

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Family, education, and safety:
How parents and researchers perceive the
needs of trans* youth

By

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August 2022

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts degree in the
Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

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Abstract

This study explores the needs of transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) youth through the eyes of the cisgender guardians, researchers, and care providers raising and working with them. Qualitative conventional content analysis was utilized to evaluate a series of parenting and research articles in order to observe how researchers and caregivers perceive and write about the needs of TGNC youth. Through this analysis I found that cisgender researchers and guardians identify the central needs of TGNC youth to be the need for family support, connection with the LGBTQ+ community, peer support, educational resources, and protection from discrimination. While there is some overlap between the two groups' findings, the incongruencies between the two groups' perspectives demonstrates a present gap in knowledge between guardians, researchers, and care providers. From these results I argue for the integration of guardian and care provider perspectives when developing trans* resources in order to ensure that all parties have a comprehensive understanding of trans* needs and consider a variety of perspectives when caring for TGNC youth.

Introduction

In order to provide the best care to TGNC youth, a population vulnerable for both their minority gender identity and age, caregivers need reliable and accessible resources that provide a comprehensive understanding of the trans*¹ experience, and how best to guide young individuals through this experience. The proverb “it takes a village to raise a child” can be applied quite literally to TGNC youth. It takes a supportive home, collaborative school administration, knowledgeable healthcare providers, respectful peers, and more to ensure the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of TGNC children.

For this reason, it is imperative that we understand how guardians² and care providers understand the needs of TGNC youth, and how they may go about addressing these needs in their care of these children. In order to analyze the perspectives of these caregivers this study will utilize content analysis to explore two central questions: 1) How do caregivers³ perceive the needs of TGNC youth, and 2) how do they write about these needs? By analyzing and comparing the needs identified in parenting articles and research articles written by cisgender guardians and researchers, we can better understand how these groups perceive and portray the various needs of TGNC youth through their writing. Based on the existing literature and preliminary research, I anticipate identifying commonalities and incongruencies between the needs identified across the research and parenting articles, and a difference in perspectives based on differing intended audiences and forums the articles were published.

¹ Trans* (read as “trans asterisk” or “trans star”) is utilized throughout this paper to to include all TGNC identities, such as nonbinary and genderfluid in addition to transgender, when referencing the trans community (OED n.d.).

² The term “guardian” is utilized throughout this paper to refer to any individual identifying as a parent or guardian to ensure the inclusion of individuals who serve as the primary guardians of TGNC youth, but may not identify as parents.

³ The term “caregivers” is utilized throughout this paper to refer to the collective group of any individual raising or working with TGNC youth (i.e., guardians, researchers, healthcare providers, therapists, etc.)

Throughout this analysis I will establish why it is necessary that we understand how these needs are perceived, and demonstrate the need for the analysis of informal educational resources. Following the presentation of my results on the perceived needs of TGNC youth and the perspectives caregivers use in their writing, I will argue for the integration of these voices into trans* resources, like care guides and informational webpages, in order to develop strong care guides and assist guardians and care providers in their work with TGNC youth.

The Study of TGNC Youth

There is a notable lack of research on the general needs of TGNC youth, as many academic and clinical studies have historically focused on the group's medical or therapeutic needs (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006). Until recently, a significant portion of research on TGNC youth has been focused on specific elements of their lives such as medical transition (gender affirming surgeries, hormone replacement therapy, etc.), instances of homelessness, higher rates of suicidality, and sexual health with a particular focus on HIV. Recent trends in trans* focused research have begun taking a broader look at the social, emotional, *and* medical needs of TGNC youth, offering new insights and care recommendations in their various publications. Works over the past decade by researchers like Elizabeth Anne Riley and her colleagues have begun developing an understanding of the needs of TGNC youth through interviews with TGNC adults reflecting on their adolescence, trans-affirming healthcare providers, and guardians (2013a; 2011). These recent studies have consistently identified needs for social support, education, safety, and transition advocacy, though further study on the broad needs is necessary to develop a more comprehensive understanding. This study will highlight some of these needs, and work to develop a better understanding of how different groups of caregivers perceive these needs.

Trans* Resources

In the research on the needs and experiences of the trans* communities thus far, there has also been a notable lack of research into the formal and informal education resources commonly accessed by TGNC individuals. The few studies that have explored informal educational materials, like Brandon Miller's analysis of transgender-created Youtube videos (2017), and Evan Krueger and Sean Young's study of a series of Tweets from a variety of transgender-related hashtags (2015) have provided insights into the tools being utilized to educate the LGBTQ+ communities and the larger cisgender heterosexual population, as well as how TGNC individuals are portrayed in these pieces. Additionally, these studies both employ content analysis, demonstrating the usefulness of this methodology in the study of LGBTQ+ educational tools.

Informal educational tools like pamphlets, blogs, podcasts, online videos, and social media posts have long been utilized by the trans* populations to share educational resources within the communities and among close allies (Evans et al., 2017; King, 2009). In the last decade as internet accessibility has become more widespread, internet-based resources have become particularly useful for TGNC youth and their caregivers. According to a 2017 study on online resource use, internet-based content has provided a greater opportunity for TGNC youth to explore their gender identities and seek out social support networks (Evans et al.). In even more recent years, social media sites like Tumblr, Twitter, and Instagram have provided TGNC youth with access to an expansive online community, and an opportunity for social and experiential learning that gender-questioning individuals without trans* communities in their hometowns may not have previously had access to (Fox & Ralston, 2016). The advancement of the internet has revolutionized the way we share and exchange information, and this has had a

particularly profound impact on trans* communities including an increasing population of individuals realizing their TGNC identities at younger ages in recent years (Ghorayshi, 2022).

These informal education tools not only provide a space for the free exchange of information, but they offer valuable insights into the needs and experiences of the trans* communities when studied formally. Krueger and Young's analysis of over 1,000 tweets provided useful insight into the health and social needs of the communities, and recommended further use of "real-time social media sites" and informal educational exchange tools to be utilized in the study of the trans* communities (2015). We are at an ideal time to utilize these resources to better understand the trans* communities and take note of how these informal resources can be integrated into reliable and accessible formal trans* resources. In my analysis of parenting blogs, an accessible resource often utilized by both TGNC individuals and their families, I am looking to fill this gap in the current research and further demonstrate the insights provided by these informal tools.

Cisgender Guardians & Youth Needs

In addition to the consideration of informal educational resources, this study will also address the authors and subjects of these informal resources: the cisgender guardians of TGNC youth, their care providers, and researchers exploring the needs of the trans* communities. Guardians of TGNC youth are positioned uniquely due to their close proximity to transness. While cisgender guardians still experience cisgender privilege, they have distinctive access to the trans* experience and the stressors involved. Studies involving the guardians of TGNC youth have found that they often tangentially experience minority stress in the process of raising their children and being exposed to some of the trans* experiences cis people are often unaware of, like housing and medical discrimination and transphobic prejudice (Hidalgo & Chen, 2019).

Guardians have also been found to experience social isolation from other guardians of cisgender LGB youth and a sense of loss after the coming out of their child, with many feeling the need to grieve their pre-transition child and experiencing a sense of genuinely emotionally impactful loss (Field & Mattson, 2016; Norwood, 2013). These experiences can have real impacts on the emotional well-being of guardians, often leading to the need for their own resources and social networks among other guardians of TGNC youth (Aramburu Alegria, 2018). Overall, these experiences may inform the way that guardians perceive and write on the needs of TGNC youth.

Guardians also play a significant role in the overall well-being of TGNC youth, as research has shown that parental support can have real benefits on the mental and emotional well-being of TGNC youth (Seibel, 2018). While TGNC youth have been found to have higher levels of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation, those children who have been supported in their social transition are found to have experiences of depression and anxiety more consistent with their cisgender peers than those TGNC youth who remained closeted or were unsupported in their social transition (Toomey, Syvertsen & Shramko, 2018; Olson et al., 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that we continue to develop a better understanding of TGNC youth's social, emotional, and medical needs in order to ensure that these needs are being met by caregivers.

Methodology

Conventional Content Analysis

This thesis utilizes qualitative conventional content analysis to explore a sample of parenting and research articles and analyze how guardians and researchers perceive and write on the needs of TGNC youth. Content analysis is widely utilized across the social and medical sciences to interpret and analyze textual and visual data in print, digital, and verbal format, and will be used in this thesis to explore digital text-based content sampled from a variety of news

websites and web-based parenting blogs (Stemler, 2015). While there are a variety of approaches to content analysis, this study will utilize conventional analysis, which draws findings out of data holistically, as opposed to evaluating data from previously established theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Kondracki, Wellman & Amundson, 2002). This approach allows for full immersion in the content and the development of inductive categories throughout the process of formal analysis.

Conventional content analysis was chosen for this thesis due to the reflexive nature of the methodology. Because conventional content analysis is meant to produce new categorizations and theory, it is often best suited for studying topics that lack previously existing theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Given the dearth of prior research on these materials, conventional analysis is an appropriate methodology for the study of these materials and the development of grounded theory. Additionally, the use of emergent coding and inductive categorization ensures that no predetermined or restrictive categories will drive the results. Conventional analysis allows for the coding categories to react to the data as a whole, and helps ensure that no key categories are excluded in the process of analyzing it.

While traditional content analysis may not be best suited for all forms of web-based analysis, due to the breadth of content available on the internet, blogs are often an exception (Herring, 2009). The controlled search mechanisms utilized within a majority of these sites allow for blogs and news websites to be more empirically analyzed when intentional searches are employed. This analysis employs a regulated search, detailed later in this section, to explore the sampled content in a controlled manner to mimic the way TGNC individuals and their caregivers may search for resources or articles on similar blogs or search engines.

Traditional content analysis was also chosen due to its successful use in the study of both formal and informal trans* educational resources like Youtube videos (Miller, 2017), Twitter

hashtags (Krueger & Young, 2015), and textbooks (Macgillivray & Jennings, 2008). Given that so much of the educational materials shared and utilized by the trans* communities and their family members are distributed online and published in digital forums (i.e., blogs, social media, etc.), web-based content analysis is particularly useful when exploring these informal educational resources.

Sample

This study analyzed a sample of 25 parenting articles and four research articles. Out of the 25 parenting articles selected for this sample, 16 were written by cisgender guardians raising at least one TGNC child, and nine articles were written by journalists based on interviews with cisgender guardians of TGNC children. All four research articles were written by cisgender researchers based on their interviews with TGNC individuals, guardians, and physicians. Throughout this paper, the articles written by guardians, or on the perspective of guardians, will be referred to as “parenting articles,” and the articles written based on empirical research and published to academic journals will be referred to as “research articles.”

Parenting Articles

The parenting articles sampled in this study were published to the websites of news platforms like CNN and MSNBC and parenting websites like *SheKnows* and *Today's Parent* which invite guardians to write and publish open-access articles on a variety of topics related to parenting and childhood development (please see Appendices B and C for further information on the sampled articles and their publishers). To meet the set criterion for sample selection, articles had to be published online to a United States based open-access forum within the last ten years and authored by cisgender individuals. For this sample, open-access includes both free websites

and websites that provide a limited number of free articles to readers per month, like the *New York Times*.

This criterion was established to evaluate the types of articles guardians raising TGNC youth may come across when searching for resources through search engines like Google, which is one of the most utilized online search engines among TGNC youth and their caregivers (Evans et al., 2017). Articles were identified by searching a variety of phrases meant to mimic what a parent or guardian may Google search when seeking resources on how to raise a TGNC child such as, “parenting a trans child/teenager/kid” and “what to do when your child comes out as transgender.” Phrases recommended by Google’s related searches were also analyzed which introduced the phrases, “how do I know if my child is transgender” and “what age does transgender start.” Please see Appendix D for a note on the ways the events of 2022 and how the recent string of state legislations targeting TGNC youth and their families has impacted the data since this sample was collected in late 2021.

Selecting recently published, free to access articles established a controlled sample and removed the variable of subscription payment inaccessibility. Given the variability of trans* rights around the globe, the geographic limitation was applied to ensure that narrative experiences were consistent among parenting articles. However, since these articles were published and accessed online, the resources and articles included in this analysis are representative of those who have internet access in the United States. It is also important to note the way political ideology may play a role in the tone or content of many of these articles. Although articles were deliberately selected from a range of sites with varying political affiliations, these types of articles are typically only published on moderate or left-leaning websites. Articles that were published to personal and family blogs run by individuals were

excluded in favor of parenting blogs or news sites run by teams of editors with their own publishing criterion. This helped ensure that there was a standard of review across the sampled articles and consistency across sources.

Research Articles

The research articles sampled in this study were published to a variety of academic journals including the *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* and *Professional Psychology: Research and Practices*. All articles were peer reviewed by each journal's standards. To meet the set criterion for sample selection, research articles had to be published in academic journals within the last ten years, involved participants from the United States, and primarily written by a cisgender individual. Given the lack of academic articles published on the needs of TGNC youth, the research articles faced a more minimal selection criterion to allow for the establishment of essential controls without eliminating all available articles.

The research articles' geographic requirements were necessarily also less rigorous, as many articles on TGNC youth are published out of the UK, Canada, and Australia. This distinction is likely due to the difference in requirements for researching with individuals under 18 in these countries compared to the United States. While all four of the sampled research articles include data from U.S. participants, two were published outside of the United States and include data from both U.S.-based and non-U.S.-based resources due to the availability of research. This geographic expansion may have some impact on the comparative findings given the difference in social experiences among TGNC individuals in the United States, Australia, and the UK. However, the means to receiving transition-related medical care is comparable across

these countries as Australia and the U.S. move towards an informed consent model of care⁴ (AusPATH, 2022; Shuster, 2021). Additionally, the presence of U.S. participants in all of the sampled research studies ensures that the data does speak towards American TGNC experiences.

A greater number of parenting articles were analyzed in an attempt to evaluate a similar number of TGNC youth when comparing the articles. The 25 sampled parenting articles highlighted the experiences of 37 TGNC youth (ages 4-20, $M = 12$), while the research articles included data from approximately 100 TGNC individuals. This disparity in numbers arises from researchers' much broader access to TGNC individuals compared to guardians speaking on their experiences raising only one or two TGNC children. Including a greater number of parenting articles, each of which included 1-5 TGNC youth, helped close the gap between the number of TGNC individuals included between the research and parenting articles.

Population

All articles were authored by cisgender guardians and journalists to limit the interaction between gender identity groups. While cisgender individuals bring a variety of perspectives, their experience *with* the trans* communities rather than *within* the trans* communities is what primarily informs their perspective on many of the experiences they are writing about. For the purpose of this study, to evaluate cisgender caregiver's understanding of TGNC youth needs and how they communicate their experiences caring for TGNC youth, the cisgender identity of the authors is a necessary element of analysis. For this reason, the few available pieces published by TGNC identifying journalists were excluded from the final sample.

Coding & Analysis

⁴ The informed consent model of care allows trans* individuals to pursue medical transition (through hormone replacement therapy and gender affirming surgeries) without undergoing mental health evaluation and referral, offering a more accessible means to medical transition, with a higher satisfaction rate (Spanos, et al., 2021).

To analyze both the parenting and research articles, I began with an initial read through of the sampled articles and completed descriptive coding to identify some immediately evident comparisons and emerging themes throughout the articles. Then, following a similar model highlighted in Steven Stemler's "Emerging Trends in Content Analysis" (2015), I utilized emergent coding to identify the themes present between the parenting and research articles. The findings will address the major themes identified in both sets of articles, the comparisons between the two sets, and the central inquiry of how cisgender caregivers perceive and write on the needs of TGNC youth.

Findings

A conventional analysis of the sampled articles shed light on the ways cisgender caregivers of TGNC youth perceive and write on their needs. Comparative analysis revealed a variety of similarities and differences between the parenting and research articles, both in the needs the two parties identified and the interventions they proposed. Throughout the rest of this thesis, I will lay out the needs identified in both sets of articles and how they compare to one another before discussing how combining these two perspectives benefits resource creation for TGNC youth and their caregivers.

Parenting Articles

Youth Needs Highlighted

One of the central topics of research this thesis explores is how guardians perceive the needs of TGNC youth. While not all of the sampled parenting articles explicitly identified TGNC youth needs, all discussed the realities of raising a TGNC child and the trials children face as a result of living their authentic gender identity. Through sharing their stories, guardians' narratives provided insight into the needs of TGNC children being raised by cisgender guardians

with many sharing similar experiences and concerns. In analyzing the sampled parenting articles, the most common needs guardians identified were: support and assistance in the pursuit of social and medical transition, the need for school accommodations, the need for family support, and the need to connect with the LGBTQ+ communities and other TGNC individuals.

The discussion of transition was a central focus of many of the parenting articles. This is understandable, as many of these families were at the early stages of the coming out process at the time their articles were written, speaking on the recent coming out of their TGNC child and the family's initial reactions. Other guardians were in the process of initiating their children's social and medical transition through actions like testing out new names and pronouns, disclosing identity to family and friends, and starting various hormone treatments. Even if guardians did not explicitly use the word "transition," many of the stories highlighted transitional times in their children's lives and identities and the impact these changes had on their families.

Some guardians discussed transition with hesitation or sorrow, expressing concerns for the perceived irreversibility of medical transition⁵ and the way it solidifies the likely permanence of their children's gender identity (Zaliznyak, 2021), as was the experience of one guardian who noted how she "grieved for the boy [she] knew would never grow into a man" after her daughter began medically transitioning to female (Gibbs, 2021). However, even those who had initial difficulties supporting a medical transition, or those who may have been nervous about how school officials or family members may react, ultimately emphasized the importance of trusting and listening to their children and pursuing both social and medical transitions when their

⁵ Though many incorrectly believe the impacts of transgender hormone replacement therapy are permanent, many of the impacts of both feminizing and masculinizing hormone replacement therapies are reversible depending on how long individuals have been taking hormones, according to transgender health guidance (Castañeda, 2015; Deutsch, 2020)

children desired to transition. On the topic of whether to start medical transition or not, one mother offered this advice:

If you're asking yourself, "Should I let my child take the next step toward transition?", the fear choice and answer would be, "What if she regrets it or changes her mind?" The love choice and answer would be, "Is this the right decision for the child in front of me now? What does my child need from me today?" (Hassouri, 2020)

For a majority of TGNC youth under the age of 18, guardians' cooperation is necessary to pursue any form of medical transition. In order for children in the United States to begin hormone replacement therapy or get any kind of gender affirmation surgeries, parental consent is required. Additionally, these treatments and procedures are often expensive, and not always covered by insurance, so parent's financial assistance is often also necessary. Importantly, guardians note the need not only for parental consent, but for genuine parental *support* in the process of medically and socially transitioning. Many guardians also noted the need for school accommodations, and the ways guardian support is often necessary to make this happen. In fact, obtaining school accommodations was one of the most consistent obstacles guardians experienced given the school-aged range of almost all of the children included in the sampled articles (approximately 92% between ages 5-18). To ensure the comfort, safety, and affirmation of school-aged TGNC youth, it is often up to school officials to assist in changing a student's name on class rosters, providing access to appropriate restrooms and locker rooms, transitioning students in any gender-separated extra curriculars, and enforcing anti-discrimination policies when necessary.

For some guardians this involved speaking to principals, teachers, and classmates, as well as providing resources to their child's school to ensure they were accommodated properly. For others, particularly those living in more rural or conservative locations throughout the American

South, this meant completely relocating their child for their protection, as in the case of Ellen and John who moved their transgender daughter Rylie to a new school to begin her social transition in second grade out of concern over the “reaction from their local community” (O'Connor, 2021).

While cases like Ellen and John’s require more hands-on supportive action on the guardians’ end, and the financial and educational means to do so, many of the parents displayed active allyship when it came to advocating for their children in school settings. For example, Shannon, mother of nine-year-old Sam, spoke of her experience going to meet with principals unannounced to inform them that her and her spouse “wanted [their transgender son] to be called a boy in school as he is at home” (O'Connor, 2021).

Many guardians also highlighted TGNC youth’s need for overall family support. In addition to the advocacy in school, and in transitioning, guardians noted the importance of parental and family support for the overall well-being of TGNC youth. This perspective is backed up by previously mentioned studies which demonstrate the positive impact family support has on LGBTQ+ youths’ mental and physical well-being (Seibel et al., 2018; Olsen et al., 2018). Though a majority of the parenting articles were more narrative-based for the purpose of providing advice derived from personal experience, many guardians and journalists cited these studies when mentioning the need for family support in reference to the disproportionately high suicide rates observed in the trans* communities (Toomey, Syvertsen & Shramko, 2018). One mother confessed that “the horrifying statistics for transgender kids and suicide are never far from [her] mind,” and concluded her article with a plea for guardians to offer support rather than becoming their child’s “first bully” (Audire, 2022).

However, when guardians cited this need for family support, they were not only referring to actions like taking them to gender specialists, or talking to their teachers. Support, for many of these guardians, means unconditional love, providing sanctuary, and ultimately trusting their children. Some of the most consistently offered advice from the parenting articles was ultimately to believe and listen to your child. Paria Hassouri, a pediatrician and mother to a transgender teenaged daughter, advised guardians to “ask [their children] what they want, listen, and go at their pace while providing support and being an advocate. Leave the doors of communication open” (Scottie, 2021). Another mother, Marlo Mack, offered similar advice by encouraging people to “listen. Our children know who they are. Or they will figure it out, if they are given the time and space to explore” (Okerlund, 2018). Once many guardians got over their initial fear of not knowing exactly what to do or say, they began to understand that “as a parent of a transgender or nonbinary child, it is most important to lovingly follow their lead and timing, and to affirm your child from the moment they share their gift” (Kaplan, 2021). It takes a lot of trust in their guardians for TGNC youth to feel safe enough to disclose their gender identity, and many guardians shared that their successes and breakthroughs took place when they trusted their children in return and provided them with the true support they needed.

Finally, guardians commonly noted the need for social connections with other TGNC individuals and interaction with the larger LGBTQ+ communities. Given the positive impact of representation and community social support on LGBTQ+ individuals, it follows that guardians have also noted these needs. In one parenting article, Kasandra Brabaw, mother to eight-year-old Heart, shared an experience she had with her trans son where they encountered a trans woman on the street just after Heart came out to his teachers (Brabaw, 2016). She described that this interaction felt like a “gift from God” by allowing Heart to see another TGNC individual thriving

(Brabaw, 2016). Other guardians took a hands-on approach to providing their children with immersion in the LGBTQ+ communities and queer culture, like Paria and her husband marching in the Los Angeles Pride Parade with their trans* child in 2018 (Hassouri 2020), Brandi Evans engaging in trans* activism in their home state of Kansas with her trans* son Andrew (Scottie, 2021), or Marlo Mack starting a podcast with her trans* daughter (Okerlund, 2018).

Guardians' Experience

In addition to identifying the needs of TGNC youth, a vast majority of the parenting articles, particularly those authored by the guardians themselves, discussed their own experiences and needs. These narratives most commonly highlighted guardians' reflections on their own journeys to acceptance, and shared a common fear for their children's safety and future well-being.

This sense of fear was palpable in a majority of the parenting articles, as guardians shared their very real concerns for the discrimination their children may face growing up TGNC in a society where trans* individuals face higher rates of violent crime and gender-based discrimination (Williams Institute, 2021). Guardians also expressed fear of the social pressures they would face if they were to publicly accept their child and aid them in their transition, with many already facing scrutiny from family and community members. One mother recalled a conversation with her mother-in-law early on in her son's transition: "'You need to fix this; it will be sad if she turns into a boy,' said my mother-in-law when Kyson insisted on a short haircut rather than the curly ringlets we'd all mooned over in his toddler years" (Audrie, 2022). Although many of the guardians noted these fears as being what initially caused their hesitation to believe or accept their child as TGNC when they first came out, they often shared that these

fears were largely resolved upon seeing how their children flourished when they were able to live as their true gender with the support of their families:

Before he formally came out, [Danny's mother] said she didn't see him as trans because she worried that she'd say the wrong thing or damage Danny in some way. But once he transitioned, she realized he knew himself better than she did (Scottie, 2021).

For many concerned guardians, their children's trans identities were beacons of hope in many ways. Guardians who watched their once energetic, happy children grow anxious, insecure, or depressed without explanation saw their children's trans identities as an answer. In discussing her family's journey, one mother noted that "when [her daughter] came out as a transgender woman, everything got better" (Dersch, 2019). After watching their children self-isolate and struggle with depression and anxiety, many guardians viewed their children's TGNC identities positively as their children transitioned into happier and more confident individuals.

Recognizing the joy that gender-affirmation brought their children is what often led guardians to more fully accept and support their children. Though guardians' paths differed greatly, this journey *to* acceptance was a common theme in the parenting articles. Even those that identified as allies prior to their children's coming out still expressed difficulty, as many of them realized the preconceived notions they had of their children were wrong, and confronted the fact their children's futures may look very different than what they envisioned.

The idea that these guardians were "mourning the loss" of their children's sex assigned at birth was quite common throughout the sampled articles. Once these guardians realized the futures they envisioned would not be fully realized, they experienced a form of grief for the adult children they pictured in their heads. One mother reminisced on the loss of some of the expectations she had after her son came out as transgender:

I realized there would be no father-daughter dance at her wedding. There wouldn't be a wedding dress or a prom dress to shop for. I wouldn't get to watch her give birth. I had

invested eleven years of hopes and dreams for my child's future. I had to grieve the loss of the future I had imagined (Plunkett, 2021).

However, similar to the way guardians overcame their fears for their children after realizing how happy their children were living in their true identity, these guardians came to celebrate their children, envision a new future, and let some of this grief go.

In their reflections on their experiences, many of the parenting articles also highlighted the guardians' needs alongside the needs of their TGNC children. The most common needs noted amongst guardians were the need for more publicly accessible educational materials to help guardians educate themselves and others while advocating for their children, and the need for a community of their own in order to exchange advice and social support among guardians of TGNC youth. A few of the guardians in the sampled articles have taken an active role in addressing these needs by making informative podcasts and leading local support groups for parents of TGNC and LGBTQ+ youth.

It is worth noting that while these needs and guardians' journeys from hesitation or grief to acceptance and unconditional love were common amongst those featured in the sampled parenting articles, this sample is only representative of those individuals who chose to publicly share their story. There are many guardians who do not experience these journeys, who do not experience that initial hesitation, or those who do not decide to accept their children. There are also many guardians who go through similar journeys, but choose not to share them publicly, or do not have the means to do so. Just as the trans* experience is not a monolithic one, the experiences of guardians of TGNC youth vary greatly, as well.

Research Articles

Youth Needs Highlighted

Compared to the parenting articles, the research articles sampled in this content analysis spoke much more explicitly about the needs of TGNC youth, as many explored central research questions focused on identifying and serving the needs of the trans* communities. Due to some of the ethical concerns with research involving children, much of the data in these research articles comes from the caregivers of TGNC youth (parents, healthcare professionals, etc.), and TGNC adults reflecting on their adolescent needs and experiences. In analyzing the sampled research articles, the most common needs identified by researchers were: the need for support from family, access to their community and a strong social network, education for themselves and others, and for safety and protection from discrimination.

Prior research has established that TGNC with parental support have better mental health and experience an adolescence more consistent with that of their cisgender peers (Seibel et al., 2018; Olsen et al., 2018). The findings of the sampled research articles are consistent with these studies, as all four note the importance and necessity of family support to ensure the well-being of TGNC youth. One study by Elizabeth Anne Riley and her colleagues (2013b) identified the desire for unconditional love from guardians as the second most commonly cited need among TGNC adult participants reflecting on their adolescent trans* experiences. This unconditional love and support was particularly salient for many of Riley et al.'s participants, half of whom did not attempt to come out to their guardians for fear of rejection and left many without a strong support system at home (Riley et al., 2013b). Another research study on the mental health needs of TGNC youth noted the importance of guardian support for children's overall well-being and advocated for the inclusion of guardians in the mental health treatment of TGNC youth when it was safe to do so (Oransky, Burke & Steever, 2019).

Three of the four sampled articles also similarly noted the need for greater access to education for TGNC youth, their caregivers, and the larger cisgender public. Another of the sampled research articles by Riley and her colleagues, which includes data collected from TGNC adults, guardians, and trans* healthcare providers, cites education as an important need for “counselors and medical professionals, for school staff, for parents and for community programmes” in addition to TGNC youth (2013a, p.651). Some TGNC participants pointed to the of lack education on the trans* communities as a driving force for anti-transgender discrimination and a “key barrier to parents supporting them” (Riley et al., 2013a, p. 652; Riley et al., 2013b). For this reason, many of the research articles highlighted the need for educational materials for both TGNC youth *and* cisgender people.

Without reliable and accessible trans* educational materials the brunt of educating the public falls onto the shoulders of the trans* communities. Because of this lack of education, many TGNC youth are forced to navigate the coming out process while also taking on the responsibility of educating their guardians, teachers, and healthcare professionals. Some of the TGNC participants in Riley et al.’s research noted that their guardians did not know what transgender meant when they initially came out to them, which left these children responsible for both the disclosure of their identity and their guardian’s education (2013a; 2013b). Thus, many of the sampled research articles identify the need for cisgender individuals to self-educate and have access to reputable educational resources as a need also relevant to TGNC youth.

All four sampled articles further spoke to the necessity of community and social connection for TGNC youth, whether that be engaging with other TGNC individuals their age, socializing with cisgender school peers, or being immersed within the larger LGBTQ+ communities. Researchers spoke to the importance of community for TGNC youth as a way to

connect with peers, avoid the negative impacts of social isolation, and even cope with discrimination (McCann et al., 2019; Riley et al, 2013a). Oransky, Burke, and Steever (2019) noted how the presence of community and peer social support can be particularly important for individuals without family or home-based support systems. The authors spoke of one case in which a trans teenager who lacked parental support and home stability was able to benefit greatly from the social support offered by her peers in group sessions, demonstrating the necessity of these peer-based social connections (Oransky, Burke & Steever, 2019).

The final need of TGNC youth, highlighted in three of the four sampled research articles, was the need for safety and protection from discrimination. We know from prior studies the negative impact in-school harassment and violence can have on the mental health of school-aged TGNC students (Wyss, 2004). The research articles reiterated the negative impact this kind of fear and discrimination can have on TGNC children, particularly when this social rejection and discrimination is occurring in school settings and enacted by their peers or trusted school officials (Riley et al., 2013b; Oransky, Burke & Steever, 2019). In order to combat these negative impacts and ensure the safety of TGNC youth, the research articles identified the need for safety and advocated for antidiscrimination policies.

Comparison

Congruence

A comparative analysis of these two sets of articles revealed some similarities and differences, both in the identified needs and in how the perspectives of the authors impacted the way they presented their findings and experiences. Most notably, both the parenting and research articles agreed on the needs for family support, for access to community and social networks, and for education.

Both guardians and researchers came to similar conclusions on the importance of parental and family support, further affirming prior research on the positive impact of guardian support of LGBTQ+ youth (Seibel et al., 2018). Guardians emphasized the importance of supporting your children in their gender journeys and offered advice to other parents on how to be supportive, while the research articles cited prior studies on the topic and highlighted the importance of family support through testimony of TGNC individuals and mental healthcare providers.

Beyond this congruent discussion of the need for family support, both sets of articles went further by including family perspectives and experiences. Since the parenting articles were written either by or about TGNC youth's guardians, there was a family narrative present across all 25 sampled articles that was communicated through the inclusion of anecdotes and personal stories with their children mixed between guardians' advice. While the research articles often took on more calculated or clinical tones, due to the nature of publishing in an academic journal versus to an online blog, the sampled research articles also included narrative on the family experience presented through the inclusion of case studies and stories provided by participants. Given how imperative family is to one's identity and bodily autonomy during childhood, it is not surprising that family support comes up quite a bit in these studies and when exploring the needs of TGNC youth. It is intriguing to note strong presence of family support across all of the content analyzed for this thesis, as well as the way some research articles even strayed from their more formal reporting to include these family narratives, demonstrating how, to quote one mother, "when someone transitions in their life, the ... family transitions too" (Kaplan, 2021). This content demonstrates that it is difficult for a child to transition socially or medically without their family, in some ways, transitioning with them.

Both sets of articles also spoke on the need for community and a social network. Again, these needs were voiced in varying ways throughout the articles, as guardians spoke on the importance of finding community for their children and finding ways to expose them to other TGNC and LGBTQ+ individuals, and researchers noted the importance of forming reliable social connections with peers and finding community support for the benefit of their emotional well-being. Overall, the congruence between the two parties enforces this central need for community as an additional form of necessary social support.

Another similarity noted in analysis was the element of fear and the need for protection from discrimination, though these themes were presented in slightly different ways between the two sets of articles. The fear in the parenting articles was primarily expressed by the guardians on behalf of their children given their awareness of the discrimination and prejudice that TGNC individuals in the United States face. However, when the guardians voiced their fears it was their *own* fear on behalf of their child, rather than commenting on their child's potential fears. By contrast, the research articles presented this fear in a more removed manner by creating space for TGNC participants' reported concerns over safety and using their findings to advocate for nondiscrimination policies, particularly in schools. Although the research articles presented these concepts through statistics on discriminatory violence and concern over public safety, the undercurrent in those findings was also one of fear as TGNC participants brought safety into the conversation related to experiencing anti-trans discrimination. This distinction provides an intriguing look at how the authors' relationships to transness impacted their focus, and how the perspectives of guardians and researchers can speak on similar aspects of the trans* experience in different ways.

Incongruence

As hypothesized, the perspectives offered between the two sets of articles greatly differed, though there was quite a bit of overlap in the identified needs. This hypothesis was predicted given that academic articles, journalism pieces, and parenting blog posts are written with vastly different tones, structures, and motivations. The differences in perspectives between these two sets of topics, however, go beyond the journalistic style of the various articles. These perspective differences also indicate the authors' proximities to transness. In this sample, guardians offer a more personal, narrative perspective due to both the style of writing expected from an online blog or news site and the ways raising a TGNC child exposes them to parts of the trans* experience that cisgender individuals are not typically aware of, or that are not readily accessible to them. As a further example of the impact this exposure has on cisgender guardians of TGNC children, Hidalgo and Chen (2019) found that guardians experience a proximal form of minority stress in response to their tangential experience with the trans* communities' minority stressors (Hidalgo & Chen). While TGNC individuals face the full brunt of these minority stressors, it is likely that experiencing these stressors secondhand influenced the personal voice observed in many of the parenting articles. When discussing some of the issues that impacted their children, like facing push back from family members or school officials, many guardians adopted "we" language when writing on these experiences. While the impact of these experiences is more directly felt by the TGNC children, many guardians wrote on the ways the entire family was impacted by these instances.

Though this difference in perspective is not necessarily a notable incongruence when considering how caregivers identify needs, it is an important factor in the question of how caregivers write on these needs. Cisgender researchers and healthcare providers may be well aware of the reality of the trans* communities' experiences and the minority stressors the

communities face, but without the same direct or secondary personal exposure to these stressors, the way they write about the needs and experiences of TGNC youth fundamentally differed in this sample.

However, it is important to note that this observation of differing perspectives as a result of proximity may not be widely applied to *all* researchers and care providers, as many researchers and care providers who work closely with trans* populations may also experience this proximity. These findings do not categorically define guardians as close-proximity, and researchers and care providers as distant-proximity. Rather, this explanation of proximity is one that may explain the difference in perspectives evaluated in this sample of articles, and further research would be necessary to determine how proximity to the trans* communities may impact the ways in which researchers and caregivers write more broadly.

In addition to their differing perspectives, the intended purposes behind the parenting and research articles are also incongruent, resulting in the varied presentation of similar findings. A majority of the parenting articles were written as a way to share advice and informally educate through sharing narrative. Guardians and journalists utilized titles like “What I learned as the parent of a transgender child” (Hassouri, 2020) and “What to do when your kid comes out as transgender” (Sampson, 2019), and delivered parenting stories and anecdotes to offer a series of recommendations to other guardians, or to uninformed cisgender people. These articles are casual, educational, and accessible to those with internet access who frequent parenting blogs, opinion columns, and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. For this reason, the parenting articles utilize more widely-understood informal language, providing clear definitions for terms like “transgender” or “dead name” to ensure that the articles will be digestible to the larger population. They are published online with the hope that readers might walk away from these

articles with a greater understanding of TGNC youth or guidance on how to raise their own TGNC child.

On the other hand, the sampled research articles are written by gender scholars and clinical researchers with the intention of providing care guidance to clinical providers, or making recommendations for organizational resource development and policy creation. These articles are often meant to be consumed by other researchers, policy makers, care providers, and academics, and are thus written to that audience with the kind of methodological jargon necessary for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Many of these articles are also behind paywalls, accessible only to those with relevant institutional access or the means and intentions to access and purchase individual journal articles.

While both of these audiences and intentions are incredibly necessary to distribute information and education to a wide variety of interested parties, their incongruent intentions lead to a difference in presentation that must be acknowledged in this analysis, as it means that different groups of people will ultimately have access to different forms of information. When trans-affirming healthcare providers and therapists are immersed solely in clinical care guidance, they may miss the information and personal edge being offered by parenting articles. Likewise, when cisgender guardians are only exposed to the perspectives of other guardians in support groups and online chat rooms, they may miss the potentially useful information that clinical guides and research articles have to offer. While these articles should continue to exist in their current forms to effectively offer these pieces of information to their intended audiences, it is important to consider the ways these perspectives can be made more accessible and/or combined in the development of educational materials for TGNC youth, their families, and trans* allies.

The take-away from this analysis should not be that guardians, care providers, and researchers should neutralize their perspectives or somehow offer all sides of the story whenever they speak on their experiences caring for TGNC individuals. Rather, in presenting these findings I encourage the consideration of all perspectives collaboratively, and for the recognition of the content offered in informal educational materials. When developing resources, or working with TGNC youth, it is necessary to recognize the vastness of the trans* experience and how different actors can present a variety of important insights.

Discussion

This thesis looks to understand how guardians, care providers, and researchers understand and write about the needs of TGNC youth through conventional content analysis. Findings indicate a notable overlap among the needs identified between the parenting and research articles, but presented through the lens of the relative relationship these caregivers have to the TGNC youth they are writing on. This congruence indicates that some consensus on the needs of TGNC youth among their caregivers, independent of one another, does exist and that there are certain needs that may be more evident to caregivers. This consensus does not necessarily mean this thesis presents a comprehensive list of TGNC youth's needs, but rather that these findings help identify which needs caregivers are most familiar with, and which ones they may be more inclined to focus on in their care.

Furthermore, the present incongruencies in the perception of needs suggest that not all caregivers are on exactly the same page, and that there may be benefits in finding ways to combine these various forms of expertise, along with the necessary insights offered by the trans* communities, to fully understand their present needs and develop effective care guides and resources.

While it is imperative that we factor in the voices of the trans* communities when considering the needs of the community itself, it is important to consider that (1) it should not be solely up to the trans* communities to create their own resources and educate the cisgender population, and (2) there are insights that guardians and other caregivers have that TGNC individuals may not be able to identify. It is clear from the data collected by scholars like Elizabeth Anne Riley and Arnold H Grossman that TGNC youth want access to resources and support, but often do not want to be held solely responsible for educating their guardians, teachers, and healthcare providers while also trying to navigate their gender identity in adolescence (Grossman & D'augelli, 2006; Riley et al., 2011; Riley et al., 2013b).

When developing formal educational resources, care guides, and youth programming for the trans* communities it is necessary to consider all avenues of information. There will be information that trans-affirming doctors and mental healthcare providers have on medical transition and emotional wellbeing needs that TGNC youth may not be aware of in their adolescence, just as there may be useful insights guardians have on navigating social transition and family relations. There is merit in the informal educational materials the trans* communities has historically relied on, and it is worth taking into account the advice and expertise being shared through accessible internet platforms like YouTube, blogs, online chat groups, and social media platforms when developing an understanding of how to best serve and support the trans* populations. In fully understanding the trans* experience and developing a more reflexive system of accessible resources, the expertise of trans* individuals, the guardians' personal perspective, and the calculated perspective of the researchers and care providers can all uniquely contribute to our understanding of the needs of TGNC youth and should all be incorporated when developing resources, educating the public, and caring for TGNC youth.

Limitations

An important consideration to these findings is that additional identity factors like race and ethnicity were often not included in the parenting articles, and demographics were often not noted in the research articles. Across all 25 of the parenting articles, only three guardians mentioned their race and ethnicity, and only one discussed the impact this had on their experiences. Out of the four sampled research articles, only Oransky, Burke & Steever (2019) included partial racial demographics for the case study examples included in their article. Given the exclusion of these discussions in the sampled content it is likely that some important intersectional experiences relevant to race and ethnicity are missing from this analysis. Future studies on the needs of TGNC youth and their families should be mindful of the importance of multiple dimensions of identities and intersectional concerns when studying the trans* experience, and should consider the inclusion of further demographics reporting and questions related to TGNC individuals' cultural identity.

In evaluating the demographics of the TGNC youth highlighted across the parenting articles, there was also an overrepresentation of binary transgender youth (male-to-female, and female-to-male identifying individuals), with only roughly 6% of the children identifying as gender nonconforming (which may include identities such as: nonbinary, agender, and genderfluid). This underrepresentation is indicative of an absence of articles shared by parents of gender nonconforming children, but it also means that the needs of GNC youth may not be comprehensively represented in this analysis.

Additionally, in evaluating the demographics of the guardians represented across the sample of parenting articles, there was a strong overrepresentation of mothers. Out of the parenting articles that were written by guardians, nearly 80% of the guardians identified as

mothers. Therefore, these findings are more representative of the mother's perspective, though further exploration of the paternal experience would be necessary to empirically identify any differences that may be present between guardians of different genders.

Another limitation of this analysis is the geographical constraint of the United States. For the purpose of keeping the scope of this thesis domestic, it was necessary to not take on an international scope for fear of making overgeneralizations between greatly differing countries. That being said, there is a greater availability of research on TGNC youth and the needs of the trans* communities available in other countries, particularly in Canada and the UK, and with greater access to global resources it may be useful to complete a transnational analysis in future research on the topic of TGNC youth needs.

Conclusion

This thesis has analyzed the ways guardians and researchers perceive the needs of TGNC youth, how their perspectives impact the way they write on these needs, and how these two mediums compare to one another. By utilizing conventional content analysis and emergent coding, I found that the most common needs identified amongst guardians and researchers were the need for family support, connection with the LGBTQ+ community, peer support, educational resources, and protections from discrimination. A comparative analysis of the two sets of articles found that there were similarities and differences between the needs identified by guardians and researchers, and that the portrayal of these needs was greatly influenced by the forums the articles were published and by the relationships the authors had to the trans* communities. These findings indicate a potential gap in knowledge and perspective between the guardians, researchers, and care providers raising and working with TGNC youth. In order to fill this gap, I propose the integration of parent and care provider perspectives into trans* educational resources

and care guides in order to provide all parties with the most comprehensive understanding of the needs and experiences of TGNC youth.

Future research should more explicitly analyze the needs of TGNC youth by incorporating the perspectives of TGNC youth, their families, and various care providers in their research designs. These studies should utilize qualitative means of data collection, such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups, to explore TGNC individuals' needs more completely and better address social and educational needs alongside emotional and physical wellness needs. Given the importance of family and social support identified in this analysis, future research should also make an effort to evaluate the families of TGNC youth more completely by involving fathers, siblings, extended family, and other individuals integral to the rearing of the child. Given the current overrepresentation of the voices of mothers in many of these studies and articles, there is not as much known about the perspectives of fathers and more extended family members, and studies should explore how different family members may provide different levels of social support. Finally, to gain a more comprehensive and intersectional perspective of the trans* experience, it is necessary that future research on the needs of TGNC youth include inquiry into the way culture, race, and ethnicity impact the experiences and needs of diverse TGNC individuals.

Appendix A

Positionality Statement

I offer this analysis as it is informed by my identity as a white transmasculine individual who has worked closely with the LGBTQ+ community throughout my academic career and personal life. I acknowledge that this research and my writings are inherently impacted by my identities, my race (white) and identification within the trans* communities, as well as dimensions of identity and experience that I do not have the space to name here. In many ways, my close proximity to the trans communities in both an academic and personal context benefited my research. Particularly in the evaluation and coding of the parenting articles, my experience within the trans* communities and being raised by cisgender parents allowed me to recognize the nuance in the language that guardians used in their articles to acknowledge the needs they were identifying by discussing the ways they were watching their children struggle. My understanding of the needs of TGNC youth has been impacted by my own experiences as a white individual raised in a working class, single mothered household, and is in no way inclusive of the expanse of perspectives across the larger trans* communities. While I recognized some of the guardian's language to be referencing a particular need, another trans* individual may have identified a different variety of themes informed by their own experiences.

As a trans* person who was raised by a cisgender lesbian mother, my immersion in the LGBTQ+ community has been lifelong, and thus my research has been heavily influenced by my desire to further explore the queer family experience. In many of these parenting articles I heard echoes of the experiences of my own mother and father, watching them struggle with my initial coming out, but become fierce allies to the trans community as I have come into my identity. In reading these parents' narratives of the fear, I recognized my own mother's fears of the

discrimination I face as a transgender person living in the U.S. Therefore, I may have missed critical elements of people with different experiences.

Throughout the last decade of my life and transition I have engaged heavily with trans* media and informal educational resources, like parenting articles and advice blogs. I learned about what it meant to be trans* on social media websites like Tumblr, and spent many years prior to beginning my medical transition watching YouTube “vlogs” of trans men documenting their recovery from top surgery. Over the years of searching for resources online, I often came across these parenting articles and found that many of them had intriguing insights into the trans* experience that even I myself hadn’t thought of extensively, due to my deep immersion in the communities. My interest in the perspectives of this well-informed, but slightly outsider community of guardians and providers piqued my interest and led to my in-depth exploration to complete this study.

Additionally, my choice to pursue this topic was influenced by my identity within the LGBTQ+ communities at a time of increased anti-trans American legislation. While I chose this topic and selected my sample of articles prior to some of the more direct attacks on trans* youth began with Governor Abbott’s actions in Texas and Florida’s passing of the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, these events played out as I was completing my analysis and report. Though I don’t speak to my own personal emotions on this topic explicitly in this paper, my sorrow, anxiety, and anger over much of these legislative moves influenced my desire to focus more on the ways my analysis could translate to resource creation, in an attempt to channel some of these emotions into research that could become actionable.

It is my belief that access to comprehensive informal educational resources is vital to the health and safety of TGNC youth, perhaps now more than ever, and it is imperative that we take

a variety of parental and researcher perspectives into account in order to understand how to best serve trans* families. At this time many young gender-questioning students in Florida, one of my own home states, may no longer feel safe going to trusted adults (like their teachers or school counselors) looking for resources or someone to talk to in light of recent legislation. Having access to comprehensive resources can help children learn about TGNC identities and the trans communities, what to do if they think they'd like to explore their gender identity, and how to talk to their family and friends about how they're feeling. Having more encompassing resources that include insights from the trans* communities, guardians and providers can be especially helpful for children who may not have access to those groups, and can help avoid some of the misinformation found online. Throughout my identity exploration and ongoing transition process, I personally found some resources to be quite helpful, but many websites and guides I accessed felt incomplete, under informed, or like they weren't grasping the whole experience I was about to walk into. It is my hope that in completing research like this that I can advocate for, and aid in the process of creating the resources I needed in my adolescence.

Appendix B

Parenting Articles Included in Analysis

- Acernie, A. (2016, October 25). *Raising a transgender child*. Charlotte Parent. <https://www.charlotteparent.com/raising-a-transgender-child/>
- Audrie, J. (2022, January 26). *How I'm raising a gender non-conforming child in a conservative religious community*. SheKnows. <https://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/2530395/transgender-child-conservative-community/>
- Brabaw, K. (2016, September 8). *This is what it felt like when my daughter became my son*. Prevention Editorial. <https://www.prevention.com/life/a20475412/when-my-daughter-became-my-son/>
- Burde, J. (2014, November 28). *Three mothers share their stories of raising transgender children in the face of adversity*. The Plaid Zebra. <https://theplaidzebra.com/raising-transgender-children/>
- Brown, P. (2022, May 3). *Dwayne Wade and Gabrielle Union give advice to parents raising transgender children*. Vibe. <https://www.vibe.com/news/national/dwyane-wade-and-gabrielle-union-parenting-advice-transgender-children-1234660748/>
- Clark, C. (2017, November 1). *Meet the Keith family*. Metro Parent. <https://www.metroparent.com/parenting/advice/meet-keith-family/>
- Delmore, E. (2020, February 27). *Author and activist Jodie Patterson on raising a trans child in a 'bold world'*. MSNBC. <https://www.msnbc.com/know-your-value/author-activist-jodie-patterson-raising-trans-child-bold-world-n1142591>
- Dersch, M. (2019, February 15). *My child wants to transition from male to female – Here's how I'm responding*. She Knows. <https://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/2003011/help-transgender-child/>
- Emanuele, F. (n.d.). *Frankly fatherhood – What if? Raising a transgender child*. The Mother & the Caregiver. <https://themomandcaregiver.com/frankly-fatherhood-what-if-raising-a-transgender-child/>
- Faye, S. (2021, Aug 24). *'I feel like it's quite a shaky acceptance': trans kids and the fight for inclusion*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/aug/24/shaky-acceptance-transgender-kids-families-fight-for-inclusion>

- Gibbs, C.A. (2021, January 22). *My son became my daughter: A mother's transition*. Grown & Flown. <https://grownandflown.com/son-transition-to-daughter/>
- Goldstein, J. (2021, November 11). *Mom opens up about raising 5-year-old son who is transgender: 'I want people to understand'*. People Magazine. <https://people.com/human-interest/mom-emily-torrison-opens-up-about-raising-son-who-is-transgender/>
- Hassouri, P. (2020, September 8). *What I learned as a parent of a transgender child*. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/08/well/family/transgender-child-parenting.html>
- Johnson, R. (2017, July 18). *How the parents of trans teens are fighting for their kids' lives*. Vogue. <https://www.vogue.com/article/raising-a-transgender-child-vogue-august-2017>
- Kaplan, S. (2021, June 16). *Things I wish everyone knew about raising a transgender child*. Piccolina. <https://piccolinakids.com/blogs/piccolina-post/things-i-wish-everyone-knew-about-raising-a-transgender-child>
- Nichols, V. (2021, July 1). *I wish I had understood more about trans kids before my son came out*. Scary Mommy. <https://www.scarymommy.com/raising-transgender-child-lessons>
- Nichols, V. (2019, September 30). *My journey as the parent of a transgender child*. Scary Mommy. <https://www.scarymommy.com/parenting/chelsea-lin-wallace-loss-through-the-eyes-of-a-child>
- O'Connor, G. (2021, March 25). *Transparenthood: Raising a transgender child*. Parents Magazine. <https://www.parents.com/parenting/dynamics/raising-a-transgender-child/>
- Okerlund, R. (2018, July 27). *One Seattle mom's advice for how to raise a transgender child*. Parenting Map. <https://www.parentmap.com/article/marlo-mack-podcast-transgender-kid>
- Paul, A. W. (2012, October 7). *A transgender story: My daughter, my son*. LA Times. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/la-xpm-2012-oct-07-la-oe-paul-transgendered-child-20121007-story.html>
- Pecoraro, N. (2022, May 3). *What I did when my 4-year-old told me that he's transgender*. Motherly. <https://www.mother.ly/life/motherly-stories/raising-4-year-old-transgender-child/>
- Plunkett, T. (2021, May 30). *I'm not an amazing mom for accepting my transgender son*. Today's Parent. <https://www.todayparent.com/family/parenting/im-not-an-amazing-mom-for-accepting-my-transgender-son/>

- Sampson, B. (2019, April 27). *What to do when your kid comes out as transgender*. Medium Parenting. <https://medium.com/gender-from-the-trenches/what-to-do-when-your-kid-comes-out-as-transgender-4c0864c7d6d9>
- Scottie, A. (2021, July 26). *Four parents of transgender boys on the challenges and joys of raising their sons in a world that can be hostile*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/25/us/parents-of-transgender-children-joy-wellness-trnd/index.html>
- Valentine, P. (2015, August 24). *Raising a transgender child*. Chicago Parent. <https://www.chicagoparent.com/uncategorized/transgender-mom/>

Research Articles Included in this Analysis

- McCann, E., Keogh, B., Doyle, L., & Coyne, I. (2019). The experiences of youth who identify as trans* in relation to health and social care needs: a scoping review. *Youth & Society*, 51(6), 840-864.
- Oransky, M., Burke, E. Z., & Steever, J. (2019). An interdisciplinary model for meeting the mental health needs of transgender adolescents and young adults: The Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center approach. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 26(4), 603-616.
- Riley, E. A., Sitharthan, G., Clemson, L., & Diamond, M. (2013a). Recognising the needs of gender-variant children and their parents. *Sex Education*, 13(6), 644-659.
- Riley, E. A., Clemson, L., Sitharthan, G., & Diamond, M. (2013b). Surviving a gender-variant childhood: The views of transgender adults on the needs of gender-variant children and their parents. *Journal of sex & marital therapy*, 39(3), 241-263.

Appendix C

Article Citation (See Appendix A)	Author Type	Publication Type	Source	Child Name	Age	Gender
Audrie, 2022	Guardian	Parenting blog	SheKnows	Kyson	5	GNC
Hassouri, 2020	Guardian	News Article	New York Times	N/S	15	MTF
O'Connor, 2021	Journalist	Parenting blog	Parents Mag	Rylie	9	MTF
				Sam	9	FTM
				Avery	4	MTF
Scottie, 2021	Journalist	News Article	CNN	Andrew	14	FTM
				Danny	14	FTM
				Max	13	FTM
				N/S	N/S	FTM
Plunkett, 2021	Guardian	Parenting blog	Today's Parent	N/S	11	FTM
Kaplan, 2021	Guardian	Parenting blog	Piccolina	N/S	N/S	N/S
				N/S	N/S	N/S
Clark, 2017	Journalist	Parenting blog	Metro Parent Mag	Hunter	18	FTM
Gibbs, 2021	Guardian	Parenting blog	Grown & Flown	N/S	10	NONBINARY
Brabaw, 2016	Guardian	Parenting blog	Prevention	"Heart"	8	FTM
Paul, 2012	Guardian	News Article	LA Times	Finn	20	FTM
Nichols, 2019	Guardian	Parenting blog	Scary Mommy	N/S	10	FTM
Dersch, 2019	Guardian	Parenting blog	She Knows	Jasmine	20	MTF
Faye, 2021	Journalist	News Article	The Guardian	"Alex"	N/S	MTF
Sampson, 2019	Guardian	Parenting blog	Medium Parenting	N/S	20	MTF
Goldsetin, 2021	Journalist	News Article	People Magazine	EJ	5	FTM
Nichols, 2021	Guardian	Parenting blog	Scary Mommy	N/S	10	FTM
Okerlund, 2018	Journalist	Parenting blog	Parent Map	N/S	9	MTF
Valentine, 2015	Guardian	Parenting blog	Chicago Parent	N/S	6	FTM
Delmore, 2020	Journalist	News Article	MSNBC	N/S	12	FTM
Emanuele, ND	Guardian	Parenting blog	Mom & Caregiver	Mona	N/S	MTF
Burde, 2014	Journalist	News Article	Plaid Zebra	Theresa	N/S	MTF
				Chris	14	FTM
				Eve	15	MTF
Percoraro, 2022	Guardian	Parenting blog	Motherly	N/S	4	FTM
Brown, 2022	Journalist	News Article	Vibe	Zaya	15	MTF
Johnson, 2017	Journalist	News Article	Vogue	"Sander"	14	FTM
				Ariel	16	MTF
				Trinity	14	MTF
				Q	11	FTM
Acerni, 2016	Journalist	Parenting blog	Charlotte Parent	James	10	MTF
				Taylor	10	MTF

Appendix B: Parenting Article Content Breakdown & Demographics

Children's names in quotations are pseudonyms assigned by article author

Appendix D

As of June, over 300 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been proposed in the year of 2022, a majority of which attack TGNC individuals' rights to medically transition and play sports (ACLU, 2022). TGNC youth have faced a particularly brutal wave of new legislation, as many of these bills not only attack their rights, but further attempt to criminalize the actions of supportive, gender-affirming guardians and medical providers (Goodman & Morris, 2022; ACP, 2022).

These new legislations are relevant to this thesis in a number of ways. For one, this new string of legislation beginning in 2022 had a profound impact on my data collection process. During my initial search for parenting articles in late 2021, as I began searching the phrases included in the Methodology portion of this paper, I was primarily presented with resource guides published by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and parenting articles written by moms looking to share their knowledge with other curious or struggling guardians. These search results told the story of a community finding ways to share resources through the internet, and guardians building creative and engaging networks in order to help their children.

This story changed rather drastically over the course of a few short months. Throughout the data analysis period, I made a point to periodically check in on the same searches to see if any new parenting or research articles had become available, and I kept up with the news of rising anti-LGBTQ+ legislations out of concern for my own rights as well. Suddenly, a search that once yielded results of community advice now presented think-pieces and emergency resources to guardians and their TGNC children. An influx of articles offering legal advice to parents in Texas and trans-friendly healthcare providers in Arkansas pushed parenting articles further down Google's search algorithm. News articles on the latest bills began suppressing the previously available advice columns, as related searches now read "how to help trans youth in

texas?” These same searches in June 2022 continue to tell this story of urgency and fearful action as state legislators launch an attack on gender-affirmation and allyship throughout the United States.

These events not only impacted my sample collection, but have larger implications on the findings of this thesis. Parenting articles from the last ten years have told similar stories of guardians’ journeys towards acceptance as they struggled to face and overcome the fears they held for their children. However, many of these bills present new fears for guardians and care providers alike and this is worth further exploration. As these bills progress over the course of 2022 and beyond it will be important to continue to provide responsive resources to TGNC youth and their families, while also looking into the new fears that have arisen in response to the developing legislation and anti-trans rhetoric TGNC families are living through in the United States.

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