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Running head: BYE BYE BINARY

Bye Bye Binary: Exploring Non-Binary Youths' Experiences of Discrimination, Mental Health,
and Community Belongingness

by

Ellis Furman

BA Psychology, University of Guelph, 2015

THESIS

Submitted to the Department of Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Master of Arts in Psychology

Wilfrid Laurier University

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increase in research focusing on the impacts of social exclusion and discrimination on the mental health of transgender populations. Despite this, few studies have focused on the experiences of gender non-conforming, or “non-binary” individuals. This community-based participatory research (CBPR) study ($N = 10$) used the arts-informed method of body mapping, individual interviews, and group discussions to examine non-binary young peoples’ experiences of discrimination in relation to mental health. Participants consisted young people (ages 16-25) living in Waterloo, Ontario. A visual analysis, thematic analysis, and member-checking session were employed to analyze collected data. In the following thesis document, I present two manuscripts where I share a) a methodological reflection of engaging with qualitative and arts-based approaches, and b) results pertaining to mental health, discrimination, and community belongingness. I describe how I, a non-binary researcher, grappled with my positionality within the research context, theoretical frameworks, and commitments to undertaking research with and for community. Implications for institutional policy, curriculum, and pedagogy within post-secondary institutions are discussed.

Keywords: non-binary, mental health, discrimination, community belongingness, arts-informed, community-based participatory research, body mapping

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“A space where people get it”: A methodological reflection of arts-informed community-based participatory research with non-binary youth

Introduction

In this paper I will share my reflections from my masters thesis work on the *Bye Bye Binary* project that sought to provide space for non-binary youth to use their power to dismantle binary notions of gender. Participants engaged in arts-informed methods through a participatory action research framework to explore their experiences of identity development, discrimination, mental health, and desire to advocate for their needs. The term “non-binary” is an umbrella term used to encompass individuals who do not identify with a binary gender (woman/man). Non-binary people might describe their gender identity using other terms such as agender, pangender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, and more. Non-binary identities can be housed within the larger conceptualization of transgender (or “trans”), which is when a person does not identify with their natal gender (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2016). While some non-binary people identify as trans, there are many who do not feel that “trans” best describes their experiences (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2016). “Non-binary” will be used to describe both trans and non-trans identified individuals in order to respect the heterogeneity among the youth engaged in this project.

In this paper, I will reflect on my experiences negotiating my positionality, the theoretical frameworks applied, my methodological choices, and lessons learned. I will also elucidate participants’ voices in unpacking the value of utilizing research methods that resonate with non-binary youth.

Situating Myself in the Research Context

As someone who identifies as non-binary, I felt it was important to develop a project that would provide other non-binary young people with opportunities to explore their identities and share their lived experiences with like-minded individuals. Woman and man are genders that are

universally recognized and it can be isolating to experience gender outside of the binary system.

I understand what it feels like to exist within a context where my identity does not feel valid. It is difficult to navigate through spaces and consume products that are inherently gendered.

Women's and men's washrooms, gendered clothing departments, hygiene products, gyms, toys, locker rooms, and media surround me, and I constantly wonder where I fit within the male/female dichotomy. I am drawn to non-binary activism in attempt to create new ideas and spaces and assert non-binary peoples' existence rather than hoping to fit within a gendered category.

Although I identify as non-binary and queer, my worldview has been informed by the intersections of my experiences as a white, educated, able-bodied, settler on Turtle Island¹. My understanding of my identity is framed within a complicated context where gender and sexuality are centered in ongoing processes of colonization (Jackman & Upadhyay, 2014; Smith, 2012). Thus, I deliberately grounded this work by looking at gender in the context of settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill (2013) define settler colonialism as “a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there” (pg. 12). Within settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples are controlled, exploited, and erased from their land by settlers who seek to reap the benefits of valuable land (Arvin et al., 2013; Smith, 2012). Heteropatriarchy is a social system enforced through colonization that normalizes heterosexuality and patriarchy, and inherently views alternative configurations as deviant (Arvin et al., 2013). European settlers forced their binary gender system, norms for heterosexuality, patriarchy, and the nuclear family upon Indigenous peoples in North America. Thus, settler

¹ Turtle Island is a term used by some Indigenous groups when referring to North America

colonialism operates through imposing heteropatriarchy and reinforcing definitions of a male/female binary dictating how people should think, behave, dress, and interact with others (Anderson, 2000; Arvin et al., 2013; Morgensen, 2012). Trans and non-binary identities are often seen as diverging from heteropatriarchy (Cricchio, 2016). It is important for me as a non-binary person to challenge heteropatriarchy and colonialism through research in attempt to dismantle norms suggesting that non-binary individuals should assimilate into the dominant culture. Thus, I am invested in conducting my research from a theoretical framework that highlights diversity and participation of non-binary people.

Arts-Informed Community-Based Participatory Research

Trans communities have historically been objectified, medicalized, pathologized, and misrepresented through research (Davidson, 2007; Namaste, 2000). However, recent community-based participatory research (CBPR) projects have helped facilitate the progression from trans persons as research subjects to active participants in shaping research processes (Singh, Richmond, & Burnes, 2013; Travers et al., 2013). Trans PULSE, a community-based research project undertaken to understand the health needs of trans people in Ontario, Canada, demonstrates the importance of engaging in highly collaborative research (Travers et al., 2013). The Trans PULSE research team worked from a value system of community initiation, continual building of capacity, and community control over each project stage, with attention to dismantling power relationships among researchers and trans community members (Travers et al., 2013). Trans PULSE has set a strong standard for engaging in meaningful and impactful CBPR with trans people.

Methods of conducting participatory research with trans communities to strive for greater social change have additionally been outlined in the literature. Singh et al., (2013) developed a checklist to critique traditional methods of inquiry and to guide researchers in taking a trans-

positive approach (See Appendix A). Components of the checklist encourage researchers to articulate a theoretical framework that will frame research centered on trans identities. Singh et al. (2013) recommends that researchers should carefully reflect on their positionality and to develop strategies where they can be held accountable for potential emergent challenges. Questioning how to engage trans participants in empowering research must also be considered, for example, providing opportunities for trans participants to actively participate without placing a burden on them (Singh et al., 2013). Singh et al. (2013) also stress the importance of conducting outreach with trans people and communities and creating authentic relationships, collaborating with participants, and connecting the research with advocacy and social change.

Both Trans PULSE and Singh et al.'s checklist for participatory action research with trans communities have informed the CBPR approach I applied in *Bye Bye Binary*. I used intersectionality and transgender theory to guide this project and to examine how power, privilege and oppression operate at different levels to shape participants' experiences and influence my own role as a researcher. Further, I felt that an intersectional approach would encourage reflections on the diversity of participants based on experiences of privilege and oppression. Both theories can be used to dismantle the perceived homogeneity of trans identities (Bauer et al., 2009; Namaste, 2000). Intersectionality is a way of conceptualizing identity and its relationship to power by examining multiple forms of oppression by examining the interplay between experiences of oppression and privilege (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersectionality has become a formable theory to explain “multiple, complex, interconnecting categories, or social positions that are not static, stable, or universal” (de Vries, 2015). In this regard, intersectionality has been pertinent in transgender scholarship to describe the heterogeneity of trans and non-binary identities in opposition of normative expectations (de Vries, 2015). Roen (2001) frames transgender theory as understanding trans-ness through

disputing the gender binary and as not necessarily requiring physical transitioning from one gender category to the other. Transgender theory conceptualizes gender identity as “fluid, embodied, and socially and self-constructed social identity”, and this can be used to understand the intersectionality of trans realities (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010). I felt that both theories would provide me with frameworks to critically engage with and celebrate the diversity of non-binary people through their active participation in the research process.

Developing a research design that amplifies the voices and experiences of participants in my research is imperative to me. I am inspired by previous studies that have involved queer and trans youth in participatory processes with creative methods to explore their experiences with difficult and sensitive subject matter such as bullying (Wernick et al., 2014), visibility and representation (Holtby, Klein, Cook, & Travers, 2015), and mental health (Sanchez, Lomeli-Loibl, & Nelson, 2009). Each of these projects integrated creative methods to appeal to the interests of queer and trans youth. Ware (2010) explains that artistic expression is a significant component of community building for trans people, and is a relatable way to engage youth in discussions about their personal experiences. Arts-informed research uses art as data to further analyze, understand, and disseminate to the wider community (Sakamoto, 2014). Such methods have been used to facilitate underserved groups’ engagement with sensitive subject matter through creatively representing complex experiences (Flicker et al., 2014; Sakamoto, 2014; Wilson et al., 2014).

Denzin (2003) asserts that arts-informed research further values the point of view of queer and trans people, and has potential to advance political movements foundations in social justice activism. There is limited research on arts-informed research practices with non-binary people in both academic and grey literature. However, it is evident that arts-informed methods fit well within a CBPR framework, as well as trans and non-binary peoples’ needs to resist and

disrupt traditional research pedagogies that have been used to misrepresent their community. For example, trans and non-binary people have used the arts as a way to contest misconceptions, promote progressive dialogue, and empower identity, self-expression, and the ability to tell one's own true story (Dittman & Meecham, 2006). Dittman and Meecham (2006) also suggest that visual art is a powerful medium to discuss issues around gender identity and expression.

Non-binary would benefit from opportunities to honour their lived experiences and demonstrate their expertise on their personal circumstances (Chilisa, 2012; Wright, Darko, Standen, & Patel, 2011). Research approaches and findings become more accessible and engaging through arts-informed approaches (Cole & Knowles, 2008). In planning the method for this study, I felt that the multiple modalities offered by arts-based approaches such as visual imagery, sound, music, poetry, drama, narratives, and video might be appealing to non-binary people who often feel constrained by rigid boxes for self-expression through language in the contexts that perpetuate binary gender norms and expectations. Creative approaches can move across cultures and boundaries, and support the expression of ideas that might be too difficult to explain in words. Wilson et al. (in-press) stated, "arts-based approaches can transform lives, making engagement with the arts a form of intervention" (pg. 7). This framing of the utility of arts-based research left me with a central question that has guided the work I will explore in this paper, namely: how can arts-informed research processes facilitate conversations about non-binary youth realities?

Body mapping

Body mapping is an arts-informed research method that has been utilized in projects aimed at exploring individual and community health. Body mapping involves a process of creating life-size visual representations that holistically explore peoples' minds and bodies (Skop, 2016). Body mapping progressed from Jonathan Morgan's (2002) Memory Box Project at

the University of Cape Town that supported South African women with HIV/AIDS in documenting their lives (Devine, 2008). South African artist Jane Solomon later modified the Memory Box Project into an art therapy technique where women with HIV/AIDS used words and images to share their life stories. While body mapping emerged out of art therapy, this method is recognized within participatory research projects (Solomon, 2002). Body mapping has been used in participatory projects exploring myriad topic areas including HIV/AIDS (MacGregor, 2008; Maina, Sutankayo, Chorney, & Caine, 2014), refugee youth (Davy, Magalhaes, Mandich, & Galheigo, 2014), undocumented workers (Gastaldo et al., 2012), fibromyalgia (Skop, 2016), sexual health (Ramsuran & Laurwengu, 2008; Senior, Helmer, Chenhall, & Burbank, 2014), and gendered violence (Sweet & Escalante, 2015). The use of body mapping to examine experiences of mental health is quite relevant to non-binary people despite the lack of literature exploring non-binary people's mental health. For example, body mapping has the potential to visually capture the nuances of how gender non-conformity and other visible markers of a stigmatized identity can deleteriously impact mental health (Miller & Grollman, 2015).

Body mapping was chosen for this project because of my awareness of the non-binary community's needs, my engagement with theory and relevant bodies of literature, and the compatibility of artistic expression for working with young people. Having worked with queer and trans people in Waterloo Region, I know that arts-based methods would be appealing to young non-binary participants. Further, prior to starting my project, I consulted with non-binary community members to describe body mapping and gain feedback on whether this method would be appropriate for people in Waterloo Region. Body mapping processes outlined in both Solomon (2002) and Gastaldo et al.'s (2012) facilitation manuals outlined an approach that could be successfully adapted and linked to key components of transgender theory and

intersectionality. Reflecting on gender identity and expression can be a daunting task for non-binary people who might be at different stages of their identity development. Body mapping allows people to thoroughly examine their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and vulnerabilities through artistic expression on a canvas that is the physical outline of their bodies (Gastaldo et al., 2012). The process of using visual and written text, as well as collaging and creating images and symbols takes on both a personal and political significance. Talking about nuances of gender embodiment, transitioning socially or medically, and all of the resulting thoughts and feelings can be emotionally charged and requires a flexible method for reflection. Body mapping provides this needed flexibility.

Project and Methods

Bye Bye Binary was my masters research project that involved ten non-binary young people between the ages of 16 and 25. Participants were involved in a multi-session body mapping workshop that I facilitated. Each session included a combination of creative activities and group discussions that provided opportunities for youth to continuously reflect on their artistic process. The number of participants that attended each body mapping workshop and activities with their respective objectives are outlined in Appendix B. I conducted individual interviews with each participant approximately one month after the body mapping workshop concluded.

Body Mapping Workshop

During November 2016, I facilitated a three-session body mapping workshop at the Centre for Community, Research, Learning and Action, at Wilfrid Laurier University. The first two sessions occurred on one weekend, while an additional third session was held the following weekend. Each session lasted approximately six hours. Participants were compensated with \$25 per session and provided lunch and snacks.

Session 1. The first workshop session was organized to familiarize participants with one another, explain the research project background, and begin the body mapping process. As participants began to arrive at the first session, I set out materials for them to decorate nametags, and then facilitated a few icebreaker activities once all participants were in attendance. I began by acknowledging the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnawbe, and Haudenoshauonee peoples that we were occupying during the workshop. This acknowledgement was important in framing a collective understanding of the relationship between gender and colonization. After acknowledging the land, participants were given an informed consent form that if signed, would provide consent to use data collected from the workshop sessions. Participants were encouraged to ask questions to ensure that they fully understood the risks and benefits of the study, as well as what their participation would entail. I also took this opportunity to share a brief PowerPoint presentation that introduced the research project and the corresponding research questions and objectives. I did this to outline how the rest of the workshop would be organized and ensure that participants had an opportunity to share their feedback on the order of activities.

Group guidelines and tour. I designed the first workshop session to develop group guidelines and mechanisms to promote group safety and to give participants a tour of the rooms they had access to during the workshop. The group generated the following guidelines: a) respect everyone's preferred name and pronouns; b) participate to the fullest of your capacity; c) do not be afraid to ask questions; d) feel free to share any learnings from the workshop after the study, but refrain from sharing any personal information about other participants; e) take care of yourself and ask the facilitator for support. We used a "thumbs up/thumbs down" system to indicate how participants were feeling throughout the workshop and whether they required additional support. The group agreed to use a "thumbs up" symbol when leaving the workshop space to indicate that they were feeling positive and did not require any support from me. A

“thumbs down” conversely symbolized that they experienced negative feelings and required support from me. Participants were then given a tour of different rooms they were able to access throughout the workshop such as gender inclusive washrooms, and a common area with couches away from the main activity room that could be accessed to take breaks.

Warm up activities. Before engaging in body mapping, I wanted to guide participants through activities that would help them connect to their own bodies and with each other. First, I instructed them to stand in a large circle, where I led them in various breathing exercises, physical stretches, and body movements. Then each person had an opportunity to show the rest of the group a stretch or body movement that helps them feel grounded. Participants followed along and learned each other’s movements. I encouraged participants to apply these breathing exercises and grounding techniques throughout the workshop if they needed a break from the group at any point during the sessions. Finally, I facilitated a game for participants to learn each other’s names and interact to build comfort in the group.

Outlining the body. Participants were instructed to remove their shoes and get into pairs to trace the outline of each other’s bodies on large sheets of paper. Participants were encouraged to select a pose that best represented who they are. For example, during the member checking session, one participant explained why they designed their body map (See Figure 1) with a dynamic pose: “ I disrupt the implicit top-bottom of the paper by going diagonally across the paper with my body, because bodies also have implicit top-bottoms and I wanted to depict conflict”.



Figure 1. Body map depicting a dynamic pose diagonally across the paper.

I then suggested that participants outline their bodies in pencil and then choose a paint colour for the body outline that best represented how they were feeling in that moment.

Undoing gender. This section of the workshop was intended to explore representations of participants' roots, identities, and where they are now in their lives. I prompted them to think about their identity development and map out their process of self-discovery on their body-map. Additional prompts included: 1) Think about and draw symbols that represent your identities; 2) What symbols come to mind when you think about your experiences with gender identity and expression, what about other identities that you hold?; 3) Think about processes of coming out as gender non-conforming, how have you come to understand your identity?

Group discussion. After a full day of activities, I facilitated an audio-recorded group discussion to check-in with participants after the first session. I specifically asked about how people were enjoying the workshop and activities, and whether they would like to see anything

changed for the remaining sessions. After turning off the audio-recorder, I ended off the session by facilitating an activity called “connectos”. Participants were instructed to write down ten words that they would use to describe themselves, those who were comfortable had an opportunity to share words from their list. Participants would then take turns saying words from their list that connected or related to the previous word spoken. This activity was meant to highlight individual experiences and promote a sense of connectivity among participants sharing with each other.

Session 2. The second workshop session allowed more time for participants to work on their body-maps since many of the housekeeping items were completed during the previous session. I began this session with an activity where participants learned about symbolism and storytelling. The purpose of this activity is to be able to take a found object and use symbolism and storytelling to give a new meaning to the object. Each participant is given a few minutes to take the object and create a short story to give the object a new meaning. I chose to facilitate this activity to encourage them to use art to symbolize emotions, feelings, and experiences in symbolic ways. After doing the activity, we discussed examples of how they can use artistic principles to create symbols for their body maps. Before continuing working on the body-maps, I briefly reminded participants of the informed consent form they signed the previous day, and that they had the right to cease participation at any point throughout the research process.

Filling in the body. I instructed participants to visually depict their identities throughout the inside of the body outline. They were prompted to think about the people in their lives, the places they are immersed in (i.e. post secondary institution, workplace, place of worship etc.), and daily interpersonal interactions, and reflect upon how they feel in various situations. Then participants were prompted to depict how they feel physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually within the spaces in which they are immersed and through their interpersonal

relationships (See Appendix B). I encouraged participants to think about challenges experienced, and how they cope with such barriers. I suggested that participants employ symbols, abstract designs, and other materials such as magazine cut-outs, stickers, and fabrics to represent their experiences.

Group discussion. I later engaged participants in an audio-recorded group discussion where they discussed their reasoning for painting certain images on their body-maps. This discussion was fruitful in sharing participants' responses to the body mapping prompts and describing specific creative choices that were made to connote meaning.

Session 3. Seven participants attended the final workshop session. The other three completed their body-maps during the second session and did not feel compelled to attend an additional session. This final session allowed participants to finish any remaining details on the body-maps and to complete two exercises.

Envisioning change. This exercise was intended to uncover participants' personal goals in relation to their experiences of inclusion within their community. I asked them to reflect on what they would hope to change or what they are working towards, in order to create safer spaces for them. There was no limit to the type of change envisioned, for example, some participants spoke about changing individual behaviours to improve their health and well-being, whereas others shared a need for larger social and structural changes.

Message to others. The final body mapping exercise involved participants developing a visual or written message that they would like to share with viewers about their experiences as a non-binary person. Prompts included: a) What message would you like to share with others who might not be familiar with non-binary identities; b) Why is it important for people to know this?; c) Where on your body-map would you want to put this message, and why?

Gallery walk and group discussion. At the end of the third session, participants engaged in a gallery walk where each person had time to explain their body maps to the rest of the group. The gallery walk was audio-recorded to capture conversations that arose through sharing each other's completed artwork. I also used this opportunity to ask participants to elaborate on creative choices that were not explained. See Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 for examples of body maps

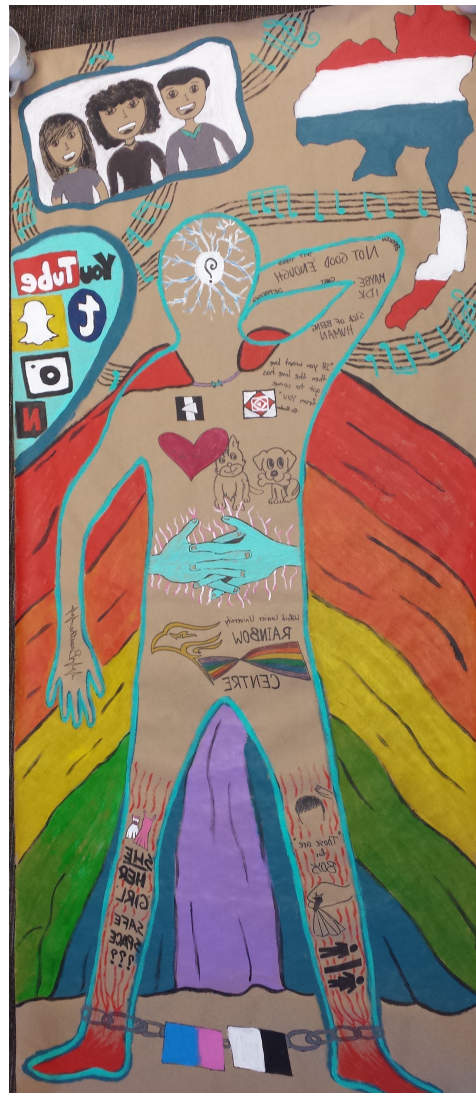


Figure 2. Completed body map.

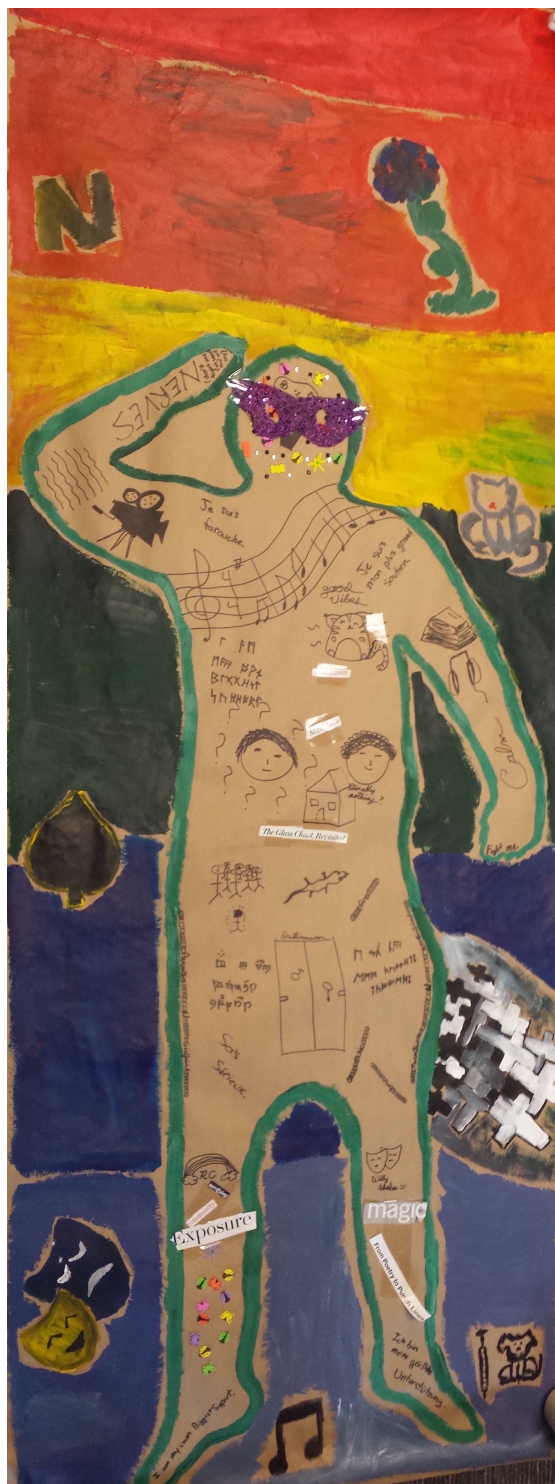


Figure 3. Completed body map.

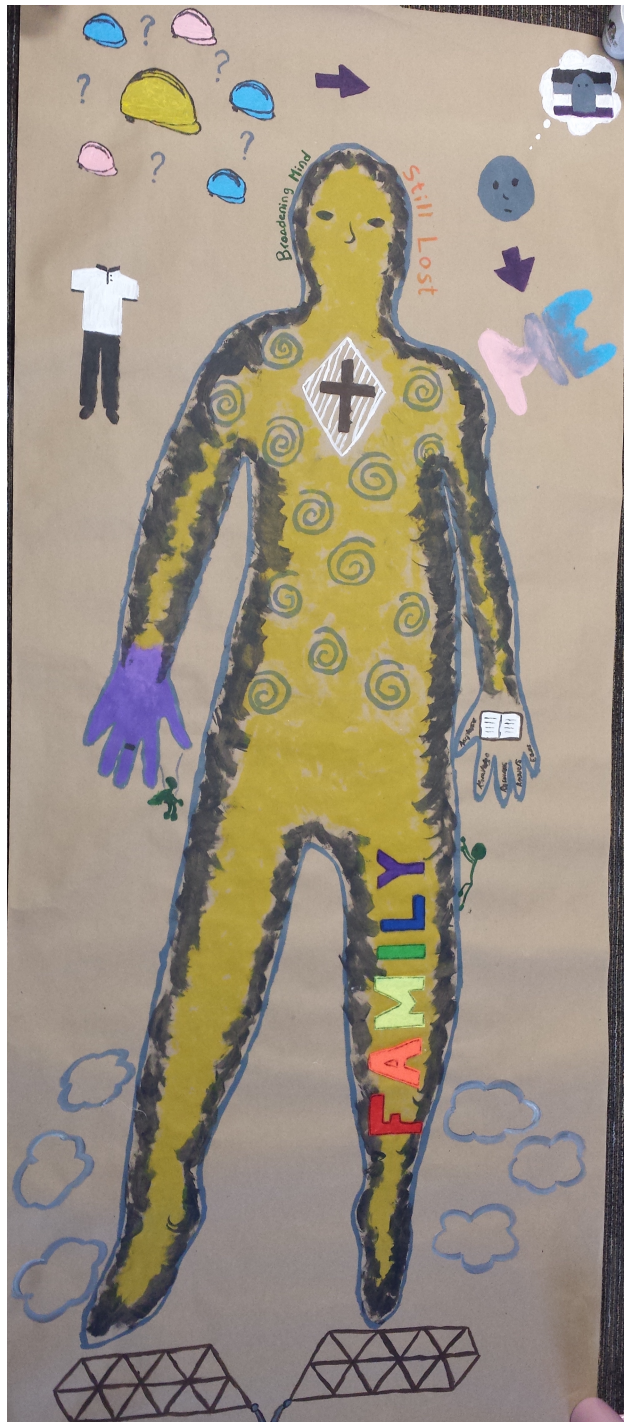


Figure 4. Completed body map.

Individual Interviews

Participants were invited to participate in audio-recorded individual interviews approximately one month after the completion of the body mapping workshop. Each individual interview lasted between 1-1½ hours, where they were asked to elaborate on their experiences of discrimination and its effects on mental health and community belongingness. I also utilized the interview to gain evaluative feedback about the body mapping workshop to better understand the most and least valuable components, so that it could be improved for the future.

Reflective Notes

I took notes after each workshop session to record observations about the context and atmosphere. Information about the setting and details of how the sessions were running were woven into personal reflective notes about the strengths and weaknesses of each session. This served as an opportunity to document my reflections as an insider/outsider researcher working with other non-binary youth as both a researcher and a peer (Bhattacharya, 2007).

Data Analysis

At this stage in the research process I was fortunate to receive funds to hire a participant to take on a “peer researcher” role for the remainder of the project. CBPR projects have applied this approach where a peer researcher is involved in the research process (Guta, Flicker, & Roche, 2013). The involvement of a peer researcher varies depending on the study. Some are involved from the start of a project, while others are involved in specific tasks. Due to the timing of a funding opportunity, a peer researcher assisted me in the visual and thematic analyses.

Visual data analysis

A combination of approaches for engaging in visual analysis were consulted and combined to cultivate a visual analysis protocol that would be critical and reflexive (Rose, 2007), apply the elements and principles of art (Helmets, 2006), and provide descriptive and

interpretive analyses of visual images (Reavey, 2012). The peer researcher and I collaboratively developed and followed an integrative strategy for visual analysis that involved: a) viewing images and recording initial impressions and feelings; b) examining the context of the images and the circumstances under which they were; c) building in reflexivity and examining our respective positionality in relation to images and emergent codes, and openly discussing biases; d) independently coding descriptions of the images and their elements and principles of design using Nvivo9 qualitative analysis software; e) grouping codes together and identifying themes until there were not further distinctive themes; and f) using the member-checking session to research each artist's intent behind their images. The visual analysis process was both participatory and collaborative in nature as participants interpreted the visual data collectively during the member-checking session.

Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was employed to analyze transcripts from the group discussions and individual interviews, and to further triangulate them with the visual data. The peer researcher and I developed a coding scheme that included themes specifically pertaining to the evaluation of the body mapping workshop and the overall use of arts-informed methods in CBPR. After individually coding each relevant transcript, we discussed how the codes fit best together and merged them into larger categorical themes.

Member Checking Session

A final member-checking session provided room for participants to review the initial themes derived from the preliminary analysis of focus group and interview data, and to collaboratively analyze the body map data. Few, Stephens, and Rouse-Arnett (2003) define member-checking as a process in CBPR where "the researcher brings the knowledge back to the informants for discussion and clarification" (pp. 207). I first shared the initial themes through a

PowerPoint presentation where I used quotations to illustrate the findings. Participants provided thoughtful suggestions on how the initial themes could be modified to better represent their experiences (Padgett, 2008).

Second, I involved participants in interpreting their own body maps and then discussing their ideas as a group. While planning the member-checking session, I realized that I did not provide participants with enough background in artistic techniques to support them through their creative process. I did not feel that it was my place as a researcher to interpret participants' artwork, so I refrained from misinterpreting the meanings that their art was intended to elucidate. I instead provided them with background information on the elements and principles of art and design (i.e. colour, line, form, balance, shape) and strategies for how they could explain the meaning behind their art using art theory. After presenting this information, participants had another opportunity to apply interpretive strategies in describing their body-maps. Participants also found that including them in the visual analysis was important in giving them more voice in shaping the research findings.

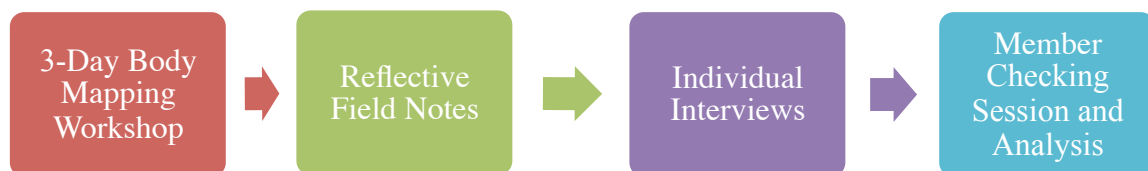


Figure 5. Depicts my research process.

Reflections On The Process

Body Mapping Workshop

Employing body mapping in conjunction with rapport building activities and group discussions were effective in garnering the perspectives and ideas of non-binary young people. Based on both participants' reflections and my own, the body mapping workshop was

particularly valuable in serving as a safe space for like-minded non-binary young people to congregate and generate ideas free from judgment. Body mapping also resulted in powerful pieces of art that could serve multiple purposes, enabled participants to explore their own identity then to connect with others through a shared identity.

Importance of safety. In developing the body mapping workshop, it was imperative to plan activities to promote participants' safety. Skop (2016) suggests that researchers who utilize body mapping "need to be trained in group facilitation to ensure that participants feel emotionally safe throughout the body mapping process" (pg. 41). Having received previous group facilitation training, I was able to create a workshop space that was physically and socially safe. I held the workshop in a building that is physically accessible and has gender inclusive washrooms to meet the needs of non-binary young people of varying abilities. I believe that giving participants an initial tour of the workshop space, washrooms, and break area helped them feel that I prioritized their safety from the start. Icebreaker activities where participants shared their names and pronouns, the development of our collective group guidelines, and "thumbs up/thumbs down" system were all useful in promoting ongoing safety.

In the individual interviews, some participants commented on my attempt to create an inclusive space centered on the needs of non-binary people. One participant shared:

The first day was really fun. It was really nice to be in the room filled with non-binary folk. It was really cool to meet new people and it was a very comfortable space. I think we all had a really good discussion and we are really engaged and we all really wanted to be there and work together.

Fostering a comfortable space that promotes safety was valuable to participants. The fact that the workshop was considered a "comfortable space" is also important as many participants reported

feeling isolated and invisible within spaces that they occupy on a daily basis such as post-secondary institutions, mental health services, clothing stores, and public washrooms.

A space where people get it. In my personal reflective notes from the first workshop session I noted that participants and I realized this was the first time many of us have been in a group solely comprised of non-binary people. Queer and trans youth have reported the importance of having access to physical and social spaces to connect with similar youth, access information, gain support, and feel part of a community (de Montigny, 2013). While there are many opportunities for queer and trans people to be involved in LGBTQ initiatives, a small percentage of trans-specific opportunities are typically offered (Allen & Jones, 2010). This is also mirrored in the limitations of research with trans people where there is a need for inclusion of non-binary people (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2016).

One participant reflected on the value of occupying space with non-binary peers:

I think you did really well and it impacted a lot of individuals within the space and that it was beneficial for them as well. I think even creating the space for different non-binary identities to come and talk and be within a space where people get it, was very nice.

I find “a space where people get it” to be a powerful sentiment. Non-binary people can experience exclusion in spaces that follow strict binary gender norms (Cricchio, 2016). We often occupy spaces where regardless of peoples’ intention to be inclusive of our gender identity, we can be misunderstood. Nagoshi and Brzuzy (2010) reveal the nuances of trans identities with respect to diverse experiences of gender embodiment. It felt refreshing to be around non-binary people who experience their gender in different ways. Some participants were “out” as non-binary to others while a number of them were “not out”, just as some identify as trans while others do not. A small proportion of participants described the desire to medically transition while the majority did not. Another participant shared they “liked being able to get to know other

people, especially there was a couple people from the [campus LGBTQ centre] who I got to know more about so that was fun”.

Idea generation and affirmation. I understand how it can be difficult to make art without talking about it beforehand. Students operate within institutions that prioritize knowledge and ideas that are well written or presented effectively. It can be difficult to engage in different modes of creation using artistic mediums that are not often utilized. Many participants articulated the value of pairing group discussions with body mapping throughout the workshop. One participant stated:

I think having discussions really helped with creating the body map. I think having a discussion before doing it can give some people ideas. I remember the first day we did it without having a discussion. I was having a hard time about what to do without like talking about it.

I noticed that many participants had difficulty starting their body maps and I agree that future workshops should begin with conversations to generate ideas for the body maps. Solomon (2002) reveals that group discussions are germane in facilitating an impactful body mapping workshop. Participants seemed more at ease after discussing their body map process with each other during the workshop, and were able to offer support to one another to help achieve art-making goals. For example, one participant offered to help mix paint for some of their peers who were struggling. These collaborative solutions would not have been initiated without group discussions. Furthermore, although participants in their individual interviews did not mention this, I noticed that the group discussions additionally served as a space where constructive feedback was exchanged. Participants who initially felt intimidated by body mapping began to feel more comfortable after gaining affirmative feedback from their peers.

Self-exploration. As previously discussed, many participants identified as non-binary within queer and trans centered spaces, but were not “out” in other areas of their lives. A few participants reflected on how body mapping helped them make more sense of their feelings and experiences as a non-binary person. One participant shared: “it kind of clarified a bit about a lot of stuff in my head, kind of brought it into focus, before it was more of a fog. So I got to organize my thoughts a bit this way.” Another participant shared: “I felt like it was something I needed to do for a lot of reasons and like self-discovery and stuff. Definitely helped answered some questions and validated some feelings. That was good”. Making sense of individual experiences was also perceived as a relaxing and comforting activity through body mapping:

“I did find the act of creating art within the piece to be very soothing although it was hard for me to come up with what to do within the piece itself because I am still, even now, trying to better come to terms with what exactly is my identity.”

Body mapping served as an opportunity for participants to place their thoughts and feelings about their identity in the forefront. A participant similarly reflected on how such reflective processes would have been difficult without the use of artistic expression: “It helps me to understand ‘me’ more. Especially when we had to do the background and what really influenced who I’ve become. I don’t think without art that would have been as easy”.

Utility of visual aids. Body mapping is a versatile tool that has been applied in various settings for: therapy, advocacy, team building, art making, and storytelling (Gastaldo et al., 2012; Solomon, 2002). A few participants envisioned how body mapping could be utilized as a tool for self-advocacy and “coming out” as non-binary. One participant reflected:

“If I ever do explain [my identity] to my parents and brother and people, I could show them this. I think that would really help explaining it, cause I have the process right there. I can explain each step and I can say that this is how I felt. This would be a really

valuable visual aid for that.”

Another participant felt that body mapping could help facilitate dialogue between non-binary youth people and target audiences (i.e. community stakeholders, policy makers, etc.):

“I think that’s the really important thing about art, in that there is no one-way to do it. I think this sort of way to create a body-map of who we are through the art, helps not just ourselves, but the individuals who are exposed to the body-maps themselves, because it creates a connection that perhaps words or simple face-to-face interaction give.”

Thus, body maps have the potential to break down barriers between different groups and catalyze meaningful change.

Connections through identity. The body mapping workshop was beneficial for participants in enabling them to feel connected to others through a shared identity. Members of marginalized groups have been found to report feeling a sense of belonging within identity-specific groups (Barr, Budge, & Adelson, 2016). For example, Nicolazzo (2016) found that trans university students development and maintenance of kinship with like-minded peers was an important factor for navigating contexts that uphold binary gender norms and expectations. A kinship network was defined as “a close group of like-minded peers”, and participants tried to build community with other trans people (Nicolazzo, 2016). A participant shared their sentiments on connecting with other non-binary people:

“It was beneficial to actually see what other non-binary individuals did with their works, and see the sorts of things that impacted them and how that might be similar to what has impacted myself, and how we have these connections through our identity. It was validating in a way that is different than putting something into words.

Individual Interviews

Conducting individual interviews with participants after the completion of body mapping workshop was a strategic component of this study. The individual interviews enabled to speak about their experiences in the workshop and in relation to the research questions. I noticed that many participants felt more comfortable speaking with me about their experiences of mental health such as suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, and gender dysphoria. Such sensitive topics would not have surfaced if participants were limited to group discussions. It was also helpful that I had multiple sessions to build rapport with each participant prior to the individual interview. I was able to delve deeper with each interview because I already established trusting relationships with each person throughout the body mapping workshop.

Knowledge, Transfer, and Exchange

During March 2017 I had the opportunity to present findings and display body maps from *Bye Bye Binary* at University of Toronto's Youth Sexual Health research symposium. Attendees expressed to me that the body maps served as powerful images that truly capture diverse experiences of non-binary youth. In the final member-checking session, participants discussed their desire to share their body maps with other queer and trans people through a community art exhibit. We are aiming to organize an exhibit for September 2017 where participants and I will invite queer and trans peers and community stakeholders such as service providers, researchers, and policy-makers to learn about our process, view the body maps, and exchange ideas of creating change from the study's results. I have already gained positive feedback on sharing the body maps in for knowledge, transfer, and exchange (KTE). From this experience, I look forward to collaborating with my participants to creatively engage in KTE.

I have had time to think about the practicality of using body maps for KTE. The reality of this art form is that body maps are large, bulky, and difficult to display. They are often too

heavy to be bound to a wall or poster board, and the type of paper used for the body maps wrinkles easily. Skop (2016) suggests photographing the body maps and then having the photographs printed on banner fabric to improve the portability. However, body maps tend to look better in person- photos do not always do them justice. Many participants intentionally used three-dimensional objects and fabrics on their body maps to represent their identities and experiences. While photographing each body map makes them easier to display, it could minimize the details put into each piece.

Methodological Challenges

Art Can Feel Awkward

The first challenge that comes to mind is that arts-informed methods can sometimes be awkward to participate in. As a facilitator, it was quite clear that participants were nervous about engaging in arts-informed methods at the start of the workshop. I would often hear participants exchange sentiments like “I am not artistic”, “I am not creative”, and “I am really bad at painting”. Although I encouraged participants to try their best and offered support, I could have structured more time during the workshop to learn about the principles and elements of art and practice different art techniques to make them feel more at ease or engage in a critique around art for aesthetics and as a professional venture, vs. art for social change and as a modality for everyone, the non expert

Lack of Time and Funding

Lack of time and funding are two interconnected challenges. This project was funded by two small grants from Wilfrid Laurier University’s Gender Violence Task Force Working Group, and Women in Science group. This funding was germane in purchasing adequate art materials, food and snacks, and compensation for participation. In order to adequately pay

participants, I decided to sacrifice the amount of time allocated for the workshop. The most frequently stated piece of feedback was that workshop should have been longer than three sessions. Participants expressed that lack of time impacted their ability to form strong relationships with new peers, created pressure in working quickly to complete their body-maps, and did not allow enough time for adequate group reflection. One participant exemplifies several honest concerns about the limited workshop time:

I didn't get to know the people all that well, cause there wasn't that much time. I was mostly like 'ok I need to work on my body map'. I felt like I was falling behind at first as well because everyone started their painting and I was still trying to come up with what symbols to use, so I was the only one left at the table and was like 'if i don't hurry up then I wont finish in time.'

Another participant felt that, "it should have been more ...there wasn't enough time", and similarly another participant stated, "I wish we had more time to do more and take our time more on the pieces. But it was a lot of fun".

This also potentially highlights the different demands in a workshop where participants are engaging in arts-based processes individually. There is the demand to complete one's art piece and that is opposed to the time needed to build relationships in a shared space. I originally planned to facilitate a two-session workshop, but it was clear that a third session was needed to complete the body maps. Future body mapping sessions should definitely take place over four or five sessions, dedicating initial sessions on rapport building among participants. Further, it would be beneficial to have the sessions take place over a longer time period. Consecutive sessions were quite intense and draining for the participants and me. As students, it was difficult for each of us to dedicate an entire weekend to body mapping instead of other responsibilities. I would recommend holding one session per week over the course of four weeks. This recommendation

would not have been feasible due to the time constraints of this study.

Recruitment

Participant recruitment could also be improved in future arts-informed CBPR projects with non-binary people. Given the context of Waterloo, Ontario, it is not surprising that the majority of participants were white. I could have employed additional recruitment techniques to recruit more people of colour and Indigenous participants for a more diverse sample. Half of the participants were individuals whom I already knew from my involvement with my university's LGBTQ centre. While it was extremely valuable to gain their perspectives with respect to the research questions, it also posed challenges. Participants who knew other through school or community settings shared the challenges of this, "Knowing people in the workshop was something that was weird for me. In some ways that could be really good and it could lead to community but it also was kind of weird". Since the workshop promoted creativity and reflection, it is understandable how it could have been difficult for participants to express vulnerability alongside their peers. It would have been useful to network more with community organizations and LGBTQ networks from other local post-secondary institutions.

Collaboration and Integration

I experienced challenges in applying many of Travers et al. (2013) and Singh et al.'s (2013) recommendations for collaboration and integration with trans people. I specifically could have improved in differentiating between collaboration and consultation, integrating participants in the research process, and dismantling power imbalances.

While the time I spent consulting with trans and non-binary people in the development of the body mapping workshop was useful, it was not inherently collaborative. Dougherty (2008) explains that researchers and participants have equal stakes in a project through collaboration, whereas the researcher is the "agent of action and knowing and engages with the phenomenon

directly” through consultation (Singh et al., 2013, pp. 100). I attempted to involve participants in the data analysis process to promote collaboration, in addition to hiring one participant as a peer researcher. I believe that many of the participants would have been interested in taking a more active role in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, but I lacked the time and financial resources to adequately compensate each person for their contributions and provided constructive mentoring in building research skills. For future projects, I would hope to accumulate more funding to compensate young people in collaborative processes. Singh et al (2013) state that “collaboration will inevitably look different in research than in practice” (pg. 100), and with that, I was able to collaborate with participants in meaningful ways without undercompensating them or taking advantage of their time or skills.

In reflecting on this process, I regret not having enough time or resources to have non-binary young people representation and control from the start of the study. Trans PULSE hired an investigator’s committee to guide the work of the project (Travers et al., 2013). Travers et al. (2013) reveal that non-academic trans community members shaped “a culture of community control” that set precedence for later phases of Trans PULSE (pp. 408). Creating an investigator’s committee for my study would have provided more opportunities for non-binary people to be involved in developing or facilitating the body mapping workshop, recruiting participants, and analyzing data. Hiring only one participant as a peer researcher to assist with data analysis helped to ameliorate some of my concerns about participant integration, but it may have also created power imbalances among participants where one person received an opportunity that others did not.

Lessons Learned

In reflecting on the research process, there are a number of observations worth noting. First, arts-informed methods are quite intensive. Successful application requires experience in

group facilitation and planning to ensure that activities are accessible to individuals of varying abilities. Funding is also crucial in being able to purchase a variety of quality art materials for participants. Second, I learned about the value in involving youth in a collaborative analysis of visual data through a member-checking session. Analyzing visual data has also been a complicated endeavor in arts-informed research (Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, Allemang, & Statsiulis, 2012; Wilson, 2015). Boydell et al. (2012) recognizes that although there are a lot of detailed articles outlining processes of implementing arts-informed methods, there is very little discussing the process of analyzing visual data. While some researchers solely rely on thematic analyses to analyze textual interpretations or descriptions of visual art, there is a lack of information pertaining to analyzing actual paintings, drawings and other mixed-mediums (Boydell et al., 2013). I personally refrained from interpreting participants' art by myself as I would be applying my worldview to another person's experiences. Wilson and Flicker (in-press) validated my sentiments in their reflections about choosing not to interpret visual data in their arts-informed research with Black and Indigenous youth. Wilson and Flicker (in-press) specifically stated that they had a "commitment to centralizing participant voices in the research process and outcomes" (pg. 23). Thus, I opted to work with participants to analyze their own data using the elements and principles of art and design to guide their process (Helmets, 2006). Third, I learned about the value of involving a participant a paid opportunity as a peer researcher to assist with data analysis and KTE planning (See Appendix C).

Conclusion

This arts-informed CBPR project uncovered the natural fit between non-binary young people and body mapping. In alignment with recent CBPR projects working with and for trans communities (Singh et al., 2013; Travers et al., 2013), this project provided opportunities for participants to collaborate and integrate in the research process through data analysis and in the

position of a peer researcher. I believe that engaging in body mapping with non-binary youth was valuable in enabling participants to express themselves through creative modalities without being limited by verbal and textual data collection methods. I am hopeful that arts-informed methods will continue to be applied in CBPR research with non-binary youth to garner valuable findings on community experiences and needs.

This research has contributed to the field of arts-informed CBPR by highlighting the value in providing space for youth to engage in creative methods to represent their experiences. It also reveals the importance of centering CBPR on intersectionality and transgender theory to promote participant involvement, collaboration, and researcher positionality (Singh et al., 2013). It will be important for researchers working with non-binary communities to be flexible in their creative approaches to working with diverse youth. Striving for collaboration, integration, personal reflection and creativity in future arts-informed research will result in richer research processes and outcomes that amplify community voices.

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Bye Bye Binary: Exploring Non-Binary Youths' Experiences of Discrimination, Community
Belongingness, and Mental Health

Introduction

The health and well-being of transgender people has been prioritized in health research over the past decade (Bauer et al., 2009; Bradford, Reisner, Honnold, & Xavier, 2013; Davidson, 2015; Frohard-Dourlent, Dobson, Clark, Doull, & Saewyc, 2017; Scheim & Bauer, 2015). A social determinants of health perspective (Raphael, 2009) has helped frame the context in which social exclusion, violence, and discrimination negatively impact the overall health and well-being of trans people (Bauer et al., 2009).

Transgender (or “trans”) is used to describe individuals who do not identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth (or *natal gender*). Trans people can identify with binary gender identities (i.e. woman, man, trans woman, trans man, etc.) and with non-binary gender identities (i.e. agender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, and pangender). The generation of new terminology emerging from trans communities is enabling researchers to better account for the complexities of gender and sex. “Non-binary” has become an frequently used term to include “people whose gender identities do not neatly fall into the dominant binary gender categories of ‘man/boy’ and ‘woman/girl’” (Frohard-Durlont et al., 2017, pg. 2). Some non-binary people will feel that they are part of the trans community, while others do not identify as trans (Frohard-Durlont et al., 2017). While it might seem that non-binary identities are new, there is historical evidence where individuals have challenged the gender binary (male/female) (Bem, 1977; Boles & Tatro, 1982; Heilbrun, 1973). Terminology used to articulate gender diversity is effective in describing trans and non-binary individuals’ experiences of social exclusion, discrimination, and health in the current socio-cultural context.

Cisnormativity is the assumption that all people are cisgender and thus will develop accordingly to identify with their natal gender; for example, individuals born with “female” or “male” genitalia will mature and identify as female or male respectively (Bauer et al., 2009). Cisnormativity enables the fear of, discrimination against, socially rejection or hate of trans and non-binary people (Scott-Dixon, 2006). Trans and non-binary people may be treated as inferior within society through “the individual, social and institutional attitudes, policies, and practices” that are pervaded by cisnormative ideas and practices (Ansara, 2010, p. 168).

An example of discrimination rooted in cisnormativity is where a trans or non-binary person is refused access to sex-segregated facilities such as washrooms, prisons, and domestic violence or homeless shelters (Johnson, 2013). Trans and non-binary persons who can “pass” as cisgender, are less likely to experience this sort of discrimination as opposed to individuals who are gender non-conforming (Vipond, 2015). The 2011 case of CeCe McDonald further presents an example of violence against trans and non-binary people that is rooted in cisnormativity and transphobia. Cece McDonald is an African American transgender woman who was assaulted and imprisoned for defending herself against a group of violent heterosexual, cisgender, white men who yelled transphobic, homophobic, and racist slurs at her (Johnson, 2013). McDonald was placed in a men’s prison despite her identification and presentation as a woman because her genitals did not “match” her female identity (Johnson, 2013). This incident marks the severe mistreatment of trans people, and transgender women in particular, who are subject to brutality if they do not pass as cisgender.

Vipond (2015) builds upon mainstream conceptualizations of trans and non-binary identities with the term “transnormativity” which describes “the normalization of trans bodies and identities through the adoption of cisgender institutions by trans persons” (pg. 24), where passing as cisgender has become a norm within trans communities. Through transnormativity,

there are additional structures enforced by trans people that structure trans identification and experiences into whether they are “trans enough” (Johnson, 2016). Previous research suggests that transnormativity manifests through the over-medicalization and legalization of trans bodies and identities to meet certain diagnostic requirements to proceed with medical or legal transitions (Johnson, 2016; Vipond, 2015). Privileging of transnormative models results in the marginalization of non-binary people who cannot or do not want to medically transition (Johnson, 2016). Evidence shows that socioeconomic status is an important factor in determining the ability and desire to medically transition and transition-related surgeries such as external genital surgery, breast enlargement (augmentation mammoplasty), or top-surgery (mastectomy) (Johnson, 2016). Trans people often face financial barriers in accessing gender affirming medical resources. As of March 1, 2016, the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) modified the criteria to access trans-related surgeries and hormone replacement therapy by allowing qualified healthcare providers throughout the province to assess individuals on the basis of gender dysphoria (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2016) Gender dysphoria is a medical term that refers to “discomfort or distress that is caused by a difference between a person’s gender identity and their sex assigned at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics)” (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2016, American Psychological Association, 2013). Despite this amendment to the OHIP criteria, an additional barrier blocking non-binary people to transition-related supports surrounds healthcare provider skepticism about treatment of genders that fall outside of an unchanging male or female gender (Harrison-Quintana, Glover, & James, 2014). This leaves a number of non-binary people without the opportunity to access services covered by OHIP, and unable to afford surgeries offered by private cosmetic surgeons. Individuals who are able to access medical transitions typically have the financial means, supportive families, or the patience to

wait several years on an OHIP waiting list to undergo surgery (Vipond, 2015). Access to gender-affirming resources for trans and non-binary people is often only possible for the small proportion of primarily white, able-bodied, and middle class people who can “afford to be trans” (Vipond, 2015, p. 34; see also Rotondi et al., 2013).

A transnormative narrative continues to publicize and reinforce an ideal that trans people should abide by binary standards of masculinity and femininity (Vipond, 2015). Transnormativity creates new binaries for trans people where passing as cisgender have become normalized as opposed to experiencing an incongruency between body and gender or appearing as gender non-conforming (LeBlanc, 2010). Transnormativity stresses gender as something static whereas gender non-conformity highlights the fluidity of gender (LeBlanc, 2010). According to these norms, people with non-binary identities are left with a subordinate status within trans communities and require further attention (Nicolazzo, 2016).

Gender Non-Conformity, Discrimination, and Mental Health

Mental health has been defined in multiple ways across disciplines ranging from clinically oriented to holistic understandings of the phenomenon (Rogers & Pilgram, 2014). Galderisi, Heinz, Kastrup, Beezhold, and Sartorius (2015) drafted a definition of mental health in attempt to avoid statements that are tied to specific cultural contexts and social backgrounds:

Mental health is a dynamic state of internal equilibrium, which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium. (pg. 231-232).

Although this definition has not been used to conceptualize mental health among trans and non-binary populations, it is evident that the social, emotional, and coping behaviour components of mental health outlined in this definition are relevant to existing literature on trans mental health. Literature on trans and non-binary persons' experiences of discrimination reveal that gender non-conformity is associated with greater exposure to discrimination (Grant et al. 2010; Miller & Grollman, 2015) and the stigma visibility of an identity can increase the likelihood that one will experience discrimination and psychological distress (Miller and Grollman (2015). Non-binary people can be visibly stigmatized if their gender expression does not pass as cisgender. For instance, qualitative studies reveal that trans people who are often "read" as trans or non-binary will face more discrimination in their lives than those who can pass as cisgender (Connell, 2010; Dozier, 2005). This is concerning for non-binary people as they continue to experience poor mental health from ongoing discrimination (Frohard-Dourlent, et al., 2017). Non-binary people encounter difficult social situations within a system that promotes a gender dichotomy (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017). Public washrooms (Bender-Baird, 2015; Cavanagh, 2010), healthcare providers (Xavier et al., 2013), social services (Abramovich, 2012) workplaces (Grant et al., 2008; Sasso & Ellard-Gray, 2015), and educational institutions (Ritchie & Banning, 2001; Taylor & Peter, 2011) are just a few of many spaces where non-binary people are subject to verbal, emotional, sexual, and physical forms of violence (i.e. being hit, kicked or punched). Various forms of violence and discrimination have also been found to be associated with increased risk of health-harming behaviours such as a substance use and smoking among non-binary youth (Miller & Grollman, 2015). Queer and trans people have reported experiencing minority stress in social environments marked by prejudice and discrimination, which have been associated with mental health problems (Meyer, 2003; Singh, Hays, & Watson, 2011). Mental health experiences of trans people, including high rates of depression, anxiety, somatization, and

overall psychological distress, have been associated with felt stigma as predicted by Meyer's minority stress model (Bockting, Miner, Swinburne Romine, Hamilton, and Coleman, 2013). Experiences of discrimination can result in chronic stress and result in poor health among non-binary people (Woodford, Joslin, Pitcher, & Penn, 2017).

Previous research outlines trans peoples' experiences of different forms of discrimination ranging from severe violations such as hate crimes and over forms, to more subtle forms (Nadal et al., 2012). Subtle forms of discrimination have been labeled as "microaggressions", which are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward members of oppressed groups" (Nadal, 2008, p. 23). Microaggression theory has been applied to frame how environments such as workplaces, education systems, the media, and the community, detrimentally effect mental health and well-being (Sue, 2010). A number of studies have provided evidence that queer and trans people experience microaggressions in their everyday lives (Nadal et al., 2011). As microaggressions accumulate overtime, individuals may experience severe psychological distress (Sue, 2010). Microaggressions theory has been specifically applied to trans communities through Nadal et al.'s (2012) proposition of a theoretical classification system describing forms of microaggressions rooted in cisnormativity. Nadal, Skolnik, and Wang (2012) developed twelve categories of microaggressions based on the experiences of nine transgender individuals. The twelve categories included: (a) use of transphobic and/or incorrectly gendered terminology (i.e. referring to a trans person as "it" instead of their preferred pronouns), (b) assumption of universal transgender experience, (c) exoticization, (d) discomfort/disapproval of transgender experience, (e) endorsement of gender normative and binary culture or behaviours, (f) denial of existence of transphobia, (g) assumption of sexual pathology/abnormality, (h) physical threat or harassment, (i) denial of

individual transphobia, (j) denial of bodily privacy, (k) familial microaggressions, and (l) systemic and environmental microaggressions (Nadal, Skolnik, & Wang, 2012). A wide range of emotional responses were shared by participants in response to their experiences of microaggressions, including anger, frustration, sadness, belittling, and disappointment, and others reported accepting that microaggression are part of their lives (Nadal et al 2012). Although participants did not cite specific mental health issues resulting from their negative experiences, reports of feeling “taxed” and “exhausted” suggest that microaggressions may impact their physical and psychological well-being across time (Nadal, Davidoff, Davis, & Wong, 2014; Nadal et al., 2012). Given that trans microaggressions research primarily involves people who identify as male or female, there is a need to contribute to the literature with the inclusion of non-binary individuals. Although scholars have been critical of the application of microaggressions theory (Lillenfield, 2017), its relevance to marginalized people has been demonstrated across diverse communities (Nadal et al., 2012).

Arts-Informed Community-Based Participatory Research

Qualitative and arts-informed research has garnered valuable information about trans and non-binary communities that has been used to inform service providers and contribute to policy change (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017; Travers et al., 2013). Community-based participatory research (CBPR) designs should intentionally “guide ethical and empowering research *with* rather than *on* transgender communities” (Singh et al., 2013, pg. 94). Young queer and trans people have been involved in participatory processes to combat experiences of discrimination across institutional structures (Holtby, Klein, Cook, & Travers, 2015; Sanchez, Lomeli-Loibl, & Nelson, 2009; and Wernick et al., 2014).

Arts-informed methods. The arts are used in research to help expand upon intricate experiences of underserved populations to share different identities, experiences, and

perspectives of social injustices (Sakamoto, 2014). For example, it can be difficult to verbally explain one's experiences of trauma and creative modalities may be better suited to represent the sensitive subject matter. There are different opportunities for communication, self-expression, and learning skills for making art (Knowles & Cole, 2008). Arts-informed methods are also useful in engaging people through a continuum of solitary to highly participatory processes (Wilson & Flicker, 2014).

Body-mapping. Body-mapping is the “the process of creating body-maps using drawing, painting, or other art-based techniques to visually represent aspects of people's lives, their bodies and the world they live in” (Gastaldo, Magalhaes, Carrasco, & Davy, 2012, p.5). Originating in South Africa, body-mapping has been employed as both a research and therapeutic tool for various projects related to health and wellbeing, specifically in relation to HIV/AIDS (Devine, 2008; MacGregor, 2009; Skop, 2016; Weiland, 2006, Gastaldo et al., 2012). This method has also been used by community researchers to conduct community-based projects about objective and subjective health indicators or perceived health risks. For example, Wilson et al. (2011) applied body-mapping for a CBPR project to “represent health impacts caused by employment/income insecurity” (p.10). Body-mapping can serve as a research, art-making, community-building, and advocacy tool. Solomon (2002) recommends body-mapping to be complemented by interviews or writing to obtain rich qualitative data. As an art-making tool, body-maps can be used to learn about art, drawing, colour, and composition. It allows participants to open up about their own creativity and deepen people's understanding of how their lives connect with each other. Finally, body-maps are intended to raise awareness about political, personal, and social issues (Gastaldo et al., 2012; Orchard, 2016).

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore non-binary young peoples' experiences of discrimination and the impact on their mental health. The objectives underlying this project are as follows: a) understand forms of discrimination experienced by non-binary post-secondary students; b) understand the relationship between discrimination and mental health; and c) explore how arts-based research can facilitate conversations about non-binary youth realities. This study explores the following research questions: a) How can arts-informed CBPR facilitate conversations about non-binary youth experiences of discrimination and mental health? b) What are the implications for transforming institutional policy, curriculum, and pedagogy within post-secondary institutions?

Method

Research Paradigm

Nelson and Prilliltensky (2011) explain that the critical transformative paradigm stems from “Marxism, German critical theory and contemporary social forces for social justice and social change including feminism, anti-racism, cultural studies, and queer theory” (p.264). This paradigm explains reality (ontology) as having evolved from history and truly acknowledging the social structures that create privilege some while neglecting underserved groups (Nelson & Prilliltensky, 2011). The critical transformative epistemology, or “the nature of knowing reality” expects researchers and participants to have their values intersect with research findings. Self-reflexivity is crucial in challenging and transforming knowledge and society (Nelson & Prilliltensky, 2011). The critical transformative axiology positions research as value-driven. Values of the researcher must be in alignment with those of the community question to be applied throughout the research project. Lastly, the methodology should be oriented toward participation and action. It is important to incorporate multiple methods that align with

community values. A critical transformative approach was used to guide this research with non-binary youth to allow space for a creative and thoughtful research design (Gitonga & Delport, 2015).

Participants

Due to this study focusing on a hard-to-reach population, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants between September 2016 and November 2016 (Padgett, 2008). Purposive sampling is “the process of selecting respondents based on their ability to provide the needed information” (Padgett, 2008, p. 73). Online recruitment flyers were distributed to LGBTQ centres at Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Waterloo, local LGBTQ organizations, and online networks utilized by local trans people. Eleven participants initially expressed interest in the study, but one participant dropped out of the study due to personal circumstances. A final sample of ten participants ($n = 10$) was obtained and consisted of young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who identified with non-binary identities including: agender, genderfluid, and gender neutral. Seven participants were current undergraduate students at local post-secondary institutions, two participants were graduate students, and one participant was enrolled in secondary school. The secondary school student will be excluded from this report as the current findings pertain to post-secondary student experiences. Seven participants in this sample identified as white, while two participants identified as people of colour. Participant demographic information can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participant Demographic Information*

Pseudonym	Race	Gender Identity Label	Pronouns
Adrian	White	Nonbinary/agender/demiboy	They/Them
Cosima	Southeast Asian	Non-Binary	They/Them

Katya	White	Non-Binary	They/Them
Emery	White	Non-Binary	They/Them
Stan	White	Gender Neutral	Zie/Zir
Rory	White	Genderfluid	They/Them
Robin	White	Agender	They/Them
Brennan	Mixed Race	Genderfluid	He/They
Spencer	White	Non-Binary	They/Them

Procedure

Participants were invited to partake in a two-day body-mapping workshop that was facilitated by the primary researcher. The workshop was originally scheduled for two consecutive sessions, but an additional session was organized for five participants who required more time to complete their body-maps. Solomon's (2002) original body-mapping curriculum was adapted and tailored to align with the objectives and research questions of this project. Most of the allotted time was dedicated to creating body-maps, with remaining time involving team-building activities, breaks for group discussions, and meals. Participants were compensated \$25 for each session they were involved in as well as being provided with lunch and snacks at all sessions. All research procedures conformed to institutional and Tri-Council research ethics requirements for Wilfrid Laurier University.

Data Collection Methods

Body-mapping. Over the course of two or three workshop sessions, participants used painting, drawing, and collage to respond to prompting questions about their identity, experiences of discrimination, safe and unsafe spaces, health, and social change that they envision for the future.

Group discussions. Audio-recorded group discussions were held at several points throughout the body-mapping workshop. The group discussions were used to reflect on participants' art making, and provide space to discuss any emerging ideas or themes that they wanted to share. Through these dispersed discussions, participants were able to share their voice and build upon each other's ideas.

Individual interviews. Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were held with participants one month following the workshop. Each audio-recorded interview lasted approximately one hour in length. Individual interviews were necessary in this project to provide space for participants to individually reflect on their connection to the research questions. Participants were compensated with \$25 for their participation in the individual interview.

Analysis

Given the diverse sources of data in this project, the researcher employed different analytic techniques depending on the type of data, and then engaged in a process of triangulation across the collected data. A visual data analysis was used to analyze the body-maps, while a thematic analysis was used to analyze transcribed data from group discussions and individual interviews.

Visual data analysis. A combination of approaches for engaging in visual analysis were consulted and combined to cultivate a visual analysis protocol that would be critical and reflexive (Rose, 2007), apply the elements and principles of art (Helmets, 2006), and provide descriptive and interpretive analyses of visual images (Reavey, 2012). The researcher and a research assistant collaboratively developed and followed a strategy for visual analysis that involved: a) viewing images and recording initial impressions and feelings; b) examining the context of the images and the circumstances under which it was created; c) building in reflexivity and examining one's positionality in relation to images and emergent codes, and openly

discussing biases; d) independently coding descriptions of the images and their elements and principles of design using NVivo 10 qualitative analysis software; e) grouping codes together and identifying themes until there were not further distinctive themes; and f) using the member-checking session to research each artist's intent behind their images. In following these guidelines, the visual analysis process was both participatory and collaborative in nature as participants and the researcher discussed themes that arose from each of the body-maps.

Thematic analysis. A thematic analysis was used to analyze transcripts from the group discussions, individual interviews, member-checking session, and the researcher's reflective notes. A grounded theory approach was used to allow for new ways of understanding and exploring phenomena as opposed to fitting within pre-existing frameworks (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The researcher and research assistant engaged in thorough readings of each transcript to ensure that each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They engaged in axial coding to sort through their initial lists of individually accumulated codes and sort the codes into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A coding scheme was co-developed by the researcher and research assistant, and they both used NVivo to recode each transcript. Lastly, both individuals discussed the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes, which eventually led to a process of reviewing and refining the narrowed-down themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Member-checking session. Six participants regrouped at a final member-checking session to discuss preliminary themes derived from the data. The member checking session provided participants with the opportunity check aspects of the data interpretation and combat against potential researcher biases (Padgett, 2008). In order to leverage youth voice and participation, the member-checking session was specifically organized to have youth participate in the analysis of body-map data. The researcher first presented the preliminary findings and

encouraged participants to ask questions and discuss their perspectives. Then, participants were instructed to examine their body-maps and share whether or not the preliminary themes were representative of their art. The researcher then shared a brief and introductory lesson on how to interpret visual images using the elements and principles of art. Participants were given time to re-examine their body-maps and further engage in dialogue about the meanings behind their artistic choices. These conversations were audio-recorded to preserve participants' feedback and commentary on how they interpreted visual elements and principles of their art.

Data triangulation. In qualitative research, method triangulation involves using multiple methods of data collection to understand the same research questions (Polit & Beck, 2008). Polit and Beck (2008, p. 543) explain that this type of triangulation is best suited for a "rich blend" of data collection methods to "evaluate the degree to which a consistent and coherent picture of the phenomenon emerges". All of the obtained data in this study was triangulated on Nvivo10 to understand the interrelation of data and emergent themes. All of the themes that arose from the visual and thematic analyses were congruent, with visual data providing stronger examples of subject matter that would be considered difficult to talk about.

Results

Participants identified three major themes representing non-binary youths' experiences of a) microaggressions, b) mental health, and c) community belongingness. Each theme and related subthemes will be further examined in this section. In the results below I will refer to participants using pseudonyms and preferred gender pronouns that they selected (See Table 1).

Microaggressions

While organizing the emergent themes, it was noticed that there was overlap between the emergent themes pertaining to microaggressions and Nadal et al.'s (2012) microaggressions

taxonomy for trans people. For this reason, a number of the subthemes are labeled according to the microaggression category that best represented each subtheme.

Systemic and environmental microaggressions. Systemic and environmental microaggressions account for veiled forms of discrimination that operate an institutional level (Nadal et al., 2012). Katya captured the essence of feeling excluded within post-secondary institutions through systemic and environmental microaggressions:

For a long time I didn't understand why I wasn't feeling represented within these institutions and why they didn't feel like they would allow me to just be me, and now that I sort of have come to understand it better...I just view them as just really projecting certain ways of being onto me that haven't always fit, haven't really ever fit, and me just sort of like as an individual having to figure out what is missing from those things that are being projected not me and how I can honour those things that are otherwise covered over.

This quote exemplifies the pervasiveness of the gender binary throughout institutional spaces, where expectations of cisnormativity and heteronormativity are upheld and make it difficult for non-binary students to feel comfortable expressing themselves authentically. Participants continued to provide more specific examples of spaces that they feel constrained within based on rigid gender norms. Many of these spaces were identified through visual symbols on the body-maps that were used to represent a specific place and then further talked about in the group discussions and individual interviews. Participants identified specific spaces on post-secondary campuses that are particularly uncomfortable to access. All participants mentioned gendered washrooms, and a few clearly symbolize gendered washrooms on their body maps (Figure 1).

Brennan mirrored fellow participants' sentiments during a group discussion by stating that "washrooms situations are the worst, I hate it so much". Stan also shared a story of being in a women's washroom:

This lady looked at me when I was in the girl's washroom, stopped in her tracks and said 'oh I thought this was the female washroom' and then started walking out. I was like 'this is...' she's like 'oh' and looked me up and down and then went into a stall, and I was like 'ok im going to leave now.'

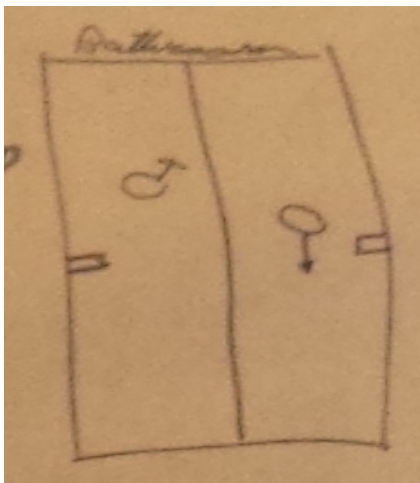


Figure 1. Both images represent gendered washrooms throughout post-secondary spaces.

Stan's uncomfortable encounter resonated with the other participants, emphasizing the findings that navigating gendered structural spaces such as washrooms is a large barrier for non-binary students. In light of discussing gendered washrooms, Adrian further problematized the gender confines of public washrooms in critiquing aspects of gender-inclusive washrooms that also reinforce the gender binary:

Bathrooms frustrate me. I hate the new gender-neutral washrooms, like I hate the symbol-the pant leg and the dress. That really doesn't look that great and it's excluding, it's

implying that people are half and half, and the gender-neutral washrooms are all single occupancy. It's just a little weird to me.

Participants also listed university residence buildings, gym change rooms, and gendered leadership positions within student-led clubs as severely gendered institutional structures. Robin shared that: "Residence building floors are individually gendered because people think that someone who is perceived as masculine and someone who's perceived as feminine cannot use the same washroom". Participants did not share any personal experiences of physical violence while occupying gendered spaces, yet described more subtle forms of discrimination. Within these spaces, participants felt that cisgender people were watching them. For example, Stan talked about zir experiences accessing gendered change rooms at a university athletic centre: "Once I get into the change room its just frustrating. Especially if im wearing more masculine clothing, there have been girls who look at me and they do like the double take". Stan was uncomfortable having to choose between a male and female change room and selected the female change room based on a perception of female change rooms being safer. Slight reactions such as a "double take" are not physically violent acts, yet reinforce a reality where non-binary students feel like they cannot and should not be accessing gendered spaces.

Participants also engaged in a more nuanced conversation about spaces within post-secondary institutions that can be safe or unsafe depending on the people who occupy the space. Katya contributed by stating that:

There are spaces that call themselves inclusive and don't have the pieces that are really necessary for that to be a reality. It's hard to find spaces where you feel included and feel valid on campus.

Cosima added to this thought by challenging whether spaces that claim to be "safe" are actually holding people accountable for their behaviours: "I think really anyone who is holding some sort

of space needs to be accountable for their own behaviour in that space and for the behaviour of other people in that space”. This alludes to the reality that although spaces within post-secondary institutions might be denoted as “safe”, there is not way to guarantee this given how people interact within spaces to maintain binary gender norms that reinforce the power of systemic and environmental microaggressions. This makes it difficult to hold spaces that guarantee the support of trans and non-binary people on post-secondary campuses aside from a campus LGBTQ centre.

Transphobic and incorrectly gendered terminology. Every participant shared personal experiences where others used demeaning language or incorrect pronouns to refer to them within post-secondary institutions. These experiences were further categorized based on being perceived as intentional or unintentional.

Intentional. Professors were identified as figures that intentionally use their positions of power to publicly invalidate the use of gender-neutral pronouns within classroom settings. Emery shared the following about an experience with one of their professors: “I had a teacher who basically said that they/them pronouns are grammatically not correct, and that was not fun within a classroom. It basically wrecked that class for me”. It is clear that non-binary students would not feel comfortable to interact with their professors or classmates when their gender identity is not validated. Spencer also reflected on their experiences with professors and classmates who did not use their gender-neutral pronouns:

Last year I had many experiences of being misgendered at school. I remember two of them as being most impactful because they were intentional. One of my classmates misgendered me in front of my peers and based on his tone and the way he looked at me, it honestly felt like he did it on purpose to really hurt me. In the other situation, after a

whole semester of working being in this prof's class, she sat me down and said something like 'I cant use your pronouns, it is really hard for me to get passed it'.



Figure 4. Image depicting the word “they” crossed out with thick black lines to represent being misgendered by others.

Refusal to respect and acknowledge gender-neutral pronouns was depicted in a participant's body-map. Brennan's image symbolizes how “they” pronouns are being crossed out and disregarded by individuals within post-secondary spaces (Figure 2). The use of dark and thick lines overtop of “they” written in purple is intended to convey the harmful intent. Adrian painted the English alphabet in white to communicate cisgender peoples' reluctance to utilize trans-affirming language even though the English language has the flexibility to account for gender neutrality (See Figure 3).

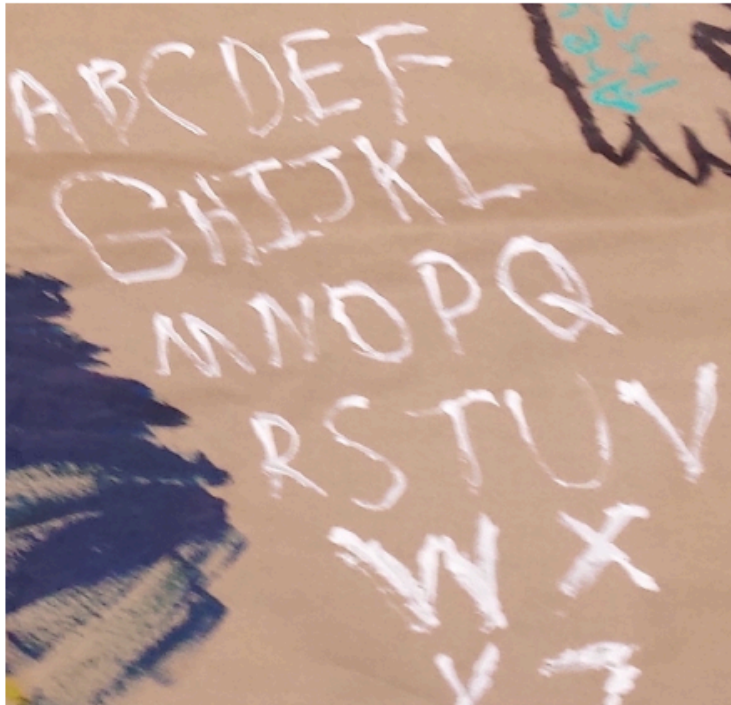


Figure 3. Adrian painted the English alphabet in white to communicate cisgender peoples' reluctance to utilize trans-affirming language even though the English language has the flexibility to account for gender neutrality.

Unintentional. Participants also reported feeling invisible on their post-secondary campuses because professors and students come into each class with assumptions that everyone is going to be cisgender and identify with a binary gender. However, participants allude to the fact that such beliefs become so internalized such that any action upon these beliefs can be interpreted as unintentional. Katya explains:

[Professors] should be more conscious that someone within their classroom could identify with gender-neutral pronouns or a related identity. How can you expect someone to learn within a space that they don't feel that they can exist within?

Although professors might not intend to harm non-binary students, overall assumptions governing classrooms make it difficult for non-binary students to participate in classes without feeling excluded. Katya provided another example of this where:

Professors will divide the classroom in ways that are gendered. They are just doing it for ease so we'll have a boy and a girl in each group, but it can create situations that are very uncomfortable for non-binary students. Participants were weary of labeling such instances as “transphobic” because there is no clear intent to harm students; it is just a lack of understanding of how gendered practices can make non-binary students uncomfortable leading to participants’ experiences of invalidation: “It happens to all of us...I don’t think any of us get through our day without being misgendered or having some assumption or having an incorrect pronoun used”.

Tokenism. This subtheme derives from components Nadal et al.’s (2012) microaggression category of exoticism, which describes, “encounters in which transgender persons are dehumanized or treated like objects (e.g., people treating a transgender person as a “token” because of their transgender identity)”. Participants reflected on experiencing tokenism within post-secondary institutions as opposed to exoticism. Tokenism encompasses when trans-identified people are put in positions where they are expected to educate others about their experiences of transness. Participants felt that tokenism is harmful because trans individuals are not being compensated for the time, effort, and emotional energy they expend while educating others.

Cosima described a situation where a fellow cisgender classmate felt entitled to ask them to provide information about trans communities in a classroom context. Cosima explained that they did not have any relationship with the cisgender person who was involved, and this person had never spoken to Cosima about their gender identity before. Cosima shares:

In my seminar class, each group is assigned a population, and one of them decided to do it on trans people. The other day [a classmate] came up to me and was like, ‘oh do you have any like information on how your biology works?’...He just assumed that I am

person to go to. He was like saying in front of the class...he does not understand what it is to be trans.

Cosima was upset by this situation because of the assumption that they are supposed to provide resources to the cisgender male probing for personal information. Other participants related to this experience in being put in positions where they have to educate groups of primarily cisgender people about the validity of trans identities and gender-inclusive pronouns. Katya had been put in several situations where faculty and staff have relied on them to educate others in order to make the space safer for trans people: "You are put in a position to educate everyone about some issue and make yourself vulnerable to issues that are so pertinent to you, for people who really don't give a fuck about you or the issue". Spencer also shared similar experiences of tokenism where faculty or staff in positions of power will ask them to educate their classmates or other groups of people on trans identities without any compensation for their time.

Impact on Mental Health

Galderisi et al.'s (2015) inclusive definition of mental health will be used to frame the results because of intentional effort to overcome idealized norms that typically skew how mental health is defined. This definition of mental health is comprised of different components, some of which will be further defined as subthemes.

Emotional regulation. Galderisi et al. (2015) defines emotional regulation as "the ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions". During their individual interview, Katya shared a general feeling about their own mental health experiences and those of their peers: "We're all depressed, we're all struggling with our mental health, so I think the impacts are very obvious if you look at it for half a second". The factors impacting mental health that Katya refers to in this quote encompasses the buildup of different microaggressions overtime. It becomes difficult to regulate painful emotions as they persist on a daily basis, and it feels as though these emotions feed into larger experiences of depression.

Body-mapping was helpful for participants in uncovering some of their experiences of emotional regulation. Figure 4 visually displays Robin's use of a dark swirl motif dispersed throughout the body.

This is meant to symbolize feelings of confusion and anxiety about their identity that are difficult to manage on a daily basis. Rory applied foam insect stickers inside the head of their body-map as a way of demonstrating anxiety that is sometimes triggered by holding a non-binary identity (See Figure 5).

Others participants elaborated on how experiencing previous discrimination as a non-binary person can make one more susceptible to experiencing negative emotions, even in the absence of discrimination. Spencer explains: "Even if someone's not doing a microaggression or something towards you, it's so internalized that people are just constantly anxious and worried that something's going to happen". Cosima also discusses the realities of worrying about how others will react to their gender expression:

I have this fear that people need to do a double take or they're wondering what [gender] am I or something, just cause like with my hair and the way I express myself, its not like clear to a lot of people.

Given the intersectionality of individuals' identities, difficulty with managing emotions could be a result of several different factors. Gender identity and expression are merely components of one's identity, but it is important to understand how non-binary students' experiences of gender-based microaggressions take part in shaping their feelings of anxiety, confusion, worry, and depression.

Flexibility and ability to cope. This subtheme refers to being able to change a course of action in light of unpredicted obstacles and adapt to changes different situations may require (Galderisi et al., 2015). Some participants provided examples of how they have had difficulty

copied with stressful situations because of structural barriers or fear of experiencing further discrimination on the basis of their gender. Stan shared a vulnerable experience during a time where they required mental health support, but did not seek professional help because of fear of being pathologized based on their gender identity: “I don’t even want to go to health services when im feeling like really down or suicidal and that's bad”.



Figure 5. Rory applied foam insect stickers inside the head of their body-map as a way of demonstrating anxiety that is sometimes triggered by holding a non-binary identity.

Ability to function in social roles. Engaging in social interactions is important to buffer against stress (Galderisi et al., 2015). Being subject to social exclusion or stigmatization reduce ones capacity to engage in healthy social participation, so it is important to understand antecedents leading to the impairment of non-binary students’ participation (Heinz & Kluge, 2010). Stan shared an experience where transphobia and homophobia within a classroom reduced zir’s ability to continue as a student in a particular class:

I had this professor and whenever he talked about homosexuality it was in a derogatory tone. He would say ‘oh this male was dressed in female clothing, he was definitely gay’. I’ve also walked out of classrooms before. I had a prof showing us this study and im just like...I dropped the course. I couldn’t handle it anymore.

Cosima reflected on a similar experience where they felt uncomfortable following-through with a course requirement after experiencing transphobia within a specific learning environment:

I was having a lot of traumatizing experiences with components of [the course]. The facilitator wasn’t able to read the room, or recognize that some of us were feeling uncomfortable. I had to step out to cry. I haven’t stepped back into that space since then. I might be able to have a conversation and do a follow up. But at the time, it wasn’t something I could do.

After being subjected to microaggressions within their course, Cosima felt that they needed to take a break from their education. Experiencing stigma led Cosima to have less capacity to function within the particular space where they would have been required to be focused and productive.

Relationship between body and mind. Lastly, the harmonious relationship between the body and mind is grounded on the idea that the “mind, brain, organism, and environment are heavily interconnected” (Galderisi et al., 2015, p. 232). When the interactions are troubled, a person might experience poor physical health. Due to the highly sensitive nature of mental health experiences, most participants felt uncomfortable discussing related experiences verbally throughout the group discussions. However, some participants felt comfortable visually depicting their experiences through art. Figure 6 is a depiction of an arm drawn by Stan, with red lines underneath a quote. The red lines are meant to represent zir experiences with self-harm.

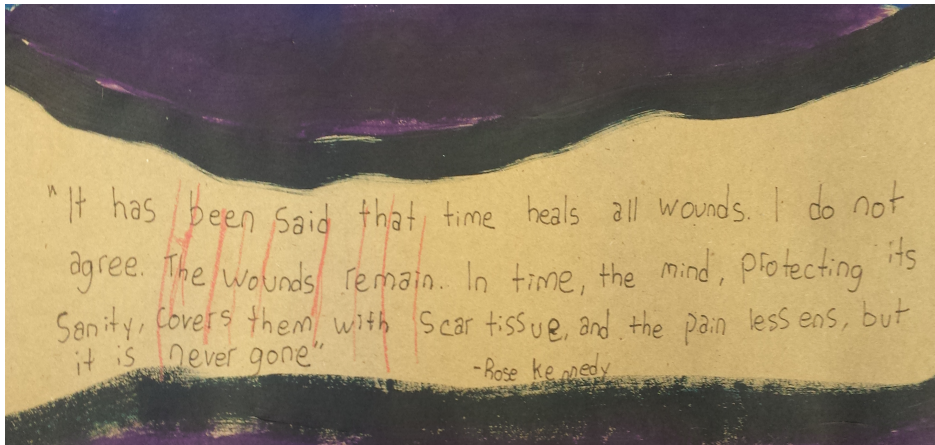


Figure 5. Stan represented zir experiences of self-harm as a method of coping with zir gender.

Spencer also felt safer sharing their feelings of gender dysphoria through art (See Figure 7). Spencer collaged pictures of cisgender men's chests from magazine images into the shape of cisgender women's breasts. Underneath, they used paint to emulate blood, symbolizing the desire to undergo top-surgery. This image exemplifies how feeling constrained within gendered institutional spaces may emphasize a disconnection between one's mind and body. Although there is no physical injury resulting in this case of gender dysphoria, pain is still felt mentally.

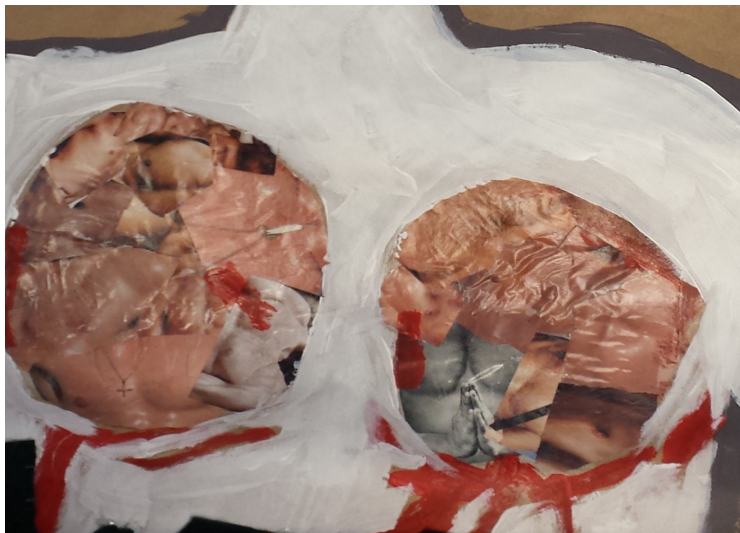


Figure 7. This image is meant to depict symbolize Spencer's experiences of gender dysphoria.

Community Belongingness

Participants described the importance of community belongingness in their lives. Sense of belonging has been defined as “a basic need associated with overall physical and psychological well-being” (Barr, Budge, & Adelson, 2016). Participants reflected on how their participation within different community spaces helped facilitated a sense of community belongingness. Campus LGBTQ centres and online LGBTQ forums were most prevalently discussed among participants. Emery shared the value of belonging to the LGBTQ centre at their post-secondary institution:

I only joined my second year. I'm like really glad that i did it because a lot of the people have come to be a second family to me, so it's like pretty cool and really nice to have that. Those people really serve as a strong support for me.

Cosima similarly reflected on how the campus LGBTQ centre is comprised of a community of individuals who are accepting compared to their non-LGBTQ peers:

I haven't been like really accepted in any of the spaces I am in except for the [campus LGBTQ centre]. That is probably the space where I feel most accepted.

Feeling accepted was also described as stemming from being surrounded by individuals who share similar values, experiences, and identities. Stan explained:

At the [campus LGBTQ centre] you're surrounded by people who share same aspects of their lives, they're part of the LGBT community or they're allies and just knowing once you enter that space you wont be judged because of your identity or anything like that. You also get support from individuals there and more information about anything part of the community.

Furthermore, two participants shared insights into their experiences of community belongingness through online communities. While both individuals access campus LGBTQ

centres, they explain the value in being part of communities that include people from around the world. Emery stated, “I’ve found that it’s easiest to meet other people online because they’ll all kind of collect in one place even if they’re from all over the world”. This ease of meeting like-minded queer and trans people online can be especially appealing for individuals who might feel too shy to engage with peers in a campus LGBTQ centre. For instance, Robin describes their apprehensions of engaging in their campus:

I guess for [campus LGBTQ centre] I have felt pretty safe, so I wouldn’t mind saying my pronouns or my orientation. There are people I see every time I go but I don’t really know them, don’t really interact with them. Everyone there knows each other supposedly, but im really reclusive so I don’t know those people.

Conversely, Robin depicted their connection to online communities on their body map (See Figure 8). The grey clouds are meant to symbolize the internet as a “cloud” or hub for community building and connections with other queer and trans people.



Figure 6. Robin painted grey clouds to represent their sense of belonging to online communities.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of discrimination and mental health, among non-binary youth residing within Waterloo, Ontario. Participants reported experiencing different forms of microaggressions aligning with Nadal et al.'s (2012) taxonomy of microaggressions specific to trans individuals. Working closely with this data, it was evident that participants felt most comfortable labeling their experiences as “microaggressions”. Participants in this sample attend post-secondary institutions and have access to language to describe their experiences that might be out of reach for non-binary young people of less fortunate backgrounds. “Microaggressions” terminology was applied in this study to honour the language used by participants. Emergent controversies surrounding microaggressions suggest that the prefix “micro” minimizes the intensity of discriminatory events (Lillenfield, 2017). It is important to expose how microaggressions are being downplayed through language, with young people classifying overt forms of discrimination as “micro”. Shifting this language is important to consider in regards to university students’ mental health.

Future research on trans and non-binary peoples’ experiences of discrimination could explore devising a continuum to account for a range of discriminatory behaviours from human rights violations to ambiguous perceptions of discrimination. Lillenfield (2017) recently critiqued microaggressions research calling it “far too underdeveloped on the conceptual and methodological fronts to warrant real-world application” (pg. 138). Lillenfield (2017) proposed eighteen recommendations to improve microaggressions research through scientific inquiry (Lillenfield, 2017). Kraus and Park (2017) contested the perspective that microaggressions cannot be validly assessed through self-reports of those who experience them. In this context, trans and non-binary people who experience prejudice have the historical knowledge to adequately gauge whether they are experiencing subtle forms of discrimination (Kraus & Park,

2017). For example, if someone says, “when are you going to *really* transition?” to a trans person, this shows that the expresser lacks insight into the historical prejudice experienced by trans people. To a trans person, this statement could be interpreted in the historical context of the medicalization and pathologizing of trans bodies where they are not seen as valid until meeting a certain level of trans-ness. Thus it is critical to look to researchers who work with trans and non-binary people to better understand microaggressions through the voices of those with lived experiences and how these experiences are situated in a larger historical context.

In this particular study, participants reported experiencing structural and environmental microaggressions and the use of transphobic and/or incorrectly gendered terminology, which are directly in line with Nadal et al.’s (2012) categories. The subtheme of tokenism identified in this study slightly deviates from the original category of exoticism because participants were situated within a post-secondary institutional context. In this study, some non-binary students experienced tokenism where students are constantly placed in positions to educate others (Hart & Lester, 2011). Trans young people experience microaggressions within post-secondary institutions from their classmates, professors, staff and colleagues, which have detrimental impacts on their mental health (Grossman & D’Augello, 2007; Jones & Hillier, 2013; Nadal et al. 2012). This study exemplifies how non-binary students are continuously immersed within spaces that are physically and ideologically structured in ways that reinforce binary gender norms and ideals of cisnormativity and transnormativity (Vipond, 2015). Discriminatory interactions can be perceived as microaggressions, whether intentional or unintentional. A recent study conducted by Veale, Watson, Peter, and Saewyc (2017) compared data from their national sample of Canadian transgender youth with data from a population survey of cisgender youth, and found that trans youth faced significant health disparities across measures of mental health. Trans youth specifically reported experiencing psychological distress, self-harm, major

depressive episodes, and suicidal ideation (Veale et al., 2017). Veale et al. (2017) discuss the need to reduce stigma, prejudice, and discrimination across cisnormative contexts in order to improve non-binary youths' mental health. In this study, participants used art and verbal discussion to express their experiences of mental health. The definition of mental health used in this study is organized into subcomponents including: emotional regulation, flexibility and ability to cope, ability to function in social roles, and relationships between body and mind (Galderisi et al., 2015). Examples of mental health provided by participants resembled the literature on coping with microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2014).

A comprehensive literature review of LGBTQ microaggressions revealed that there is a growing amount of research dedicated to how marginalized groups cope with and are resilient in reaction to microaggressions (Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo, & Davidoff, 2016). Nadal et al. (2014) describe three types of responding to microaggressions: emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally. Emotional reactions to microaggressions encompassed a spectrum of emotions including anger, betrayal, distress, hopelessness and exhaustion, and feeling invalidated and misunderstood (Nadal et al., 2014). Participants in this study similarly identified feeling exhausted after being subjected to tokenism, distressed within post-secondary spaces where they are nervous or worried about experiencing discrimination, and invalidated by professors and students who overtly and covertly use demeaning language to describe trans and non-binary identities. The majority of participants who experienced negative emotions in response to microaggressions tended to be those who were not "out" as non-binary and those who had less supportive peers. Of the possible cognitive reactions identified by Nadal et al. (2014), participants in this study similarly coped with microaggressions through resiliency and empowerment. Participants in this study who did not report any experiences of poor mental health related to their gender, were more confident in their ability to cope with microaggressions

because of holding more privileged identities. Participants who identified as white and graduate students reported feeling able to cope with microaggressions because they had developed language to respond to microaggressions. Behavioural reactions to microaggressions are defined as “different types of actions or inactions that were taken in response to microaggressions” (Nadal et al., 2014, p. 78). Specific forms of behavioural reactions include direct confrontation, indirect confrontation, and passive coping (Nadal et al., 2014). Participants in this study mostly exhibit signs of passive coping where they avoid confrontation or remove themselves from difficult situations to appease others. This is comparable to the mental health subtheme of ability to function in social roles where participants talked about dropping out of classes or avoided certain course requirements to refrain from directly coping with microaggressions. In connecting to the literature, it is evident that non-binary youths’ experiences of mental health in reaction to microaggressions can improve or worsen depending on the type of coping they engage in (Nadal et al., 2014).

Participants additionally discussed how community belongingness helped promote their mental health. Researchers have found significant relationships between sense of belonging within minority communities and mental health outcomes (Barr et al. 2016). Sense of belonging has been correlated with outcomes including: increased self-esteem and lower levels of depression and anxiety (Barr et al. 2016). Barr et al. (2016) found that community belongingness was significantly mediated the relationship between their trans or non-binary identity and well-being. Community belongingness is quite pertinent for marginalized identities that might require social support from individual who share their identity (Flanagan, 2017). Austin and Craig (2015) revealed the importance for trans youth to develop supportive social networks and to maintain such relationships. For queer and trans communities, experiencing community belongingness can buffer against experiences of minority stress from discrimination, and further

protect against poor mental health outcomes (Flanagan, 2017). It is probable that non-binary individuals who feel a sense of belonging to their community are able to access resources and social support to promote their mental health and overcome adversity.

Limitations

Although this study contributes to the growing literature on non-binary youth, there are limitations to consider. While all of the participants in this study identified as non-binary, the majority of participants consisted of people who identified as white and able-bodied university students. Experiences of non-binary people who identify as people of colour, with disabilities, and as immigrants to Canada might be substantially different than those of the participants in this sample. This sample does not adequately take into account the intersectionality of experiences based on holding multiply marginalized identities. Unlike previous studies, this study accounted for participants who have not made a medical or hormonal transition in their lives and present themselves as non-binary. However, a number of participants were not “out” as non-binary or trans to many people in their lives aside from fellow queer or trans-identified peers. Many participants passed as cisgender despite their gender identity and could have also experienced passing privilege that buffers against discrimination in post-secondary institutions. Lastly, seven of nine participants involved in this study were assigned female at birth, with only two participants who were assigned male at birth. A majority of participants presented their gender along a masculine spectrum, thus there could have been a greater effort to recruit participants who present along a feminine spectrum to account for diversity of non-binary identities. Perhaps this accounts for a lack of discussions surrounding experiences of misogyny and fetishism within this sample, as feminine-spectrum trans people are likely to report such experiences (Serano, 2016).

Implications for institutional policy, curriculum, and pedagogy

This study's findings have significant implications for institutional policy, curriculum, and pedagogy across post-secondary campuses. Efforts to prevent forms of discrimination within post-secondary institutions is critical in promoting the mental health needs of non-binary students must be addressed within post-secondary institutions. Participants in this study reported finding salvage at their campus LGBTQ centres, where they interact with like-minded people to grapple with their experiences of discrimination on a daily basis. Given the value of these LGBTQ spaces, there is a need for post-secondary administrators to become more engaged with how they can promote a sense of inclusion and belonging for non-binary students on their campuses (Woodford, Han, Craig, Lim, & Matney, 2015). Taneja (2016) provides a comprehensive overview of successful models of collaboration between LGBTQ centres and post-secondary administrators.. Woodford et al. (2015) recommended that the development of programs and policies that address discrimination such as microaggressions, mistreatment, and hostility are needed to support students' mental health. Administrators need to reach out to LGBTQ centres to gain feedback on addressing non-binary needs in a collaborative way that does not burden students with the responsibility of catalyzing institutional change. To address experiences of systemic and environmental microaggressions on campus, academic leadership could connect with LGBTQ centres to organize around challenging cisnormativity in curriculum content (Taneja, 2016). For example, administrators could meaningfully involve students on campus in reviewing campus policies pertaining to gender identity and expression (Taneja, 2016). Administrators could additionally seek out training opportunities to better educate and inform faculty and staff about building a safer institution for non-binary students. Training opportunities should be structured to encourage discussion about sensitive content pertaining to trans and non-binary communities and promote dialogue among participants (Craig, Dorion, &

Dillon, 2015). Trainings should additionally strive to enhance the skills of post-secondary faculty, administrators, staff, and students to act as allies for trans and non-binary individuals (Craig, Dorion, & Dillon, 2015).

Conclusion

The present research provides a more nuanced understanding of how non-binary youths' mental health is impacted by microaggressions in post-secondary institutions, and how community belongingness has the potential to protect against poor mental health outcomes. It is valuable to for young non-binary people to feel that they have the power and resources to overcome barriers within post-secondary institutions and in other areas of their lives. Providing spaces for non-binary people to congregate on post-secondary campuses would also facilitate peer relationships leading to social support. Results pertaining to microaggressions, mental health, and community belongingness from this study could serve as a foundation for future research focusing on tangible strategies to reduce discrimination against trans and non-binary people in order promote non-binary mental health in post-secondary institutional settings. Collaboration between non-binary community members and institutional stakeholders is crucial in moving toward fostering a culture of inclusion for gender diversity on their campuses.

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Appendix A

Singh, (2013)'s checklist for participatory action research (PAR) feminist researchers working with transgender communities

- Assess one's intersecting identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identity and expression, etc.) as they relate to privilege and oppression and power as a researcher
- Clearly articulate a theory on gender and determine how this theory informs methodological choices
- Reflect on researcher positionality related to transgender concerns
- Conduct a current transgender literature review informed by both peer-reviewed sources and other nonacademic sources of information (blogs, advocacy websites, novels etc)
- Provide and/or attend presentations or activities at community centers that serve transgender individuals, so that a potential PAR relationship could be initiated
- Determine community needs by working collaboratively with transgender people and communities
- Identify the opportunity for advocacy associated with the PAR study
- Work with a research team order to establish expectations and accountability related to researcher privileges, assumptions, and biases
- Use sampling practices that ensure a diverse and representative population
- Share all aspects of the research process and data with informants and communities (stake holders)—and be sure to ask for feedback and input along the way
- Practice humility about one's knowledge and assumptions, apologize as necessary, and make changes to the study based on this learning
- Understand historical oppression of transgender people and communities
- Identify how your personal liberation is connected to the liberation of the informants and participants with whom you work

Appendix B

Workshop Session	Activities	Objectives
Session 1 (n=10)	Welcome and Land Acknowledgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To acknowledge the traditional territory of the Anishnawbe, Haudenosauonee, and Neutral Indigenous peoples To discuss the relationship between gender and colonization To understand the rationale, objectives, and methods of the study
	Group Guidelines and Tour of the Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop group guidelines and mechanisms to promote group safety To inform participants of spaces that they could access throughout the workshop
	Warm-Up Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For participants to connect to their own bodies and practice grounding techniques To connect with each other through interactive games
	Outlining the Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To outline each other's bodies on large sheets of paper
	Undoing Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore representations of participants' roots, identities, and where they are now in their lives
	Group Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To discuss participants experiences engaging in the previous activities
Session 2 (n=9)	Symbolism & Story Telling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To use symbolism and storytelling to give a new meaning to objects To explore how art can be used to symbolize emotions, feelings, and experiences
	Filling in the Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To think about the people in their lives, the places they are immersed in (i.e. post secondary institution, workplace, place of worship etc.), and daily interpersonal interactions, and reflect upon how they feel in various situations To depict how participants feel physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually within the spaces in which

		<p>they are immersed and through their interpersonal relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reflect upon challenges experienced, and how participants cope with such barriers
	Group Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To discuss participants experiences engaging in the previous activities
	Envisioning Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to uncover participants' personal goals in relation to their experiences of inclusion within their community
	Message to Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a visual or written message that participants would like to share with viewers about their experiences as a non-binary person
Session 3 (n=6)	Independent Work Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To complete any incomplete work on the body maps
	Gallery Walk and Group Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For participants to share their final body maps with their peers • To discuss any emergent themes across the body maps

Appendix C

Benefits and Challenges of Body Mapping, Group Discussions, and Interviews

Body Mapping	Group Discussions in Workshop	Interviews
Benefits	Benefits	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honours non-binary youth/individual voice • Opportunities for rapport-building • Appealing knowledge transfer and exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative process • Ongoing reflection of artistic process • Space to gain ongoing feedback and have participants shape the research process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal setting to discuss difficult subject matter (i.e. experiences of mental health) • Enables shy participants to share their insights
Challenges	Challenges	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costly • Large time commitment • An individualized process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires large segments of time frequently throughout the workshop sessions • Discussing difficult subject matter (i.e. experiences of mental health) • Some participants can be more outgoing than others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time commitment