratives are understood to be co-composed in the spaces between inquirer and participant (Poole, 2021), and so narrative inquirers are understood to be a part of the phenomenon being studied (Clandinin, 2013). This understanding of the researcher's position differs from modernist research perspectives in that narrative inquirers acknowledge that they cannot be bracketed from the inquiry and understand that they are always a part of the research puzzle even beyond ways that can fully be understood (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

Researcher Positionality

Narrative inquirers intentionally position their storied lives within the inquiry, and in doing so understand this relation as altering the experience being studied. Just like our participants, the way a researcher narrates their world is greatly influenced by when, where, and how we are socioculturally located (Jacobson & Mutsafa, 2019). To highlight the value-laden stance I embody, I will take this section as an opportunity to briefly make transparent the socio-cultural identities that I personally carry with me into this work. Like the participants, I am what Gergen (2020) refers to as a multi-being, who carries with me into this research a multiplicity of

stories that are central to my self-understanding and my relationships with others (p. 72). These stories are oriented from my positionality as a white, able-bodied, settler whose parents are from working class, rural roots. I identify as queer and am currently negotiating what it means to take up a genderqueer identity. I use the pronouns they/them. These identities are interrelated, and no single identity can be viewed as more salient than another, as the meaning each participant makes of my positionality will vary across relationships (Fujii, 2017). Similar to my participants, I want to acknowledge that my positionality is fluid, multi-dimensional, and has evolved throughout this inquiry (Kindon et al., 2007).

As mentioned in my narrative beginning, another central element of my positionality is my position as a gender creative parent inquiring about the experiences of other gender creative parents. This particular facet of my identity offers me a kind of insider status that comes with certain advantages and disadvantages (Fujii, 2017). Being a gender creative parent, I had greater access to groups to recruit from, as well as potentially a greater degree of trust with participants who may have been more likely to believe my motivations for engaging in this inquiry. However, there is a degree of risk with my insider status as I may use my researcher positionality as means to validate my personal perspectives on gender creative parenting by smoothing over conflicting and contradicting understandings (Clandinin et al., 2018).

While this was never my intention, I remained vigilant to the desire to eliminate difference and construct a universal GCP experience (McNamee, 2017), carrying delicately the words of Plummer (2019), "Appreciating human differences has the potential to enhance our humanity, while failure to do so will dehumanize" (p. 23). To appreciate difference, it is imperative that I seek to always find my way back to place of loving perception and a sense of uncertainty and humility (Clandinin et al., 2018). To remain open to tension and liminality, and

to take account of my biases shifting identities, beliefs, and values (Ortlipp, 2008) and their influence on the inquiry, I utilized a self-reflective journal throughout the entirety of this research inquiry.

Relational Ethics

Another facet of Dewey's pragmatic worldview that drives narrative inquiry, and greatly diverged from his peers at the time, was his belief that all inquiries should be motivated by moral ends, understood as *meliorism* (Hildebrand, 2008). His perspective that inquiry should generate new, transformative relations between humans and their lives, communities, and the world, have been said to be greatly influenced by Indigenous peoples and early feminist ideas (Caine et al., 2022). Within this section, I seek to integrate the ideas of constructionist scholars, including queer and feminist perspectives of ethical relationality, alongside that of narrative inquiry to piece together my own understanding of relational ethics which was the foundational for this research.

In line with feminist relational theory, this research is guided by the emancipatory goal of valorizing the experiences of gender creative parents, who seek to rethink and challenge structures, institutions, and norms that maintain the gender/sex binary (Koggel et al., 2020). This intention is also grounded in principles of queer relationality within which research aims to create cultural change by advancing the narratives of minoritarian subjects who seek to create and build alternative networks and ways of knowing and being in the world (Yep et al., 2023). Considering the importance of this inquiry, I moved forward with the perspective that gaining access to the participants' worlds is a privilege that I do not take lightly (Fujii, 2017).

With this privilege in mind, narrative inquiry is understood to be a relational methodology where the inquiry space becomes a relationally ethical space where participants can

fill the space with the richness of their stories (Clandinin et al., 2018). If "stories come alive through relationships" (Plummer, 2019, p. 54), taking on a relational ethic means centering relational processes that focus on people experiencing together and what their "experiencing" makes (McNamee, 2017). To center relationships within research is an act of resistance against traditional scientific methodologies that perpetuate oppressive patriarchal and colonialist narratives of rationality through separation, independence, and autonomy (Gilligan, 1993).

In line with Robinson's (2020) perspective that there can be no standardized understanding of how relational care should be given or received, within this narrative inquiry I moved forward with an understanding that relationality must be practiced in different ways with different people in different contexts. With the notion that each conversational space must be individually negotiated between researcher and participant (Clandinin et al., 2018). I aimed to embody a relational ethic by constructing a small conversational universe, unique to the needs of each individual participant or co-parents that could make space for the multiplicity of their storied lives. To do so meant upholding an ethic of improvisation and innovation alongside the GCP participants, as sustaining transformative relationships require continuous agility (Gergen, 2019).

Relational ethics guides every stage of the narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and as such, the primary responsibility of the researcher is always to their relationship with the participants (Caine et al., 2013). Placing relational ethics at the forefront of all decision-making acknowledges that how knowledge is produced and acted upon is equally as important, if not more important, to what knowledge is produced (Hopner & Liu, 2021). This reflects the pragmatist's perspective of knowledge, in that narrative inquirers recognize there are real life implications for decisions made that influence participants and extend beyond the borders of the

inquiry (Clandinin et al., 2018). Said best by Ellis (2007), relational ethics "requires researchers to act from [their] hearts and minds, acknowledge [their] interpersonal bonds to others, and to take responsibility for actions and their consequences" (p. 3).

With that in mind, rather than establishing a separate "Ethical Considerations" section, which is typical of most theses, you will notice I have written the methods section with relational ethics explicitly interwoven in each stage of this research design. I have intentionally embedded principles of collaboration, mutuality, and reciprocity (Caine et al., 2020), within each design stage including the participant recruitment, data collection, and the data analysis process. My best hope is that the reader will see my intention to relationally live out this research puzzle alongside the participants.

Participant Selection & Recruitment

A researcher's sampling strategy is influenced by their philosophical paradigm, methodology, ethics, research objectives, and logistics (Mertens, 2019). In narrative research, the number of participants included is typically kept small, varying from one - a self-study, to two, or a few more (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). A relatively small sample size aligns with narrative inquiry's relational ethics with the intent to not only gain rich, in-depth data but to also foster responsive relationships. While my intention was to recruit 3-5 *GCP units*, for this particular inquiry, I ended up recruiting eight participants across six GCP units to participate.

When I speak of the term GCP unit, I am referring to the choice I provided to the participants to interview alone or interview with a partner(s) or co-parent(s), and if they took up the latter option they were still counted as a singular unit. I made this decision with the assumption that partner(s)/co-parent(s) were likely to have similarly aligned values and practices around GCP. Within this study, all the participants chose to interview alone, except one three-

parent family who interviewed together. To recruit these participants, I employed purposive sampling, meaning the sample was hand chosen by myself, to find participants who were accessible and willing to participate, but also those who met the inclusion criteria and were best suited to shed light on this specific research puzzle (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The participant inclusion criteria included those who (a) are caregivers (over the age of 18) and have one or more children; (b) identify as practicing gender creative/gender neutral/gender expansive parenting; (c) did not assign a gender at birth to their child; and (d) are located in Canada. Inversely, it excluded those under age 18, who do not practice GCP, who did assign a gender to their baby at birth, and who live outside of Canada. To recruit participants, I posted the *Recruitment Poster* (see Appendix A) in three gender creative parenting Facebook groups to which I am a member, one titled *Gender Creative Parenting*, another *Gender Neutral Parenting Support Group* and the last group called *Parenting Theybies: Using they/them/their Pronouns from the Start*. Prior to this study, I had never personally met or communicated with any of the parents belonging to this group.

With this inclusion criteria in mind, my intention was to have a sample with parents at varying stages in parenting (e.g., infant, toddler, preschool, primary school, junior high school, etc.). Yet of those who responded to my recruitment methods, no one had a child over two years old. I also gave preference to individuals with diverse socio-cultural identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion/spirituality, education levels, and socioeconomic status) and populations traditionally underrepresented in research. This research choice provides an explanation for going over my intended sample size and making space for one additional GCP unit who I felt added greater diversity to the study. Prioritizing diversity aligns with the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS, 2018), which asserts that if

research is intended to explore a specific community, participant recruitment should prioritize including a full range of members of the community under study.

   Ethical Considerations for Participant Selection and Recruitment.

   This study relied on social media for recruitment, which comes with its own unique set of ethical hurdles. As the communities I recruited from are all on the Facebook platform, I read through Facebook's *Terms of Service* to ensure my research efforts complied with its use. Further, I read through the *About* sections of all three Facebook groups and none mentioned that the groups could not be used for communication about research opportunities. All these groups are closed groups, meaning only gender creative parents can join. Within my recruitment efforts I made my insider status as a gender creative parenting explicit. I believe doing so allowed the participants to feel a greater sense of safety as I am someone that values their parenting philosophy, is sensitive to their experiences, and sees merit in sharing their stories outside of our communities with potential benefits to us.

   Yet it is also worth mentioning that due to my positionality as a gender creative parent, I had greater access than most to recruit from these groups (Fujii, 2017), which were likely created to promote community and not intended to promote research. As I am connected to potential participants through these social networks, it was important that I was mindful of community members' privacy to ensure they did not feel vulnerable about recruitment advances made (Gelinas et al., 2017). With this in mind, within my *Letter of Information/Informed Consent* (see Appendix C), I made explicit that I was entering these online spaces with the purpose of recruiting for research and not for social networking purposes. I also made it transparent in that all data would be collected through virtual interviews and that no information would be collected from individual's online profiles or Facebook activities. The *Letter of Information/Informed*

Consent (see Appendix C) also mentioned that participation is voluntary, would be kept confidential, and that their participation would in no way impact their membership in the Facebook communities they are a part of.

As mandated by the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS, 2018), for research to be ethical it is necessary that those participating understand any potential risks and freely choose to participate in the study. As mentioned, to recruit participants, I utilized a *Recruitment Poster* (see Appendix A) to initially make contact with any individuals interested in participating. Once interested, participants were sent the *Letter of Information/Consent Form* (see Appendix C) for them to review and sign in their own time. The *Letter of Information/Consent Form* provided those interested with a complete picture of the purpose of the study, my relationship to the topic, confidentiality, data storage, benefits and risks to participation, and their role in the research. This exchange also provided potential participants the opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns prior to signing the consent form. Ensuring the initial informed consent processes were done in a thorough and complete way, free of influence or pressure, was a means of providing potential participants the opportunity to change their mind about participating, a decision that would be more difficult to make once we met virtually (Johnson & Dougall, 2021).

Collection of Field Texts

Once connected to research participants, narrative inquirers are called upon to continually negotiate a relational space, referred to in narrative inquiry as the *field* (Clandinin, 2013). Correspondingly, the term *field text*, understood in other methodologies as data, is the records reflective of the experiences of the inquirer and participants (Clandinin, 2013). Clandinin and Connelly intentionally abandoned the term data to signal that the field texts gathered, composed, and created in narrative inquiry are "experiential, intersubjective texts rather than objective"

(Clandinin, 2013, p. 46). While the types of field text that can be composed in narrative inquiry are boundless, this specific research relied on the transcripts of researcher/participant video-conferencing conversations as its source of field text.

To support my interview skills as a novice researcher, I entered the conversation with a short list of open-ended, guiding questions (see Appendix D) that employed layperson vocabulary versus much of the academic jargon found in my literature review chapter (Arsel, 2017). All of the questions on this list were reviewed by my response community to ensure they were both relevant, but also culturally responsive. It is worth mentioning that this response community consisted of two Athabasca graduate studies peers who provided challenging and responsive perspectives throughout all stages of my research study (Clandinin, 2013).

Within this research, the term "conversation" intentionally replaced the word "interview," as "research interviews normally have an inequality about them" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 110). Knowing that the conditions of an interview impact a participant's degree of comfort and trust and can influence their ability to provide rich and detailed accounts of their experiences, (McGrath et al., 2019) my intention was to invite participants into a more egalitarian and collaborative role. As such, during some of the interviews I relied more on guide than in others. Rather than prioritizing the questions I had personally constructed, my priority was to create a conversational space where participants' felt safe to share stories that they determined most salient to the experiences of gender creative parenting. Another way I aimed to honour our relational space was by having flexibility in conversational end times based on participant and conversational needs. All the video-conferencing conversations were around 1 hour to 1 hour and fifteen minutes in length, with the exception of the three-parent family, which was closer to 1.5 hours in length.

Ethical Considerations for Collection of Field Texts.

As articulated in the TCPS 2 (2018), upholding the principles of *Respect for Person* and *Concern for Welfare* calls on researchers to demonstrate equal respect and consideration for all the participants, but does not always mean treating everyone the same. As expressed by Poole (2021), upholding relational ethics requires researchers to individualize how they relate to each participant. While collecting the field texts, my intention was to involve participants in decision-making so that the context of our conversation best suited them. In doing so, I was also upholding the TCPS 2's (2018) third principle of *Justice* by acknowledging the imbalance of power between researcher and participant and attempting to soften this imbalance by fostering more egalitarian relationships (Johnson & MacDougall, 2021).

Guided by these principles, each participant was called on to suggest a date and time for the conversation that best suited their schedule. As previously mentioned, the participants were also asked if they wished to participate in the conversation individually or together with their partner(s)/co-parent(s). This choice was intentionally provided to support the participant's comfort. Depending on the preference the participant declared on *Letter of Information/Consent Form*, I also provided them with my list of guiding questions (In Appendix D), so they were able to ruminate on the conversational topics in advance if they wished to.

Researchers bear the responsibility of continually providing participants with all relevant information to maintain their consent to participate (TCPS 2, 2018). Accordingly, at the start of the Microsoft Teams conversation, I re-reviewed most of the informed consent process including the purpose of the study, benefits and risks in participating, confidentiality/anonymity, and the conversational process. I also reminded them that they had the right to abstain from any question asked, end the conversation at any time, and withdraw from the study if they wished to do so

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). When engaging in conversations with the participants, it is of the utmost importance that narrative inquirers employ their relational responsibilities to bolster up the TCPS 2 (2018) three core principles of *Respect for Persons*, *Concern for Welfare*, and *Justice*. As previously mentioned, while engaging in the conversation, my priority was to learn what the participant wished to share about the inquiry puzzle, thus like feminist researchers Johnson and MacDougall (2021), I was not concerned if the conversation moved away from the interview guide.

Both the formality of video conferencing methods (Miller Scarnato, 2019) and the minimally structured conversational style (Johnson & MacDougall, 2021) was used to shift the balance of power towards participants; positioning them as experts with valued knowledge to learn from. Within the conversation, I relied on person-centered interview techniques gained from my Master of Counselling courses. This included attentive and empathetic listening, asking clarifying questions, probing the participant for further information, and paraphrasing to ensure understanding (Pare, 2013). Another advantage to using video recording to collect the field texts was that I was better able to focus on active listening and on building rapport with the participants, rather than attentively taking notes, a requirement of alternative interview methods (Miller Scarnato, 2019).

Toward the end of the conversation, I always asked if there was anything outside of what we discussed that they wanted to share to ensure all the topics the participant wished to speak to were covered. To conclude, I also shared with the participants next steps of the research process, including the honorarium and how to review the conversation transcripts if they wished to be involved in this stage of the research. Following the completion of the conversation, each participant was be provided a $50 honorarium. To provide this honorarium, I utilized funds from

the *AU Access to Research Tools Award*. My intent behind providing an honorarium was to acknowledge the participants for their expertise and to ensure finances were not a barrier to their participation. The honorarium acted as compensation for both their time and for any expense incurred, such as childcare (Cheff, 2018).

Data Analysis

This research puzzle relied on thematic analysis (TA), which is highly regarded as a flexible and accessible approach to analyzing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With its increased popularity, TA has taken on a variety of forms (Terry et al., 2017); thus, it is necessary to clarify that this particular research study integrated key features of narrative analysis alongside Braun and Clarke's (2006) step-by-step conceptualization of TA. Utilizing an inductive approach to interpreting the data, TA was used with the intention of composing a rich, thematic description across the field text. While I wrote my plans for analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase analytic method, it is worth noting that TA aligns with narrative inquiry's perspective of analysis in that it is not seen as a linear approach and instead as a recursive and iterative process (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016).

Phase 1: Immersion with Field and Interim Texts.

Like many other qualitative research studies that utilize interviewing methods, data analysis began with transcription. Microsoft Teams has a built-in transcription system that was used to produce the initial field text. I then systematically reviewed each of these transcripts alongside the saved Microsoft Teams video-conversation recordings to ensure they were accurate. At this time, I also made sure all confidential information was eliminated and all participants names were replaced with the pseudonym they provided in the informed consent documents to ensure confidentiality. Thereafter, the 4 out of six GCP units, who agreed to review

their transcripts were sent the revised copies of the field texts. These transcriptions acted as what narrative inquiry terms *interim texts*, which are understood as partial texts provided to the participants to allow myself, the researcher, and the participants to "further co-compose storied interpretations and to negotiate the multiplicity of possible meanings" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 47).

The participants who wished to be involved in this stage, were encouraged to not only edit errors and replace indiscernible labels in the transcription with missing conversation, but to also use the comment feature by requesting parts of the transcripts be removed or by clarifying or expanding on moments from the original conversation. I also added a few questions and comments encouraging the participants to share more about some of the ideas they expressed, many were happy to expand. Participant feedback was then accepted and revisions to the transcriptions were made. This co-composition and drafting of the interim text continued to foster relational ethics with the participants (Clandinin, 2013).

At this stage of the research process, I was quite familiar with the breadth and depth of content, yet I continued to immerse myself in the data by re-watching and re-reading the updated conversations multiple times, marking down questions, and initial codes and patterns I was noticing (Terry et al., 2017). This phase of analysis proved to be an important time for me to utilize the reflective journal to note many of my personal responses to the participant stories, including moments of validation, tension, and wondering. I continued to use this reflective journal throughout the entirety of the narrative inquiry.

Phase 2: Constructing Codes.

In the next stage of the analytic process, I uploaded the final interim texts (the transcripts) into NVivo, a software system often relied on by researchers to organize large amounts of data. Within the program, I began to create codes to sort through and organize the conversation

transcriptions. This phase involved systematically going through all the transcripts, ensuring equal attention was given to each conversation (Braun & Clark, 2006) and "tagging" each idea and/or sentence with a phrase that captures the meaning of that conversational item (Terry et al., 2017). Applying a narrative specific take to text analysis, the transcripts were be coded openly and inclusively within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry spaces of place, temporality, and sociality.

While Braun & Clarke (2006) noted extracts from the transcripts can be coded once, multiple times, or be left uncoded, I took Creswell & Poth's (2018) advice to try to stay around 25-30 codes as they suggested more can be quite challenging to later turn into themes. With TA being employed through a pragmatic view, both semantic and latent analysis was used. This means that from a semantic lens, the codes I created sometimes explicitly reflected the words and meaning ascribed by the participants, and at other times the codes were applied more latently to capture concepts embedded under the explicit conversation content (Terry et al., 2017). In an effort to develop coding consistency, this process was iterative in nature as I continuously reviewed the data to clarify, modify, and collate the coded data (Terry et al., 2017).

Phase 3: Negotiating Narrative Themes.

The next step in the analysis process was to search for relationships across the different codes to cluster similar codes together under a narrative theme (Terry et al., 2017). According to Braun et al. (2015), a theme can be understood as a broader conceptual idea that underpins the data grouped together. It is within this stage that I looked for patterns or narrative threads within participants' ideas as well as within perceived tensions and silences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Once more, the three-dimensional commonplaces of experience: place, temporality, and

sociality were employed to analyze relationships between the codes, between the themes, and even between different levels of themes to create sub-themes.

Next, it was also necessary to collate all the significant previously coded conversation extracts under the potential themes (Terry et al., 2017). From here, I turned to the relevant literature compiled in my literature review chapter to consider the practical and professional context of the emerging themes (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). During this stage, many sub-themes and themes need to be filtered, combined, separated, and refined (Braun & Clark, 2006). To visualize the relationships between the codes, sub-themes, and themes, I created a visual representation to better support both mine and the reader's understanding of how the data was organized.

Phase 4: Evaluation of Narrative Themes.

The purpose of this phase of the analysis was to review the candidate themes parallel to the field text to confirm that the themes told a distinctive and meaningful story of the lived experience of GCP (Terry et al., 2017). As suggested by Braun & Clark (2006), this stage was completed in two levels: reviewing within each theme and reviewing in relation to the entire interim text. Within the first level, I reviewed all the collated, coded extracts within each candidate theme ensuring they formed a coherent pattern and that the theme fully captured their essence (Braun & Clark, 2006). Once satisfied that they did, I moved onto the second level of review by rereading the entire interim text to identify if any items had been missed within the coding process and to ensure the themes were still representative of the significant stories told by the gender creative parents (Terry et al., 2017).

Phase 5: Defining & Refining Narrative Themes.

Once I had a clear picture of the themes, it was important to turn the analysis to the social justification of the research. At this time, I refined the themes by defining and naming them with consideration of how these themes contributed to the expansion of interdisciplinary knowledge around my key concepts of the gender/sex binary, gender health, and gender socialization (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). To start, I wrote a few sentences to define the essence of each theme guided by Braun & Clark's (2006) warning that in this step it is important that a theme is clear and distinctive rather than trying to get a theme to cover too much. Definitions were also a helpful way to ensure that each theme had enough depth and detail to hold its own (Terry et al., 2017). Once the themes seemed complete, I named them by reviewing my visual representation to consider the broader picture of the themes, examining what role each theme played in the larger context of gender creative parenting. I also looked closely within each theme to determine which aspect of the analytic story it captured (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Phase 6: Writing the Research Text.

While final research texts can take on a variety of forms (Clandinin, 2013), within this narrative inquiry, the research text will be found across *Chapter 4: Findings* and the following *Chapter 5: Synthesis & Implications*. Both chapter titles imply a degree of finality in what the research will share with the reader; however, as Clandinin (2013) asserts, there are always multiple interpretations within narrative inquiry and no story will ever be truly finished, as each story of experience invites new stories. Within this stage, my intention was to craft chapters that foregrounded the participants' language and expressions as a means to highlight their voice and more accurately capture the essence of their experiences. In doing so, I invited the reader to lay their experiences alongside the inquiry experiences (Clandinin, 2013), providing "a concise,

coherent, logical, non-repetitive, interesting account of story the data [tells] - within and across themes" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 93).

At this point of TA, I worked towards connecting the research relationship, the original field texts, the analysis, and the scholarly literature into one coherent narrative that sought to answer the original research questions (Terry et al., 2017). This stage of analysis was quite complex as I was called on to continually foreground multiple directions and audiences (Clandinin, 2013). Best said by Connelly and Clandinin (2006), the research text "...needs to reflect the temporal unfolding of people, places, and things within the inquiry: the personal and social aspects of inquirer's and participants' lives: and the place in the inquiry" (p. 485). This means reflecting upon the ways both mine and the participants experiences of GCP shape and are shaped by social, familial, cultural, linguistic, and institutional narratives (Clandinin, 2013).

While it was necessary for me to attend to the diversity of possible readers of the research text, including the perspectives of the scholarly community, in keeping with narrative inquiry's relational ontology, my first responsibility was to the participants. After revisions and suggestions from my supervisor, response community, and committee member, I sent my first draft of my findings chapter to all of the GCP participants who agreed in the informed consent document that they wished to be included in member-checking at this stage. Of the 8 GCP participants, 5 agreed to review the findings ensuring my representations of their stories of GCP exemplified their lived experiences. All of the feedback suggested by the participants was applied.

Ethical Considerations for Research Text.

As expressed in the TCPS 2 (2018) on privacy and confidentiality, the researcher has an ethical duty to safeguard the participants entrusted information from unauthorized access or use.

In turn, there are several measures I undertook to ensure the confidentiality and security of the information collected. As articulated within the informed consent documents, participants were asked to choose pseudonyms to foster anonymity. I intentionally asked the participants to choose their own names and pronouns, rather than assigning them, as this is best practice in TGD research as the gender/sex meanings of both play a distinctive role in this community (Lahman et al., 2022). These pseudonyms, along with the participant's asserted pronouns, were used across all the research documents including the transcripts, my reflexive journal, conversations with the response community, the interim text, and the research text.

A codebook of the pseudonyms was kept on my password protected computer. As highlighted in the participant selection and recruitment section, the data management plan was a part of the informed consent process as well (Manti & Licari, 2018). Once the researcher/participant Microsoft Teams conversations ended, the recordings and transcripts were automatically uploaded to my personal Microsoft Streams account which is password protected. Within 24 hours of the conversations, they were both transferred to both my password protected computer and personal encrypted hard drive and electronically destroyed from the Microsoft platform. All information regarding data storage was shared in the informed consent documents including the fact that Microsoft Teams was chosen as the platform to conduct the research interviews as Athabasca University has undergone a privacy and security review of the platform and agreed to an enterprise contract with the service. As mentioned, once the transcripts were verified by the participants, they were uploaded into NVivo, which stores its data on servers located in Canada.

The video recordings and transcripts were only ever viewed from my password protected personal computer. When the computer was not in use, it was kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Ensuring the security of research documents was reviewed with all parties including the participants, my response community members, and my supervisors (Manti & Licari, 2018). All the data uploaded or created within NVivo was also encrypted while in storage.

Relational ethics continued to play an important role at the analysis stage. To foster collaborative relationships and co-construct meaning (Poole, 2019), I embedded member checking at the start of the analysis within the transcription phase and toward the end once I had completed the first draft of the findings chapter, positioning interpretation as a somewhat "shared event" (Harvey, 2015, p. 34). In doing so, it was my intent to negotiate the field text, interim text, and research text, ensuring I was respectfully representing the participants' lived and told stories (Clandinin, 2013).

The inclusion of the participants within the data analysis phase not only fostered rapport (Poole, 2019), but it also shifted power towards the participants by ensuring their thoughts and opinions influenced the interpretation process (Scaranto, 2019). This aligns with the TCPS 2 (2018) suggestion that privacy is best respected if participants are provided the opportunity to exercise degrees of control over their personal information. However, when attempting to work collaboratively, researchers need to consider limits to participant involvement including lack of time, resources, and interest (Kemmis et al., 2013), as well as the unintended harm that may fall upon the participants within the process (Hallet, 2013). Thus, in the recruitment and informed consent processes, I ensured it was explicit that member-checking was an optional part of participation.

Rigour & Trustworthiness of Inquiry

There is no universal set of criteria for judging the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and as expressed by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), an inquirer must

search for and defend the criteria that best applies to their research puzzle. As is the case in all narrative inquiries, accountability to the participants was at the forefront of my mind while designing this study. Throughout the research process, I intended to foster collaborative and person-centered relationships with the participants by flexibly negotiating their role in the inquiry, regularly considering consequences to participants' lives, continuously seeking informed consent, and through negotiation of both entry and exit into the study.

The findings of this inquiry are more likely to be supported and used if they are determined credible. Considered the most influential strategy for enhancing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and congruent with this research's relational ontology, participant feedback was relied on throughout the data analysis stage. As previously articulated, this member-checking approach was utilized to review the conversational transcripts and the findings chapter during which time participant feedback was readily incorporated. Another way I intend to strengthen the credibility of this research is through repeated engagement with my response community, inclusive of two peers, my supervisor, and my committee member, whom I depended on to question my thinking and ask difficult questions of my research decisions and interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I kept written accounts of the feedback provided by my response community and thoughtfully considered how to employ their suggestions.

Narrative inquiry calls on inquirers to place themselves within their study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) and acknowledge their position as a primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Clarke & Veale, 2018; Orange, 2016). Yet in acknowledging this role, researchers are called on to be transparent about their position and influence (Clarke & Veale, 2018). By including a narrative beginning, which can be found within the introduction chapter, I aim to make explicit, my positionality and disclose my own biases and values around the experience of

GCP to the reader. As mentioned, since the start of this research journey to the moment of writing this, I have utilized a reflective journal as a place to continuously critically consider my personal belief systems and subjectivities, and the power-knowledge relationship with my participants (Ortlipp, 2008).

Along with being reflexive and explicit with my researcher positionality, I also intended with this chapter to be as transparent as possible with my processes and decision-making to allow multiple audiences, including the participants and any future readers, to determine the transferability of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). As suggested by Creswell & Poth (2018), I utilized various means to create an audit trail for documenting my thinking processes over time. While coding, generating themes, and coming to conclusions, I stored all memoing and visual maps made, which was revisited throughout the inquiry.

I also utilized a second journal, separate from my reflexivity journal, that I used throughout the study to note down research design decisions. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also highlight the importance of making visible to readers the choices an inquirer makes to foreground particular aspects of stories. With the hope that this research will be used to underpin future research on gender health, it is of the utmost importance that other researchers understand the steps undertaken and decisions made throughout this inquiry.

Finally, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) encourage narrative inquirers to consider the authenticity of their research texts by asking themselves: "Are the narratives authentic and true to the participants' experiences as they told them?" (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016, p. 17). Once more, along with my self-reflective journal, member-checking was used to check researcher bias (Birt et al., 2016) and ensure validity (Doyle, 2007). To further enhance both the trustworthiness of this research project, as well as create an invitational quality to the final research write up, I

attempted to utilize rich and illustrative descriptions of the participants' experiences of GCP (Pratt, 2009) and to weave direct quotations into the findings chapter to demonstrate that the conclusions made are both genuine and plausible.

Limitations & Delimitations

As asserted by Mertens (2018), no study is perfect in design and thus it falls on the researcher's shoulders to foreground potential limitations. In a continued effort to be transparent, I will use this section to highlight potential limitations of this researcher study's design. First, it is necessary to speak to the small sample size of six GCP units, which aligns well with both narrative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and the suggested number of interviews for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The small sample size supported in-depth and rich descriptions of GCP experiences yet is not generalizable to the experiences of all caregivers practicing gender creative parenting. However, with narrative inquiry's understanding of experience as lived in the midst, relational, and woven within the three-dimensional commonplaces of place, temporality, and sociality, the findings of the research are valued for being specific and incomplete instead of generalizable (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007).

Considering the philosophical underpinnings of this study, it is important to note that approaching this inquiry with a different ontological and epistemological framework would surely illuminate different ways of narrating GCP experiences. For example, those that would approach this same study from a post-structuralist paradigm may seek to interpret the participants' perspectives to uncover pre-existing social discourses (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). While narrative inquiries share border spaces with many other philosophical paradigms, including an appreciation of the post-structuralist assertion that experience is shaped by

macrosocial processes, the primary intention of this research was to gain knowledge from the study of lived experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Finally, it is important to bring attention to the methods of data collection through a video conferencing platform. The use of video recording may have aroused some discomfort in the participants, which could have influenced what was shared in our conversations. My intent was to approach this area of sensitivity through explicit consent processes, allowing some time to build rapport before we began recording, and by initiating continual participant check-ins to foster comfortability (Penn-Edwards, 2004). With this in mind, one further limitation to this study is the fact that I am a novice researcher who is continuing to develop their research and interviewing skills.

Chapter. 4 Findings

One of the primary justifications for this research puzzle is to provide a foundational understanding of the gender creative parenting experience as the philosophy has not been well explored in the research. With the intention for this study to underpin future transdisciplinary research around topics of gender health, childhood gender socialization, and parenting, my analysis will explore three overarching and interrelated themes fundamental to the GCP experience of the participants: (1) perspectives (2) practices (3) supports and barriers. When possible, the results are presented using illustrative quotes. To provide a more visual understanding of how the research findings are organized, on the following page the reader can find a mind map representing the gender creative parenting experience.

Figure 3

Visual Representation of the Gender Creative Parenting Experience
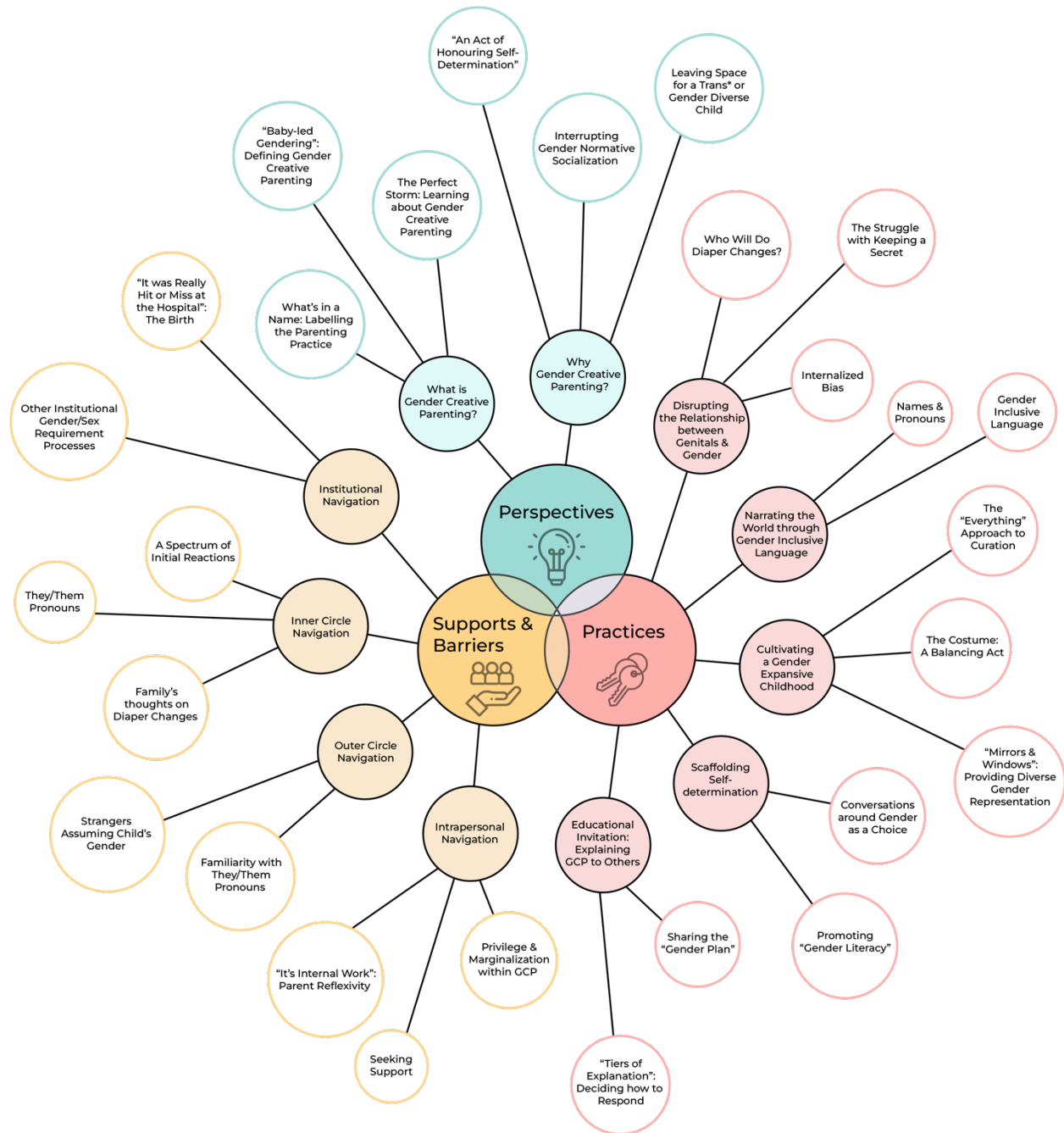
Participant Positionality

Before exploring the research findings, I believe it is essential to understand the positionality of the study's eight GCP participants as doing so will better support the reader's understanding of the results. As outlined in the methodology chapter, the requirements for participation in this study were that participants must be located in Canada, be eighteen years or older, have one or more children, and did not assign a gender to their child at birth. Parenting perspectives and practices can look quite diverse depending on the developmental needs and age of a child, thus it is essential to note that all the participant children being raised through gender creative parenting were under the age of a year and half. Also of mention, while many gender creative parents do not identify as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, all the participants in this study did. Interestingly, over half of the participants in this research have studied at graduate levels in post-secondary education, some surrounding the topics of gender. In terms of other notable socio-cultural identities, one participant identified as Indigenous and another as a South American emigrant. One of the participants also practiced Judaism. Each of the participants has a unique family structure including two of the participants living in multi-generational homes, one parent who is a single parent, and another family who has a three-parent household. Finally, all the participant families but one lived in an urban context.

Perspectives

An essential aspect of this research is the investigation of how the GCP participants conceptualize their gender creative parenting approaches. The first sub-theme, What is Gender Creative Parenting? explores the participants' identifications with this philosophy including how they first learned about the approach, and how they name and define it. The second sub-theme,

Why Gender Creative Parenting? captures the participants' motivations for taking up GCP and what impact they are hoping the approach will have on their children.

What is Gender Creative Parenting? With the movements near invisibility in the research, it is essential to explore the participants understandings of what the approach is. This section encompasses an exploration of how parents define GCP and explain the philosophy to others. It also investigates how the participants first became familiar with the approach. Finally, this section also discusses the names parents use to label their parenting approach, pointing the participants tensions with gender-neutral parenting practices.

“Baby-led Gendering”: Defining Gender Creative Parenting. When asked how they explain their parenting practice, many of the GCP participants' responses centred around supporting their children to self-determine their own unique relationship with gender. Lydia explained the GCP philosophy as “parenting in a way that lets kids express themselves and be who they are when it comes to gender.” When describing their parenting philosophy to others, Rohan shared “I just sort of say we use they/them pronouns for the baby and will allow them to choose what their gender is whenever they choose it and however often they want to choose it.” Co-parents, Janneke, Cohen, and James playfully used the metaphor of “baby-led gendering” to explain their parenting approach. Janneke explained “you give a plate of a variety of genders, and they can choose which one they eat.” James added “…and how they eat it and what they put aside.” A couple of the participants' explanations of GCP expanded beyond gender. Shane conceptualized the approach as “an intentional decision to not assign a sex or gender to a child at birth and creating an environment, a familial, kinship environment, where gender of all kind and identities of all kind are celebrated.”

The Perfect Storm: Learning about Gender Creative Parenting. When asked about how they came to learn about gender creative parenting, nearly all the GCP participants mentioned Storm, a child from a 2011 Toronto Star article who was not assigned a gender. Some of the participants who live in the larger Canadian cities, explained that within their community they had also been exposed to others parenting in this way. James shared "I feel like it's just something we knew from being in the queer community too. We kind of just knew people doing this thing, like not a ton, but it was around." A couple of the parents discussed knowing they were not going to assign their child a gender but hadn't realized that others had given this parenting approach a name until they started to look into it further. Many participants also mentioned learning more about GCP through Dr. Kyl Myer's book, *Raising Them.* Shane thoughtfully articulated that although GCP is gaining some momentum in mainstream culture, the concepts and practices behind the philosophy are not new:

> Gender creative parenting is often seen as something white families do and is credited to white scholars and community members. While every person has a right to their experience of gender diversity, it is worth noting that racialized communities around the world have been engaging in diverse practices of gender for thousands of years. Racialized trans and gender diverse people often bear the brunt of transphobia and cissexism, while white community members are seen as innovating ideas around gender.

What's in a Name: Labelling the Parenting Practice. Apart from gender creative parenting, there was quite an extensive list of names parents in this study used to label their parenting practice, including: gender expansive parenting, gender open parenting, theybie parenting, and gender-neutral parenting. Many of these terms were used interchangeably and most seemed to be viewed as implying the same perspectives and practices. Of these labels, the

one that elicited the most discussion amongst the participants was the term *gender-neutral parenting.* A couple of the parents shared that they regularly used gender-neutral parenting as it is a more "commonly known phrase" that allowed them to communicate their parenting practice more easily to others. However, some of the participants shared strong sentiments about the term. Shane explained their shift away from the term:

> For a long time, I used the term gender neutral parenting, which isn't really…my goal with parenting because I'm not looking to neutralize anything. I'm looking to expand identity options, not just in terms of gender, but just in terms of also just experience of the world.

Mar also discussed her rationale for opting for a label other than gender neutral to name her parenting practice:

> I personally have a negative reaction to neutrality. I associate it with colonization, white supremacy, and just bad science, to be honest. I feel it's been used so much to maintain the status quo that it rubs me the wrong way. I don't want to be neutral about anything! In terms of parenting, gender neutral feels grey and gender open or creative feels colourful. Filled with more opportunities and celebratory of all expressions. Not so genderless and more like genderfull.

Why Gender Creative Parenting? Within this section we explore three primary reasons the participants discussed for taking up gender creative parenting, which include honouring their children's self-determination, interrupting gender normative socialization, and to leaving space for the possibility of a TGD child. By investigating the reasons for choosing to parent their child through GCP we begin to understand the GCP participants challenges to gender typical parenting practices. Within this section, we also begin to see the impacts the GCP participants are hoping the philosophy will have on their child's gender health.

"An Act of Honouring Self-Determination". The participants expressed a variety of reasons for wanting to take up the gender creative parenting approach, most of which centered around the desire for their children to live an authentic life. Shane described the impact they hope GCP will have on their child:

I hope that for [child's name], it will give them a sense of authenticity in themselves that they can know themselves in a really true way, with as little interference from us as possible…it's really an act of honouring self-determination in a really real way.

Shane later spoke about GCP as "creating spaces for our kids to be who they are, not who they should be or who I think they should be or who anyone else is telling them who they should be." Many understood current gendered practices around child-rearing narrowing their child's possibilities. Rohan articulated perplexity at the current gendered landscape:

I was thinking about how obsessed we are with infants' genitals. So weird. Why are we so obsessed with their tiny penises or tiny vulvas? That's so strange that [society has] created this whole system around that, right…I want to give my kid the ability to live beyond just what they were born with.

Interrupting Gender Normative Socialization. Most of the participants expressed the gender creative approach as interrupting the harms of typical gender socialization. After sharing examples of the ways children are raised depending on the gender they are assigned, Mar articulated that one of her primary reasons for taking up GCP is to "avoid gender stereotyping, or at least delay it because you know we won't be able to avoid it." Parent of two, Finnice compared her experience of raising her oldest child, who was assigned female at birth, to their youngest through GCP "I can already see that people bought [sibling's name] pink things and that people say to her that she's a pretty little girl and we thought that we would be able to stop

it." She goes onto say "I kind of wished we had done [GCP] with [sibling's name] because I can

see now how gendering takes hold from an early age." When asked about what impact James

hoped GCP would have, James responded:

> I almost kind of hope that there is almost like a negative impact or like an absence of an
>
> impact. I'd like to not impact [child's name]'s gender journey. The goal is really to just
>
> give them the room to figure out their own space.

Rohan also discussed the harms of typical gender socialization as primary rationale for

taking up GCP:

> I think that's been the major contributor to me deciding to do this with [child's name], is
>
> how much gender can be oppressive and like can be shitty. And I also know how exciting
>
> gender can be when you're given the space to…write your own script.

Leaving Space for a Trans* or Gender Diverse Child. Another primary reason for taking

up GCP that was shared by the participants was around leaving space for the possibility that their

child could identify as transgender or non-binary. As mentioned, all the participants identify as

being part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, with some identifying as transgender and/or non-

binary. As such, most of the participants have lived experience around the harms of the

gender/sex binary and of coming out. Many articulated a desire to counteract the damaging

effects they have experienced. James' response illustrates this intention:

> Having a baby really makes you face your childhood self in a way I think and makes you
>
> decide "Am I going to perpetuate what happened to me or am I going to make a different
>
> choice?" And that's a choice you make in big and small ways all the time. One thing that
>
> felt really important to me was really trying to just let [child's name] be anyone who they

can and want to be in this world because I have had to fight very very hard for that and I'm

still working on it all the time.

James' partner Cohen echoed these sentiments when he shared that GCP:

Gives [child's name] so many more options and things that I never had because I feel like I

was limited in what I could do, or people put expectations on me of what I should do or

how I should behave.

Mar mentioned the high suicidality rates within 2SLGBTQIA+ populations and spoke to

the anxiety that people within this community have to face around coming out. When reflecting

on her reasons for taking up GCP, she described this stress and anxiety as avoidable:

When I talk to people who have had to come out of the closet, and I include myself there,

even if you have had a good response, it [can be] a traumatic experience… the anxiety of

[wondering] if people will be ok with me telling them I'm not what they think I am or what

they fully expect of me. So, why put [people] in the closet in the first place?

Shane discussed the potential impact GCP could have on a child who is TGD, "If they are

trans or they are non-binary, or they are gender expansive in a different way…they will have felt

celebrated their whole life."

Practices

The GCP perspectives expressed by the participants are foundational to the approaches

the participants undertake in the raising of their children. Across the interviews, the GCP

participants discussed a number of practices they take up to best support their child's gender

health, which are divided into five sub-themes. The first sub-theme, Disrupting the Relationship

between Genitals & Gender, explores the efforts the GCP participants take to interrupt the

meaning afforded to their child's bodies. The second sub-theme, Narrating the World through

Gender Inclusive Language, captures the parents' efforts to use gender inclusive language for and around their child. The next sub-theme, Cultivating a Gender Expansive Childhood encompasses the participants' strategies to cultivate an environment that encourages gender exploration. The fourth sub-theme, Scaffolding Self-determination, consists of the participants present and future approaches to support their child's authentic understanding of gender identity and expression. The final sub-theme, The Educational Invitation: Explaining Gender Creative Parenting to Others, includes the approaches the participants take to guide others' understanding of GCP.

Disrupting the Relationship between Genitals & Gender. This section explores the GCP participants varying perspectives around the efforts they take to destabilize their own and others' association between their child's genital and gender socialization. It explores the decision-making processes the participants use to determine who will be involved in diaper changes or have knowledge of their child's genitalia. This section also explores the tension the participants experience with keeping this knowledge secret, including relational and practical considerations for not doing so. Finally, it also explores the participants effort to untangle their own internal biases around their child's genitalia.

Who Will Do Diaper Changes? A unique way the GCP participants attempted to keep the gender/sex binary at bay is by determining who in their lives will have knowledge of their child's genitalia. Across the participants there were a wide range of perspectives and approaches for determining who would have this knowledge. Multiple GCP participants shared concern over other's ability to disassociate their child's genitals from gender. Mar spoke to this by sharing that she would be more willing to share this information with others if "the connection between genitals and gender wasn't so strong in people's minds." Shane echoed this sentiment when they said, "it doesn't matter how well [people] want to do, it's an ingrained part of cissexism."

In response, many of the participants seemed to treat knowledge of their child's genitals as privileged, reserved solely for people in their lives who are supportive of the gender creative parenting approach. This is highlighted in Rohan's sentiment that their two close friends who are aware of their child's genitalia understand the reasoning behind their choice to take up GCP and were not going to be "gendering the kid after seeing their genitalia." Not understanding GCP, or even being resistant to it, seemed to be a primary reason for not disclosing this information to others. Shane reported "I will never disclose our child's genitals to a stranger, to friends that I don't think can care for that information in a good way, or to my family members."

Interestingly, other GCP participants seemed to treat knowledge of their child's genitalia as something that could be earned over time. Mar disclosed that it was important for anyone who knew her child's genitals first to have a relationship with her child. She shared that after almost a year of keeping this information confidential, she and her partner decided that her father-in-law, who had a bond with their child and was travelling with them at the time, had demonstrated a supportive attitude toward GCP and could help with diaper changes. One GCP, Lydia, seemed to assert that entrusting certain loved ones to change diapers and have that one-on-one time with the child could help facilitate their relationship. She stated "My parents want to have that relationship with [my child]. So, I want [my child] to have that relationship with them."

Apart from relational reasons, many of the GCP participants discussed practical reasons for those in their inner circle knowing their child's genitalia. Other than their medical team, some participants spoke to the importance of their chosen support system being present at birth and through their involvement gaining this knowledge. Another reason commonly mentioned for others being involved in diaper changes, is the necessity for additional childcare. Lydia's position as a solo parent exemplifies the practical reasoning for others needing to be involved in

diaper changes as her child attends daycare and her parents often step in as backup childcare when needed. Other GCP participants live in multi-generational homes where they mentioned it was impractical to attempt to conceal their child's body from family members they live with. Finnice speaks to this point, "I know that a lot of people make an effort not to change diapers in front of people but with our living situation, it just can't be avoided. You know, kids are going to be naked." Finnice, who self-identifies as conservative Jewish, makes mention of a cultural and religious reason for others gaining information around her child's genitalia – circumcision. She explained that once her child was born the question of circumcision, a practice common in Judaism, came up, and thus the form of her baby's body was an unavoidable conversation with her family and rabbi.

The Struggle with Keeping a Secret. The GCP participants seemed to place varying perspectives on the necessity of keeping their child's genitalia private. When Janneke, James, & Cohen's baby was born, Cohen decided to refrain from sharing this information with others, while James and Janneke decided to disclose this information to their immediate family. Janneke explained their thoughts behind their decision to share this information with their family:

> The mystery of it draws more attention to it, and I know it's like a very individual thing and I totally respect when people don't want to share that, but I just didn't want to make it a thing and then we can just, you know, move on. People are like 'Oh, why aren't you letting us change a diaper or whatever?'

Finnice reported that she had chosen not to avoid diaper changes in either private or public settings. She explained "That's something we just have to get past, like, that's what the genitals look like. Doesn't affect how we're parenting them." Shane's baby arrived early which did not allow for them and their partner to get on the same page around genital disclosure.

This meant that while Shane preferred keeping their child's genitals private from most others, their partner took a different approach. While processing the grief associated with some family and friends now knowing their infant's genitalia, Shane discussed that they are opting to decenter the conversation of genital disclosure by casually changing their baby in front of others "in an attempt to normalize that bodies exist, have needs, and we're going to address that need here so respectfully understand these boundaries."

Whether or not GCP participants engaged in practices to keep their child's genitalia private, almost all the parents acknowledged the hardship associated with having to avoid diaper changes in front of others. Rohan recalled an uncomfortable moment where they had to remind their mother-in-law to leave the nursery while they changed their baby's diaper. Similarly, Mar, who shared that she fantasizes about her child being free enough to run around naked in front of others, described how much work it is to find a private spot to change her child into their swimsuit because others cannot separate genitals from identity. Two non-birthing parents in the study, expressed empathy for the hardship that hiding the baby's genitals has on the birthing parent or primary caregiver. James expressed that he was mindful of the burden his co-parent Janneke would have to take on if they chose to keep the baby's genitals private or explain the choice to use they/them pronouns as Janneke was doing a lot of the "primary care work, doing a lot of the negotiating with the midwife, and then with different caregivers." When speaking about their partner, Shane expressed compassion of the need for additional support for the birth parent in the early days and "that it's a lot to like have to move your kid all the time and you know like get up after you've just given birth and had stitches and all those things and do all these things to avoid people finding out or whatever."

Confronting Internalized Bias. Of significance, most of the GCP participants shared that they recognized they were not immune to gender/sex biases. Multiple participants spoke to their own internalized bias around their child's genitalia. Some shared moments where they caught themselves imagining who their child would become based on their body parts. Others shared examples of overcompensating in their choices based around their child's genitalia. Many participants also spoke to gender creative parenting as supporting them to recognize and unlearn these internalized biases. Mar described her thoughts around her internalized gender/sex biases:

> We are honest that we can't undo the kind of brainwashing and the conditioning. And that we have implicit bias, and we try to fight it for sure but not to kind of overcompensate. We try to say 'Ok, why am I thinking this? Why am I picking this? Am I compensating?'

Narrating the World through Gender Inclusive Language. Knowing the influence that language has within gender socialization, all the GCP participants in this study have made intentional efforts to utilize gender inclusive language. This section will explore the participants' decision-making around name and pronoun choice. It will also highlight the alternative ways the participants intentionally narrate their children's world in a gender expansive way.

Names & Pronouns. Two of the first decisions around language that the parents expressed having to make were around choices for their child's names and pronouns. Most of the participants in this study spoke to the decision they made to choose what they believed to be a gender inclusive name. Prior to their child's arrival, the participants also put a lot of thought into the pronouns they would use to refer to their child. Lydia playfully referred to this decision as assigning her child a "starter pronoun". Inclusive in this label, Lydia acknowledged that her child could continue to use the starter pronouns that she chose for them but is also leaving space for the possibility that they could take up alternative pronouns when they are older.

Across this research, all the GCP participants but one family, decided to refer to their child with exclusively they/them pronouns from the time they were born. The family that did not start exclusively with they/them pronouns, instead opted to alternate between pronouns when their child was born. Janneke explained their family's thinking prior to their child's arrival "We were like 'Ohhh, we will do they and them, you know, and he or she, depending on who comes out.'" However, shortly after their child's arrival, the family made the decision to shift to solely using they/them pronouns. James explained that he found swapping between pronouns involved being conscious of using each pronoun strategically and in a balanced way which was taking him "out of the moment." He also shared that by using binary gendered pronouns with his child he was "sort of expecting a narrative of their life that even I would not logically want to do." Another participant, Finnice, who used she/her pronouns with her oldest child from birth, echoed these sentiments around the influence pronouns make on child perception by sharing how using they/them pronouns makes "such a difference in how you see the kid."

Gender Inclusive Language. From the interviews, it was clear that the GCP participants also place importance on using gender inclusive language beyond the pronouns they use to refer to their child. Lydia described the impact caregiver language plays in a child's understanding of the world, "when you are walking around outside with a toddler, you narrate the world to them." Many of the parents spoke to the conscious choice they make to narrate their child's world more inclusively by altering the language they use while speaking to or around their child. Some examples noted by the parents included replacing words like "man" or "woman" with "person" or "boy" or "girl" with "kid." GCP participant, Finnice, shared a story highlighting the influence gender inclusive language use has had on her oldest child. She described a moment in which a

person driving a truck with a beard pulled up beside her and her child in a parking lot and her child turned to her and asked, "Do you think this person is going shopping?"

Two of the GCP participants spoke to the intersectional nature of culture and language and their impacts on their approach to use gender inclusive language. Shane, who is Anishinaabe, shared the positive influence learning their language has had on their parenting perspectives:

> To learn that many of our languages, Anishinaabemowin specifically, is an entirely gender-neutral language was incredibly eye opening and affirming. The language literally provides ways to talk about child rearing, gender diversity, kinship, and community building without assigning a gender or sex. We do have words for man, woman, etc. We do have some gendered relative and familial terms, but we also do not. For example, the word "aanikoobijigan" means both great-grandchild and great-grandparent. It is not a gendered familial term but rather looks at the kinship responsibilities these two people would have to each other in community.

Alternatively, Mar, whose first language is Spanish, spoke to the difficulty of using gender inclusive language in a language which uses a binary grammar gendered system. As a Canadian immigrant, they also spoke to the tension of wanting to honour their heritage, culture, and language with their child while also feeling limited by the binary grammar gendered system of Spanish.

Cultivating a Gender Expansive Childhood. The GCP participants place importance on cultivating gender expansive spaces that support their children's authentic exploration of gender. Within this section we explore the strategies the participants use to curate a rich environment

through an "Everything" approach, and at times through a "balanced" lens. It also highlights the

importance the participants place on providing their children with diverse gender representation.

The "Everything" Approach to Curation. Shane expressed their understanding of the

environment they and their partner are attempting to create for their child, "it's actually just

about providing a child with as many options as possible to explore who they are, what they like

to do, what they like to wear, how they like to relate to others." They later added "they should

have access to anything that they want to do or are interested in and to not feel policed by that."

Across the participants, this gender expansive approach extends across all aspects of a child's

environment including their clothes, toys, room decor, as well as the books and media they are

exposed to. Lydia described their experience of acquiring baby clothing,

> Before they were born, when I was collecting up bulk baby clothes from strangers,
>
> somebody said I've got a bag of baby boy clothes. I would jump on it. They would say I
>
> have a bag of baby girl clothes. I would jump on it. You know, we try to have everything.

Nearly all GCP participants echoed the "everything" approach as further expressed in

Mar's response,

> We put a request to the big family for babies second hand everything, you know, whatever.
>
> It doesn't matter. Like all the things. We have dresses. We have pants. We have dinosaurs
>
> and trucks and rainbows and all of the things, and glitter. So, we are just exposing them to
>
> everything.

Underpinning this expansive approach, multiple participants expressed the perspective

that items do not intrinsically convey gendered messages. James articulated this understanding

by describing his family's approach to toys,

A lot of our toys and stuff I would not really think of as inherently gendered toys. You know, like we have like a hippo stuffy and like a toy piano, a toy kitchen, like, you know, some of [Child's name] favourite toys are like the little Playmobil figures or blocks.

Based on the GCP participant's children's age, most do not have much media exposure, yet many of the parents' expressed ideas about what types of media and entertainment they intend to expose their child to. James explained his family's future approach "Right now, they don't do any TV shows or movies because we just don't do screen time, but when they do, we'll make sure we incorporate a wide variety of shows." Outside of TV, James' partner Cohen also added his perspective on beneficial forms of entertainment:

One of the things I want to do with [child's name] is to go to some drag shows because I think they are a really great way to see people doing things with gender in a fun, safe environment and like doing drag story time and things is something I really want to do with them.

The Costume: A Balancing Act. Based on the GCP participants' answers around creating a gender expansive environment, this practice seemed to require some reflexivity on their part. In fact, many of the parents articulated moments that required self-reflexivity to ensure their gender expansive approach to their child's environment was "balanced." Across the interviews, this "balanced" conceptualization was most evident in conversations around children's clothing. When determining their children's clothing many of the GCP participants considered comfort and practicability as important factors, which tended to eliminate certain stereotypically "feminine" clothing within their children's closet. This point is exemplified by Mar who shared "To be fair, we don't put them in dresses that much because they're just impractical." One parent,

Rohan, shared their perspective of clothing as an important part of self-expression. They spoke to them and their partner's shifting perspective on how they were dressing their infant:

We realized about a month ago that we have very few pink clothes which I thought was really sad because I love pink. Pink is one of my favourite colours. So more recently my partner was like we need to buy them more like feminine clothing. I want to get a whole bunch of new stuff. So, I was like OK, sure. So, he went and bought them a tutu and those bows or whatever - they're like bandanas that do nothing, they have no purpose other than to look pretty.

Some of the GCP participants mentioned the influence their child's supposed assigned sex has on their decision-making. Janneke explained their approach to dressing their child:

We do check in sometimes because all are like a bit more masculine and obviously that influences our choices on what [child's name] wears. I'm also cognizant that if and when we're trying to compensate for what [child's name]'s "assigned sex" would be, there's not opposite, but different clothing. So, I try and make sure you know that we aren't dressing [child's name] too masculine, [or] too feminine this week, you know, is it balanced enough?

One participant explained that their decisions on how to dress their child were to support themself and their family members in not gendering their child. They shared:

I think it might help people not gender them when I keep them in neutral or masculine colours. But I think that's temporary, until we all settle in with the they/them. I think soon we'll do more 50-50 feminine masculine clothes.

This parent went on to say that this approach "doesn't exactly align with my personal philosophy on things, but it is the easiest way to make sure people don't gender them." Most of

the GCP participants expressed looking forward to their children being able to make their own

choices, with James beginning to foster his child's own decision-making. He described his

approach, "Now that [child's name] is getting a little bigger…we started to let them pick their

own outfits, you know, give them two options and they can smack one and then that's what

they're wearing."

    "Mirrors & Windows": Providing Diverse Gender Representation. When creating

gender expansive environments, another important consideration GCP participants consider is

their children's access to representation. Most of the parents sought to find representation that

both reflects their family's intersectional identities, while also ensuring they expose their

children to alternative identities and expressions, including but also beyond gender. reported that

to support their parenting practices they have "lots of books about being whoever you want to

be." Yet, his family noticed a gap in materials that represented their specific family structure and

relationships. To fill that gap, the family used a website that allowed them to create their own

books. James further explained:

> So, we have a [book called] "Momo and Me" and then we have "Daddy and Papa and
>
> Me"…it's just pictures of us and [child's name] and a little story so that they kind of get to
>
> know who we are.

    James later added "Those books cost like $70 each to make so the money to make those

is a privilege in itself." One participant, Shane, highlighted an approach their family took to

fostering affirmative representation for their child:

> We did ask folks to give books that showed our family in different ways and showed our
>
> communities in different ways and…had books in Cree and had books in
>
> Anishinaabemowin and all those things. Because like I said at the beginning, when I think

about gender creative parenting, it's not just about gender. It's about all of these other things too, that are part of building that environment for our kid to see themselves as like a wholly Indigenous kid from a two-spirit family.

Another way the GCP participants ensure their children are exposed to both affirming and explorative representation is by considering the people in their environment. Some of the GCP participants reflected that they feel confident based on who is in their life that their child is surrounded by a diverse gender community. Others expressed feeling the need to take efforts to cultivate further representation in their child's life. One participant, Shane, spoke to the importance of the ceremonial community they are raising their child within,

Our ceremonial community is 2SLGBTQQIA+ affirming for people and people of all genders are able to participate in whatever ways feels right for them. Our child has had access to ceremony, culture, and language from the moment of their birth and will grow up with other children with families that look like theirs…Having an affirming space where our kid will not be policed and will not be required to conform to any gendered expectations to participate in their cultural birthright is incredibly important to us.

They went on to describe that they "foresee this work looking quite organic in practice because my child will grow up with other children and adults who identify as a variety of different identities." Similarly, Rohan also reflected on their child's community:

I'm hoping that I have enough people in my life that are awesome and cool of many different genders so that they can have that representation and make a decision for who they are that isn't necessarily biased one way or the other, I guess.

Some of the parents in this study shared that they are making intentional efforts to ensure their children grow up around people that mirror their family and their family's practices and

values. One parent, Lydia, has used social media to find other gender creative parents in her community, expressing that it's been nice for her and her child to get to know other children that use they/them pronouns and that "not only is it normalized, but then there's lots of people there to, you know, kind of echo all of the right things." Another GCP participant, Janneke has taken efforts to connect their local gender creative parenting community through meetups. Along with their intention to build community, they shared that at a minimum "at least [child's name] will know other children who are raised in this way."

Scaffolding Self-determination. With the ubiquity of gender/sex assignment, the participants of this study spoke to ways they intended to scaffold their children's self-determination. This section explores the efforts the participants use to frame gender as a choice that belongs to their children. It also investigates the ways parents promote their children's *gender literacy*; a term coined by Elizabeth Rahilly (2015).

Conversations around Gender as a Choice. Apart from taking efforts to keep typical gender socialization at bay and to create gender expansive environments, a unique facet of GCP is that parents who practice the philosophy seem to trust their children's ability to define their own relationship to gender. In fact, multiple participants cited gender development research within the interviews. James explained his expectations for his child's gender development, "Based on what I've read, [child's name] will start to form their own gender identity and pronoun preferences between the ages like two to five. So, I'm very excited to see what that will look like." All the GCP participants expressed the importance of supporting their children to self-determine their relationship to gender. This is exemplified by Rohan's comment:

They can't consent to me presenting them with gender. I have to allow them to look at gender in the way that they want to, and that's going to be a lot of work because the whole

world says so many strict things about gender and so to get to present it to them in a way that's different, I guess it's exciting and also like I said, we'll take work to be going kind of against the grain.

While many of the GCP participants recognized the tough road they have ahead, many welcomed the opportunity to engage in conversations around gender with their children. Mar shared "I'm looking forward to the conversations, the part that a lot of people I see are afraid of in parenting, like having those tough conversations. That's what I'm looking forward to. Let's just talk about this hard stuff." Shane echoed appreciation for these future conversations "I think it's like a gift actually, by being trans, that I feel like completely prepared and happy to have that conversation in all ways and in any way."

Alongside books and in response to their children's ideas and questions, the GCP participants with older children have opted to frame conversations around gender as a choice on the part of the children. Finnice's response about how she communicates gender to her oldest child illustrates this approach:

> Sometimes we talk about choosing. You can choose what you want to be. If you want to be a girl or a boy or not either. It's like being open to that being an option and being just like, well, we don't really have to pick one. You can just be like whatever and you can change it.

> Lydia's perspective expanded on the framing gender as a choice approach:
> It's kind of talking to them in ways that say that like this is the thing you can choose, and you get to decide. And I mean, well, I wouldn't necessarily use choice in talking to an adult about gender identity. It's the easing framing, the best framing that I've got for talking to a little kid.

As their children start to communicate their relationship to gender, all the GCP participants shared that they plan to support and affirm their children no matter their identities and expressions. Shane's response highlighted this:

As they get older, if they decide they identify as the gender commonly associated with the way their body looks, we will celebrate. If they identify as a different gender, we will celebrate. All parts of their identity will be celebrated by us including if gender isn't important to them at all or if gender is really important to them.

Many of the GCP participants also mentioned the importance of supporting their children in an understanding of gender identity and expression as fluid. Cohen discussed:

You know when [child's name] is able to really see gender as a spectrum and understand that and decide like, OK, this is for now at least this is who I am, this is how I want to be, this is how I want to dress…we can celebrate that and cherish that and love that and do that as many times as we need to based on changes that take place...I hope they can experience all those wonderful, great things, and they can play with their gender if they want.

Promoting "Gender Literacy". A few of the GCP participants noted that their child's gender development will to some degree be influenced by stereotypical gender socialization. Shane articulated their response to this:

If our child learns, either for themself or others, stereotypical or cissexist ideas about gender, then we will provide alternative education to ensure that they know that gender expression and gender identity are fluid, personal experiences. What's important to us is that our kid is provided with as much space and options as possible to ensure they know whoever they are, we are supportive. As they grow up, we will adapt the above themes in age-appropriate ways to talk about gender, sexuality, race, identity, our family, culture, etc.

Some of the parents noted their intention to seize opportunities to support their child's critical understanding of gender. If their child wanted to watch a stereotypically gendered TV show, Janneke shared that they would respond by saying that they could watch the show as a family, taking note of the stereotypes and that they would have a "discussion together about it." Mar also envisioned approaching these conversations collaboratively with her child:

I have to both tell them that I'm open to accepting [them] for where they are but also tell them that I understand that we can't make…we don't make choices in isolation. So, what does it mean to be your 'true self', well we're figuring it out. Sometimes, some of our choices are shaped by the world we're living in. Maybe all the time.

The Educational Invitation: Explaining Gender Creative Parenting to Others. As GCP is not well known, those who practice the approach are often thrust into moments where they must decide if, and in what ways, they will educate others. This section explores the efforts the participants make in the early days to invite loved ones and alternative caregivers into the gender creative parenting fold. This section also explores the varying levels of explanation the participants use to explain their parenting philosophy to others they meet.

Sharing the "Gender Plan". In fact, the participants described their role as educator taking place even before they became parents. Prior to their child's arrival, many of the parents described the ways they shared their decision to take up GCP with key members of their future child's community. In the case of Mar, she and her partner opted to gather his local family members to share their decision to practice GCP and to respond to any questions they might have had. For her family who primarily lives abroad, she chose to share their decision to take up GCP through WhatsApp, an instant messaging platform. Other parents, like James, decided to disclose his family's "gender plan" with key family members via email. Included in these proactive

conversations, many GCP participants described passing along resources including books, websites, videos, social media accounts, and online articles that they had curated to family and friends.

Once the child is older, the need to proactively educate others around GCP expands beyond loved ones, with a couple of participants sharing approaches they took to educate external care providers such as daycare facilities. Some of the participants again relied on written communication to write an email explaining their GCP approach including the discussion of their unique family make up and the use of they/them pronouns for their child. One participant, Lydia, discussed that she engaged in multiple conversations with the daycare workers regarding the GCP approach with her child. For some of the participants, the education piece has carried on as their child continues to grow, with resource sharing and conversations with family members being on going.

“Tiers of Explanation”: Deciding how to Respond. While out in the community, all the GCP participants shared stories of interactions in which they had to make the decision on whether or not to explain their parenting practice to others, and if so, to what degree. A large part of the decision-making on how to respond to strangers seems to come down to weighing the risks and benefits of who, when, and which circumstances are valuable opportunities to educate others around GCP. Mar explained her approach to engaging others as utilizing “tiers of explanation.” She went on to say that she typically begins with a shorter and more concise explanation such as “we are doing gender creative parenting, which means for us that we are not assigning gender and that we are waiting for [child's name] to tell us who they are.” If people choose to engage in the conversation and ask questions, she will then move onto a higher-level tier where she provides a more detailed explanation around the purpose of GCP. Many of the other GCP

participants seemed to follow suit with short and concise answers, such as Finnice, who reported her typical response to strangers wondering about her child's gender is "we are going to wait for them to tell us."

Multiple participants spoke to the significance of these conversations. Shane's response illustrated this weight:

The biggest thing that I feel like I am constantly thinking about is like how do I respond to some of these questions about gender creative parenting in a concise way? In a way that I can get the point across and feel confident about it, whether that person understands or not. And I can't be fully responsible for that. [I want to] respond in a way that I feel confident because I think that's going to be the number one protective factor for myself, and our family, but also for my kid.

When asked what they meant by their explanation being the number one protective factor, Shane explained that in a world of increased transphobia and cissexism, "Ensuring that I can protect my child from harm feels incredibly important. Being able to confidently speak about gender creative parenting is one portion of that."

Understanding the risks associated with opening up about GCP with strangers leads some of the GCP participants to intentionally avoid the conversation. Janneke explained that depending on who they encounter or the context they are in, they may take up any number of approaches to deflect these interactions, including providing their child's name instead of gender, providing the stranger with a random gender for their child, or reframing the conversation. They illustrated the latter approach, "I actually use a strategy that I saw on the Theybie [Facebook] group a couple weeks ago, which is to pretend like you don't hear the question and like redirect

[the conversation]." Cohen contextualized these deflective approaches by speaking to their necessity:

> Sometimes I just have to take an approach of like…I'm on a bus. I'm somewhere unfamiliar and someone asks what [child's name]'s gender is, and I just have to make a choice really quickly about [how to respond] and it sucks to have to make a choice because of like safety. Sometimes you just like can't really escape and it's just easy to give someone a pronoun so that you can just get out of that conversation.

When speaking to the weight of responding to others, some GCP participants also mentioned the importance of considering their child's conversational awareness and the impact their responses could have on their child, Shane expressed "Being able to explain GCP clearly and concisely in all situations is also about modelling our family is valid to our child."

Supports & Barriers

Embedded within the participants' perspectives and practices, moments of validation and invalidation around GCP organically surfaced. The participants disclosed supports and barriers that affected their ability to employ GCP strategies. I divided these supports and barriers into four sub-themes. The first sub-theme, Institutional Navigation, unpacks the organizational supports and barriers the GCP participants encounter and their responses. The second sub-theme, Inner Circle Navigation, encompasses the participants' reflections on the validation and invalidation they face in relation to their friends and family. The next sub-theme, Outer Circle Navigation, describes the experiences of navigating GCP in relation to strangers. The final sub-theme, Intrapersonal Navigation, explores the inner dialogue of the GCP participants and supports and hinderances to their personal wellness.

Institutional Navigation. From daycare facilities to insurance companies, the

participants spoke to the tension of navigating institutional environments and policies through

their GCP approach. Considering the relatively early phase of GCP the participants are in, many

were prepared to discuss the institutional supports and barriers they experienced around their

birth and their child's birth certification, which is a central sub-theme in this section.

Secondarily, this section explores other institutional processes that both validate and invalidate

their parenting approach. It also highlights the spectrum of approaches the parents take when met

with institutional processes require a gender/sex assignment.

"It was Really Hit or Miss at the Hospital": The Birth. Nearly all the GCP participants

spoke to tensions around their parenting approach first coming to a head in the hospital, during

their first moments as parents –their child's birth. Many of the GCP participants mentioned

including an explanation of the GCP philosophy in their birth plan so that the hospital staff was

aware of their choice not to announce the baby's gender/sex when they were born and to use

they/them pronouns to refer to the baby. Each of the GCP participants were met with varying

degrees of support within the hospital setting, which is expressed in Finnice's comment "it was

really hit or miss at the hospital." While some disclosed that the hospital struggled to uphold

their choice of pronouns for the baby, others expressed appreciation for the care they received

while in the hospital. Shane shared that while they had significant fears as "queer trans

Indigenous people in the medical system," they were pleasantly surprised by the medical care

their family received:

> Having nurses, postpartum nurses, medical staff, the OB, midwives, the paediatrician - all
>
> these people actually use they/them pronouns and actually respect our family…I felt good,

and I was like, this is exactly…proof enough as to why any gender affirming care is so

important.

When it comes to the parents' decision to not assign their child a gender/sex at birth, the

GCP participants were met with only barriers, and sadly little support. Many of the GCP

participants spoke to the effort they made to avoid the legal and medical assigning of a

gender/sex to their child. Lydia shared her perspective of the bureaucratic act, "I think it's stupid

that we have, that anybody has, a legally defined gender anyway." One participant, Finnice,

shared that their biggest obstacle in GCP so far was around the medical assignment of a

sex/gender to their child on the part of the hospital. In fact, she shared that a hospital

administrator was fired over their choice to edit her child's statement of live birth.

Finnice is not alone in her stress, the participants expressed a range of emotions from

anger to disappointment that on their child's original birth certificate they could not register their

newborn's sex as "X" within Ontario, the home province of all the GCP participants within this

study. Within the province, a baby can only be registered as male, female, or undetermined when

they are born. The provincial website explicitly states that "undetermined" should not be used as

a gender-neutral option and can only be selected if a birth attendant has indicated they are

"unable to medically determine a child's birth sex" (Service Ontario, n.d.).

Figure 4

Sex Marker from Government of Ontario Birth Certificate Website

Details about the birth of

Sex of child

◯ Female

◯ Male

⦿ Undetermined (not known)

> Note: This is not a gender-neutral option.
>
> In some cases, the birth attendant (e.g., doctor, midwife) is not able to medically determine whether a child's sex at birth is male or female and will indicate undetermined or unknown.
>
> Select this option only if the birth attendant has indicated this.

Rohan explained their confusion with this policy saying, "it is weird that they say this is not a gender-neutral option, but then there is no gender-neutral option. It would be great if there was a fourth option." It is worth noting that once a parent registers the birth, they can then reorder a birth certificate requesting to change the sex to X or ask for sex to be taken off the birth certificate completely. Further, many of the GCPs, expressed dissatisfaction around the unnecessary time and effort it takes to have the birth certificate reissued especially while caring for a newborn and/or recovering from labour and delivery. Rohan explained their frustration "It's a birth certificate. I want it to be clear that they are represented from birth as they are, right?" While unhappy about these institutional policies, some of GCP participants seemed to place less importance on their child's legal gender/sex. Lydia seemed to find comfort in the thought that "Kids aren't super aware of having a legally defined gender anyway."

Other Institutional Gender/Sex Requirement Processes. Not all provincial and federal institutions required parents to register their children's gender/sex. In fact, some of the GCP

participants discussed appreciation for the Ontario health care card system and the federal passport system. To speak to the former, Ontario health care cards by default, do not include a designated sex marker, a policy many of the GCP participants expressed a preference for. When creating a child's Canadian passport, a parent can ask for an X, a F, or a M. Some of the participants spoke to the stress they felt over the decision of choosing a gender marker on the passport because of the potential unsafety or discrimination their child or family could face for having an X marker in another country due to differing international laws. Lydia mentioned struggling over the decision but in the end decided to choose a gendered marker as she and her child will have to travel a lot for her work. Another parent, Mar, chose an X for their child's passport only to learn after that the Canadian government recommends that travellers call ahead to find out which countries will accept an X. Now knowing this information, she questioned whether she should have made a different decision.

As expressed by the participants, there is a wide range of other institutional processes that assume parents have assigned their child a gender. Those mentioned by the participants included tax and insurance processes, declaring a child as a RESP beneficiary, applying for Indigenous status cards, and even signing up for daycare. Shane described the invalidation they feel regarding these administrative obstacles:

> Having to explain our family on paperwork that is not meant for our family to exist. It tells us very clearly in this paperwork that our child is not meant to have these parents and have this configuration…It's like a double whammy, both being the trans parent and then also parenting this way has like double barriers to it.

To bypass these institutions and avoid assigning a gender/sex to their child, participants expressed the additional labour of having to go through appeals processes or visit these

institutions in person to speak to someone. One participant, Finnice, spoke to the support of her rabbi, who modified their Jewish baby naming ceremony, "she was able to do all of the prayers and everything without gendering them." However, in moments when modifications are not allowed and an institution requires a binary gender/sex marker, a couple of the GCP participants highlighted ways they creatively respond. Mar recalled "When we face a situation where [we're] filling a form and you know, it's designated to only accept one of two options, we flip a coin." When speaking with an administrator over the phone who requires a binary gender marker, Mar and her partner respond with "Ok, you pick" which she laughed about saying "I have to have a little fun too." When applying for a city of [city name] daycare subsidy which required a photo of her child's birth certificate, Lydia opted to "edit the photo to block out the gender marker and it got through just fine that way."

Inner Circle Navigation. Across the interviews, the GCP participants had a plethora of examples of interpersonal validations and invalidations they had experienced while negotiating their parenting approach with others. The section will explore the range of initial reactions family and friends had to the parents' choice to take up GCP. It will also explore the GCP participants family member's varying responses to utilizing they/them pronouns and exclusion from diaper changes.

A Spectrum of Initial Reactions. Upon announcing their choice to use GCP, the participants received a range of reactions from their loved ones. These responses included appreciation for the approach, questions around wanting to know more, pushback through misconceptions around the philosophy, and all together rejection and withdrawal from the relationship on the part of family members.

Considering the emotional labour associated with educating others about GCP, multiple participants expressed appreciation for those in their life who did not require an explanation or justification for the approach. Rohan spoke to the gratitude they felt for their friends:

I love that my queer friends just get it, like I've never had to explain it to the queer friends I have. They're always just like, 'Ohh, cool' and then they'll just start using they/them pronouns. That's been the biggest [support] because it's like I don't have to go into detail.

Shane echoed these sentiments:

The biggest supports have just been our friends and our community we have. There's never been a single question from anyone. We didn't even have to say anything like people just used they/them pronouns. They like actually assumed that would be what we would be doing instead of assuming that we'd be gendering our kid.

When announcing their choice to use the GCP approach to loved one's who were less familiar with the philosophy, many participants expressed appreciation for some family members' open-minded attitudes as demonstrated through their interest in learning more about GCP and engaging with resources the participants had recommended to them. At this stage, some participants experienced pushback when engaging in educational efforts. Mar recalled a moment of tension she experienced while trying to support her family members understanding of GCP:

I was very excited before our baby was born and I bought all their cousins books that talk about gender or have characters that use they pronouns and I posted it on Instagram kind of excited. One of my sisters-in-law reached out and said, "Please don't get that for my kids."

One of the biggest sources of support expressed by the GCPs was when they were relieved from their educational burden. A couple of the participants expressed appreciation for loved ones

who took responsibility to educate themselves around GCP. Mar spoke to the allyship she received from her mother-in-law,

> His mom who is…was...she passed away in December…my role model for like who to be as a mom had my favourite reaction to everything which was "Hmmm…what should I read?" That was definitely helpful. And then seeing her do her own research and like exploring, you know who to follow on Instagram or seeing my Instagram and being like 'Oh, I'm going to follow that person', like kind of having her own initiative.

Another way loved ones eased the educational burden, was to take on that burden in place of the parents. After the arrival of her child, Mar's mother-in-law, posted a birth announcement on social media, not only using all the correct language set out by Mar & her partner, but also correcting the comments that used binary gendered pronouns when referring to her grandchild. Similarly, when asked about what supports have been most helpful Finnice shared "My sister-in-law spending a great deal of time explaining to my niece and nephew about gender creative parenting and continuing to have those conversations."

After learning about GCP, a couple of participants shared feelings of affirmation when grandparents had mentioned wishing they had known about the philosophy GCP while they were raising their children. Shane shared their mother's response to learning they would not be assigning a gender to their child "Sounds like a great idea. You probably could have benefitted from that." Finnice expressed appreciation for her family for "really making an effort and really believing in the process." Not all family and friend responses to the GCP philosophy that the participants disclosed were affirming. Mar shared that after sharing her parenting approach with her loved ones, some of her family stopped speaking to her. She expressed by not assigning her child a gender "They think I am doing my kid real harm."

They/them Pronouns. Across the interviews, one of the biggest struggles with loved ones was they/them pronoun use. Some of the GCP participants have had family members all together refuse to use they/them pronouns or tried for a short time only to abandon them for binary gendered pronouns. Lydia reported "My father tried [using they/them pronouns] for a couple of months. He has reasons why linguistically, just like in terms of language not in terms of support, why it's more difficult for him." Alternatively, some participants shared appreciation for their family's efforts to adapt to they/them pronouns. Finnice shared gratitude for her mom's efforts to correct pronoun slipups even when she and her partner are not in the room. In moments where loved ones do not use they/them pronouns for their child, some of the GCP participants correct their loved ones, others do not. James explained his family's choice not to correct their loved one's pronoun use "Right now, [child's name] doesn't know, and they don't care. Once they start asserting whatever their preference is then we will be a little more vocal about it."

Family's thoughts on Diaper Changes. Loved ones also seemed to have varying reactions to the GCP participants' decision not to share knowledge of their child's genitalia with them. Some of the GCP participants shared stories of family member's disappointment over the parents' choice not to involve them in diaper changes. One participant, Mar, expressed gratitude for her mother-in-law's choice response to knowing her child's genitalia:

> My mother-in-law had terminal cancer and at some point, I told her that if she really wanted to know, I felt comfortable telling her or letting her give [child's name] a bath because I felt very supported by her. And she smiled and said that she was so happy we introduced her to this way of seeing people and that she felt she knew everything that was important about [child's name] and did not need that particular piece of information.

Outer Circle Navigation. Outside of their inner circle, the GCP participants reported a range of reactions to their parenting philosophy. This section will explore the GCP participants encounters with strangers in public, most of whom assume their child's gender. It also explores strangers varying reactions to they/them pronoun use.

Strangers Assuming Child's Gender. Given stories of the participants' day-to-day interactions, it is clear that most strangers have not considered the possibility that a child could not be assigned a gender/sex. Conversely, all the participants highlighted moments where strangers interacted with their child assuming their gender/sex as male or female. Many of the GCP participants expressed an understanding that strangers seem to make gendered meaning from various social cues, such as their child's name or how they are dressed that day. Cohen's response illustrates this point,

> I find people, they'll see like a hint of blue on their clothes and then… just take this huge
>
> gamble with like trying to guess your kid's gender and they'll be like boy right away and
>
> I'm like alright, sure, if that's what you're going from.

Within these interactions where their children's gender/sex is assumed, multiple participants expressed noticing strangers applying gender stereotypes in the ways they interact with their children. Cohen described a regular interaction his family has at their local pharmacy where the pharmacists disregard their pronoun choices for their child. One pharmacist refers to their child as he and the other as she. Cohen noted that the pharmacist who thinks of their child as a boy will regularly say things like "Oh, he's growing so big. He's definitely going to be a hockey player one day." While later in the same visit, the other pharmacist who uses she/her pronouns for their child will say things like "I wish you would just smile more." He explained that these encounters with this pharmacy seem to happen each time they come in, reflecting "I'm struck by

that conversation we have every time I go in because they don't…they're just not paying attention." Mar described her initial reaction to these gendered interactions:

> I thought that [with] people not knowing their genitals it would force them into more neutral interactions, but that is not the case. People have made their mind, have a gender in their mind and they're interacting with [child's name] at least with the gender in their mind and they are applying that stereotype.

Most of the GCP participants disclosed that in moments where they are casually interacting with a stranger who genders their child that they intentionally opt to do nothing. Some of the participants responses, like Finnice's, seemed to conceptualize these interactions as trivial,

> If it's just somebody who I'm interacting with for like a minute…like if it's somebody who's just stopping by to say how cute the baby is at a mall or something, I'm just like, sure, yeah, whatever. You know, like somebody will be like, "Oh, what a cute little girl?" and I would be like, "Uh, thanks." You know, who cares?

Some of the participants expressed that their children being referred to and socialized as multiple genders might even have some benefits. Mar explained this perspective "It's still beneficial because [child's name] gets different exposure and people treat [child's name] as a boy and people treat [child's name] as a girl and they get kind of more balanced exposure."

Familiarity with They/Them Pronouns. In moments when the participants opt to share more about GCP or about their choice of using they/them pronouns with strangers, a response common - and expressed as expected, by all the GCP participants, is to be met with confusion. Lydia noted that in these moments of misunderstanding over GCP, most people opt to simply leave the conversation without engaging further. She explained this reaction "I think a lot of people just didn't really understand my answer and decided that it wasn't worth pursuing, you know, these

are casual interactions with strangers." Some of the GCP participants expressed that stranger confusion is most present around their choice to use they/them pronouns with their child. Many of the participants shared that when they use the pronouns they/them, others will sometimes think they are referring to more than one child. After sharing a story of a doctor's office encounter where a stranger thought they had twins after using they/them pronouns, Rohan reflected "People are more confused about the grammar of it than they are the gender."

Another common invalidation shared by the GCP participants, is that members of the public often disregard their choice to use they/them pronouns for their child. Finnice explained a typical interaction she has using they/them pronouns for her child in public, "They just don't acknowledge it and they just choose a sex; they choose a gender. They're just like 'Ok, well you said they, but I am just going to keep saying he,' you know?" Janneke reflected on the disheartening nature of this common experience with strangers "It's sort of a weird moment where it is like 'Oh, you're living in a different world than I am.'"

In person, none of the GCP participants shared moments of outward hostility or aggression in their interactions with strangers, but one parent James disclosed that they occasionally receive hateful comments on social media. He shared his response "I filter my comments and I block almost all of them. Any time I do get a rude comment, you know, I just block it."

Not all interactions with strangers are invalidating experiences. Some of the participants expressed that they were pleasantly surprised when strangers were receptive to their parenting approach. In fact, multiple GCP participants shared examples where people did not question their parenting approach and made an effort to use they/them pronouns. Lydia expressed appreciation for her neighbours whose first language is not English, "for a long time…they would always call [child's name] he, and they've kind of linguistically learned to call [child's name] they." James

recalled a story of a trip he took with his child to the library where he disclosed to another parent that his child goes by they/them pronouns. He shared the other parent's response "She was like 'Ok cool' and then just continued the conversation and it felt like no big deal, which was kind of nice. Every now and again someone will surprise you like that."

Intrapersonal Navigation. As the GCP community is relatively small and the approach less known, the GCP participants shared some of their internal dialogue, including the range of thoughts and emotions regarding their choice to take up this unconventional parenting philosophy. This section also explores the resiliency strategies taken up by the GCP participants to foster connection and support their understanding of how to navigate some of the institutional and interpersonal barriers they face. Finally, this section also encompasses the parents' reflections on the influence place, temporality, and their socio-cultural backgrounds have on their ability to practice GCP.

"It's Internal Work": Parent Reflexivity. Across the interviews all the GCP participants feel passionate about their choice to take up GCP, as mentioned a few of the participants have studied gender at relatively high academic levels. At multiple points across the conversations, the participants expressed joy about their choice to raise their child through GCP. This is exemplified in Rohan's comment "I'm excited about them getting to be whoever they want to be and…them getting to choose who that is and change their mind over and over again. And that's going to be really fun to see and to support." In moments of the interview, many participants seemed to lean into the unconventionality of the GCP approach. When questioned about the outcomes of the GCP philosophy, Mar shared their typical response "It's absolutely an experiment. I don't know why people think that's an insult. Like, I'm happy, yeah for sure, isn't it? Isn't parenting a little bit of an experiment?"

Along with positive self-reflections around their parenting choices, many of the participants shared some of their inner dialogue around the burdens of GCP. Some of the GCP participants expressed feeling "on guard" when out in public, mentally preparing to have to react to a conversation around their child's gender. Shane's response illustrates this anxiety, "It's always a conversation. It's like I can never think about going anywhere with my child where it's not a conversation because that's how insidious the gender binary is that it's like the first conversation that people have." Many of the GCP participants shared feelings of isolation for not wanting to engage in these conversations. Janneke discussed their experiences of disconnection in parenting groups:

> It's going to be like 90% cishet moms and…their language for affirmation, connection, and bonding is like so antithetical to our own. Like they think it is a positive thing to gender your child…I think there's a lot of performative gendering of children…so that you can play into this role together.

Rohan also mentioned feelings of alienation in reference to the gendered nature of online parenting forums "It's impacted me in a sense of like, I don't post a lot on those groups. I don't seek those folks out because again, it's a lot of work to have to explain it." In Rohan's statement they mention another commonly shared burden of educating others of GCP. Depending on the context, some of the GCP participants shared that they enjoyed taking on the educator role. One parent, Mar, who has experienced a wide range of responses from family members around GCP shared "I actually don't mind this work. Being asked questions [about GCP] feels like a privilege." Yet with the continuous nature of the education piece, many of the parents expressed this teaching role as wearing. Rohan's response exemplifies this: "Teaching friends and family, especially about something that affects me so personally, is very draining."

Another common experience for the GCP participants seemed to be around a fear of rejection for their choice to take up GCP. When speaking about parenting groups once more, Janneke disclosed "I feel kind of alone and isolated…I feel worried that I won't relate, or they won't be accepting and they don't understand." The comment of one parent, Mar, who has experienced familial rejection over their choice to take up GCP, speaks to the resiliency GCP participants are called on to cultivate within themselves,

> For me the hard work of gender-creative parenting is that it brings that darkness to the surface. It's emotional/psychological work because it brings out that bigotry in your friends and family and strangers that maybe you even suspected was there, but you had found a way to avoid. But once it's out, you have to deal with it. You have to make decisions. It is hard work in terms of figuring out how to manage conversations and confrontations - what to say, how to build my arguments, when to bring them up, etc. And it's also internal work. How do I make sense of the pain, love, and anger that I feel when my loved aunt refuses to meet my child? How do I even mourn these relationships? How do I rebuild my village?

Seeking Support. Nearly all the GCP participants have taken action in response to the feelings of anxiety and isolation they feel by looking outward toward the GCP community. Many participants mentioned turning to GCP online parenting groups, such as the Parenting Theybies Facebook group, as a space to connect, share stories, and learn from others. Janneke noted their appreciation for the Facebook group "It's just nice like that there are people from all over that are like doing this and it makes us feel like…we're not just like out here doing it by ourselves." When reflecting on the online group, Shane mentioned "I found that really helpful…like reading people's experiences and kind of learning from what people are doing and not doing."

Many of the parents have also sought out relationships with other GCP parents. Cohen shared about the benefit of knowing another three-parent family practicing gender creative parenting "They've been a huge support network for me…we try to find space to hang out with them and like invite them over and we go to their place, it's like they're the only ones that I know that are like literally a clone of us." When asked how she felt about connecting with others practicing GCP, Finnice responded:

Less alone. I guess less like we're blazing a trail and more like no, this is a thing people have been doing and that's a few of us here. We're not the first people to do this, there's a road map of some kind, you know?

Another GCP participant, Janneke, has made an effort to connect to their local gender creative parenting community, they shared:

I've started… like every once in a while, when I have the energy for it…I'm trying to start gathering gender creative parents. Like last year I did a couple of [location] picnics, and I'm organizing a gender creative picnic in May. So hopefully we'll continue to meet people who are parenting this way.

Nearly all the participants mentioned reading the limited resources and books as a source of support and knowledge expansion. Although not without criticism of the book, many of the participants expressed appreciation for Dr. Kyl Myer's book *Raising Them* for expanding their understanding of what practicing GCP in everyday life could look like. Most of the participants spoke to the need for more diverse stories around gender creative parenting. Mar expressed her desire for more expanded and intersectional GCP experiences:

A big example of the need for more material would be how my parenting choices intersect with my queer identity but also with my identity as an immigrant and a Spanish speaker. One

book cannot address all the potential scenarios and identities. That is why I think we are in

a moment when we need as much information about gender creative parenting as can be

produced.

Shane also articulated the necessity of more Indigenous and racialized stories around GCP,

For us, being able to connect with other Indigenous families, particularly those practicing

GCP, would have an immeasurable impact on the life of our child and our lives as parents.

It is representation, it is connection, it is community. It would support the building of a

strong sense of identity as well as a pride in our family.

Privilege & Marginalization within GCP. Multiple GCP participants also discussed the

privilege they had to take up GCP given their socio-cultural identities. Mar reflected on the

privileged identities she holds:

I wonder sometimes if I am able to do this because I'm privileged in some ways, like I'm

educated and white, and I feel safe enough…to take those risks, which is a little bit of a

risk and we are opening up our family to be harassed and, you know, confronted. And if I

was a visible minority…maybe it would mean it would be harder to take that step to

make that choice.

Janneke also mentioned the privileged social location of their family:

We are by [city name] standards, we are like middle class. Like there are a lot of things

we don't have to worry about. That gives us room to worry about like, you know, the

gender stuff. Like maybe we wouldn't have that capacity if we were lower income or

lived in a different housing situation or more rural that could be more difficult. And we

are in a space where…I mean also like with the three of us…So we're not doing this

alone. Yeah, it's a huge factor and like our whiteness does protect us from, like, a certain

degree of scrutiny then if we were like people of colour doing this, then like the risk to us

as a family would be higher, absolutely.

The GCP participants made mention of the influence their geographical location and the

temporal climate has on their parenting philosophy. Lydia commented "That makes such a

difference, like where we are and when we are." She goes on to say, "I kind of got lucky in terms

of time and place, where [gender creative parenting] is relatively easy." Janneke mentioned

several benefits of practicing GCP based on their family's location,

> Living in a big city, being able to afford to live in a big city, where we have access to a
>
> wide variety of programming, so if one place doesn't feel so friendly, we cannot too
>
> terribly go to another one.

Considering his and his family member's identities, and their choice to raise their child

through GCP, James also expressed concern about the current political climate,

> I'm pretty nervous about all the anti-trans hate that's been on the horizon. I think that we've
>
> been able to kind of fly under the radar a fair amount and I worry that that will become a
>
> little harder but there's not a lot to do about that like other than, like, live our lives
>
> authentically and love our child and try to take care of each other.

A couple of the GCP participants shared an understanding of GCP not being an

accessible or appropriate choice for all parents. Lydia disclosed "There are also good reasons for

parents to choose not to [practice gender creative parenting], especially factoring time and

place."

This findings chapter has taken a spacious and broad approach to explore the diverse

experiences of eight gender creative parents. Within perspectives theme, explored the

participants conceptualization of the philosophy and their reasoning for turning away from

gender typical parenting toward gender creative parenting. The practices' theme captured the divergent ways the GCP participants take up five parenting approaches unique to the GCP philosophy. Finally, the supports and barrier's theme uncovered the validations and invalidations faced by the GCP participants and the unique ways the parents navigate the challenges and tensions they face. In the next chapter, I will analyze these findings, examining the impact the GCP experience may have on dismantling the gender/sex binary in favour of promoting children's gender health.

Chapter 5. Synthesis and Implications

In 2005, after analyzing a variety of parenting resources, sociologist Karin Martin (2005) described the gender-neutral child rearing movement as a "stalled revolution" (p. 456). Yet through exploration of the lived experiences of gender creative parents, I demonstrate that the feminist reimagining of gendered childhoods has in fact not been abandoned but reinvented in a trans-affirmative way. Many of the perspectives and practices articulated by the parent participants within this study can be traced to feminist parenting practices that aimed to deconstruct what Morgenroth & Ryan (2021) refer to as the gender/sex binary's *stage*.

The stage is described as a physical and cultural environment that enables and reinforces a binary gender/sex performance (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). While gender equality is far from reach, feminist efforts to dismantle the stage have resulted in a softening of some traditional gendered roles. More parents are allowing their children to step outside normative "masculine" and "feminine" behaviours (Rahilly, 2015). Yet, in their attempts to loosen gender boundaries in childhood, feminist parenting models failed to question essentialist perspectives of gender and sex, invisibilizing transgender and/or gender diverse (TGD) identities.

The temporal and social space that modern day GCP occupies is vastly different from the landscape from which feminist parenting originated. In recent years the social and political conversations around gender and sex have shifted dramatically allowing for new gendered possibilities within the parenting realm. With greater international gains in 2SLGBTQIA+ acceptance by way of increased protection and rights, such as marriage equality and anti-discrimination laws, an increasing number of parents are more comfortable with the possibility of having a queer child. This perspective is vastly different from the early feminist parenting

approaches of the 1960s and 1970s, which appeared to advertise non-sexist parenting as a means to subvert homosexuality (Martin, 2005).

An even more recent shift in the parenting world is the prospect of raising a child in a way that affirms their TGD existence (Meadows, 2011; Rahilly, 2015; Rahilly, 2020; Ryan, 2016). In fact, many of the perspectives and practices of this study's gender creative parents, can be identified in those of trans-affirmative parents not practicing GCP. The most fundamental of these shared perspectives being parents' defense of their children's gender health, which necessarily upends the gender/sex binary's stage.

Where the experiences of the GCP participants differ from feminist parenting models of the past and most modern day trans-affirmative parenting, is in the perspectives and practices they utilize to deconstruct the gender/sex binary's stage. In their psychological framework, Morgenroth & Ryan (2021) asserted that there are two strategies that can be used to dismantle the stage of the gender/sex binary, de-gendering or multi-gendering. As explained in the literature review chapter, *de-gendering* strategies intend to decrease the salience of the gender/sex binary through the removal of gender/sex division (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). Alternatively, *multi-gendering* strategies intend to disrupt the gender/sex binary by bringing attention to genders and sexes outside of the binary (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021).

The GCP participants within this study employ a range of de-gendering and multi-gendering strategies with the intention of freeing their children from the restrictive prescriptions and proscriptions of the gender/sex binary that inhibit their children's gender health. Through their efforts to tear down the stage of the gender/sex binary, the GCP participants intend to make space for their children to creatively misalign the various facets of the gender/sex binary in a way that feels most authentic to them.

While GCP has made considerable strides to revive feminist parenting models in a trans-affirmative way, one must be cautious to valorize the GCP experience as the universal pathway to gender health. As highlighted in Martin's (2005) use of the phrase "stalled revolution" and by looking towards research on other well-intentioned actors' attempts to deconstruct normative gender socialization, these efforts have been found to be less effective than intended (Kane, 2012, Kissane & Winslow, 2016; Ridgeway, 2011; Ryan, 2016; Trumpy & Elliot, 2016). Met with social resistance and institutional barriers, the GCP movement, is vulnerable to unintentionally reproducing the gender/sex binary and negatively impacting their children's gender health.

In this synthesis chapter, I will hold up the de-gendering and multi-gendering strategies utilized by the GCP participants to the historical and contemporary gendered parenting research. This will include analyzing the actions they take to dismantle compulsory cisgenderism, create a gender expansive childhood, bolster their children's self-determination, and the ways in which the GCP participants resist the barriers they face. In each section, I will foreground the ways the GCP participants are resisting the gender/sex binary and advocating for their children's gender health, and in doing so, redefining childhood. As the gender/sex binary is strengthened by a lack of reflection in doing gender (Lorben, 2022), this chapter will go on to discuss ways that the GCP movement is potentially leaving the gender/sex binary intact.

Combating Compulsory Cisgenderism

Where GCP diverges from both the historical and modern-day gendered parenting literature is in its intentional resistance of compulsory cisgenderism. When a baby is born, the disciplinary power of the gender/sex binary mandates gender and sex alignment through the assignment of a gender based on a child's external reproductive organs. As demonstrated in the

literature review chapter, this seemingly innocent act is the starting point for the gender/sex binary as it sets into motion how a child, and later an adult, will be socially perceived and managed (Hyde et al., 2019).

Past feminist parenting philosophies left the presumed correlation between gender and sex unquestioned, which is exemplified in Bem's (1998) approach to sex education within her aschematic parenting philosophy wherein she taught her children that "A boy, we said again and again, is someone with a penis and testicles; a girl is someone with a vagina, a clitoris, and a uterus" (Bem, p. 107). In fact, within feminist parenting models, a child's gender/sex was seen as fundamental to knowing oneself. Within her research on non-sexist parenting, Statham (1986) summarized her participants' perspective on gender/sex:

> They saw themselves as trying to undo sex stereotypes, but without undermining the child's sense of self. Knowledge of one's sex was, in the parents' eyes, an important part of a person's identity and self-concept (p. 78).

The recent surge of trans parenting research suggests that affirmative parents have come to acknowledge the incongruent relationship of gender and sex by honouring their child's TGD identity and advocating for their gender health (Aramburu Alegría, 2018; Durwood et al., 2017; Hale, 2021; Meadows, 2018; Rahilly, 2015; Rahilly, 2020). Yet, in most research studies, this acknowledging of TGD possibilities is typically in response to their child's gender non-conforming identity and expression. However, other than the study on GCP completed by Davies in 2020, there is no research to date of parents resisting compulsory cisgenderism from birth.

Rejecting Gender/Sex Assignment. Rather than perpetuating the essentialist ideals that the body a child is born with determines their gender, all the participants in this study refused to socially assign their child a gender/sex. I use the term socially assign, as the GCP participants

shared that a number of institutional processes, such as their children's birth certificates require a legal gender/sex assignment. This action, or lack thereof, uniquely occupies both a multi-gendering and de-gendering approach to dismantling the gender/sex binary's stage.

By refusing to assign their child a cisgender gender identity, the GCP participants utilize a multi-gendering approach by leaving space for their child to hold a TGD gender identity, an identity typically unintelligible under the gender/sex binary. Within their psychological framework, Morgenroth & Ryan (2021) referred to a person's gender identity, as the *character* a person plays. One's character is based on an internal sense of self and an interplay of societal forces, such as "the acceptability and availability of different gender labels in a culture or context" (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021, p. 1119).

With their positionality as members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, the GCP participants have lived experience of the harms that the heteronormative and cisnormative narratives of the gender/sex binary dictate as acceptable. In response to the damage caused by this invisibilization, the GCP participants hold the perspective that undoing compulsory cisgenderism will better support their child's gender health, no matter their child's gender identity. This belief was also shared by some of the gender creative parents in Davies (2020) study who spoke to the trauma of being "wrongly" assigned a gender/sex (p. 36). Instead by leaving space for the possibility of a TGD child's existence, the GCP participants choose to normalize and affirm gender expansive identities from birth.

Beyond the Body. In their recognition of gender/sex assignment as the point of origin for the gender/sex binary, another motivation the GCP participants expressed for avoiding the gender markers of F or M, was to prevent the gender division that begins at and is carried on from infancy. Viewed from this lens, the act of resisting compulsory cisgenderism, can also be

seen as a de-gendering strategy with its intention to keep at bay the gender socialization practices of others. The others, inclusive of a child's parents, make up what Morgenroth & Ryan (2021) referred to as the *audience*. The audience refers to the various social agents that observe and react to a person's gender performance, guiding a child to identify and express their gender in ways that align with the ideals of the gender/sex binary.

To interrupt the audience's harmful normative gender socialization practices, most of the GCP participants put a considerable amount of thought into who will have knowledge of their child's genitalia, or more specifically, who will be involved in diaper changes. Most of the GCP participants shared that although these decisions need to be made around practical considerations, such as childcare needs and living conditions, the parents hope that those who hold this knowledge will join their efforts to avoid normative gender socialization. Some of the GCP participants within this study expressed appreciation for the efforts of family members to correct binary pronoun use and reduce gender stereotyping despite knowledge of their child's genitalia. However, both within this study and Davies (2020) GCP study, parents disclosed that family members who knew the form of their child's genitalia struggled to use they/them pronouns.

Starter Pronouns. Another strategy used to support their children's gender health that is unique to GCP, was the parents' decision to refer to their child with they/them pronouns. In the case of the GCP participants, the choice to use they/them pronouns is aligned with their decision to resist compulsory cisgenderism. Intertwined with the act of not assigning their child a gender/sex to avoid gender normative socialization and hold space for TGD identity, the use of they/them pronouns can also be seen as both a de-gendering and multi-gendering strategy. As they/them pronouns are commonly used when a person's gender is unknown (Baron, 2022), the

intention behind this practice is that the participants' children, who are all under two, have not yet voiced a relationship to gender.

Additionally, by refraining from using the binary pronouns of 'he' or 'she', their children may feel less pressured to accept the gender label given to them. It is worth mentioning that the parents in this study do not view they/them pronouns as tied to a non-binary gender identity, in line with a commonly held misconception that the intention of GCP is to raise non-binary children (Davies, 2020). Instead, the GCP participants of this study see they/them pronouns as a place holder, as exemplified in GCP participant Lydia's reference to them as "starter pronouns." Although not at this phase yet due to their children's developmental levels, some of the participants in this study spoke to supporting their child's gender/sex literacy by ensuring their child understands that they/them pronouns were not an assignment their child needs to maintain. In line with their perspective of honouring their children's gender health, all the participants mentioned that they plan to affirm their child's choice to take up any pronouns and were prepared to do this multiple times to adapt to their child's shifting sense of self.

Aligned with the choice to delay or decline other's involvement in diaper changes, using they/them pronouns for their child supports the GCP participants' efforts to interrupt the audience's gender normative socialization. In fact, both the GCP participants within this study and that of Davie's (2020), expressed that when embraced, the choice to use they/them pronouns reduces family member's gender normative socialization practices and further supports the parents in undoing their own gender biases. Interestingly, Davies (2020) participants shared that using they/them pronouns for their child seems to neutralize conversations and limit gender stereotyping in public. This perspective was not shared by the participants of this study. Many of the GCP participants felt that despite their children's gender inclusive names or their choice to

use they/them pronouns, members of the public disregard these efforts and instead assume their child's gender/sex and socialize them accordingly.

The Everything Approach: From Gender Null to Gender Full

Another method taken up by the GCP participants to promote their children's gender health is the "Everything Approach" to cultivating a gender expansive childhood. For the parents in this study, the strategy looked like consciously and proactively curating an environment that exposes their children to a wide range of toys, books, clothing, activities, colours, etc. In moving away from the gender/sex binary's regulatory assumption that one's gender/sex determines the expressions and roles they must take up, this approach promotes the creative misalignment of sex, gender, expression, and roles.

By eliminating the gender/sex division that dictates the types of play a child should engage in, how they should dress, and who they should play with based on gender/sex assignment, this strategy implements a de-gendering position. Underpinning this resistance on the part of the GCP participants was the notion that the more exposure their child had to a variety of items, experiences, and people, the greater opportunity they would have to know themselves and the world. As a byproduct, this freedom of exploration will enhance their children's gender health. This Everything Approach can be traced back to feminist parenting models of the past, as exemplified in author Letty Cottin Pogrebin (1980)'s statement that feminist parenting should:

> Promote the widest variety of play experiences. To assure children's access to all kinds of games, toys, and activities, you may have to affirmatively negate the labels that society has attached to them and actively challenge the stereotypes that close off whole categories of fun (p. 352).

While the motives of past feminist parenting models and GCP appear to be closely aligned, the enactment of the Everything Approach has significant differences. By holding the GCP participants practices up to the gendered parenting literature, this next section will investigate the ways the parents of this study enact a revisionist position through the multi-gendering and de-gendering strategies they take. It also explores the ways the GCP participants maintain accountability to the gender/sex binary by at times upholding a neutrality position and a "balanced" conceptualization of their Everything Approach. Both of which appear to be defense tactics in relation to the gender/sex socialization practices of others.

Revisionist vs. Neutrality. In her book, *Growing Up Free*, Letty Cottin Pogrebin's (1980) provided her readers with two parenting positions, each of which she promotes as equally effective non-sexist parenting strategies. One is the *revisionist position,* which she explains as "resolving to be color blind" and buying or accepting any item or activity regardless of the gendered meaning society gives it (Cottin Pogrebin, p. 111). The second perspective is the *neutrality position*, which she explains as banning highly gendered items from childhood (Cottin Pogrebin, 1980). Similar to Cottin Pogrebin's revisionist position, many of the GCP participants conceptualizations of the Everything Approach, share a perspective that they do not believe typical facets of a child's environment, such as their toys, clothes, activities, and more, to be inherently gendered. The GCP participants not only strive to ignore the gendered meaning society applies to items and behaviours, but also discredit it.

In the interviews, the participants clearly expressed that they were aware of the neutrality position, and many made it well known that their approach to creating a gender expansive environment was not gender neutral in nature. The GCP participants opposition to the neutrality position is grounded in the perspective that gender neutrality often disguises hegemonic

masculinity, valorizing items and behaviours labelled as "masculine" and devaluing those considered "feminine." Exemplified in their promotion of the gender-neutral position, some of the past feminist parenting models lacked awareness of the ways gender neutrality maintained the gender/sex binary.

The early feminist parenting models promoted strategies that bolstered both the revisionist and the neutralist approaches, which at times seem contradictory. In Greenberg's (1978) *Right from the Start: A Guide to Non-sexist Childrearing,* she promoted a revisionist position by asserting that all children should have access to a range of different styles of clothes. This included "things that flow, like robes; things that hug the body like bathing suits; short things; long things; and fabrics that are rough, smooth, and nubbly (Greenberg, 1978, p. 37)." However, later while providing guidance on how to create a dress-up box, she urges parents to avoid highly gendered clothing that could increase adult anxiety. Not only does this gender-neutralist position seem to contradict her earlier revisionist approach to cultivating a gender expansive wardrobe, but it also supports the GCP participants belief of gender neutrality as promoting masculinity. This is most evident when she stated that her suggestion is important because "girls in men's fedoras, ties, and suits do not stimulate the same adult anxiety as do boys in high heels, stiffened petticoats, and flowery female hats (p. 185)."

Icons of Femininity. While not without suggested reforms to male socialization, it is apparent that past feminist parenting philosophies placed greater emphasis on expanding female children's environments. The movement discouraged stereotypically "feminine" items coined by Kane (2012) as *icons of femininity*, which includes dolls, dresses, and housework, and instead called for female socialization to include more stereotypically "masculine" ways of being

through toys, dress, and activities. This is evidenced in Greenberg's (1978) chapter titled *Dolls, Dolls, Dolls* which discourages doll play:

> While girls are thought to control dolls, constant and exclusive doll play will actually control them. It will confine them, limit their physical development, and remove them from access to public rewards. In addition, it will give them little opportunity to develop skills for managing conflict, competition, and confrontation. Lastly, the doll as constant companion, a constant source of comfort, may preclude the emotional ability to tough it out and go it alone (p. 193).

> Similarly, Stathem's (1986) book *Daughter and Sons: Experiences of Non-sexist Childraising* determined that non-sexist parents are more inclined to remove stereotypically feminine items from their daughter's rooms and closets than stereotypically masculine items from their son's environments. Even less common within early feminist parenting philosophies was the idea of feminizing a male child's environment. In her book *The Gender Trap*, Kane (2012) noted that many parents spoke negatively towards traits and activities defined to be stereotypically feminine, yet few spoke against their child being "too boyish" (p. 204).

Although the participants in this study were cognizant of the ways in which the gender-neutral position perpetuates hegemonic masculinity, exploration of the ways they enact the Everything Approach demonstrates that not all are immune to it. Within this study, the GCP participants shared varying perspectives of the icons of femininity, most notably feminine dress. Specific to their children's clothing, some of the parents opted to take a more gender-neutral approach by limiting certain items they considered stereotypically feminine from their children's closets. One participant, who disclosed their child had a vulva, explained that they were

temporarily dressing their child in gender-neutral clothes, which they asserted as leaning more "masculinely," to support their loved ones to use they/them pronouns.

Others who lean more gender-neutral in their clothing approach, justified their choice through a lens of practicality, explaining that items such as bows or dresses are impractical and more restrictive of their children's mobility. Yet this position was not held by all the participants, with some making an intentional effort to include items they deemed impractical, founded in the belief that the inclusion of stereotypically feminine clothing items will promote greater self-expression. In line with gendered parenting literature, it is worth noting that conversations around the exclusion or inclusion of icons of masculinity were not discussed amongst the participants.

Balancing Act. At times, pressure to maintain accountability to the gender/sex binary make it difficult, and sometimes undesirable, to uphold wholly revisionist and 'colour-blind' perspectives to creating a gender expansive childhood. These pressures are most evident in the GCP participants enactment of the Everything Approach through a "balanced" conceptualization. For some GCP participants, the balanced conceptualization was in reference to cultivating an environment that promotes diverse opportunities and skills. Yet with statements such as "I think soon we'll do more 50-50 feminine masculine clothes" or "Are we dressing [child's name], too masculine or too feminine this week, like you know, is it balanced enough?" it can be understood that other times some of the GCP participants are envisioning "balance" on a scale of masculinity and femininity.

Interestingly, this balanced framework is central to Bem's (1974) model of androgyny, which asserts there are "feminine" and "masculine" ways of being that parents should seek to combine in their child no matter their gender/sex. The balanced approach also appears in some

specific strategies feminist parents promote, such as Cottin Pogrebin's (1980) suggestion for parents to take an inventory of their children's toys by sorting and counting the number of feminine vs. masculine toys. Feminist parenting models encouraging of a balanced approach to gender expansive childhoods has been criticized for its accountability to the gender/sex binary through its dualistic notion of masculinity and femininity that blinds society to new ways of doing gender (Statham, 1986). Yet, in the case of the GCP participants, rather than inherent to their conceptualization of gender creative parenting, the balanced method appears to be a counter measure to mitigate the gendering efforts of others, which may potentially hinder their children's gender health.

Everything is Gendered outside the Home. While in the privacy of their home it may be easier for gender creative parents to take on a revisionist position that de-genders their child's environment, the Everything Approach becomes more difficult to navigate outside the home as items, appearances, and behaviours carry gendered meanings. As Lorben (2022) asserted, it is nearly impossible to live without a gender in a gendered world as everything in one's presentation, or in the language of Morgenroth & Ryan (2021) one's *costume*, including clothing, hair, weight, gestures, name and pronoun, are understood as an indication of gender. The struggle to uphold the Everything Approach seems to be most evident in the meaning that the audience (i.e., members of the public) makes of the appearance of the GCP participants' children.

In fact, all the GCP parents shared examples of strangers assuming their child's character (i.e., their gender/sex) dependent on their costume (i.e., how they were dressed, their haircut, and the colours they wore). This is exemplified in Cohen's reflection on his child's clothing "they'll see like a hint of blue on their clothes and then strangers will be like 'Ohh, well there!' and

people just take this huge gamble with like trying to guess your kid's gender and they'll just like 'boy' right away." Through these experiences, the GCP participants have learned that despite their efforts to keep the gender/sex binary at bay, they have little control over the gendering practices of acquaintances and strangers. However, considering the age of the GCP participant's children, most of whom are unable to express clothing preferences, how their child presents in the world, is largely within the parent's control. Accordingly, it appears the GCP participants utilize the balanced method when it comes to dressing their children, as a means to protect the Everything Approach. This looks like dressing their children in a way that promotes equitable exposure to both boy and girl socialization. Mar reflected on the benefit of balanced gender socialization:

> People have made their mind, have a gender in their mind and they're interacting with [child's name] at least with the gender in their mind and they're applying that stereotype. It's still… beneficial… because [child's name] gets different exposure and people treat [child's name] as a boy and people treat [child's name] as a girl and they get kind of more of a balanced exposure.

Taking a balanced perspective to the Everything Approach could be viewed as leaving the gender/sex binary in place. However, it appears the GCP participants are strategically using it as a line of defense against the gender/sex socialization practices of an audience who do not hold their expansive understanding of gender/sex. By attempting to "balance" the gender socialization their children receive from others, the GCP participants seek to respond in a way that best promotes their children's gender health.

Gender Expansive Narration. In enacting the Everything Approach, one more important strategy the GCP participants discussed was the effort they took to narrate their child's

world in ways that dismantle the gender/sex binary in favour of gender diversity. One of the approaches the GCP participants take to narrate their children's world in an expansive way is through their use of gender inclusive language. This practice includes using words and phrases inclusive of all genders, avoids unnecessary gendering, and counteracts stereotypes.

Gender Inclusive Language. The use of gender inclusive of language was also valorized by feminist parenting models of the past yet was grounded in a binary understanding of gender/sex that sought to promote female equality. This notion is reflected in Selmberg's (1978) chapter titled *Talking Straight & Speaking Equal*, where she stated "As women are kept out of public space, so too are they kept out of public language. Thus, we are told that "he," "his," and "him," really mean "he and she," "his and hers," and "him and her (p. 154)." Divergently, the parents of this study make an intentional effort to speak in a way that de-genders language, such as saying "child" instead of "boy" or "girl." These efforts uphold a de-gendering position in that they act to decenter gender from the environment, but also a multi-gendering position in that they leave space for the existence of multiple genders that are made invisible under the gender/sex binary.

Eliminate & Deconstruct Gender Stereotypes. Another strategy the GCP participants take to inclusively narrate their child's environment is by aiming to both eliminate and deconstruct gender stereotypes. Some of the GCP participants mentioned the conscious efforts they take to keep stereotyped messages at bay, which was most evident in statements like Janneke's regarding children's books, "I accidentally bought a book that said, like, 'Little Princess' at the end and it bothered me and now I can't read it to them." Some of the gender-subversive trans-affirming mothers in Ryan's (2016) study also used this approach of limiting or restricting their children's access to examples of gender modelling they considered unhealthy.

This approach to handling gender stereotypes assumes a more gender-neutral position in that it seeks to eliminate hyper-gendered messages. This is not the only approach to undoing gender/sex stereotypes described by the GCP participants.

Some of the parents also spoke to the usefulness of swapping out pronouns when reading to their children. The participants shared that at times they swap a 'he' or a 'she' pronoun with a 'they' to diversify representation and mirror the child's pronouns. Yet other times, swapping pronouns was an intentional way to deconstruct gender stereotypes, for example by relabelling a character with long hair wearing a dress as a 'he'. This latter approach is promoted in feminist parenting models as well (Bem, 1995; Pogrebin, 1978). Finally, an approach exalted as a revisionist position in feminist parenting practices (Pogrebin, 1978) that the GCP participants utilized is addressing conventional messages of gender as teaching and learning opportunities. Some of the GCP participants discussed leveraging gender stereotypes, such as those found in TV and books, as a point of conversation between parent and child that would build critical consciousness of the gender/sex binary. Given the development level of their children, this approach was something the GCP participants spoke about as a future-oriented strategy.

The GCP experience is most set apart from feminist parenting models of the past through the multi-gendering strategies the participants use to narrate a gender expansive childhood. Thus far, this section has explored the methods the GCP participants use to endorse the Everything Approach, and when held beside the gendered parenting literature, the ways these de-gendering strategies both reproduce and resist the gender/sex binary. As previously discussed, while feminist parents promoted boys and girls to pursue their interests regardless of stereotypes, their children were always considered to be cisgender boys and girls (Rahilly, 2020). The parents of

this study aim to cultivate a gender expansive environment which calls attention to and celebrates identities and expressions outside of the gender/sex binary.

  Gender Diverse Role Models. While one study by Ryan (2016) identified a small group of parents she named gender-subversive mothers, that highlighted TGD existence in their child's environment since birth, most parents only did so in response to their TGD child's gender non-conforming identities (Meadows, 2018; Rahilly, 2015; Rahilly, 2020; Ryan, 2016). Conversely, all the children of this study's GCP participants were introduced to gender expansive identities and expressions from birth through their parents 2SLGBTQIA+ identities and/or TGD allyship. With its sharp focus on de-gendering strategies to redefine gendered childhoods, feminist experts called on parents to actively deconstruct the traditional roles of mother and father. A relic from a time when a family almost exclusively consisted of a heterosexual husband and wife, feminist parenting aimed to:

> broaden their children's perception of what was appropriate behaviour for each sex by showing them men doing housework, looking after children and expressing their emotions, and women using tools, being strong and competent and working outside the home (Statham, p. 124).

While de-gendering parenting roles was a central aspect of feminist parenting, within this study, it was hardly discussed. Instead, applying a multi-gendering position to the Everything Approach stands to affirm each parent's unique gender identity and expression and also introduces their children to gender expansive ways of living outside of their family unit. The parents within this study actively seek to curate an environment that affirms the misalignment of all the layers of the gender/sex binary, including the misalignment of a person's character, costume, and script. Alongside their own modelling of gender creativity, the GCP participants

undertake this multi-gendering strategy by ensuring their child has access to a multitude of possible gender identities and expressions. Access to gender diversity is considered across the books, media, entertainment, events, and social circles their child is exposed to. Yet, as asserted by some of the trans-affirmative mothers in Ryan's (2016) study, even diverse representation can be stereotypical and limited in nature. As mentioned in the findings chapter, when one GCP family in this study was unable to find a book about a Momo, a parenting label used by one of the parents, they got creative and sought out a business that would help them make their own.

However, efforts to narrate the stage in an expansive way was applied in a way that not only provides the participants' children with mirrors of their family, but also seeks diverse representation that showcases alternative gendered possibilities to their children. This is exemplified in the GCP participants' consideration of the social circles their children are a part of and the types of media they are exposed to. One parent, Cohen, mentioned his future plans to take his child to drag shows because he believes "it is a really great way to see people doing things with gender." This choice to take up a multi-gendering approach to cultivate their child's environment, stands in sharp opposition to the current *Let kids be kids* movement, which asserts that elementary school-aged children are too young to learn about identities outside of the gender/sex binary.

Scaffolding Self-determination

Thus far we have examined the de-gendering and multi-gendering strategies used by the GCP participants to deconstruct the gender normative stage in hopes of protecting their children from the discursive power of the gender/sex binary. Underpinning these actions is the belief that the restrictive prescriptions and proscriptions of the gender/sex binary jeopardize their children's gender health. Through their efforts to dismantle the gender normative stage of the gender/sex

binary, the GCP participants intend to make space for their children to creatively misalign the various facets of the gender/sex binary in ways that feel most authentic to them. Foundational to the participants conceptualization of and approaches to GCP, is the trust they have in their children's ability to self-determine their own relationship with gender. The valorizing of self-determination represents a significant shift in the gendered parenting literature.

The beginnings of the feminist parenting movement were grounded in *Social Learning Theory,* developed in the 1960s by theorists like Mischel and Mussen, which relied on behaviourist perspectives that positioned children as objects to be shaped through rewards and punishments towards a desired goal (Statham, 1986). With these principles in mind, feminist parenting called on caregivers to manipulate children's environments, including their toys, clothes, books, media, the roles parents modelled. It also encouraged them to alter how they responded to gender non-conforming behaviour in order for their children to learn less sexist gender roles (Martin, 2005). Yet, these earlier renditions of feminist parenting were criticized for their view of children as passive actors molded by their environment, and the movement started to lean towards the cognitive theories of gender development (Statham, 1986). Rather than perceiving children as passively learning stereotyped sex roles through modelling and reinforcement, the two most influential cognitive theories, cognitive developmental and gender-schema theory, promote the idea that children actively construct gender influenced by how gender is presented in a child's social environment (Martin & Ruble, 2004).

The GCP participants seem to hold the perspective that they have little to no influence over their child's gender identity. However, based on their efforts to reconstruct gendered childhoods, it is clear the GCP participants do not hold biological deterministic views of gender either. Like the GCP participants in Davies (2020) study, the parents in this study also mirror a

social constructionist perspective in that they believe they have an influence over their child's gendered environment. As explained above, the GCP participants make intentional efforts to dismantle the stage of the gender/sex binary, which they believe has a direct impact on their children's gender health. Strategies the GCP participants articulated as necessary to supporting their children's gender health through self-determination was to frame gender as a choice, follow their child's lead, and refrain from policing their child's behaviour.

Gender as a Choice. While most children come to learn about the concept of gender through gender socialization based on their gender/sex assignment, the GCP participants have taken up intentional strategies to allow their child the space to self-determine their relationship to gender/sex. Yet despite their efforts, many of the GCP participants shared that they were aware that given the ubiquity of gender/sex labels and division, they would have to take action to support their children's self-determination. Thus, a conversation unique to GCP is when and in what ways parents should introduce their children to the concepts of gender/sex in ways that honour their self-determination. The strategy, which some of the parents of older children were beginning to implement, and the participants of younger children articulated in a future-oriented way, was to frame gender identity, expression, and pronouns as choices that belong to their children.

With chapter titles like *Children as Choosers* (Statham, 1986), it is apparent that later feminist parenting models aimed to also promote child agency. Yet, as previously mentioned, these models understood gender as directly linked to one's genitalia, and in turn being a boy or a girl was not viewed as something one could choose. Thus, when held beside the gendered parenting literature, framing gender as a choice is quite radical. As previously mentioned, we only begin to see the framing of gender as a choice in recent years through TGD-affirmative

parenting research. Yet within trans-affirmative parenting, this approach is typically in response to their children's TGD identity, and rarely a proactive conversation.

Amongst the participants, the framing of gender as a choice is used to combat the prescriptive and proscriptive nature of the gender/sex binary as it utilizes a multi-gendering approach in its promotion of gender as expansive and potentially fluid in nature. Multiple participants shared the expectation that their child would begin to assert a gender identity, or lack thereof, between the age of 2-5, information grounded in the gender development research of both cisgender and transgender children (Kohlberg, 1966; Olson, 2015). Even still, many of the GCP participants articulated preparedness to support their child's shifting sense of gender, inclusive of their identity, pronouns, and expression. Rahilly (2015) found that the trans-affirmative parents in their study engaged their children in various forms of *gender literacy* that equipped them with vocabulary and trans inclusive understandings of gender/sex, as well as warned them about prejudice towards gender non-conformity. Supporting their children's gender literacy was another way the GCP participants within this study intend to bolster their gender as a choice.

Interestingly, one of the participants asserted that while they view the gender as choice framework as a useful way to approach self-determination for kids, they do not in fact believe gender identity to be a choice, but instead an intrinsic part of one's identity. Not all the GCPs shared this perspective with some of the participants asserting that gender need not be an essential part of childhood, leaving space for the possibility that their child could hold an agendered relationship to gender. The divergent ways the GCP participants frame gender to their children is particularly interesting given Butler's assertion that framing gender identity as inner

truth rather than a by-product of repeated gender performance reinforces the gender/sex binary as essential (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018).

Following the Child's Lead. Another perspective commonly held by the GCP participants was their intention to honour their child's self-determination by following their children's lead. As mentioned, all the children of this study's participants are infants and toddlers, which means the parents are still making most decisions for their children. Of the GCP participants whose children were older, the parents promoted their children's agency by providing their children with opportunities to make choices, such as allowing them to choose their clothes. This strategy was also highlighted in Davies (2020) study of GCP.

Notably, several of the GCP participants spoke to gender creative parenting becoming easier once their child was old enough to assert preferences around what to wear, what toys to play with, what activities to engage in, and more. This strategy of following a child's lead to support their individuation is well discussed in the gendered parenting literature. In fact, one of the reasons that sociologist Karin Martin (2005) provided for labelling feminist parenting as a stalled revolution was its overemphasis on raising free children through the promotion of individuation. She asserted this muted the movement's call for gender equity through social change.

In her book titled *The Gender Trap*, sociologist Emily Kane (2012), differentiated between the indirect and direct actions parents take to undo what she calls the gender trap, another name for the gender/sex binary. Of the group of parents in her study, she notes a subset who sought to resist the gender/sex binary through the sole use of indirect gendered parenting practices (Kane, 2012). The indirect practices she highlighted are not dissimilar from some of those used by the GCP participants, such as the cultivation of a gender expansive environment

and thereafter following the child's lead. Kane (2012) asserted that the intention behind their non-interventionist position, that avoided direct parenting strategies, was to promote individualism and protect their children's autonomy. Yet Kane (2012) warned against an over-reliance on the follow the child's lead approach in that parents may fail to question whether individual preferences are truly free . Doing so could underestimate the power of social forces, leading them down conventionally gendered paths. In accepting their children's choices as completely their own, parents may be unintentionally leaving the gender/sex binary intact.

As demonstrated in the parents' efforts to eliminate and deconstruct gender stereotypes, many of the GCP participants are conscious of the importance of utilizing both indirect and direct gendered parenting strategies. As their children begin to assert gendered preferences, some GCP participants are mindful of the importance of remaining vigilant to the influence gendered messages may have on their children's sense of self. This both/and perspective of honouring their child's autonomy and recognizing the discursive power of the gender/sex binary is articulated by Mar:

> …we don't have to explain anything yet, right? Like they're a year old, we're not there yet. But like I play those games like where we talk…I have to both tell them that I'm open to accepting for where they are but also telling them that I understand that we can't make…we don't make choices in isolation. So what…what does it mean to be your "true self" well, you, we're figuring it out. Sometimes some of our choices are shaped by the world we're living sometimes…Maybe all the time, I don't know.

Mar's envisioned conversation with her child, seeks to honour her child's self-determination by utilizing a direct gendered parenting approach that aims to engage her child in a critical awareness of gender stereotypes and their oppressive intent.

"Gender Hedging". Intertwined with their intention to primarily follow their children's lead, is the GCP participants' intention to not police their children's gender behaviour. This strategy is aligned with the latter half of Hidalgo's (2013) definition of gender health in that children should be able to express gender with "freedom from restriction, aspersion, or rejection (p. 286)." Like the following the child's lead approach, the encouraging and discouraging of certain gendered behaviour is also a parenting strategy well explored in the gendered parenting literature. In the earlier days of their role as trans parents, Rahilly (2015) found many TGD-affirmative parents set boundaries around their children's gender atypical behaviours, a direct parenting practice she labelled as *gender hedging*. Amongst TGD parents, gender hedging can look like regulating gender atypical behaviours to certain times and contexts or making gender compromises, like encouraging a child to wear red instead of pink (Rahilly, 2020).

Across the gendered parenting literature, parents have differing perspectives on the best ways to support their children's self-determination. Some parents believe that taking an indirect approach by allowing gender atypicality was enough, others felt like the non-interventionist stance was not enough and that they need to take a more direct approach in actively promoting gender atypicality. As articulated above in the section on gender neutral positionality, gender conscious parents often make a concerted effort to steer their children away from gender typical behaviour, particularly their daughters, and towards gender atypical behaviour (Kane, 2012; Statham, 1986). However, even those most cognizant of the discursive power of the gender/sex binary, Kane (2012) found use gender hedging strategies to limit their male children's gender atypical behaviours.

Within Martin's (2005) review of the most popular parenting guides, they concluded that parenting experts feared the encouragement or promotion of gender atypicality in sons would

cause homosexuality. While this fear of homosexuality remains to some degree, I would argue that now the greater fear amongst modern day parents is that the encouragement of gender atypicality in sons will result in transgenderism. Within this study, the notion that their parenting practices will lead their children towards 2SLGBTQIA+ identities is not a fear that the GCP participants share. As previously asserted, the participants in this study seemed to believe they have little to no influence over their children's gender identity or sexual orientation. In fact, it is worth mentioning that conversations of their children's sexual orientation did not even come up in the interviews, exemplifying shifting attitudes towards the gender/sex binary's assertion that gender and sexual orientation are inextricably linked. Secondly, with their personal 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, not only do the parents in this study not fear trans and queer identities but they also celebrate them.

Within all previous research, the hedging of gendered behaviour was framed around the normative ideals that the gender/sex binary places on a child dependent on their assigned gender/sex. Thus, founded in the fact that none of the participants' children have yet to assert a gender/sex, one might assume it would be difficult to hedge their children's gender/sex behaviour in any way. However, some of the GCP participants disclosed moments where they became aware they were unintentionally considering their child's genitalia when making a choice. In response, many of the GCP participants shared reflections of efforts they make to remain vigilant to the coercive power of the gender/sex binary and dismantle their own gender/sex biases.

While none of the children in this study are old enough to have asserted a gender identity, it will be interesting to explore GCP participants' perspectives on gender hedging once their children begin to assert their relationship to gender. Remaining vigilant to the discursive

pathways set out by the gender/sex binary, this conversation will be especially relevant if a child

of GCP asserts a gender identity and begins behaving in stereotypical ways that parents may

view as harmful. In fact, considering the relatively early phase the participants are in with GCP,

the insights gained from the self-determination strategies explored above, are in more of a

conceptualization phase than a practicing phase. As will be further articulated in the future

research section, following the GCP movement within later parenting phases, such as when their

children begin to assert a relationship to gender, will prove to be insightful.

Visibilizing the GCP Labour

As discussed in the findings chapter, gender creative parents are no strangers to

opposition. In fact, with all the GCP participants holding 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, it is likely

they have experienced repercussions for living outside of the boundaries of the gender/sex binary

long before they became parents. Yet, Morgenroth & Ryan (2021) argued that those who attempt

to dismantle the stage of the gender/sex binary, as gender creative parents do, are likely to be

viewed as even more threatening than individuals, as they aim to undo the system itself. Efforts

to deconstruct the stage of gender/sex binary evoke personal, group-based identity, and system

threats (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021).

Actions taken by individuals to alleviate threats to frameworks like the gender/sex binary

can be explained by systems-justification theory (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). This theory asserts

that people seek to protect frameworks that provide them with comfort, security, and a shared

sense of reality, even if they stand to oppress the individual or the groups to which that

individual belong (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). Despite this theory providing explanation for the

pushback and challenges faced by the GCP participants, it does not remove the institutional and

interpersonal barriers that infringe on their ability to practice GCP. Investigating the challenges

faced by the GCP participants makes visible the invisible behaviours and policies that stand to

repress the actions of gender creative parents to eliminate threats to the framework. Exploration

of these challenges also makes visible the strategies of resistance and resiliency utilized by the

GCP participants in response to their experiences of conflict.

GCP Under Threat. A fundamental aspect of GCP that set the movement apart from the

historical and contemporary literature on gendered parenting is its resistance of compulsory

cisgenderism in favour of gender self-determination. As the act of assigning a baby a gender that

aligns with their genitalia is the starting point for the gender/sex binary, it is unsurprising that the

GCP participants rejection of this taken for granted act, is viewed by many as a threat. While

socially the GCP participants have been able to avoid gender/sex assignment to varying degrees,

on a legal and medical level a gender/sex label, in many cases, cisgenderism is mandated. All the

participants within this study spoke to their experiences of being unable to avoid gender/sex

assignment in the hospital and on their child's original birth certificate.

Institutional Threats. During this monumental milestone, and a moment of high

vulnerability, most of the GCP participants begrudgingly went along with this process. While

most of the GCP participants felt that efforts to fight this process would be fruitless, one

participant is fighting their child's gender/sex assignment and still does not have their child's

birth certificate. No matter the personal and interpersonal efforts the parents take to advocate for

their children's gender health, as long as the hospitals and government mandates sex/gender

assignment, the GCP movement will never be able to completely deconstruct the stage of the

gender/sex binary.

Long after their children's birth, the GCP participants continue to struggle to protect their

children's right to gender self-determination, with many institutional processes from tax and

insurance, RESP beneficiary, Indigenous status cards, and even daycares, requiring a gender/sex assignment. All the GCP participants expressed feeling frustrated with these institutional barriers, most of which they believe are unnecessary. Some of the GCP participants have attempted to resist these processes, which typically involve battling significant confusion from administrators or lengthy appeals processes with little success.

Other participants intentionally avoided such efforts stating that they did not place a significant amount of weight on these institutional gender/sex assignments that their children would not be aware of them. When there seemed to be no way around organizational policies that require assigning their child a gender/sex, some GCP participants chose to undermine the system. These strategies include passing over the gender/sex marker to see if their applications would still get through or simply allowing the administrator to choose the gender/sex marker to trivialize the process.

Institutional Allyship. Some of the GCP participants expressed appreciation for institutions that utilize a de-gendering strategy by not requiring a gender/sex marker or the de-gendering and multi-gendering approach of allowing for an X marker in place of an F or M. Apart from administrative processes, some of the participants also shared moments of validation they received from inclusive practices and people working for or involved with certain institutions. While the hospital experiences of the GCP participants varied, some shared the supportive practices of the medical staff they encountered, inclusive of nurses who fluently used they/them pronouns and went out of their way to scratch out 'baby boy/baby girl' on forms. Another participant made mention of her rabbi adapting their Jewish baby naming ceremony to ensure the language used was gender inclusive. By protecting their child's right to gender self-determination, these institutional adaptations affirmed the GCP participants parenting ethics. It is

worth mentioning that the feminist and trans-affirming parenting literature often speak to school as a key agent in gender socialization, yet with none of the GCP participants' children being school age, and only one in regular daycare, navigating this institution was minimally discussed.

Interpersonal Threats. In their efforts to avoid compulsory cisgenderism and defend their child's right to self-determine their relationship to gender, the GCP participants have also been met with varying degrees of interpersonal resistance. When sharing their decision to practice GCP, some of the participants' family members expressed outward opposition to gender creative parenting. Viewed within Morgenroth & Ryan's (2021) research as an attempt to alleviate threats to the gender/sex binary, this opposition came in several forms including verbal discreditation of the approach, attempts to change the participant's mind on GCP, refusal to learn about the approach, and in some cases, a withdrawal from the relationship with the parent's and their child. Despite this pushback, the participants chose to move forward with their decision to take up GCP and in doing so continue to face resistance to their de-gendering and multi-gendering practices.

As the participants live out the early years of GCP, they continue to navigate invalidations from their loved ones. These invalidations range from continued confusion over GCP, hurt feelings over lack of involvement in diaper changes, refusal to use they/them pronouns, and the use of binary pronouns that match the baby's genitalia (for those who hold this knowledge). Notably, the latter two experiences were mentioned by Davies (2020) participants as well. The GCP participants have also experienced similar invalidations from members of the public, including confusion, withdrawal from the conversation, and ignoring the parents use of they/them pronouns to instead use binary pronouns when referring to the participant's child. Met with repeated institutional barriers and invalidations by those in their inner and outer circles, a

considerable amount of thought and effort is spent on the part of the GCP participants on how to navigate these various forms of resistance.

To Extend the Gender Creative Invitation? Both the ubiquitous nature of gender socialization and the misconceptions the participants face regarding GCP point to a lack of understanding of the gender/sex binary's infringement on children's gender health. In response, the GCP participants are often pushed to take up the role of educator, a key finding within Davies (2020) study on GCP. As exemplified in the findings chapter, significant rumination is spent weighing the costs and benefits of educating others.

Weighing the Relationship. One consideration mentioned by the participants was the weighing of the person's relationship to the family, including whether the individual is an important part of the family's life or a stranger they met in public and were unlikely to meet again. Another consideration when weighing the decision on whether to take up the educator role is taking a temperature check regarding the physical and emotional safety surrounding the conversation. Given the participants intersectional 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, this is likely a strategy the parents are versed in. To determine the safety of the conversation, the GCP participants mentioned consideration of the conversational context, such as whether the parent is in an unfamiliar or familiar place. One other measure the parents used to determine the safety of the conversation, is whether the GCP participant perceived an individual to be open-minded and willing to learn about GCP. When considering the choice to take on the educator role, it is worth noting that one participant speaking to the future, also made mention of the presence of their child and the message this choice would relay to them.

When utilizing these measures, the GCP participants often decide that the conversation context does not permit and/or would not justify them taking up the educator role. Other times,

the GCP participants expressed a willingness to educate others, using similar measures to determine the degree to which they would extend the educational invitation. When explaining GCP to others, one of the participants mentioned conceptualizing their approach in tiers, depending on the extent of education warranted in the circumstance. Many of the participants mentioned struggling with the lowest tier of explanation, a short and simple explanation of GCP that they feel is most warranted in brief public interactions. To support the highest tiers of explanation, most often used with close family members, the participants shared the various methods they used. In these instances, the duties of the educator were to the curate resources, lead discussions, and answer questions.

Vulnerability in Educator Role. Apparent across the interviews is that the decision to extend the educational invitation to others and share about GCP is a vulnerable one. The GCP participants shared a range of emotions they felt about taking up the educator role. Many feel frustration and fatigue over the pressure they have to take on this role. This perspective is mostly directed towards the recurring confusion about GCP that the parents face from members of the public or the family members they need to repeatedly educate and assert boundaries with. Alternatively, when others demonstrate a willingness to learn about GCP, some of the participants expressed enjoying the educator role. In some instances, relatives outwardly rejected the GCP participant's educational invitation when it was offered. As shared by one of the participants, one of the hardest parts of GCP is coping with the pain and anger of these moments and negotiating how to move forward in these relationships.

To Correct or Not? Another aspect of the educator role is determining whether to correct binary pronoun use. Nearly all the participants shared that they do not feel the need to correct others and are comfortable with their child being referred to with any pronouns, a perspective

shared by the participants of Davies' (2020) study. As mentioned in the Everything Approach section, some of the parents in this study are conscious of the way they dress their children to ensure they are referred to with balanced pronouns. Similarly, while several participants shared feelings of frustration over their family member's binary pronoun use, none mentioned correcting their relatives. Multiple GCP participants shared that they are prepared to step into the educator role and correct other's pronoun use when their child asserts a pronoun preference.

Relief from Educator Role. Given the considerable amount of rumination on whether to extend the GCP educational invitation, and the vulnerability that comes along with doing so, it is unsurprising that one of the greatest forms of support is the absence of pressure to take on the educator role. Within some of their inner circles, the GCP participants feel relieved to not have to explain their practice as some of their family and friends already knew about GCP and had familiarity with they/them pronoun use. The GCP participants also shared moments of validation when strangers fluently switched to they/them pronouns. In some cases, loved ones who were not familiar with GCP are also quick to relieve the participants of their educator role by taking initiative to educate themselves. However, the GCP participants also experienced validation in the open-minded attitudes of others. With family members this looked like a willingness to join in on gender creative parenting by reading resources shared with them, engaging in conversation and asking questions, and deconstructing their own gender biases.

Centering the Parents' Identities. Nearly all the GCP participants mentioned their socio-cultural identities and lived experiences as greatly impacting their own conceptualizations of gender/sex. With their 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, multiple participants reflected on the harm they personally experienced from the discursive power of the gender/sex binary. Others spoke to the joy they experienced from rejecting the gender/sex binary and writing their own gender/sex

script. Multiple participants viewed their 2SLGBTQIA+ identities as a source of strength they carry with them into gender creative parenting. One participant, Shane, found great strength in their Anishinaabe heritage, which prior to colonization and Christianity, did not assign children a gender at birth. With this historical knowledge, they view GCP as aligned with their Indigenous traditions and a way to decolonize parenting.

Parent Privilege. Across multiple interviews, the GCP participants expressed moments of self-reflection acknowledging how their socio-cultural identities and lived experiences influence the enactment of their GCP strategies. Many also noted how their backgrounds influenced their responses to their internal biases and the interpersonal and institutional pushback they face. Multiple GCP participants within this study acknowledged the temporal and geo-political context within which they practice gender creative parenting as privileged. All the GCP participants live in Canada, a country where TGD identities are protected from discrimination under the human rights act. All the participants, inclusive of the participant who lives rurally, has access to 2SLGBTQIA+ affirming spaces and social networks. Some of the GCP participants mentioned the influence their privileged socio-cultural identities carry, which allow them to take up this gender/sex binary resistant parenting approach. The positions of the participants of this study, including the socioeconomic, racial, and educational privileges many of them shared, allow them to be better able to respond to and advocate for their parenting practice despite barriers they face. As mentioned by one of the participants, these social locations also greater protect them from the costs of social resistance.

Parent Vulnerability. Each of the GCP participant families also occupy a unique socio-cultural position that may make them vulnerable to the accountability pressures of the gender/sex binary. One parent, a South American immigrant, has faced considerable pushback from family

members back home that do not agree with her understandings of gender/sex. Along with her familial struggles, another unique obstacle she faces is trying to find gender inclusive resources that honour GCP as well as the Spanish language and her South American heritage. Shane, a two-spirit parent, spoke to GCP as an act of decolonization by honouring traditional Anishinaabe caregiving practices, also mentioned the unique barriers they face, including the navigation of ceremonial protocols that are often binary in nature. While one parent in this study is a single-parent, other parents in this study are a part of a three-parent family, each of which come with their own discrimination and challenges. It is also worth mentioning that considering the rise in anti-trans rhetoric, multiple participants expressed concern over their safety and worries about increased pushback in their choice to parent this way.

Parent Resiliency. Across the participants, all mentioned feeling alone in their GCP practice. They spoke of not knowing many people who use the approach and limited resources to turn to for support. In response to this isolation, a central way the GCP participants find personal resiliency is by the intentional effort they make to seek connection with others within the GCP movement. All participants shared an appreciation for the knowledge and support gained from the GCP social media networks they are a part of. Some have found strength in meeting others who are utilizing the GCP approach. When met with gaps of support, others have taken on efforts to fill these gaps, such as Janekke's efforts to create a local gender creative parenting meet up. In these parents acts to take care of themselves and those in the GCP community, we continue to see the way they resist the gender/sex binary.

From feminist, non-sexist, gender-aschemetic, gender-neutral, to now gender creative, parents' efforts to dismantle the gender/sex binary is anything but a "stalled revolution" (Martin, 2005, p. 456). This research puzzle on the lived experiences of gender creative parenting shines a

light on the ways that modern parents have reinvented feminist parenting practices to cultivate

TGD affirmative childhoods that promote children's gender health from birth. These actions

include questioning the origins of the gender/sex binary by rejecting compulsory cisgenderism,

using multi-gendering and de-gendering strategies to cultivate gender expansive environments,

and to scaffold their children's gender self-determination.

This study establishes gender creative parents as both resourceful and resilient. It also

suggests the movement is up against significant institutional and interactional opposition that

both hinder their efforts to protect their children's gender health and pull them towards

accountability to the gender/sex binary. This brings into question, what can be done, both within

and beyond the field of counselling, to support gender creative parents' efforts to dismantle the

gender/sex binary's stage?

Research Implications

All people deserve gender health. All individuals, children and adults alike, should be

free to live and express their relationship to gender without restriction and rejection. These

beliefs are at the heart of the parenting perspectives and practices of gender creative parents. Yet,

cultivating a world where all people are entitled to a life of gender health is not just the

responsibility of a small movement of gender rebellious parents, but the responsibility of all who

value gender equity.

By analyzing the supports and barriers experienced by the participants, this research

creates an opening for allyship and action. When looking towards institutional practices of

requiring gender/sex assignment, these processes enact antiquated essentialist perspectives of

gender and sex as one in the same. They also uphold perspectives of gender/sex as binary, static,

and pre-discursive categories – perspectives that do not align with contemporary scientific

research on gender/sex, and invisibilize TGD identities. Further, as long as children are forced into membership in a gender/sex category from birth, gender socialization under the gender/sex binary is inevitable. With the understanding of compulsory cisgenderism as fundamental to the construction and maintenance of the gender/sex binary, institutions must be held accountable for the ways they sustain gender inequity and dishealth. In turn, this research calls on institutions to interrogate the necessity of gender/sex assignment, eliminate these gratuitous requirements, and align themselves with the GCP movement's ethics of promoting gender self-determination.

Yet, even with the undoing of gender/sex assignment, the burden to advance children's gender health should not solely fall on parents. As discussed in the literature review chapter, the health fields', including the fields of counselling and psychology, have a harmful legacy of positioning those as unambiguously gendered and sexed against the binary as living a healthy and moral life (Stagstad, 2022), which continues to have devastating effects on the queer, intersex, and transgender communities. In response, knowing the power and influence they hold, health care fields have an ethical responsibility to undo the ways in which they have weaponized the gender/sex binary. They have a responsibility to honour gender expansive identities and expressions as a natural human variation by advocating for collective societal gender health.

Morgenroth & Ryan (2021) called on psychologists, and I will extend this call to all the "helping" professions, to not only support and protect those that seek to dismantle the gender/sex binary's stage, but to join in their efforts. As discussed, conversations around gender health need to be expanded beyond responsive approaches to affirming a TGD child's existence to the proactive cultivation of environments and interactions that seek to promote all children's gender health. With this broader and more expansive position on gender health, all individuals and disciplines that are connected to children's gender development are implicated.

From early childhood education, schools, social work, medicine, counselling and more, transdisciplinary efforts must be made to encourage those in these fields to critically consider the ways their institutions and practitioners act as social agents of the gender/sex binary. This must include both post-secondary studies and training programs and on-going professional development for those already in the fields, to encourage alternative processes and practices that seek to advance children's gender health.

While this study highlights some preliminary ways to cultivate gender expansive practices within parenting, more research must be done in each specific field. Further, with familial support being one of the primary protective factors for TGD individuals (Johns et al., 2018; Olson et al., 2016; Veale et al., 2017), it is essential that these various fields take action to educate parents around the importance of children's gender health. This could take the form of workshops, coaching and/or counselling, and family-focused support groups aimed at providing psychosocial education that raises caregiver awareness of the harms of gender socialization and strategies that best promote their children's gender health.

Limitations & Future Research Directions

Like many other studies, the specific design choices made within this study both serve to advance and limit the research findings. The study limitations, while not supporting generalizability, support narrative inquiry's understanding of experience as lived in the midst, relational, and woven across the three-dimensional commonplaces of place, temporality, and sociality. With this perspective, these findings are valued within narrative inquiry for being specific and incomplete, instead of generalizable (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). Further, the limitations of this study can also be seen as invitations to alternative research possibilities around the area of gender creative parenting.

An important limitation of this research is the relative homogeneity of the participant sample. Grounded in narrative inquiry's relational ethics, I intentionally limited the sample size to 5 GCP family units, 8 gender creative parents total, with the intention of gaining both rich and in-depth data and fostering responsive relationships with the participants. However, with this relatively small sample size, it is certain that the experiences of the participants in this study cannot be universally applied to that of all gender creative parents. While the socio-cultural identities of the GCP participants are quite diverse, there are some commonalities across the parents that limit the breadth of the study.

As mentioned in the findings chapter, one of these key similarities amongst this study's participants is their geographical location. Although all the participants were recruited online, all but one lived urbanly in the same Canadian province. Based on their locations, one can assume the participants of this study are likely to have greater access to both institutions and individuals that are more familiar and inclusive of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities than other gender creative parents living in more rural or conversative contexts. The GCP experiences of this study's participants may not reflect the experiences of gender creative parents in other regions of Canada, or in other countries. Thus, future research should intentionally recruit participants from diverse locations to allow for a comparison of experiences across geographical regions.

Another similarity amongst the participants is that more than half have studied at a graduate post-secondary level, some specializing in gender related topics. This may point to a self-selection bias as people who have completed research themselves may be more willing to take on a participant role. The participants educational background also points to the relative intersectional privileges of this study's sample, inclusive of the parents' socio-economic backgrounds. Another notable similarity amongst this study's sample is that all the participants

identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. It would be valuable for future research to include parents who are not members of this community to understand if they hold alternative perspectives on how they conceptualize and enact GCP.

Although gender diverse parenting practices have existed across time and cultures, as pointed out by participant Shane, gender creative parenting, as detailed in this study, is a relatively new movement. Thus, a notable source of homogeneity in this study's sample is that all the GCP participants have children under the age of two and are in a similar phase of parenting. While this homogeneity supports a depth of understanding of the earlier phases of GCP, it points to the importance of future research that follows gender creative parents and their children within later phases of development. It would be valuable for this research to include children who have begun to communicate their relationship to gender including their gender identity or pronoun preference. Following the gender creative parents in later phases of parenting is also likely to produce some significant shifts in the perspectives and practices used by the participants. This might provide greater depth to one of the findings of this research study, the ways parents scaffold their children's self-determination. Further, in later phases of GCP, the supports and barriers the parents face will differ, for example the parents are likely to have greater experiences with differing institutions, such as daycares, schools, and extra-curricular organizations.

Arguably the most important limitation of the present study is that it does not include children's experience of being raised through the gender creative parenting approach. This study is theoretical in nature and stands to inform future studies that can measure gender creative practices and strategies. Future research could not only observe child- parent interactions, but child perspectives on the gender creative parenting approaches. This would better support an

investigation into which aspects of the parents' gender-related perspectives and behaviours affect children's gender-related cognitions and behaviours, as well as their feelings of gender health.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not speak to my personal positionality as a gender creative parent as both a strength and limitation of this study. I have intentionally placed checks-and-balances within my research design, including regular reflexive journaling and participant member checking. However, it should be known that at the heart of this work I believe gender creative parenting is benefiting the gender health of children, which for better or worse, surely biases the results.

Conclusion

With the movements near invisibility in academia, this research puzzle stands to provide a foundational understanding of the lived experienced of gender creative parenting. Through this exploration we see that gender creative parents are revolutionists who are rejecting the gender/sex binary's essentialists beliefs, creatively reconstructing feminist and trans-affirmative parenting practices, and depositioning cisgender identity as central to a healthy life. Instead, the GCP participants of this study re-imagine childhood in a way that promotes the creative misalignment of gender and sex and seeks to foster their children's gender expansive identities and expressions. The insights gained from this research on gender creative parenting stand to not only generate new transdisciplinary conversations around how to best support children's gender health, but are an invitation to courageously question a world where the first thing people ask expectant parents is "What are you having?"

References

Adams, S., Kuebli, J., Boyle, P. A., & Fivush, R. (1995). Gender differences in parent-child conversations about past emotions: A longitudinal investigation. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 33*(5-6), 309–323. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01954572

Ansara, Y. G. & Hegarty, P. (2012). Cisgenderism in psychology: Pathologising and misgendering children from 1999 to 2008. *Psychology & Sexuality, 2*(3), 137-160. https://10.1080/19419899.2011.576696

American Psychological Association. (2015a). Guidelines for psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming people. *American Psychologist*, *70*(9), 832–864. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039906

American Psychological Association. (2015b). *Key terms and concepts in understanding gender diversity and sexual orientation among students*. https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/key-terms.pdf

Aramburu Alegría, C. (2018). Supporting families of transgender children/youth: Parents speak on their experiences, identity, and views. *International Journal of Transgenderism, 19*(2), 132–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2018.1450798

Archer, J. (2004). Sex differences in aggression in real-world settings: A meta-analytic review. *Review of General Psychology*, *8*(4), 291-322. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.8.4.291

Arsel, Z. (2017) Asking questions with reflexive focus: A tutorial on designing and conducting interviews, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *4*(44), 939–948. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucx096

Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019) What is qualitative in qualitative research? *Qualitative*

Sociology, 42, 139–160. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-019-9413-7

Aznar, A. & Tenenbaum, H. R. (2014). Gender and age differences in parent-child

emotion talk. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *33*(1), 148-155.

https://doi.org/10.1111/bjdp.12069

Bandura, A. (1969). *Principles of behavior modification*. Holt, Rinehart &

Winston

Barad, K. (2016). *Troubling Time/s, Undoing the Future*. Lecture presented in the future

lecture series. Aarhus University. Available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBnOJioYNHU. (retrieved 30 November, 2022).

Bariola, E., Lyons, A., Leonard, W., Pitts, M., Badcock, P., & Couch, M. (2015).

Demographic and psychosocial factors associated with psychological distress

and resilience among transgender individuals. *American Journal of Public Health,*

105(10), 2108-2116. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302763

Bauer, G. R., Scheim, A. I., Pyne, J., Travers, R., & Hammond, R. (2015). Intervenable

factors associated with suicide risk in transgender persons: A respondent driven

sampling study in Ontario, Canada. *BMC Public Health*, *15*(1).

https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1867-2

Bauman E. S., Hollander L. N., Fauchon D. E. V., Eggink A. J., Lotgering F. K., & Benzie R. J.

(2008). What factors are associated with parental desire to find out the sex of their

baby? *ASUM Ultrasound Bulletin, 11*(1),19–24.

https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1867-2

Bayat, F., & Hodges, N. (2022). Just say "No" to compulsory hijab: Exploring the motivations

and meanings of bad-hijabi in Iran. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, *0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X221089580

Bearman, S. K., Presnell, K., Martinez, E., & Stice, E. (2006). The skinny on body dissatisfaction: A longitudinal study of adolescent girls and boys. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *35*(2), 217-229. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-9010-9

Bem, S. L. (1983). Gender schema theory and its implications for child development: Raising gender-aschematic children in a gender-schematic society. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *8*(4), 598–616. https://doi.org/10.1086/493998

Bem, S. L. (1993). *The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality.* Yale University Press.

Bem, S. L. (2005). *An unconventional family*. Yale University Press.

Bhattacharya, N., Budge, S. L., Pantalone, D. W., & Katz-wise, S. L. (2021). Conceptualizing relationships among transgender and gender diverse youth and their caregivers. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *35*(5), 595-605. https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000815

Bian, L., Leslie, S.-J., & Cimpian, A. (2017). Gender stereotypes about intellectual ability emerge early and influence children's interests. *Science*, *355*(6323), 389-391. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aah6524

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016) Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research, 13*(26), 1802-1811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Blackless, M., Charuvastra, A., Derryck, A., Fausto-Sterling, A., Lauzanne, K., & Lee, E. (2000). How sexually dimorphic are we? Review and synthesis. *American Journal of*

Human Biology, 12(2), 151-166.

http://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1520-6300(200003/04)12:2<151::AID-AJHB1>3.0.CO;2-F

Blakemore, J. E. O. (2003). Children's beliefs about violating gender norms: Boys

shouldn't look like girls, and girls shouldn't act like boys. *Sex Roles: A Journal of*

Research, 48(9-10), 411–419. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023574427720

Bockting, W. O., Robinson, B., Benner, A., & Scheltema, K. (2010). Patient satisfaction

with transgender health services. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 30,*

277-294. https://doi.org/10.1080/00926230490422467

Boe, J. L., & Woods, R. J. (2017). Parents' influence on infants' gender-typed toy

preferences. *Sex Roles*, *79*(5-6), 358-373. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0858-4

Bonfatto, M., & Crasnow, E. (2018). 'Gender/ed identities: an overview of our current work as

child psychotherapists in the Gender Identity Development Service'. *Journal of Child*

Psychotherapy, 44, 1, 29-46. https://doi.org/10.1080/0075417X.2018.1443150

Bowleg, L. (2012). The problem with the phrase *Women and minorities*:

Intersectionality—an important theoretical framework for public health. *American*

Journal of Public Health, *102*(7), 1267-1273. https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2012.300750

Brachfeld-child, S., Simpson, T., & Izenson, N. (1988). Mothers' and fathers' speech to

infants in a teaching situation. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, *9*(2), 173-180.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/1097-0355(198822)9:2<173::AID-IMHJ2280090205>3.0
.CO;2-Y

Bradford, J., Reisner, S. L., Honnold, J. A., & Xavier, J. (2013). Experiences of

transgender-related discrimination and implications for health: Results from the

Virginia Transgender Health Initiative Study. *American Journal of Public Health,*

103(10), 1820–1829. https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2012.300796

Bradford, N. J., & Syed, M. (2019). Transnormativity and transgender identity development: A master narrative approach. *Sex Roles, 81(1),* 306-325. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-0992-7

Brannon, L. (2017). *Gender: Psychological perspectives,* (7th ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315621821

Braun, S. S., & Davidson, A. J. (2017). Gender (non)conformity in middle childhood: A mixed methods approach to understanding gender-typed behavior, friendship, and peer preference. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 77*(1-2), 16–29. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0693-z

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013) Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners. Sage.

Braun, V., Clarke, V., and Terry, G. (2015). Thematic analysis. In P. Rohleder and A. Lyons (Eds.), *Qualitative research in clinical and health psychology* (pp. 95–113). Palgrave MacMillan.

Brown, H. M., Rostosky, S. S., Reese, R. J., Gunderson, C. J., Kwok, C., & Ryser-Oatman, T.(2020). Blessing or BS? The therapy experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming clients obtaining referral letters for gender affirming medical treatment. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *51*(6), 571-579. https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000274

Byrnes, J. P., Miller, D. C., & Schafer, W. D. (1999). Gender differences in risk taking: A

meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 125*(3), 367–383.

https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.125.3.367

Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

Routledge.

Butler, A., & Sinclair, K. A. (2020). Place matters: A critical review of place inquiry and

spatial methods in education research. *Review of Research in Education*, *44*(1),

64–96. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X20903303

Burczycka, M. (2020). Students' experiences of discrimination based on gender, gender

identity or sexual orientation at postsecondary schools in the Canadian

provinces, 2019. *Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics.*

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-005-x/2020001/article/00001-eng.htm

Bussey, K., & Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of gender development and

differentiation. *Psychological Review, 106*(4), 676–713.

https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.106.4.676

Caine, V., Estefan, A., & Clandinin, D. J. (2013). A return to methodological

commitment: Reflections on narrative inquiry. *Scandinavian Journal of*

Educational Research, 57(6), 574-586. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2013.798833

Camp, J., Vitoratou, S., & Rimes, K. A. (2020). LGBQ+ self-acceptance and its relationship

with minority stressors and mental health: A systematic literature review. *Archives of*

Sexual Behaviour, 49(4), 2353-2373. https://doi.org /10.1007/s10508-020-01755-2

Campbell, A., Shirley, L., & Candy, J. (2004). A longitudinal study of gender-related

cognition and behaviour. *Developmental Science*, *7*(1), 1-9.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7687.2004.00316.x

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research

    Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of

    Canada (2018). *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research*

    Involving Humans. Retrieved from

    https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/documents/tcps2-2018-en-interactive-final.pdf

Capacchione, L. (1991). *Recovery of your inner child: The highly acclaimed*

    method for liberating your inner self. Simon & Schuster.

Carpenter, C. S., Eppink, S. T., & Gonzales, G. (2020). Transgender status, gender

    identity, and socioeconomic outcomes in the United States. *ILR Review*, *73*(3),

    573-599. https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793920902776

Chafouleas, S. M., & Lovino, E. A. (2021). Engaging in a whole child, school, and community

    lens in positive education to advance equity in schools. *Frontier Psychology, 12*(1), 1-11.

    https://doi.org/ 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.758788

Chang, S. C., Singh, A. A., & Rossman, K. (2017). Gender and sexual orientation diversity

    within the TGNC community. In A. Singh & L. Dickey (Eds.), *Affirmative counseling*

    and psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming clients (pp. 19–

    40). American Psychological Association.

Cheff, R. (2018). Compensating research participants: A survey of current practices in

    Toronto. *Westley Institute,* 1-14.

    https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Fair-compensation-

    Report-.pdf

Chaplin, T. M., & Aldao, A. (2013). Gender differences in emotion expression in

children: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin, 139*(4), 735-765.

https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030737

Churcher Clarke A., & Spiliadis A. (2019). 'Taking the lid off the box': The value of extended

clinical assessment for adolescents presenting with gender identity difficulties. *Clinical*

Child Psychology and Psychiatry, *24*(2), 338-352.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104518825288

Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story*

in Qualitative Research. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2006). Narrative Inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, &

P. B. Elmore (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (pp. 77-87).

American Educational Research Association.

Clandinin, D. J., Lessard, S., & Caine, V. (2019). The relational ethics of

narrative inquiry. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Clandinin, D. J., & Murphy, S. (2007). Looking ahead: Conversations with Elliot Mishler,

Don Polkinghorne, and Amia Lieblich. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.)*, Handbook of*

narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology (pp. 632–50). Sage.

Clandinin, D. J., & Rosiek, J. (2007). Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry:

Borderland spaces and tensions. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative*

inquiry: Mapping a methodology (pp. 35–75). Sage.

https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226552.n2

Clark, B. A., Veale, J. F., Townsend, M., Frohard-Dourlent, H., & Saewyc, E. (2018).

Non-binary youth: Access to gender-affirming primary health care. *International*

Journal of Transgenderism, 19(2), 158-169.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2017.1394954

Clark, K. R., & Vealé, B. L. (2018). Strategies to enhance data collection and analysis in

qualitative research. *Radiologic technology*, *89*(5), 482CT-485CT.

Clearfield, M. W., & Nelson, N. M. (2006). Sex Differences in Mothers' Speech and Play

Behavior with 6-, 9-, and 14-Month-Old Infants. *Sex Roles: A Journal of*

Research, 54(1-2), 127–137. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-8874-1

Coleman, E., Radix, A. E., Bouman, W. P., Brown, G. R., de Vries, A. L. C., Deutsch, M. B.,

Ettner, R., Fraser, L., Goodman, M. Green, J. Hancock, A. B., Johnson, T. W., Karasic,

D. H., Knudson, G. A., Leibowitz, S. F., Meyer-Bahlburg, H. F. L., Monstrey, S. J.,

Motmans, J., Nahata, L., Nieder, T. O., …Arcelus, J. (2022). Standards of care for the

health of transgender and gender diverse people, Version 8. *International Journal of*

Transgender Health, 23(1), S1-S259, https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2100644

Collins, S. (2018). Embracing culturally responsivity and social justice: Re-shaping

professional identity in counselling psychology. Counselling Concepts.

Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics.* Stanford

University Press.

Conroy, S. (2021). Section 3: Police-reported intimate partner violence in Canada, 2019.

In *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2019.* (Juristat Statistics

Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X). https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-

x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm

Conroy, S. & Cotter, A. *Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014.*

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.htm

Costa Biermann, M.C., & Farias, M.G. (2021). Patriarchy and Feminist Perspectives. In:

  Shackelford, T.K., Weekes-Shackelford, V.A. (Eds) *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary*

  Psychological Science. Springer, Cham.

  https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-19650-3_1823

Correctional Service Canada. (2019, May, 16). Statistics and research on women offenders.

  Government of Canada. https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/women/002002-0008-en.shtml

Cotter, A., & Savage, L. (2019). Gender-based violence and unwanted sexual behaviour

  in Canada, 2018: Initial findings from the Survey of Safety in Public and Private

  Spaces. *Juristat* (85-002-X). https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-

  quotidien/191205/dq191205b-eng.htm

Cundill, P. (2020). Hormone therapy for trans and gender diverse patients in the general practice

  setting. *Australian Journal of General Practice, 49*(7), 385-390.

  https://doi.org/10.31128/AJGP-01-20-5197

Currah, P. (2006). Gender pluralisms under the transgender umbrella. In P. Currah, R. M. Juang,

  S. Price Minister (Eds.), *Transgender Rights* (pp. 3-30).

  University of Minnesota Press.

Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2018). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among

  five approaches. (4th ed.). Sage.

Dea, S. (2016). *Beyond the binary: Thinking about sex and gender.* Broadview

  Press.

Diamond, L. M., Pardo, S. T., & Butterworth, M. R. (2011). Transgender experience and

  identity. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of*

  identity theory and research (pp. 629–647). Springer Science + Business Media.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_26

Dominguez, M., Shrestha, A., Ahuja, A., & Ashley, K. (2019). Treatment in transition: The

    rapidly evolving landscape of transgender and gender non-binary care. *Journal of Gay &*

    Lesbian Mental Health, *24*(1), 112–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2019.1692387

Doyle, S. (2007). Member checking with older women: A framework for negotiating

    meaning. *Health Care for Women International, 28*(10) 888–908.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/07399330701615325

Dreger, A. D. (1998). *Hermaphrodites and the medical invention of sex.* Harvard University

    Press.

Drescher, J. (2010). Transsexualism, gender identity disorder and the DSM. *Journal of Gay &*

    Lesbian Mental Health, 14(2), 109–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/19359701003589637

Ducheny, K., Hendricks, M. L., & Keo-Meier, C. L. (2017). TGNC-affirmative interdisciplinary

    collaborative care. In A. Singh & l. m. dickey (Eds.), *Affirmative counseling and*

    psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming clients (pp. 69–93).

    American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/14957-004

Durwood, L., Mclaughlin, K. A., & Olson, K. R. (2017). Mental health and self-worth in

    socially transitioned transgender youth. *Journal of the American Academy of*

    Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, *56*(2), 116-123.e2.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2016.10.016

Egale. (2021). 2SLGBTQI terms and concepts.

    https://egale.ca/awareness/terms-and-concepts-updated/

Ehrensaft, D. (2014). Listening and learning from gender-nonconforming children. *The*

    Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, *68*(1), 28-56.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.2015.11785504

Ehrensaft, D., Giammattei, S. V., Storck, K., Tishelman, A. C., & St. Amand, C. (2018).

Prepubertal social gender transitions: What we know; What we can learn—A

view from a gender affirmative lens. *International Journal of Transgenderism,*

19(2), 251-268. https://doi.org/10.1080/15552739.2017.1414649

Eisenbaum, E., Womack, R., Dahl, K., Sheppard-jones, K., Singleton, P., Moseley, E., &

Espinosa bard, C. (2022). Serving clients with developmental disabilities in

clinical practice: Utilizing a universal design framework. *Social Work in Mental*

Health, *20*(4), 418-431. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332985.2021.2023935

Ellis, C. (2007). Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with

intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *13*(1), 3–29.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800406294947

Elsesser, K. (2021, July 27). What makes an athlete female? Here's how the Olympics decide.

Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimelsesser/2021/07/ 27/what-makes-an-athlete-

female-heres-how-the-olympics-decide/?sh=25388f884f9c

Etaugh, C., & Liss, M. B. (1992). Home, school, and playroom: Training grounds for

adult gender roles. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 26*(3-4), 129–147.

https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00289754

Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). *Sexing the Body.* Basic Books.

Feder, E. K. (2014). *Making sense of intersex: Changing ethical perspectives in*

biomedicine. Indiana University Press.

Feldman Witchel, S. (2018). Disorders of sex development. *HHS Public Assess, 48*, 90-102.

http://doi.org/10.1016/j.bpobgyn.2017.11.005

Femenias, M. L. (1994). Women and natural hierarchy in Aristotle. *Hypatia, 1*(9), 164-172.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1994.tb00115.x

Fiani, C. N., & Han, H. J. (2018). Navigating identity: Experiences of binary and non-binary

transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) adults. *International Journal of*

Transgenderism, *20*(2-3), 181–194. https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2018.1426074

Fine, M., & Torre, M. E. (2019). Critical participatory action research: A feminist project

for validity and solidarity. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 43(4), 433-444.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684319865255

Fisher-Thompson, D. (1993). Adult toy purchases for children: Factors affecting

sex-typed toy selection. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 14*(3),

385–406. https://doi.org/10.1016/0193-3973(93)90016-O

Forcier, M., Van Schalkwyk, G., & Turban, J. L. (2020). *Pediatric gender identity:*

Gender-affirming care for transgender & gender diverse youth. Springer.

Freeman, N. K. (2007). Preschoolers' perceptions of gender appropriate toys and their

parents' beliefs about genderized behaviors: Miscommunication, mixed

messages, or hidden truths? *Early Childhood Education Journal, 34*(5), 357–366.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-006-0123-x

Gabriel, S. E. (1999). The epidemiology of gender-discrepant illness. *Lupus*, *8*(5),

339-345. https://doi.org/10.1177/096120339900800502

Garb, H. N. (2021). Race bias and gender bias in the diagnosis of psychological disorders.

Clinical Psychology Review, 90(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01320

Garland, F., Thomson, M., Travis, M., & Warburton, J. (2021). Management of 'disorders of sex

development'/intersex variations in children: Results from a freedom of information

exercise. *Medical Law International*, *21*(2), 116–146.

https://doi.org/10.1177/09685332211003636

Gavin, K. M. (2022). Tangled sideways research: Reimagining temporality in research

with children. *Childhood*, *29*(2), 157–171. https://doi.org/10.1177/09075682221094394

Gelinas, L., Pierce, R., Winkler, S., Cohen, I. G., Lynch, H. F., & Bierer, B. E. (2017).

Using social media as a research recruitment tool: Ethical issues and

recommendations. *The American Journal of Bioethics, 17*(3), 3-14.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2016.1276644

Gergen, M. M. (2020). Practices of inquiry: invitation to innovation. In S. McNamee, M.

M. Gergen, C. Camargo-Borges, E. F. Rasera. (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of*

Social Constructionist Practice (pp. 17-23). Sage.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). Fourth generation evaluation.

Sage.

Goldberg, A. E., Kuvalanka, K. A., Budge, S. L., Benz, M. B., & Smith, J. Z. (2019).

Health care experiences of transgender binary and nonbinary university students.

The Counseling Psychologist, 47(1), 59-97.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000019827568

Gould, L. (1972). Baby X: A Fabulous Child's Story. *Ms.*

https://waylandbrown.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/x-story.pdf

Gray, S. A. O., Sweeney, K. K., Randazzo, R., & Levitt, H. M. (2015). "Am I doing the

right thing?": Pathways to parenting a gender variant child. *Family Process*, *55*(1), 123-

138. https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12128

Greenberg, S. B. (1979). *Right from the start: A guide to nonsexist child rearing.*

Houghton Mifflin.

Griffiths, D. A. (2018). Shifting syndromes: Sex chromosome variations and intersex

classifications. *Social Studies of Science*, *48*(1), 125 -148.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312718757081

Grijalva, E., Newman, D. A., Tay, L., Donnellan, M. B., Harms, P. D., Robins, R. W., &

Yan, T. (2015). Gender differences in narcissism: A meta-analytic review.

Psychological Bulletin, 141(2), 261–310. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038231

Grossman, A. H., D'augelli, A. R., Howell, T. J., & Hubbard, S. (2005). Parent' reactions

to transgender youth' gender nonconforming expression and identity. *Journal of

Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, *18*(1), 3-16. https://doi.org/10.1300/j041v18n01_02

Grossman, A. H., & D'augelli, A. R. (2007). Transgender youth and life-threatening

behaviors. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, *37*(5), 527-537.

https://doi.org/10.1521/suli.2007.37.5.527

Hagai, E. B., & Zurbriggen, E. L. (2022). *Queer theory and psychology: Gender, sexuality, and

transgender.* Springer Link.

Hale, A. E., Chertow, S. Y., Weng, Y., Tabuenca, A., & Aye, T. (2021). Perceptions of

support among transgender and gender-expansive adolescents and their

parents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *68*(6), 1075-1081.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.11.021

Halim, M. L., & Ruble, D. (2010). Gender identity and stereotyping in early and middle

childhood. In J.C. Chrisler & D.R. McCreary (Eds.), *Handbook of gender

research in psychology* (pp. 495-525). Springer.

Halim, M. L., Ruble, D. N., Tamis-lemonda, C. S., Zosuls, K. M., Lurye, L. E., &

Greulich, F. K. (2014). Pink frilly dresses and the avoidance of all things "girly":

Children's appearance rigidity and cognitive theories of gender development.

Developmental Psychology, *50*(4), 1091-1101. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034906

Halim, M. L. D., Gutierrez, B. C., Bryant, D. N., Arredondo, M., & Takesako, K. (2018).

Gender is what you look like: Emerging gender identities in young children and

preoccupation with appearance. *Self and Identity*, *17*(4), 455-466.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2017.1412344

Hallett, R. E. (2013). Dangers of member checking. In W. Midgley, P. A. Danaher, & M.

Baguley (Eds.), The role of participants in education research: Ethics,

epistemologies, and methods. (pp. 29-39). Routledge.

Halpern, D. F., & LaMay, M. L. (2000). The smarter sex: A critical review of sex

differences in intelligence. *Educational Psychology Review*, *12*(2), 229-246.

(2000). https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1009027516424

Harvey, L. (2015). Beyond member-checking: a dialogic approach to the

research interview. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, (1)*38, 23-

38. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2014.914487

Haslam N., Rothschild L., Ernst D. (2000). Essentialist beliefs about social categories. *British

Journal of Social Psychology*, 39, 113–127. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466600164363

Hicks Anderson, L. (2018). Historical background. In R. Yarbrough (Eds.), *Transgender mental

health* (pp.31-42). American Association Publishing.

Hidalgo, M. A., Ehrensaft, D., Tishelman, A. C., Clark, L. F., Garofalo, R., Rosenthal, S.

M., Spack, N. P., & Olson, J. (2013). The gender affirmative model: What we

know and what we aim to learn. *Human Development*, *56*(5), 285-290.

https://doi.org/10.1159/000355235

Hildebrand, D. L. (2008). *Dewey: A beginner's guide*. One World.

Hill, D. B., & Menvielle, E. (2009). "You have to give them a place where they feel

protected and safe and loved": The views of parents who have gender-variant

children and adolescents. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, *6*(2-3), 243-271.

https://doi.org/10.1080/19361650903013527

Hilliard, L. J., & Liben, L. S. (2010). Differing levels of gender salience in preschool

classrooms: Effects on children's gender attitudes and intergroup bias. *Child

Development, 81*(6), 1787–1798.

Hopner, V., & Liu, J. H. (2021). Relational ethics and epistemology: The case for

complementary first principles in psychology. *Theory & Psychology*, *31*(2),

179–198. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354320974103

Human Rights Campaign. (2018, November 19). *A national epidemic: Fatal anti-transgender

violence in America in 2018*. Retrieved from

https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/AntiTransViolence-2018Report-

Final.pdf?_ga=2.87107992.1087835002.1549390089-45596882.1549390089

Hyde J. S. (2005). The gender similarities hypothesis. *American Psychologist*, 60, 581–592.

https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.6.581

Hyde J. S., Bigler R. S., Joel D., Tate C. C., van Anders S. M. (2019). The future of sex and

gender in psychology: Five challenges to the gender binary. *American Psychologist*,

74(2), 171–193. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01510.x

Ijoma, J. N., Sahn, M., Mack, K. N., Akam, E., Edwards, K. J., Wang, X., Surpur, A., Henry, K.

E. (2021). Visions by WIMIN: BIPOC representation matters. *Molecular Imagining and*

    Biology, 24, 353-358. https://doi.org./10.1007/s11307-021-01663-4

Intersex Society of North America. (2008).*What is intersex?* Retrieved from

    https://isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex/

Jack, A. (2020). The gender reveal party. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family*

    Studies, 11(2), 82-93. https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs112202019520

Jacobson, D., & Mustafa, N. (2019). Social identity map: A reflexivity tool for practicing

    explicit positionality in critical qualitative research. *International Journal of*

    Qualitative Methods, *18,* 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919870075

James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The*

    report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Washington, DC: National Center

    for Transgender Equality. https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/USTS-

    Full-Report-FINAL.PDF

Jewell, J. A., & Brown, C. S. (2013). Relations among gender typicality, peer relations,

    and mental health during early adolescence. *Social Development*, *23*(1),

    137-156. https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12042

Jimenez, M. A. (1997). Gender and psychiatry: Psychiatric conceptions of mental disorders in

    women, 1960-1994. *Affilia*, *12*(2), 154-175.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/088610999701200202

Joel, D., & McCarthy, M. M. (2017). Incorporating sex as a biological variable in

    neuropsychiatric research: Where are we now and where should we be?

    Neuropsychopharmacology, 42, 379–385. https://doi.org/10.1038/npp.2016.79

Joel D., Tarrasch R., Berman Z., Mukamel M., Ziv E. (2014). Queering gender: Studying gender

identity in 'normative' individuals. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 5, 291–321.

https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2013.830640

Johnson, A. H. (2016). Transnormativity: A new concept and its validation through documentary

film about transgender men. *Sociological Inquiry, 86*(4), 465–491.

https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12127

Johnson, K. C., Leblanc, A. J., Deardorff, J., & Bockting, W. O. (2019). Invalidation

experiences among non-binary adolescents. *The Journal of Sex Research*,

57(2), 222-233. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2019.1608422

Johnston, K., & MacDougall, C. (2021). Enacting feminist methodologies in research

toward reproductive justice. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *20*, 1-10.

https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211016157

Jones, T. (2018). Intersex studies: A systematic review of international health literature. *SAGE

Open*, *8*(2), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017745577

Jones, T., Smith, E., Ward, R., Dixon, J., Hillier, L., & Mitchell, A. (2016). School

experiences of transgender and gender diverse students in Australia. *Sex

Education, 16*(2), 156–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2015.1080678

Kane, E. W. (2012). *The gender trap: Parents and the pitfalls of raising boys and girls.*

New York University.

Katz, J. (2014, November). What does Mechitza have to do with racism? On patriarchy and the

outsourcing of blame in Jewish communities. *New Voices.*

https://newvoices.org/2014/11/20/mechitzaandracism/

Katz-wise, S. L., Ehrensaft, D., Vetters, R., Forcier, M., & Austin, S. B. (2018). Family

functioning and mental health of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth in

the trans teen and family narratives project. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *55*(4-5), 582-590. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1415291

Kemmis, S., MacTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2014). *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research*. Springer. https://link-springer-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/book/10.1007%2F978-981-4560-67-2

Kent, S. K. (2020). *Gender: A world history*. Oxford University Press.

Keo-Meier, C., & Ehrensaft, D. (2018). Introduction to the gender affirmative model. In C. Keo-Meier & D. Ehrensaft (Eds.), The gender affirmative model: An interdisciplinary approach to supporting transgender and gender expansive children (pp. 3-19). American Psychological Association.

Ker, A., Fraser, G., Fleming, T., Stephenson, C., da Silva Freitas, A., Carroll, R., Hamilton, T. K., & Lyons, A. C. (2020). 'A little bubble of utopia': Constructions of a primary care-based pilot clinic providing gender affirming hormone therapy. *Health Sociology Review*, *30*(1), 25-40. https://doi.org/10.1080/14461242.2020.1855999

Kerr, J. H., & Vlaminkx, J. (1997). Gender differences in the experience of risk. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *22*(2), 293-295. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0191-8869(96)00198-5

Kessler, S. J. (1998) *Lessons from the intersexed.* Rutgers University Press.

Kindon, S. L., Pain, R., & Kesby, M. (2007). *Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation and place.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203933671

King, K., Rice, S., Schlichthorst, M., Chondros, P., & Pirkis, J. (2021). Gender norms

and the wellbeing of girls and boys. *The Lancet Global Health*, *9*(4), e398.

https://doi.org/10.1016/s2214-109x(20)30551-9

Kinitz, D. J., Salway, T., Kia, H., Ferlatte, O., Rich, A. J., & Ross, L. E. (2021). Health of

two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people experiencing poverty in

Canada: A review. *Health Promotion International*, *37*(1).

https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daab057

Klein, A., & Golub, S. A. (2016). Family rejection as a predictor of suicide attempts and

substance misuse among transgender and gender nonconforming adults. *LGBT*

Health, *3*(3), 193-199. https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2015.0111

Kollmayer, M., Schultes, M.-T., Schober, B., Hodosi, T., & Spiel, C. (2018). Parents'

judgments about the desirability of toys for their children: Associations with

gender role attitudes, gender-typing of toys, and demographics. *Sex Roles*,

79(5-6), 329-341. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0882-4

Kooper A. J., Pieters J. J., Eggink A. J., Feuth T. B., Feenstra I., Wijnberger L. D., Rijnders R. J.,

Quartero R. W., Boekkooi P. F., van Vugt J. M., Smits A. P. (2012) Why do parents

prefer to know the fetal sex as part of invasive prenatal testing? *ISRN Obstetrics and*

Gynecology, Article ID 524537(2012) 524-537. https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/524537

Kuper, L. E., Wright, L., & Mustanski, B. (2018). Gender identity development among

transgender and gender nonconforming emerging adults: An intersectional

approach. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, *19*(4), 436–455.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2018.1443869

Kwan, K. M. W., Shi, S. Y., Nabbijohn, A. N., Macmullin, L. N., Vanderlaan, D. P., &

Wong, W. I. (2019). Children's appraisals of gender nonconformity:

Developmental pattern and intervention. *Child Development*, *91*(4).

https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13316

Lahman, M. K. E., Thomas, R., & Teman, E. D. (2022). A good name: Pseudonyms in

research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *0*(0) 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004221134088

Laquer, T. (1992). *Making Sex – Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud.* Harvard UP.

Leaper, C., & Robnett, R. D. (2011). Women are more likely than men to use tentative

language, aren't they? A meta-analysis testing for gender differences and

moderators. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *35*(1), 129-142.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684310392728

Lee, P. A., Houk, C. P., Ahmed, S. F., Hughes, L. A. (2006). Consensus statement on

management of intersex disorders. *Pediatrics, 118*(2), 488-500.

https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2006-0738

Lefevor, G. T., Boyd-Rogers, C. C., Sprague, B. M., & Janis, R. A. (2019). Health

disparities between genderqueer, transgender, and cisgender individuals: An

extension of minority stress theory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 66*(4),

385-395. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000339

Lenti, E. (2021, September 21). *Canada, meet your LGBTQ2S+ MPs.* Xtra.

https://xtramagazine.com/power/lgbtq2s-federal-election-queer-mps-209072

Levitt, H. M., & Ippolito, M. R. (2014). Being transgender: The experience of transgender

identity development. *Journal of Homosexuality, 61*(12), 1727–1758.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.951262

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Lindsay, J. M. & Schwind, J. K. (2016). Narrative inquiry: Experience matters. *Canadian*

Journal of Nursing Research, 1(48), 14-20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0844562116652230

Lindsey, E. W., & Mize, J. (2001). Contextual differences in parent–child play: Implications for children's gender role development. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 44*(3-4), 155–176. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010950919451

Linton, A. E. (2022). *Unmaking sex: The gender outlaws of nineteenth-century France.* Cambridge University Press.

List of Gender Identities. (2022, November, 23). In *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_gender_identities

Lucas-Stannard, P. (2012). *Gender neutral parenting: Raising kids with the freedom to be themselves.* Verity Publishing.

Lykens, J. E., LeBlanc, A. J., & Bockting, W. O. (2018). Healthcare experiences among young adults who identify as genderqueer or non-binary. *LGBT Health*, *5*(3), 191–196. https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2017.0215

Lytton, H., & Romney, D. M. (1991). Parents' differential socialization of boys and girls: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *109*(2), 267-296. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.109.2.267

Macphee, D., & Prendergast, S. (2018). Room for improvement: Girls' and boys' home environments are still gendered. *Sex Roles*, *80*(5-6), 332-346. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-0936-2

Malpas, J. (2011). Between pink and blue: A multi-dimensional family approach to gender nonconforming children and their families. *Family Process*, *50*(4), 453-470. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2011.01371.x

Majumder, A., Roychaudhuri, S., Chakraborty, S., & Bhattacherjee, K. (2020). An

observational study of the quality of life among gender incongruent individuals

from "Hijra" community of India. *Indian Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism*,

24(4), 301. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijem.ijem_169_20

Manti, S., & Licari A. (2018) How to obtain informed consent for research. *Breathe, 14*(2),

145-152. https://doi.org/10.1183/20734735.001918

Martin, C. L. (1989). Children's use of gender-related information in making social

judgments. *Developmental Psychology, 25*(1), 80–88.

https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.25.1.80

Martin, K. A. (2005). William wants A doll. Can he have one? Feminists, childcare

advisors, and gender-neutral child rearing. *Gender & Society*, *19*(4), 456-479.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204272968

Martin, K. A. (2009). Normalizing heterosexuality: Mothers' assumptions, talk, and strategies

with young children. *American Sociological Review*, *74*(2), 190–207.

https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400202

Martin, C. L., Andrews, N. C. Z., England, D., Zosuls, K., & Ruble, D. N. (2016). A dual

identity approach for conceptualizing and measuring children's gender identity.

Child Development, *88*(1), 167-182. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12568

Martinez, A., & Christnacht, C. (2021, January, 26). Women are nearly half of U.S. workforce

but only 27% of STEM workers. *United States Census Bureau.*

https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/01/women-making-gains-in-stem-

occupations-but-still-underrepresented.html

Mascaro, J. S., Rentscher, K. E., Hackett, P. D., Mehl, M. R., & Rilling, J. K. (2017).

Child gender influences paternal behavior, language, and brain function.

Behavioral Neuroscience, *131*(3), 262-273. https://doi.org/10.1037/bne0000199

Matsuno, E. (2019). Non-binary affirming psychological interventions. *Cognitive and Behavioural Practice, 26*(4), 617-628. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2018.09.003

McCullough, R., Dispenza, F., Parker. L. K., Viehl, C. J., Chang, C. Y., Murphy, T. M. (2017). The counselling experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming clients. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, *95*(4), 423-434. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12157

Mcfarland, L., Murray, E., & Phillipson, S. (2016). Student–teacher relationships and student self-concept: Relations with teacher and student gender. *Australian Journal of Education*, *60*(1), 5-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944115626426

McGrath C, Palmgren P. J., & Liljedahl M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Med Teach, 41*(9), 1002-1006. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149

McKenzie, M. (2008). The places of pedagogy: Or, what we can do with culture through intersubjective experiences. *Environmental Education Research*, *14*(3), 361–373. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620802194208

McLemore, K. A. (2018). A minority stress perspective on transgender individuals' experiences with misgendering. *Stigma and Health*, *3*(1), 53–64. https://doi.org/10.1037/sah0000070

Meek, H. (2012). Medical men, women of letters, and treatments for eighteenth-century hysteria. *Journal of Medical Humanities, 34,* 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10912-012-9194-4

Meerqijk, E. L., & Sevevlius, J. M. (2017). Transgender population size in the United States: A meta-regression of population-based probability samples. *American Journal of Public Health, 2*(107), e1-e8. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303578

Mertens, D. M. (2020). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (5th ed.). Sage.

Micale, M. S. (1995). *Approaching hysteria: Disease and its interpretations.* Princeton University Press.

Miller Scarnato, J. (2019). The value of digital video data for qualitative social work research: A narrative review. *Qualitative Social Work,* 18(3), 382–396. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325017735885

Mocarski, R., King, R., Butler, S., Holt, N. R., Huit, T. Z., Hope, D. A., Meyer, H. M., & Woodruff, N. (2019). The rise of transgender and gender diverse representation in the media: impacts on the population. *Communication, Culture & Critique, 3*(12), 416-433. https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcz031

Mondschein, E. R., Adolph, K. E., & Tamis-lemonda, C. S. (2000). Gender bias in mothers' expectations about infant crawling. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *77*(4), 304-316. https://doi.org/10.1006/jecp.2000.2597

Morgan, D. L. (2014). Pragmatism as a paradigm for social research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *20*(8), 1045–1053. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800413513733

Myers, K. (2020, September, 3). I let my child create their own gender identity. The experience has been a gift for us both. *Time.* https://time.com/5885697/gender-creative-parenting/

Montei, A. (2021, July, 11). How American parents became obsessed with gender. *Vox* https://www.vox.com/first-person/22569143/parents-gender-ultrasound-sonogram

Morgenroth, T., & Ryan M. K. (2018). Gender trouble in social psychology: How can Butler's work inform experimental social psychologists' conceptualization of gender? *Frontiers in*

Psychology, 9, 1-9. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01320

Morgenroth, T., & Ryan, M. K. (2020). The effects of gender trouble: An integrative

theoretical framework of the perpetuation and disruption of the gender/sex

binary. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *16*(6), 1113–

1142. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620902442

Morgenroth, T., Sendén, M. G., Lindqvist, A., Renström, E. A., Ryan, M. K., & Morton, T. A.

(2020). Defending the sex/gender binary: The role of gender identification and need

for closure. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *12*(5), 731–

740. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620937188

Morris, A. (2018, April 2). It's a theybie! Is it possible to raise your child entirely without

gender from birth? Some parents are trying. *The Cut.*

https://www.thecut.com/2018/04/theybies-gender-creative-parenting.html

Moulin de Souza, E., & Parker, M. (2022). Practices of freedom and the disruption of binary

genders: Thinking with trans. *Organization*, *29*(1), 67- 82.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508420935602

Myers, K. (n.d.). Sasha & Storm. *Raising Zoomer.*

https://www.raisingzoomer.com/article/2016/2/10/sasha-storm

Myers, K. (2020, September, 3). I let my child create their own gender identity. The

experience has been a gift for us both. *Time.*

https://time.com/5885697/gender-creative-parenting/

Myers, K. (2020). *Raising them: Our adventure in gender creative parenting*. Topple

Books/Little A.

Naphy, W. (2004). *Born to be gay: A history of homosexuality.* Tempus.

Odeh, M., Grinin, V., Kais, M., Ophir, E., & Bornstein, J. (2009). Sonographic fetal sex

determination. *Obstetrical & Gynecological Survey*, *64*(1), 50-57.

https://doi.org/10.1097/ogx.0b013e318193299b

OECD. (2021). Canada. *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators.*

https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/cac929c1-en/index.html?itemId=/content/comp

onent/cac929c1-en

Olson, K. R., Key, A. C., & Eaton, N. R. (2015). Gender cognition in transgender

children. *Psychological Science*, *26*(4), 467-474.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797614568156

Olson, K. R., & Gülgöz, S. (2018). Early findings from the transyouth project: Gender

development in transgender children. *Child Development Perspectives, 12*(2),

93–97. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12268

Orange, A. (2016). Encouraging reflective practices in doctoral students through

research journals. *The Qualitative Report, 21(*12), 2176-2190.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800413513733

Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research

process. *The Qualitative Report*, *13*(4), 695-705.

https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1579

Paoletti, J. B. (2012). *Pink and blue: Telling the boys from the girls in America*. Indiana

University Press.

Paré, D. A. (2013). *The practice of collaborative counseling and psychotherapy:

Developing skills in culturally mindful helping.* Sage.

Parens, E. (2013). On good and bad forms of medicalization. *Bioethics, 27*(1), 28-35.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8519.2011.01885.x

Pariseau, E. M., Chevalier, L., Long, K. A., Clapham, R., Edwards-Leeper, L., &

Tishelman, A. C. (2019). The relationship between family acceptance-rejection

and transgender youth psychosocial functioning. *Clinical Practice in Pediatric*

Psychology, *7*(3), 267-277. https://doi.org/10.1037/cpp0000291

Pelletier, R., & Patterson, M. (2019). The gender wage gap in Canada: 1998 to 2018.

Centre for Labour Market Information, Statistics Canada.

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019004-eng.htm

Penn-Edwards, S. (2004). Visual evidence in qualitative research: The role of

videorecording. *The Qualitative Report*, *9*(2), 266-277.

https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2004.1928

Pflum, S. R., Testa, R. J., Balsam, K. F., Goldblum, P. B., & Bongar, B. (2015). Social

support, trans community connectedness, and mental health symptoms among

transgender and gender nonconforming adults. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation*

and Gender Diversity, *2*(3), 281-286. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000122

Pinnegar, S., & Daynes, J. G. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically: Thematics

in the turn to narrative. *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, 3-34.

https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226552.n1

Pogrebin, L. C. (1980). *Growing up free: Raising your child in the 80's*.

McGraw-Hill.

Poole, A. (2019). International education teachers' experiences as an educational

precariat in China. *Journal of Research in International Education, 18*(1), 60–76.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240919836489

Pratt, M. G. (2009). For the lack of a boilerplate: Tips on writing up (and reviewing) qualitative research [Editorial]. *Academy of Management Journal, 52*(5), 858–862. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2009.44632557

Preves, S. E. (2003). *Intersex and identity: The contested self.* Rutgers University Press.

Pullen Sansfaçon, A., Temple-Newhook, J., Suerich-Gulick, F., Feder, S., Lawson, M. L., Ducharme, J., Ghosh, S., & Holmes, C. (2019). The experiences of gender diverse and trans children and youth considering and initiating medical interventions in Canadian gender-affirming speciality clinics. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, *20*(4), 371-387. https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2019.1652129

Peretti, P. O., & Sydney, T. (1984). Parental toy choice stereotyping and its effects on child toy preference and sex-role typing. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *12*(2), 213-216. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.1984.12.2.213

Poisson, J. (2011, May 21). Parents keep child's gender a secret. *The Star.* *https://www.thestar.com/life/parent/2011/05/21/parents_keep_childs_gender_sec ret.html*

Pomerantz, E. M., Altermatt, E. R., & Saxon, J. L. (2002). Making the grade but feeling distressed: Gender differences in academic performance and internal distress. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94*(2), 396–404. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.94.2.396

Poulin-Dubois, D., Serbin, L. A., & Derbyshire, A. (1998). Toddlers' intermodal and verbal knowledge about gender. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 44*(3), 338–354. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23093706

Pflum, S. R., Testa, R. J., Balsam, K. F., Goldblum, P. B., & Bongar, B. (2015). Social support, trans community connectedness, and mental health symptoms among transgender and gender nonconforming adults. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation*

and Gender Diversity, *2*(3), 281-286. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000122

Raag, T., & Rackliff, C. L. (1998). Preschoolers' awareness of social expectations of gender: Relationships to toy choices. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 38*(9-10), 685–700. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018890728636

Rahilly, E. P. (2015). The gender binary meets the gender-variant child. *Gender & Society*, *29*(3), 338-361. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243214563069

Reddy, G. (2007). With respect to sex: Negotiating hijra identity in South India (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Reisner, S. L., & Hughto, J. M. W. (2019). Comparing the health of nonbinary and binary transgender adults in a statewide nonprobability sample. *PLOS ONE, 14*(8), e0221583. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0221583

Richards, C., Bouman, W. P., Seal, L., Barker, M. J., Nieder, T. O., & T'Sjoen, G. (2016). Non-binary and genderqueer genders. *International Review of Psychiatry, 28*(1), 95-102. https://doi.org/10.3109/09540261.2015.1106446

Riggs, D. W., Pearce, R., Pfeffer, C. A., Hines, S. H., White, F., & Ruspini, E. et al. (2019). Transnormativity in the psy disciplines: Constructing pathology in the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders and standards of care. *American Psychologist, 74*(8), 912-924. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000545

Robbins, C. K., & McGowan, B. L. (2016). Intersectional perspectives on gender and gender identity development. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2016*(154), 71–83. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20176

Roberts, A. L., Rosario, M., Slopen, N., Calzo, J. P., & Austin, S. B. (2013). Childhood gender nonconformity, bullying victimization, and depressive symptoms across

adolescence and early adulthood: An 11-year longitudinal study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 52*, 143–152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2012.11.006.

Robinson, C. C., & Morris, J. T. (1986). The gender-stereotyped nature of Christmas toys received by 36-, 48-, and 60-month-old children: A comparison between nonrequested vs requested toys. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 15*(1-2), 21–32. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00287529

Root, A. K., & Rubin, K. H. (2010). Gender and parents' reactions to children's emotion during the preschool years. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, *2010*(128), 51-64. https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.268

Roscoe, W. (2019). Sexual and gender diversity in Native America and the Pacific Islands. In K. Crawford-Lackey & M. E. Springate (Eds.), Identities and place: Changing labels and intersectional communities of LGBTQ and two-spirit people in the United States (pp. 58–88). Berghahn Books.

Rosenthal, S. M. (2014). Approach to the patient: Transgender youth: Endocrine considerations. *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, *99*(12), 4379–4389. https://doi.org/10.1210/jc.2014-1919

Rosenwohl-Mack, A., Tamar-Mattis, S., Baratz, A. B., Dalk, K. B., Ittelson, A., Zieselman, K., & Flatt, J. D. (2020). A national study on the physical and mental health of intersex adults in the U.S. *PLoS ONE, 15*(10), Article e0240088. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240088

Russell, S. T., Pollitt, A. M., Li, G., & Grossman, A. H. (2018). Chosen name use is linked to reduced depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior

among transgender youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *63*(4), 503-505.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.02.003

Ryan, C., Russell, S. T., Huebner, D., Diaz, R., & Sanchez, J. (2010). Family

acceptance in adolescence and the health of LGBT young adults. *Journal of*

Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing, *23*(4), 205-213.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6171.2010.00246.x

Rydstrom, K. (2020). *Degendering menstration: Making trans menstrators matter.* Spring

Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-0614-7_68

Sampson, H., Bloor, M., & Fincham, B. (2008). A price worth paying? Considering the

"cost" of reflexive research methods and the influence of feminist ways of "doing."

Sociology, 42(5), 919–933. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508094

Sax, L. (2002). How common is intersex? A response to Anne Fausto-Sterling. *The Journal of*

Sex Research, *39*(3), 174-178. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490209552139

Shipp, T. D., Shipp. D. Z., Bromley, B., Sheahan, R. Cohen, A., & Lieberman, E. (2004). What

factors are associated with parents' desire to know the sex of their unborn child? *Birth,*

31(4), 272-279. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0730-7659.2004.00319.x.

Showalter, E. (1997). *Hystories: Hysterical epidemics and modern culture.* Columbia University

Press.

Shutts, K., Roben, C. K. P., & Spelke, E. S. (2013). Children's use of social categories in

thinking about people and social relationships. *Journal of Cognition and*

Development, *14*(1), 35-62. https://doi.org/10.1080/15248372.2011.638686

Simons, L., Schrager, S. M., Clark, L. F., Belzer, M., & Olson, J. (2013). Parental

support and mental health among transgender adolescents. *Journal of*

Adolescent Health, *53*(6), 791-793.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.07.019

Sinno, S. M., & Killen, M. (2009). Moms at work and dads at home: Children's

evaluations of parental roles. *Applied Developmental Science, 13*(1), 16–29.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10888690802606735

Skewes, L., Fine, C., & Haslam, N. (2018). Beyond Mars and Venus: The role of gender

essentialism in support for gender inequality and backlash. *PloS One, 13*(7), e0200921.

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0200921

Slagstad, K. (2021). The political nature of sex – Transgender in the

history of medicine. The *New England Journal of Medicine, 384*(11), 1070-1074.

https://10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01320

Smithers, G. D. (2014). Cherokee "Two spirits": Gender, ritual, and spirituality in the native

south. *Early American Studies, 3*(12), 626-651. https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2014.0023

Spears Brown, C. (2014) *Parenting beyond pink & blue: How to raise your kids free of*

gender stereotypes. Ten Speed Press.

Spears Brown, C., Biefeld, S. D., & Tam, M. J. (2020). *Gender in childhood*. Cambridge

University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108874281

Stanley, E. A. (2014). Gender self-determination. *Transgender Studies Quarterly, 1*(1-2), 89-91.

https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2399695

Statham, J. (1986). *Daughters and sons: Experiences of non-sexist childraising.*

Blackwell.

Statistics Canada. (2022). Just the facts: International women's day 2022.

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-28-0001/2022001/article/00002-eng.htm

Stennes, L. M., Burch, M. M., Sen, M. G., & Bauer, P. J. (2005). A Longitudinal Study of

    Gendered Vocabulary and Communicative Action in Young Children.

    Developmental Psychology, 41(1), 75–88.

    https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.41.1.75

Stryker, S. (2018). *Transgender history: The roots of today's revolution* (2nd ed.). Seal Press.

Taliaferro, L. A., McMorris, B. J., Rider, G. N., & Eisenberg, M. E. (2019). Risk and

    protective factors for self-harm in a population-based sample of transgender

    youth. *Archives of Suicide Research*, *23*(2), 203-221.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2018.1430639

Tasca, C., Rapetti, M., Giovanni Carta, M., & Fadda, B. (2012). Women and hysteria in the

    history of mental health. *Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health, 8*(1),

    110-119. https://doi.org/10.2174/1745017901208010110

Tate, C. C., Ben Hagai, E., & Crosby, F. J. (2020). Undoing the gender binary. Cambridge

    University Press. https://doi.org./10.1097?OGX.0b013e318193299b

Tatum, A. K., Catalpa, J., Bradford, N. J., Kovic, A., & Berg, D. R. (2020). Examining identity

    development and transition differences among binary transgender and genderqueer

    nonbinary (GQNB) individuals. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity.*

    Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000377

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). In Willig, C., & Rogers, W. S.

    (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*. Sage.

    https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555

Testa, R. J., Habarth, J., Peta, J., Balsam, K., & Bockting, W. (2015). Development of

    the gender minority stress and resilience measure. *Psychology of Sexual*

Orientation and Gender Diversity, *2*(1), 65-77. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000081

Thrift, E., & Sugarman, J. (2019). What is social justice? Implications for psychology. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, 39*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1037/teo0000097

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2016). *Global report on trafficking in persons 2016*. Vienna. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2016_Global_Report_on_Trafficking_in_Persons.pdf

US Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). *Results from the 2013 national survey on drug use and health: Summary of national findings*. https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHresultsPDFWHTML2013/Web/NSDUHresults2013.pdf

van Anders S. M. (2015). Beyond sexual orientation: Integrating gender/sex and diverse sexualities via sexual configurations theory. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 44, 1177–1213. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0490-8

Van Brenk, D. (2020, February 20). Study: Canada cannot dust off gender roles in home. *Western News.* https://news.westernu.ca/2020/02/canada-cannot-dust-off-gender-roles-in-home/

Van der pol, L. D., Groeneveld, M. G., Van Berkel, S. R., Endendijk, J. J., Hallers-Haalboom, E. T., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., & Mesman, J. (2015). Fathers' and mothers' emotion talk with their girls and boys from toddlerhood to preschool age. *Emotion*, *15*(6), 854-864. https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000085

Veale, J., Saewyc, E., Frohard-Dourlent, H., Dobson, S., & Clark, B. (2015). Being safe, being me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey. Retrieved from

https://apsc-saravyc.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2018/04/SARAVYC_Trans-Youth-Health
-Report_EN_Final_Web2.pdf

Veale, J. F., Peter, T., Travers, R., & Saewyc, E. M. (2017). Enacted stigma, mental
health, and protective factors among transgender youth in Canada. *Transgender
Health*, *2*(1), 207-216. https://doi.org/10.1089/trgh.2017.0031

Vincent, S. J. (2009). *The anatomy of fashion: Dressing the body from the renaissance
to toda*y (English ed.). Berg.

Ward, J. (2010). Gender labor: Transmen, femmes, and collective work of
transgression. In *Sexualities* (pp. 236-254).
https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460709359114

Warner, M. (1991). *Fear of a queer planet: Queer politics and social theory.* University of
Minnesota Press.

West, W., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society, 2*(1),
125-151.
https://www.gla.ac.uk/0t4/crcees/files/summerschool/readings/WestZimmerman_1987_D
oingGender.pdf

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (2009). Accounting for doing gender. *Gender & Society*,
23(1), 112-122. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243208326529

Westwater, J. J., Riley, E. A., & Peterson, G. M. (2019). What about the family in youth
gender diversity? A literature review. *International Journal of Transgenderism*,
20(4), 351-370. https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2019.1652130

Wilson, E. C., Chen, Y.-H., Arayasirikul, S., Raymond, H. F., & Mcfarland, W. (2016).
The impact of discrimination on the mental health of trans*female youth and the

protective effect of parental support. *AIDS and Behavior*, *20*(10), 2203-2211.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-016-1409-7

Winslade, J. (2017). Counseling and social Justice: What are we working for? In C. Audet & D.

Pare (Eds.). *Social Justice Counselling* (pp. 16-28). Routledge.

Witcomb, G. L., Claes, L., Bouman, W. P., Nixon, E., Motmans, J., & Arcelus, J. (2019).

Experiences and psychological wellbeing outcomes associated with bullying in

treatment-seeking transgender and gender-diverse youth. *LGBT Health*, *6*(5),

216-226. https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2018.0179

Wright, T., Candy, B., & King, M. (2018). Conversion therapies and access to transition-related

healthcare in transgender people: a narrative systemic review. *BMJ Open, Article

e022425*(8), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-022425

Wood, E., Desmarais, S., & Gugula, S. (2002). The impact of parenting experience on

gender stereotyped toy play of children. *Sex Roles*, *47*(1), 39–49.

https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020679619728

Wong, W. I., & Yeung, S. P. (2019). Early gender differences in spatial and social skills

and their relations to play and parental socialization in children from Hong Kong.

Archives of Sexual Behavior, *48*(5), 1589-1602.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-019-1415-8

World Health Organization. (2019). *Suicide in the world: Global health estimates.*

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/326948/WHO-MSD-MER-19.3-eng.pdf

Xiao, S. X., Hashi, E. C., Korous, K. M., & Eisenberg, N. (2019). Gender differences

across multiple types of prosocial behavior in adolescence: A meta-analysis of

the prosocial tendency measure-revised (PTM-R). *Journal of Adolescence*, *77*(1),

41-58. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2019.09.003

Yadegarfard, M., Meinhold-Bergmann, M. E., & Ho, R. (2014). Family rejection, social isolation, and loneliness as predictors of negative health outcomes (Depression, suicidal ideation, and sexual risk behavior) among Thai male-to-female transgender adolescents. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, *11*(4), 347-363. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2014.910483

Zosuls, K. M., Ruble, D. N., Tamis-lemonda, C. S., Shrout, P. E., Bornstein, M. H., & Greulich, F. K. (2009). The acquisition of gender labels in infancy: Implications for gender-typed play. *Developmental Psychology*, *45*(3), 688-701. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014053

Zosuls, K. M., Miller, C. F., Ruble, D. N., Martin, C. L., & Fabes, R. A. (2011). Gender development research in sex roles: Historical trends and future directions. *Sex Roles*, *64*(11-12), 826-842. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9902-3

Zosuls, K. M., Andrews, N. C. Z., Martin, C. L., England, D. E., & Field, R. D. (2016). Developmental changes in the link between gender typicality and peer victimization and exclusion. *Sex Roles*, *75*(5-6), 243-256. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0608-z

Zosuls, K. M., & Ruble, D. N. (2018). Gender-typed toy preferences among infants and toddlers. In E. S. Weisgram & L. M. Dinella (Eds.), *Gender typing of children's toys: How early play experiences impact development* (pp. 49–72). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000077-004

Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN GENDER CREATIVE PARENTING
What are you Having? The Lived Experience of Gender Creative Parents
My name is Skyler Todd, and I am a gender creative parent and Master of Counselling student at Athabasca University who is seeking participants to be a part of a study on the lived experiences of caregivers practicing gender creative parenting.

Who is invited to participate?
-   Parents(over the age of 18) that have one or more children
-   Parents who identify as practicing gender creative/gender neutral/gender expansive parenting
-   Parents who did not assign a gender at birth to their child
-   Located in Canada

What does participation look like?
　　　　As a participant in this study, you will be asked to partake in a recorded conversational video-conferencing interview that will take approximately 1 hour. This interview can be one-on-one, or you can interview alongside your partner(s). After the interview, you will be sent a copy of the transcript via email, and although not necessary, you will be provided the opportunity to edit and/or elaborate on what was discussed. Once I have completed a first draft of the research findings, I will also send a copy to you via email to provide feedback on. Again, this stage of participation is not mandatory. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the study at any time.

What are the benefits & risks to my participation?
As a caregiver using the gender creative parenting approach, you will have the opportunity to have your perspective shared in scholarly research. Sharing your lived experience of gender creative parenting has the potential to revolutionize the way various academic fields conceptualize the best way to promote a child's gender health. This understanding is important for developing better policies, practices, and training within a variety of fields, including medicine, counselling, social work, education, and more. At a minimum, my hope is that our conversation may be cathartic in some ways, facilitating new ways to think about, and speak to, your gender creative parenting experiences. A potential risk of participating in this study is that conversing about personal topics around your gender creative parenting experiences may be emotional or distressing. In appreciation of your time, each participant will receive a $50 honorarium.

If you are interested in participating, or want to know more about participation, please reach out to me privately on Facebook or by email at stodd1@learn.athabascau.ca. This study is supervised by: Dr. Emily Doyle who can be contacted at edoyle@athabascau.ca

This study has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns about your treatment as a participant, the research, or ethical review processes, contact the Research Ethics Officer at 1.780.213.2033 or by email to rebsec@athabasca.ca

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Date: *Insert date here*

Dear Potential Participant,

You may know me, my name is Skyler Todd, I am a gender creative parent, and I am the founder of the Facebook group named the *Alberta Gender Creative Parenting Collective*. I am reaching out to you as a Master of Counselling student at Athabasca University who is seeking participants to be a part of study on the lived experiences of caregivers practicing gender creative parenting. I am conducting this project under the supervision of Dr. Emily Doyle.

I am sending this message to invite you to be a part of this project because I believe you qualify for participation in this research project. Those who participate must be a caregiver with one or more children, practice gender creative parenting, did not assign their child(ren) a gender at birth, and are located in Canada. Please note participating in the project is entirely voluntary and that you may end your participation at any time without penalty. In no way will your membership with the *Alberta Gender Creative Parenting Collective* be impacted by your choice to participate.

Little academic research has been undertaken around the topic of gender creative parenting. Given the unique position gender creative caregivers are in, you can offer personal, practical, and social knowledge on navigating the tension between upholding child(ren)'s subjective sense of gender and mediating the pitfalls of a hyper-gendered world. Your experiences of raising children within the gender creative parenting model could provide greater insight on the best ways to promote a child's gender health, regardless of a child's gender identity. Therefore, the purpose of this research will be to investigate the lived experiences of caregivers using the gender creative parenting philosophy.

You are likely wondering what participation would involve. As a participant, you are asked to participate in a few ways:

1. Participate in a conversational video-conferencing interview that will be approximately one hour in length. This interview will be audio & video recorded. This interview can be one-on-one or can be done together with your partner(s)/co-parent(s). It will take place in the month of February and will be scheduled at a date and time that best suits you. This interview will be minimally structured, meaning that I will come prepared with some guiding questions, but it will advance more like a conversation where you are able to speak to topics of your interest.

2. If you wish to do so, you are invited to participate in the member-checking of transcripts and final research write up which will include research findings and conclusions made. Reviewing the transcripts will be used as an opportunity for you

to clarify, expand on, or delete any statements made. These will be sent to you within two weeks of the interview. You will also be provided with a copy of the final research text to acquire your feedback and an opportunity for you to remove any personal quotations used. Again, this phase of participation is not necessary.

Your anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured throughout this research study. Please note that no information will be collected which relates to your Facebook profile or participation in the *Alberta Gender Creative Parenting Collection* Facebook group. I will be the only person who will know of your participation and of your identity. For the purpose of the study, you will select a pseudonym (unless requested otherwise) and all identifying information will be altered to ensure your anonymity. All information you provide during the study will be kept securely on my personal computer, which is password protected. An additional copy will be kept on a portable, password-protected hard drive. Both will be kept in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. Data collected for the purpose of this research will be stored for five years after my thesis defence, and then electronically destroyed.

As a caregiver using the gender creative parenting approach, you will have the opportunity to have your perspective shared in scholarly research. Sharing your lived experience of gender creative parenting, has the potential to revolutionize the way various academic fields conceptualize the best way to promote children's gender health. This understanding is important for developing better policies, practices, and training within a variety of fields, including medicine, counselling, social work, education, and more. At a minimum, my hope is that our conversation may be cathartic in some ways, facilitating new ways to think about and speak to your gender creative parenting experiences. There will be a one-time honorarium of $50 paid to each interview participant.

If you are interested in participating or want to know more about participation, please respond to this Facebook message or reach out to me by email at: stodd1@learn.athabascau.ca. Additionally, if you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can also contact my supervisor Dr. Emily Doyle at edoyle@athabascau.ca. Please note I am also happy to share some of the guiding questions I intend to ask in our interview to help you make your decision or so that you feel more prepared for participation.

Thank you for considering participation.

Sincerely,
Skyler Todd

Appendix C: Letter of Information/Consent Form

LETTER OF INFORMATION
What are you having? The Lived Experiences of Gender Creative Parents

Date:

Principal Investigator	*Research Supervisor*
Skyler Todd (they/she)	Dr. Emily Doyle (she/her)
Master's Student	Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology
Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology	Athabasca University
Athabasca University	edoyle@athabascau.ca
stodd1@learn.athabascau.ca	

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled *'What are you having? The Lived Experiences of Gender Creative Parents'*

This form is part of the process of informed consent. The information presented should give you a basic overview of what this research is about and what your participation will involve, should you choose to participate. It also describes your right to withdraw from the project. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research project, you should understand enough about its risks, benefits and what it requires of you to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this document carefully as it is important that you understand the information provided to you. Please contact the principal investigator, *Skyler Todd* if you have any questions about the project or would like more information before you consent to participate.

It is entirely up to you whether or not you take part in this research. If you choose not to take part, or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you now, or in the future.

Introduction
My name is Skyler Todd, and I am a gender creative parent and Master of Counselling Psychology student at Athabasca University. As a requirement to complete my degree, I am conducting a study on the lived experiences of caregivers practicing gender creative parenting. This research project is being supervised by Dr. Emily Doyle.

Why are you being asked to take part in this research project?
You are being invited to participate in this project because you are a caregiver of one or more children, you practice gender creative parenting (or perhaps call the philosophy something different), you did not assign your child(ren) a gender at birth, and you are located in Canada.

What is the purpose of this research project?
Little academic research has been undertaken around the topic of gender creative parenting. Given the unique position gender creative caregivers are in, you can offer

personal, practical, and social knowledge on navigating the tension between upholding child(ren)'s subjective sense of gender and mediating the pitfalls of a hyper-gendered world. Your experiences of raising children within the gender creative parenting model could provide greater insight on the best ways to promote the gender health of children, regardless of their gender identity. Therefore, the purpose of this research will be to investigate the lived experiences of caregivers using the gender creative parenting philosophy.

What will you be asked to do?
As a participant, you are asked to participate in a few ways:

1. Participate in a conversational video-conferencing interview that will be approximately one hour in length. This interview will be audio and video recorded. This interview can be one-on-one or can be done together with your partner(s)/co-parent(s). It will take place in the month of February and will be scheduled at a date and time that best suits you. This interview will be minimally structured, meaning that I will come prepared with some guiding questions, but it will advance more like a conversation where you are able to speak to topics of your interest.

2. If you wish to do so, you are invited to participate in the member-checking of transcripts and final research write up which will include research findings and conclusions made. Reviewing the transcripts will be used as an opportunity for you to clarify, expand on, or delete any statements made. These will be sent to you within two weeks of the interview. You will also be provided with a copy of the final research text to acquire your feedback and an opportunity for you to remove any personal quotations used. Again, this phase of participation is not necessary.

What are the risks and benefits?
Benefits
As a caregiver using the gender creative parenting approach, you will have the opportunity to have your perspective shared in scholarly research. Sharing your lived experience of gender creative parenting, has the potential to revolutionize the way various academic fields conceptualize the best way to promote a child's healthy sense of gender. This understanding is important for developing better policies, practices, and training within a variety of fields, including medicine, counselling, social work, education, and more. At a minimum, my hope is that our conversation may be cathartic in some ways, facilitating new ways to think about and speak to your gender creative parenting experiences. There will be a one-time honorarium of $50 paid to each interview participant.

Risks
In our interview conversation, sensitive topics that come up around your gender creative parenting experience may cause emotional or psychological distress. If at any point our conversation, you wish to take a break from the interview, switch topics, or all together end the interview I will be supportive of your decision.
Do you have to take part in this project?

You do not have to participate in this study and there will be no negative consequences if you decline. Your membership in the "*insert recruitment Facebook group name here*" will in no way be impacted by participating or refusing to participate. You are free to ask questions before and during the study. If you consent to being in the study, you can stop the interview at any point and are free to withdraw at any time. The interview will only happen once. Within two weeks of the interview date, you will be sent a copy of the conversation transcript via secure email to review if you are inclined to. This is to provide you with an opportunity to clarify, expand on, or delete any statements made. Should you wish to withdraw or edit any of your statements, you may do so within two weeks of being sent the email with the transcript. This request should be made to myself, Skyler Todd at stodd1@learn.athabascau.ca. After this time, I will analyze all interview conversations had across participants to articulate the study's findings and write conclusions about the research. Once the first draft of this is complete, I will send a copy of these research texts to you via secure email which you are once more welcome to review. Again, if you have feedback or would like any personal quotations removed these suggestions can be emailed to me within two weeks of receiving them.

How will my confidentiality and anonymity be protected?
Your anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured throughout this research study. Please note that no information will be collected that relates to your Facebook profile or participation in the *Alberta Gender Creative Parenting Collection* group. I will
be the only person who knows of your participation and of your identity. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym (unless requested otherwise) and all identifying information altered to ensure your anonymity. I will quote you only with your permission. Identifying information will be kept in a master list, which lists identifying markers and pseudonyms. The master list will be kept on a password protected document on a password protected computer.

How will the data collected be stored?
All data collected for this research, inclusive of the video recordings and transcripts, will be stored on a portable hard drive and on my personal password protected computer. When these are not in use they will be kept in a locked cabinet. Data collected for the purpose of this research will be stored for five years after my thesis defence, and then electronically deleted. While most of the data will be stored on servers in Canada, both the video-conferencing platform, Google Meets, and the transcript program I will use called, Otter.ai, save data on cloud storage within the United States.

Regarding U.S. data storage, The US Patriot Act allows authorities to access the records of internet service providers. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. If you choose to participate in this survey, you understand that the data you provide will be stored for a time (i.e., until it is transferred from that company's server to the principal researcher's computer) and may be accessed in the US during that time. The security and privacy policy for the transcription and video conferencing companies can be found online.

Who will receive the results of this research?

Results of this study may be disseminated via a published written dissertation, at an oral defense of this thesis, through presentations at conferences or within a publication of an academic, peer-reviewed journal. The existence of the research will be listed in an abstract posted online at the Athabasca University Library's Digital Thesis and Project Room and the final research paper will be publicly available. If indicated below, participants will also be provided with a final copy of this thesis via a secure email.

Who can you contact for more information or to indicate your interest in participating in the research project?
Thank you for considering this invitation. If you have further questions, comments, or would like more information about the study please feel free to reach out to me, Skyler Todd by email at stodd1@learn.athabascau.ca or my supervisor Dr. Emily Doyle at edoyle@athabascau.ca. If you are ready to participate in this project, please complete and sign the attached Consent Form and return it one week after receiving it to my email at stodd1@learn.athabascau.ca. Please note I am also happy to share some of the guiding questions I intend to ask in our interview to help you make your decision or so that you feel more prepared for participation.

Thank you,
Skyler Todd

This project has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns about your treatment as a participant, the research, or ethical review processes, please contact the Research Ethics Officer by e-mail at rebsec@athabascau.ca or by telephone at 780.213.2033.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Your signature on this form means that:
- You have read the information about the research project.
- You have been able to ask questions about this project.
- You are satisfied with the answers to any questions you may have had.
- You understand what the research project is about and what you will be asked to do.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw your participation in the research project without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now, or in the future.
- You understand that if you choose to end your participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that point will be destroyed.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the project at your request, up to four weeks after your interview.

	YES	NO
I agree to be video recorded		
I agree to the use of direct quotations		
I would like to be provided the guiding questions in advance of my interview		
I want to be contacted following the interview to verify that my comments are accurately reflected in the transcript.		
I want to be contacted once the first draft of the research findings are complete to provide feedback.		
I want to be provided with a copy of the finalized thesis		

Pseudonym/Pronouns
If you wish to be referred to by a specific pseudonym, please write it here. Please also write the pronouns that should be used when referring to you in the research.

_____

Participant Email

If applicable, please provide your preferred email address for receiving the transcripts and final research texts to.

_____

Mailing Address

Please provide your mailing address where the $50 honorarium cheque can be mailed to upon completion of the interview.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Your signature confirms:

- You have read what this research project is about and understand the risks and benefits. You have had time to think about participating in the project and had the opportunity to ask questions and have those questions answered to your satisfaction.

- You understand that participating in the project is entirely voluntary and that you may end your participation at any time without any penalty or negative consequences.

- You have been given a copy of this Informed Consent form for your records; and

- You agree to participate in this research project.

_____ _____ _____
        Participant Name   Participant Signature   Date

Principal Investigator's Signature:

I have explained this project to the best of my ability. I invited questions and responded to any that were asked. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in participating in the research project, any potential risks and that he or she has freely chosen to participate.

_____ _____ _____
        Researcher Name   Researcher Signature   Date

Appendix D: Guiding Interview Questions

1. How do you define gender creative parenting?

2. What brought you to practicing the gender creative parenting philosophy?

3. How have your personal experiences of gender impacted your gender creative parenting practice?

4. What was your experience like of sharing with others that you would be practicing gender creative parenting?

5. What support do you have as a gender creative parent?

6. What successes have you had as a gender creative parent?

7. What barriers do you face as a gender creative parent?

8. How do you navigate those barriers?

9. How do you balance affirming your child's subjective gender identity and expression while also combating gender stereotypes?

10. How have your experiences with gender creative parenting impacted your view of yourself?

11. When considering gender, what hopes do you have for your child(ren)?

12. What do you foresee as next steps in your gender creative parenting journey?

13. Is there anything else about gender creative parenting you hope to share?

Appendix E: Tri-council Policy Statement Certificate

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE 2022

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Skyler Todd

successfully completed the Course on Research Ethics based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2: CORE 2022)

Certificate # 0000841151   14 September, 2022

Athabasca University
RESEARCH CENTRE

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (REB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The REB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

Ethics File No.: **25177**

Principal Investigator:
Mx. Skyler Todd, Graduate Student
Faculty of Health Disciplines\Master of Counselling

Supervisor/Project Team:
Dr. Emily Doyle (Supervisor)

Project Title:
What are you Having? The Lived Experiences of Gender Creative Parents

Effective Date: February 22, 2023   **Expiry Date**: February 21, 2024

Restrictions:

Any modification/amendment to the approved research must be submitted to the AUREB for approval prior to proceeding.

Any adverse event or incidental findings must be reported to the AUREB as soon as possible, for review.

Ethical approval is valid *for a period of one year*. An annual request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.

An Ethics Final Report must be submitted when the research is complete *(i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable))* or the research is terminated.

Approved by: **Date: February 22, 2023**

Paul Jerry, Chair
Faculty of Health Disciplines, Departmental Ethics Review Committee

_____

Athabasca University Research Ethics Board
University Research Services Office
1 University Drive, Athabasca AB Canada   T9S 3A3
E-mail rebsec@athabascau.ca
Telephone: 780.213.2033