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**Non-binary experiences in the context of gender dichotomization:  
a qualitative systematic review**

Chyna (C.J.) Parker

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Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

NON-BINARY EXPERIENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDER DICHOTOMIZATION: A  
QUALITATIVE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

A clinical dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Psychology

by

Chyna (C.J.) Parker

July, 2023

Shelly Harrell, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This clinical dissertation, written by

Chyna (C.J.) Parker

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Doctoral Committee:

Shelly Harrell, Ph.D., Dissertation Chairperson

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Thank you, Dr. Harrell, for encouraging me, cheering me on, and slowing me down. Thank you for helping me create a project that opened my eyes to what research could be. Thank you for believing in my abilities and allowing me to cultivate my skills. Thank you for igniting confidence, perseverance, and advocacy in my veins. Your guidance and support have been instrumental in my development, and I feel deeply blessed to have learned from you. I could not be more thankful.

Thank you, Dr. Thema, for creating space, opening discussions, and naming what needed to be named. Your words echo in the chambers of my mind, enlightening me to the parts of myself that need to be re-sparked. Thank you for grounding me in frameworks and perspectives I had not previously considered. Your wisdom has profoundly changed me.

## VITA

Chyna J. Parker

### EDUCATION

---

**Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology**  
Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, CA

*Anticipated graduation date: May 2023*

- **Dissertation:** *Non-binary Experiences in the Context of Gender Dichotomization: A Qualitative Systematic Review*

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- Preliminary Orals – Pass with Distinction
- Dissertation Defense Anticipated Date - March
- **Anticipated Internship Completion Date** (VA Long Beach Healthcare System): 07/28/2023

**Master of Science in Counseling Psychology**  
California State University, Bakersfield, Bakersfield, CA

*May 2019*

**Bachelor of Arts in Psychology**  
California State University, Bakersfield, Bakersfield, CA

*June 2016*

### CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

---

**VA Long Beach Healthcare System - Internship Training Program,** *Long Beach, CA*  
**Supervisors:** Wesley Cook, PsyD, MAC, Grace Kim, Ph.D., Veronica Palad, Ph.D., and Ashley Vaillancourt, Ph.D.  
Pre-Doctoral Intern

*August 2022 - Present*

- Acute Psychology Inpatient (Fall Rotation)
  - Conduct twice-weekly groups in the Inpatient Psychiatry-L1 Unit - focused on safety, discharge planning, coping skills, managing mood, and distress tolerance.
    - Utilize a Process-oriented Psychoeducational Model (POP) to include a diversity of presenting problems and mental health concerns.
    - Provide individual evidence-based treatment, including crisis intervention and brief psychotherapy for patients experiencing severe mental illness, offering support with discharge and safety planning, as well as collaboration with the treatment team.
    - Conduct twice-weekly groups in the Inpatient Geriatric Psychiatry-M1 Unit - focused on providing recovery-based education, group therapy, and activities that assist patients moving toward rehabilitation after discharge.
    - The education and activities focus on practical problem-solving, crisis resolution, adaptive skill building, transition to self-care, and independent living where possible.
    - Primary diagnoses include neurocognitive disorders and/or other diagnoses that include psychotic and behavioral components such as Schizophrenia and Mood Disorders.
- Women's Mental Health Clinic (Fall Rotation)

- Co-facilitate Trauma Skills Recovery Group, Managing Emotions Group, and Stress Reduction Group.
- Facilitate Pride and Grit Group, an LGBTQIA+ Veteran support group. Group focuses on identity development, intersectionality, family of origin/choice, and building resiliency.
  - Developed a LGBTQIA+ Veteran Support Group Manual as part of the Intern Research Project. Utilized pre- and post-measures to obtain baseline and outcome measures (see details below under Intern Research Project).
- Provide Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure (PE).
- Attended Virtual Regional CPT for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) 3-Day Certification Training with a 6-month follow-up consultation. Additionally, receiving in-depth training and consultation on both CPT and PE.
- Conduct weekly triage appointments to assist Veterans with linkage to services, administer psychodiagnostic evaluations, and provide relevant referrals throughout and outside of the VA healthcare system.
  
- Blind Rehabilitation Rotation (Spring Rotation)
  - Opportunity to provide services to active-duty service members or Veterans who are legally blind or have functional visual impairments and additional presenting problems such as mild cognitive impairment, vascular dementia, and/or cognitive decline related to multiple etiologies. The clinic is a 24-bed residential, inpatient rehabilitation program that offers training in the evaluation and facilitation of strategies that promote quality of life, social integration, and adjustment to visual impairments and/or blindness.
  - Assessment Opportunities in cognitive screeners (e.g., Blind MoCA, Oral Trail Making Test A & B) and mood measures to establish a cognitive baseline for initial intakes and monitor cognitive changes over time for returning Veterans.
  
- Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP) (Spring Rotation)
  - Provide outpatient individual and group psychotherapy for Veterans presenting with a wide range of problems including PTSD, Anxiety Disorders, Mood Disorders, Adjustment Disorders, interpersonal and relational difficulties, pervasive emotion dysregulation, substance abuse, cognitive impairments, gender dysphoria and gender transition issues, and co-morbid medical complications.
  - Strengthen delivery of evidence-based practices (EBPs) such as CBT for PTSD, PE, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), CBT for Depression and Anxiety, ACT, and Anger Management.
  - Administer psychodiagnostic assessments, as well as personality and cognitive screenings (e.g., MMPI-3, PAI, RBANS, and MoCA).
  
- Programmatic Training and Research
  - Conducted a two-part Intern Research Project involving the creation and implementation of Pride and Grit, and LGBTQIA+ WMHC Support Group with pre- and post-treatment efficacy measures, with the second phase consisting of the creation and presentation of a training webinar on LGBTQIA+ Affirmative Therapy for the Psychology Department at Long Beach VA Healthcare System with pre- and post- measures.
  - Additional training received via comprehensive didactic seminars in recent and current literature covering diversity, assessment, professional development, supervisory competency, and evidence-based practices.

**VA Long Beach Healthcare System – Pepperdine Practicum Training,**  
**Supervisors:** Dr. Amy Potts and Dr. John Huang  
Practicum Extern

*Long Beach, CA*

*August 2021 – July 2022*

- Outpatient Mental Health – Santa Fe Springs Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC)
  - Provided evidence-based practices like PE and CPT to Veteran patients with various presenting problems, mental health and substance use disorders, and traumatic experiences.
  - Obtained experience in suicide assessment, suicide prevention strategies, psychodiagnostic assessment, and triaging for coordination of care.
  - Received cultural responsiveness training in military culture from different eras and veterans with various presenting problems, age groups, gender identity, sexual orientations, religious identities, disabilities, and ethnic backgrounds, with an emphasis on the Latinx population.
- Program for Traumatic Stress - Combat PTSD Clinic (Spring Rotation)
  - Provided evidence-based trauma-focused treatment to Veterans with a primary diagnosis of PTSD
    - Obtained training on the “whole health” model, with the goal of treating the body and mind following traumatic events.
  - Co-facilitated Evidence-based and Whole Health Groups such as PTSD Coping Skills, Cognitive Processing Group Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Group Therapy, Relaxation Skills Group, Tai Chi Group Therapy, and Drum Therapy
- EBP Seminar Trainings
  - Completed seminars in PE, CPT, CBT, and DBT.

**Sports Concussion Institute - Pepperdine Practicum Training,**  
**Supervisors:** Tony Strickland, PhD and Katherine Kruser, PsyD  
Neuropsychological Assessment Extern

*Culver City, CA*

*August 2021 – January 2022*

- Conducted neuropsychological and psychodiagnostic assessments of fire survivors who are demonstrating posttraumatic stress symptoms
  - Evaluation of significant changes in cognitive and psychosocial functioning, trauma symptoms, and other diagnostic presentations.
  - Administered comprehensive assessments to identify the presence of post-concussion syndrome symptoms, cognitive changes following TBIs, and non-TBI medical issues. Assessed patients in verbal reasoning, judgment, visual perceptual memory function, and expressive language.
- Scored, interpreted, and integrated data for strength-based report writing
  - Utilized an integrative model to consider medical records data, the patient’s subjective experience of injury or trauma, diagnostic impressions, and treatment recommendations.

**Boys Hope Girls Hope – Pepperdine Practicum Training (Summer Training),**  
**Supervisor:** Dr. Susan Himelstein

*Irvine, CA*

Practicum Extern

*May 2021 – December 2021*

- Conducted full clinical biopsychosocial interviews for youth ages 12-18.
  - Administered, scored, and interpreted comprehensive assessment reports to answer referral questions. Brief summary provided with recommendations, strengths, and areas of growth

**Institute for Girls Development - Pepperdine Practicum Training,**  
**Supervisors:** Dr. Grace Goodman and Dr. Melissa Johnson

*Pasadena, CA*

Practicum Extern

*August 2020 – July 2021*

- Provided evidence-based treatment for youth and young adults who are culturally and psychologically diverse.
- Co-facilitated evidence-based psychotherapy groups and process-oriented groups such as
  - “Compassion and Grit Group” for youth ages 7 to 10 to assist with emotion identification, socialization skills, and communication skills
  - “Explore Your Path” for ages 18 to 25 to assist with adjustment, mindfulness-based skills, and coping with an array of social/emotional challenges.
  - Developed curriculum for an LGBTQIA+ psychotherapy group
    - “Rainbow Grit for Teens” to assist with developing social and emotional skills, working through identity development stages, and managing minority stress.
  - Co-facilitated two Gender Camps
    - “Epanouie Day Camp” – a summer program for transfeminine youth ages 10 to 12 years with an emphasis on expressive arts, socialization, empowerment, self-esteem, and psychoeducation. “Unicorn Camp” – a summer program for transgender and gender-nonconforming kids ages 6 to 10 years with an emphasis on expressive arts, socialization, and community connection.
  - Obtained training in Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS)

**DaVinci Extension - Pepperdine Practicum Training,**  
**Supervisor:** Dr. Keegan Tangeman

*El Segundo, CA*

Practicum Extern

*September 2019 – August 2020*

- Managed long-term Transitional Age Youth (TAY) clients with a broad range of psychiatric diagnoses (major depression, anxiety, post traumatic stress, and adjustment issues)
  - Conducted comprehensive clinical intake interviews and authored thorough reports
  - Conducted psychotherapy utilizing CBT, Gestalt Therapy, feminist, and multicultural frameworks
  - Collaborated with clients of varying ages, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation
  - Provided process-oriented group psychotherapy, which focused on adjustment issues, familial expectations, and value exploration.

**Access and Assessment Center - CSU, Bakersfield Practicum Training**

Therapist Trainee

*June 2018 – August 2019*

- Provided psychodiagnostic assessment and linkage to psychological and substance abuse treatment at the Access and Assessment Center, the central point of contact for the Kern Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (KBHRS) System of Care.

- Evaluated needs of adults through biopsychosocial and psychodiagnostic assessments.
- Evaluated suicidal and homicidal risk through screening and utilization of the Suicide Risk Inquiry (SRI), Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), and ASIST skills to engage in crisis intervention and safety planning when confronted with crisis situations
- Worked with a multidisciplinary team regarding client safety and needs for hospitalization.
- Trained and certified in Kern County on 5150/5250 decision-making protocols.
- Provided referrals and resources based on the client's presenting problems, medical evaluation, and level of care. Participated in a multidisciplinary team meeting with nurses, psychiatrists, site supervisors, and clinical supervisors to ensure holistic and wrap-around care.

**Kern Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (KBHRS),**  
Recovery Specialist

*Bakersfield, CA*  
*June 2018 – August 2019*

- Assigned to Adult Wrap Around (AWA) – Crisis Division
  - Managed a caseload of ~ ten high-risk clients, providing individual and group therapy
  - Patients presented with suicidal/homicidal ideation, psychotic features, personality disorders, recent or repeated hospitalization, or high crisis center utilization.
  - Provided clients with crisis management skills, safety planning, distress tolerance skills, and emotional regulation skills.
- Obtained training and Certification through KernBHRS
  - Wellness and Recovery Action Plans (WRAP)
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – Suicide Prevention (CBT-SP)
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – Trauma-Focused (CBT – TF)
  - 5150 Certification via Board of Supervisors approval through KernBHRS

**Aegis Treatment Centers - Medication Assisted Treatment Program,**  
Caseload Manager

*Delano, CA*  
*September 2017 – June 2018*

- Maintained a full-time caseload of approximately 35 patients diagnosed with opioid-related diagnoses and comorbidities of other substance use disorders, medical-related conditions, and other mental health conditions.
- Conducted weekly psychoeducational groups on coping with craving, recovery skills building, art therapy, and a women's empowerment group.
- Hosted team-led events for the advocacy and celebration of patient sobriety and success.
- Managed documentation, treatment planning, and completed American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) assessments. Conducted weekly case conceptualization with a multidisciplinary team of medical providers, clinicians, and nurses.
  - Reviewed urine analysis with patients, site supervisors, and medical providers.
  - Trained on HIPAA/CFR 42.
- Facilitated groups utilizing Mind Over Mood, Seeking Safety, and Matrix Material.

**University Training Clinic - CSU, Bakersfield Practicum Training,**  
Therapist Trainee

*Bakersfield, CA*  
*August 2017 – May 2018*

- Provided individual therapy to culturally and psychologically diverse persons with an emphasis on Latinx populations, financially disenfranchised persons, and the LGBTQIA+ community with ages ranging from nine years of age to 65 years of age.



## **ASSESSMENT TRAINING**

**Pepperdine University**, Graduate School of Education and Psychology,  
Teaching assistant to Dr. Alison Vargas

*Los Angeles, CA  
Fall 2021*

- Assisted in the instruction of doctoral students enrolled in Cognitive, Personality, and Advanced Assessment courses in administration, scoring, and interpretation of assessment batteries
- Led individual didactic training sessions (WAIS-IV and Rorschach), graded assignments and exams, and provided feedback regarding student performance in administration, scoring, and integrated report writing.
- Mentored incoming teaching assistants for a successful transition.

## **Assessment Training**

### **Tests of Intellectual and Executive Functioning**

Beery (VMI-6)

Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt Test (Bender-Gestalt II)

Controlled Oral Word Association Test (COWAT)

Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (WAIS-IV)

Wide Range of Achievement Test – 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (WRAT-5)

Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Test (RAVLT)

Mini-Mental Status Exam (MMSE)

Trail Making Tests, Parts A & B (TMT: Parts A & B)

### **Tests of Effort and Malingering**

Rey 15-item Test

Rey Word Recognition Test

Test of Memory Malingering (TOMM)

### **Personality Assessments**

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2)

NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO-PI-R)

Million Adolescent Clinical Inventory

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

Roberts Apperception Test for Children

Rorschach Inkblot Test

Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank – Second Edition (RISB-2)

### **Tests of Psychological Functioning**

Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)

Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II)

General Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)

Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)

Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS)

PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5)

Collaborative Assessment & Management of Suicidality (CAMS)

Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)

Michigan Alcohol Screening Test (MAST)

## **LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE**

**Pepperdine University**, Graduate School of Education and Psychology,  
Peer Consultant

*Los Angeles, CA  
August 2021 to August 2022*

- Provided peer consultation to three doctoral students for the Wiseburn and Da Vinci School Districts with the support of primary site supervisor, Dr. Keegan Tangeman, Child Psychologist, and Dr. Carol Falender.

- Obtained didactic supervision for professional development in supervisory competency skills
  - Received in-depth and comprehensive training from Dr. Falender, a specialist in clinical supervision, the ethics of supervision, and diversity factors in supervision.
- Assisted with building professional and developmental competencies through a developmental model. Specifically, assisting in ethical and legal decision-making as it relates to tiered supervision. Assisted peers with case conceptualization through multiple theoretical orientations as it fit my peer's and their client's needs, and the use of diagnostic and culturally informed treatment planning.

**Pepperdine Student Government Association (SGA)**

*August 2020 to May 2022*

*SGA President (2021-2022)*

*Steering Committee Member (2020-2021)*

- Learning Day Committee – Collaborated on the creation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Learning Day focused on Anti-racism.
  - Co-facilitated two breakout rooms regarding the practice of cultural humility, professional development, culturally-emergent strategies, and anti-racist strategies to promote health, advocacy, and voice for and within the BIPOC community.
- Executive Board Position – oversaw all functions of the student government association, including all subcommittees (i.e., diversity committee, steering committee, and self-care committee). Initiates and promotes activities for the cohesion and the general good of the student body and encourages service and community outreach.

**Psi Chi Honor Society**

Secretary

*August 2015 – May 2016*

- Assisted with event planning, volunteer work, and fundraising
  - Volunteer work with the American Lung Association, Toys for Tots, Bakersfield Homeless Center (40 hours), Wellness Fairs, NAMI, Suicide Candle Light Vigils, and Save A Life Today (SALT) walks.

**California State University, Bakersfield - Special Education Department**

Student Assistant

*November 2014 – November 2016*

- Coordinated events, research symposiums, special education community outreach events, and organized professional learning committees (PLCs) for the continued development of incoming Project PURPOSE scholars.

**Research and Related Experience**

**Graduate School of Education and Psychology,**

*Culver City, CA*

Demonstrator

*August and October 2022*

- Falender, C. A., Parker, C., Vilkin, K. (2022). *Role Invocation in Clinical Supervision*. [Film, educational]. Video produced for the Southern California Counties Regional Partnership: Building Supervision Capacity. October 2, 2022. Project by Carol A. Falender and Rodney Goodyear.
- Falender, C. A. Parker, C., Vilkin, K. (2022). *Establishing the supervisory relationship and contract in Competency-based Clinical Supervision*. Video produced for the Southern California Counties Regional Partnership: Building Supervision Capacity. October 2, 2022.

- Parker, C., & Falender, C. A. (2022). *Role Induction: Beginning the supervision process*. (Video, training module on Competency-based Clinical Supervision). Southern California Regional Partners.
- Falender, C. A., and Parker, C. (2022). Training video on Forming Supervisory Relationship {Video}. Hubei Oriental Insight Mental Health Institute, Wuhan, China.

**Graduate School of Education and Psychology,**  
Poster Presenter

*Culver City, CA  
June and October 2022*

- Presented at the 34th Annual Los Angeles Psychological County Association (LACPA) and the 6th Annual Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP) Research Symposium
  - Title of Presentation: Non-binary Experiences in the Context of Gender Dichotomization: A framework for theory, research, and practice.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness - Orange County (NAMI-OC)**

Presenter

*June 2022*

- Parker, C. (2022). *Navigating Gender Identity*. (Educational Seminar on Gender Identity and Resiliency, an LGBTQIA+ Affirmative approach). On behalf of NAMI-OC.

**CSUB Counseling Psychology, Psychology Department**

Research Assistant

*December 2018 – December 2019*

- Presented at the Western Psychological Association (WPA). Research focusing on the impact of attachment styles, romantic relationships, and gender role socialization under Dr. Richard Zamora, Research Coordinator.

**CSUB Cognitive Processes Lab, Psychology Department**

Research Assistant

*January 2016 – June*

*2016*

- Collected data from human participants to gather cognitive processing data. Tasks involved timing participants, administering testing material, providing informed consent, and debriefing participants on the research purpose.

### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS)
- Division 19: Society for Military Psychology
  - Division 19: Student Leadership Program - Scholarship Recipient
- Division 44: Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity
- Division 50: Society of Addiction Psychology
- Division 55: Society for Prescribing Psychology
- Division 56: Division of Trauma Psychology

### **Additional Certificates**

**EPFLx, an online learning initiative of École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne**

BrainX: Cellular Mechanisms of Brain Function

*July 2020*

**HarvardX, an online learning initiative of Harvard University**  
Fundamentals of Neuroscience, Part 3: The Brain

*July 2020*

**HarvardX, an online learning initiative of Harvard University**  
Fundamentals of Neuroscience, Part 2: Neurons and Networks

*June 2020*

**HarvardX, an online learning initiative of Harvard University**  
Fundamentals of Neuroscience, Part 1: The Electrical Properties of the Neuron

*June 2020*

## ABSTRACT

Gender diverse persons have historically and presently faced unique challenges, marginalization, and discrimination. The lived experiences of the transgender nonconforming population are still widely unresearched, and most research treats transgender and transgender nonconforming (TGNC) people as a homogeneous group. This neglects the nuanced and diverse experience of the TGNC population. This integrative systematic review of the literature was conducted in order to identify and highlight the experiences of transgender nonconforming persons in the context of a binarily set world. The following questions guided this study: (a) What are the identity-related experiences of non-binary individuals in the context of gender dichotomization?, (b) What are the social and relational experiences of non-binary individuals in the context of gender dichotomization?, and (c) What are the psychotherapy and counseling experiences of nonbinary individuals in the context of gender dichotomization? The comprehensive search process yielded 24 qualitative studies that met inclusion criteria. Review findings suggest that the TGNC community is heterogeneous in their gender identities and experience their gender journey as nuanced and unique to the individual and in the context of their other socio-cultural identities. Additionally, themes of acceptance from family, peers, romantic partners, mental health providers, and educational systems appeared to promote overall socio-emotional wellness, while rejection appeared to exacerbate mental health problems and lead to internalized negative attitudes directed at oneself. Though only two studies directly looked at the therapeutic relationship and mental health outcomes, data suggests that the TGNC community benefits from providers educating themselves about the TGNC community, while also cultivating a safe and affirming environment.

## **Chapter I: Background and Rationale**

### **Statement of the Problem**

As the conceptualization of gender continues to expand, grow, and develop, so does the need to address the categorization and dichotomization of gender identity in the transgender nonconforming (TGNC) community. The exploration and development of gender identity for nonbinary persons in current societal norms pose challenges. As society stretches beyond the gender binary, broader understandings of gender as a fluid construct needs to be approached. The shifts in culture attempt to keep up with gender exploration; however, gender categorization and language limitations continue to restrict our understanding and conceptualization of gender identity and experience (Darwin, 2017). Additionally, Darwin (2017) noted scarcity in nonbinary research as this population is often placed under the umbrella term of Transgender, which does not address the complexity and nuance of gender experiences for the TGNC population. Nonbinary and gender diverse persons face unique experiences in their identity development and unique challenges in their relational and community settings (e.g., romantic, social, academic, employment, therapeutic relationships, and group affiliations).

Dominant cultural norms predominantly categorize gender on a binary system, which often limits gender experiences and perpetuates minority stress. Minority Stress Theory (MST) argues that stigma and prejudice directed at gender minorities bring about a multitude of stressors that lead to adverse effects on mental, emotional, and physical health (Meyer, 2003, 2020). Additionally, this often perpetuates physical and mental health disparities between gender minorities and cisgender counterparts (Meyer, 2020). The Minority Stress Model suggests that gender minorities chronically face unique and hostile stressors, both distal and proximal. Built upon Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Model, the Gender Minority Stress and Resilience

(GMSR) Model addresses distal and proximal stressors as external prejudice events and anti-trans discrimination (distal), as well as internal psychological processes such as experiences of internalized transphobia and identity fragmentation (proximal; Lloyd et al., 2019). Recently, Meyer (2020) has considered adding rejection sensitivity to the Minority Stress Model to include individual responses to societal, interpersonal, therapeutic, and intrapersonal rejection as a moderator for negative mental health outcomes. Rejection Sensitivity is further explained as an individual cognitive-affective reaction to rejection, which can be approached at a clinical level intervention when sitting with gender minorities looking for coping skills to manage negative outcomes related to minority stress. This addition to the Minority Stress Model may problematize the individual or group as being too sensitive rather than noting and normalizing the response to minority stress.

Additionally, attention to rejection sensitivity gives recognition of in-group and out-group dynamics that may shed light on the cognitive-affective response to rejection. Thus, it is important to hold in frame the individual's lived experiences rather than problematizing the individual or group when looking at rejection sensitivity and response to minority stress.

Specifically, the GMSR model has been developed for transgender and TGNC populations to illustrate minority stressors such as gender-related victimization as well as potential moderators for managing minority stress at systemic and interpersonal levels (Lloyd et al., 2019). According to Lloyd et al. (2019), TGNC populations experience disproportionate levels of psychological distress compared to the general population, as they are often subject to frequent and intense gender-related stigma and rejection. Lloyd et al. (2019) noted several limitations to their study of 358 transgender and TGNC participants, such as a lack of appropriate and available measures to reflect the uniqueness of the TGNC population. With the

complexity of gender expression and gender experiences, addressing the nuances of TGNC experiences is vital as it gives voice to an underrepresented and under researched population. Furthermore, when viewing transgender identity, most research has focused on assigned male at birth (AMAB) and assigned female at birth (AFAB) and the process of medical transitioning, thus systematically overlooking populations that do not fall within the binary or those who choose to not medically transition. Not only are there examples of multileveled and systematic oppression, but research also fails to address the unique dynamics and experiences of TGNC persons. Gordon (2005) noted the binary system as a possible erasure of the complexity of gender identity. However, acknowledging the narrowed cultural construction of gender identity creates a dialogue to address issues of oppression and marginalization by recognizing gender as fluid and contextual (Gordon, 2005).

In the mental health setting, this dialogue allows for flexibility in conceptualizing gender expression and enables clients to explore their identity development. However, there has been resistance to opening this dialogue, and some mental health communities continue to discriminate, stigmatize, and marginalize (e.g., the practice of conversion therapy). Following the shift in the mental health field, the American Psychological Association (APA) debated whether to distinguish between the concepts of "sex" and "gender" when transitioning to the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)*. This distinction shifted diagnosis from pathologizing gender identity like Gender Identity Disorder (GID) to recognizing unique differences among gender identity and expression (APA, 2000). According to the American Psychological Association (2015) guidelines regarding psychological practice for transgender and gender nonconforming persons, psychologists understand that gender is a nonbinary construct that allows for a spectrum of gender experiences that may not align with the



sex assigned at birth. Additionally, psychologists recognize how biases might impact the quality of care as well as how gender identity intersects with other cultural identities (APA, 2015). Thus, the dialogue of recognizing TNGC populations in the context of larger systems that have historically marginalized gender expansive persons allows for a deeper understanding of the TGNC population and the challenges they face.

Factor and Rothblum (2008) noted that using the medical model, such as focusing on sex over gender identity, does not fully capture the complexity of gender as it exists on the spectrum. For example, the narrowing of gender experiences overlooks the complexity of those who have transitioned, as one-third of participants labeled transwoman or transman described their gender identity as fluid. Factor and Rothblum (2008) also noted that identity disclosure to healthcare professionals and family members occurred at a higher rate for those who identified as transgender (transman or transwoman) versus those who identified as genderqueer or gender diverse. Thus, the limiting view of the binary system and the overgeneralization of TGNC experiences in relation to the transgender community have slowed research and application for mental health treatment of nonbinary persons. Despite notable shifts in psychology, the therapeutic and societal adjustment has been slow to adapt to affirmative practices, which has implications for how nonbinary persons are treated in interpersonal, social, and therapeutic relationships (Factor et al., 2008). Specifically, identifying nonbinary issues in research has widely been in relation to transgender persons who identify within the binary, while gender nonconforming populations have been widely overlooked.

A comprehensive and integrative review examining the themes of identity and relational experience for nonbinary persons in the context of gender dichotomization does not yet exist in the current literature. Therefore, there appears to be a need for a systematic review of the

literature to identify themes of nonbinary experiences with regard to identity developmental processes and interpersonal and interactional dynamics. This can contribute to a deeper understanding of the processes of gender identity and development and nonbinary persons' relational experiences in the context of gender dichotomization, as well as a contextualized lens of how TGNC people develop, navigate, and negotiate identity and relationships in a socio-political and culturally laden world. The value of such a review for professional practice is to provide mental health professionals with a resource to gain information and insight into gender diverse clientele as well as representation, voice, and advocacy for nonbinary experiences in different relational contexts.

## **Overview of Current Research and Theory**

### ***Gender Binary/Non-Binary***

Transgender has become an umbrella term for those who identify as the “opposite sex,” but can also include gender nonconforming, nonbinary, agender, and so on (i.e., the Trans+ community; Darwin, 2017). Specifically, persons who identify outside of the gender binary may identify more closely with terms such as nonbinary, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, pangender, two-spirited, agender, gender neutral, and so on (Richards et al., 2016). Richards et al. (2016) examined the prevalence of nonbinary persons in the U.K. and Scotland, with 5% of LGBTQ+ youth identifying outside of the binary, and of the 5%, 13% of the LGBTQ+ youth participants marked "gender not listed here." After reviewing the literature on transgender mental health, these researchers found that 25% of participants identified as nonbinary (Richards et al., 2016). They noted that identifying outside of the binary is not a new phenomenon but a silenced experience due to cultural and societal gender norms. This demonstrates the growing need for

research focused on the experiences of nonbinary persons in the context of gender dichotomization (Richards et al., 2016).

Dominant culture still heavily relies on binary explanations of gender, which often leads to the marginalization of gender minorities. Levitt (2019) expanded on the definition of gender as a constellation of personal qualities fitting in the context of physiological sex and the given culture. He also noted the current limitations of culture due to stigma, traditional gender role norms, and limited language when attempting to communicate the complexity of one's gender sense. Nonbinary persons are also continuously challenged by the binary system when choosing to come out, express, or communicate their identity.

Thus, the very notion of TGNC identities inherently challenges the gender binary. Challenging the binary system poses unique physical and systemic obstacles. Poststructuralist perspectives hold the view that an individual is operating from conflicting tension in self-perception (Monro, 2005). Despite this recognition and the attempt to delink biological sex and gender, Poststructuralist Theory fails to recognize transgender person's experiences in the context of socio-political and cultural frameworks (Monro, 2005). Historically, socio-political contexts encouraged silence from the trans community, as communication about sexual orientation and gender identity would often lead to imprisonment, institutionalization, experimentation, and often death. The additional layer of intersectionality as it intertwines with differing cultural expressions of gender (e.g., two-spirited persons) were also erased in boarding schools and family dynamics through the enforcement of assimilation. Painful historical trauma lives in the minds and bodies of current trans persons who have to navigate safety daily.

Additionally, the failure to note the limitations of the binary system perpetuates the silencing of TGNC populations as the theory sees gender experience as fully subjective rather

than a dynamic interplay between the physical, interpersonal, cultural, and internal worlds. Monro (2005) further explained that expanding current theories under postmodernism and structuralism fails to recognize the corporeal and societal limitations in historical and current contexts. Poststructuralism fails to address the interrelationship between TGNC populations and larger social constructs that marginalize nonbinary identities, such as social and medical red tape that disallows gender expression. These theoretical shortcomings are a call to expand the conceptualization of gender-related experiences and address the continued marginalization of TGNC persons.

Historically, pathologizing gender nonconforming identities via diagnoses of GID, which was included in the *DSM-IV*, reflects a serious threat to the lived experiences of gender nonbinary persons. These threats were pervasive across contexts and bi-directional in nature as societal expectations on gender normative experiences pathologized those who fell outside of the cis-normative, binary narratives. This, in turn, influenced the field of psychology which led to the pathologizing of a person's gender identity. The power held by experts, doctors, psychologists, and therapists were compromised by the larger transphobic narrative in Western medicine. Larger social norms perpetuated these narratives through behaviors such as abuse, violence, rejection, and exclusion towards the TGNC population.

Specifically, Veldhuis and colleagues (2018) conducted a convenience sampling of 242 trans-identifying participants who experienced first-hand, second-hand, and tertiary acts of violence. Of the 242 participants, 55.8% reported hearing about hate crimes, 37.2% reported witnessing any type of hate crime, and 29.8% reported experiencing hate crimes personally since the 2016 presidential election. In addition to historical evidence of marginalization and oppression, themes of discrimination towards nonbinary expression in social, relational,

academic, work, and therapeutic interactions are evident in current socio-political and cultural contexts (Levitt, 2019; Markman, 2011). Although this proposed systematic review does not focus on the collective historical trauma of the transgender population, it is important to note that historical marginalization has continued to be pervasive in the current context of the dominant culture, which inherently influences the experiences of nonbinary individuals on a multitude of domains (e.g., identity development and relational interactions). Specifically, as mentioned above, gender diversity has traditionally been pathologized, which has negatively impacted the trajectory for mental health and wellness amongst trans-identifying individuals. Morris et al. (2020) noted that negative mental healthcare experiences had been linked to reduced future help-seeking behaviors. Of the 91 trans-identifying participants, qualitative analysis of participant disclosures presented with four major themes surrounding microaggressions in the context of mental health services: disrespect for gender identity, lack of competency from providers, the saliency of identity in treatment approaches (i.e., overemphasis or minimization), and gatekeeping, which was described as an abuse of power to allow or disallow hormone treatment or gender-affirming surgery (Morris et al., 2020). This abuse of power demonstrates pervasive barriers to the synthesis of one's gender identity.

### ***Identity Development***

According to Goldberg, Kivalanka, and Dickey (2019), creating space to challenge the binary system has been an increasing area of focus as a way to reduce the alienation for those who do not have a cisgender identity. For example, Goldberg, Kivalanka, and Dickey (2019) defined cis-normativity as the assumption that an individual's gender identity matches their biological sex, which can be noted across micro- and macro- systems (i.e., interpersonal, work, and medical contexts). Issues such as cis-normativity perpetuate the notion that there are only

two genders and that biological sex defines gender identity. Conceptualizing gender as binary enforces rigidity in the expression and formation of gender identity. However, a considerable body of research has demonstrated that gender can be fluid and flexible (Cerezo et al., 2020; Gordon, 2005). The fluidity and flexibility of gender exploration create unique experiences for identity developmental processes. Although theories such as Queer Theory build upon the idea that gender is a part of the essential self with the use of sexual identity development models, few models address gender identity development (Gordon, 2005). Specifically, Queer Theory challenges the binary system and questions oppressive ideologies that marginalize and silence nonbinary experiences. The theory proposes that disruptions in binaries will lead to a disruption in inequality. The challenging of norms allows for an expanded experience during identity developmental processes (Gordon, 2005) Thus, expanding on postmodern theories, like Queer Theory, may address gaps in nonbinary identity developmental processes. For example, sexual identity development models may assist with bridging gaps in research when attempting to understand the complexity and multidimensionality of gender identity (Gordon, 2005).

Typically, sexual identity developmental models address two processes: identity formation and identity integration (Cerezo et al., 2020). Cerezo et al. (2020) explained that the period of formation involves exploring an intrapersonal understanding of their sexual orientation as well as navigating distal and proximal stressors when accounting for cultural influences. Levitt (2019) also found participants to experience gender as a strong internal sense of self and how they relate and socially consolidate their identity. Cerezo et al. (2020) and Levitt (2019) highlighted the important influence social and cultural messages have during identity developmental processes. Nonbinary persons are faced with cultural and intrapsychic challenges such as marginalization, managing internalized cisgender messages, and building on one's

internal sense (Meyer, 2020). Additionally, for those who exist in a more fluid state of gender identity, integration, acceptance, and coming out become a lifelong process that requires adjustment in multiple life domains (Cerezo et al., 2020).

In a sample of 20 self-identified gender expansive Latinx and African American participants, Cerezo et al. (2020) explored identity formation as it intersected with race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. These intersecting identities also influenced identity formation. Themes such as family and cultural expectations, freedom to explore one's identity, and negotiation between internal and external messages influenced coming out experiences, identity integration, and the person's sense of acceptance and belonging. Proper identity integration led to an internal state of acceptance of the person's intersectionality. This integration was mediated by supportive others who encouraged identity exploration and expression. However, most participants were often met with resistance within the context of wider systems (e.g., family and friends, socio-political, and cultural expectations).

Johnson (2016) defined generalized trans-normative narratives as a further marginalization to TGNC populations as it works under a medical framework and gender binary assumption that individuals who are trans-identifying fall into an either-or categorization as male or female presenting. Tatum et al. (2020) examined identity differences amongst binary and nonbinary populations. Significant differences were found with respect to developmental milestones, identity conceptualizations, and gender expressions, suggesting that applying a generalized trans-normative narrative may unintentionally marginalize the idiosyncratic experiences of nonbinary persons (Tatum et al., 2020). Additionally, with the failure to recognize different approaches to identity development, developing affirmative practices for nonbinary individuals continue to be overgeneralized. Specifically, how does one navigate

identity development and community belonging in the context of gender dichotomization?

Goldberg, Kuvalanka, and Dickey (2019) found navigation trends, such as using online resources and college settings, to explore gender more fully. Although there is increasing navigation amongst designated safe spaces to explore gender, there is still much need for building spaces of affirmation and validation.

A study of 506 transgender undergraduate and graduate students, most of whom (75%) had nonbinary gender identities, found that nonbinary participants who disclosed their gender identity tended to experience invalidation from family and peers with the additive pressure to present as their assigned sex (Goldberg, Kuvalanka, & Dickey, 2019). This additional pressure extended past families into larger systemic contexts. Scheffey et al. (2019) identified themes of discomfort within medical offices due to restrictive paperwork, such as checking off boxes that do not fully match their identity. Nonbinary persons exposed to inflexible gender binary options expressed further discomfort and invalidation in settings meant to provide supportive services, which had negative consequences for the individual's perception and trust towards providers. Themes across literature are beginning to highlight the additional layer of harm created when a loved one or a helping professional invalidates and marginalizes a person's gender identity. As noted above, this may increase minority stress, disconnection from family and community, and reduce use of medical and mental health services.

### ***Marginalization***

Transgender people have a long history of marginalization and victimization. Issues such as "passing," psychiatric pathologizing of gender experiences, and socio-cultural and political alienation has furthered the gap in trans-equality and gender representation outside of the binary (Shelley, 2009). For example, transgender microaggressions such as slights, insults, hostile



communication, or derogatory remarks towards TGNC community members can be a damaging and isolating experience (Nadal, 2012). These patterns of marginalization have created discernable mental health disparities within the TGNC community.

Fabbre and Gaveras (2020) noted mental health disparities in TGNC persons are often related to systemic and interpersonal stigmatization. Individual levels of stigma manifest as internal conflicts related to a constant challenging of gender norms and internalized transphobia. Interpersonal stigma navigates conflicting experiences of acceptance and exclusion, and structural level stigma approaches issues such as transphobic policies and social norms that promote marginalization and silencing of nonbinary experiences (Fabbre & Gaveras, 2020). These multiple levels of stigma create barriers to interpersonal and intrapersonal connections. Specifically, stigmatizing environments impact TGNC identity formation and integration. With continued expectations of the TGNC community to fit within the binary, internalized psychological conflict elevates internalized transphobia. For example, navigating messages that devalue, minimize, or misrepresent the individual's gender complicates identity developmental processes. These messages come from various sources such as family, work, media, government, and policy, which become painful internalized messages on individual and structural levels (i.e., internalized transphobia, oppressive laws/systems; Rood et al., 2017).

### ***Marginalization and Mental Health***

The rejection of one's nonbinary gender identity and internalized transphobia often leads to increased experiences of depression, low self-esteem, and suicidality (Rood et al., 2017). Denying gender identity through micro and macro-aggressions disaffirm nonbinary identity and are strongly correlated with suicidality among nonbinary persons (Nadal, 2012; Parr & Howe, 2019). Specifically, Nadal (2012) highlighted common themes of microaggressions within the

transgender community, such as misgendering, assuming an individual's gender experience, the fetishization of gender experience and identity, and endorsement of gender normative behavior (i.e., expectations to act as the assigned sex). As a result of these micro and macro aggressions, participants noted physical and psychological fatigue, increased isolation, and decreased quality of life (Nadal, 2012). Additionally, these disproportionate rates of mental health disparities are significantly correlated with social stigma and gender-related victimization. Thus, this exposure to threat and victimization is meant to pressure conformity to maintain cis-normative narratives so the individual's interpersonal and intrapsychic modes of relating are digestible by the dominant culture.

According to Parr and Howe (2019), as much as 45% of transgender individuals experience physical violence, harassment, and gender-based victimization (e.g., physical/sexual violence, systemic discrimination, family/community rejection). A dialogue needs to be created to address the physical and mental health disparities for nonbinary individuals, so their lived experiences do not go unrecognized and unheard. This dialogue can be utilized to develop better models of identity development, improve quality of life, increase inclusivity within systems, and push the boundaries of the binary gender system.

### ***Community and Interpersonal Experiences***

Community and relational considerations such as advocacy fatigue, safety concerns, and shifts in socio-political climates also impact TGNC experience of relating, connecting, and expressing themselves. Veldhuis et al. (2018) identified allyship issues, such as advocacy fatigue in the current political climate. Advocacy fatigue is the burning out of psychological resources that are needed to provide support. This fatigue creates additional issues as supporters become silenced amongst the wave of increased marginalization through current policy and government.

The political marginalization of TGNC populations has led to increased overt behavioral acts of violence and discrimination towards non-binary persons. Findings documented an increased concern from the TGNC and ally community regarding TGNC safety, quality of life, mental health, and rights and freedoms (Veldhuis et al., 2018). Shifts in socio-political climates are likely to lead to differences in how one shares their identity with family, friends, and community members. According to Gordon (2005), the traditional conceptualization of sexuality and gender (e.g., heteronormativity and cis-normativity), which have historically been used to oppress and manage social change, no longer fit the complexity of gender.

### ***Community Progress and Support***

Despite the challenges of advocacy fatigue and current socio-political marginalization, the TGNC population has challenged the binary system and created space and language that has forever shifted the notion of gender. Allyship and community connection have also been a positive driving force of support for improved quality of life for the TGNC population (Weinhardt et al., 2019). Thus, it is key to consider that the person is never removed from their context as it would not capture the entirety of their experience nor account for the moderating effects on mental health outcomes and quality of life.

If a process of identity development is socially constructed and gender is experienced in the context of current cultural influences, then understanding the role of family, friends, and significant others may provide an understanding of a nonbinary person's experiences with gender identity development. Weinhardt et al. (2019) examined the impact of social and family support on domains such as mental health, well-being, resilience, and quality of life in a sample of 154 transgender and non-binary youth. Weinhardt and colleagues' (2019) findings suggest an association between relational support and measures of well-being. Those who had family and

friends who affirmed their gender identity endorsed a higher quality of life. Conversely, those who did not have supportive others to affirm their gender identity experienced a reduction in quality of life and increased mental health issues such as increased suicidal ideation and depressive and anxious symptoms.

### ***Therapeutic Relationships***

Finding supportive spaces that allow for gender affirmation is important for building visibility in the TGNC community. Gender identity is not always visible, and invisibility creates additional implications for non-binary experiences. Nadal et al. (2012) identified themes of disaffirming counseling approaches such as misgendering and assuming a global transgender experience. These are often based on stereotypes, strict gender role norms, and disapproval of TGNC identity. Disapproval was often communicated through expectations to act in gender-conforming manners (Nadal et al., 2012). These assumptions create issues for mental health professionals as there may be biases and misconceptions of nonbinary experiences. These biases and misconceptions lead to non-affirmative treatment and further marginalization.

In a more recent study, Richards et al. (2016) explained there are still considerable threats and victimization towards gender-nonconforming persons within political, societal, and interpersonal domains. Specifically, Richards et al. (2016) outlined barriers to gender expression such as business, bureaucracies, and healthcare systems only recognizing binary genders (i.e., Male/Female). However, considering the history of diagnostic classification concerning gender-sense, there appears to be a trend towards acceptance and understanding of gender diversity. The acceptance and understanding of gender diversity have been reflected within the context of mental health care systems, such as revisions and removal of GID in the *DSM-V* and the addition

of Gender Dysphoria (G.D.), which explicitly recognizes that having a different gender than one's assigned sex is not a disorder in and of itself.

Mizok and Lundquist (2016) interviewed transgender and gender nonconforming adults, ages 60-83, to offer a historical perspective of therapeutic experiences. Of the 10 participants, nine of them discussed recent, affirmative experiences in therapy. The participants also described their first therapeutic experience as negative, such as the clinician using homophobic/transphobic approaches (e.g., given derogatory psychological literature). Bettergarcia and Israel (2018) utilized mock therapeutic sessions for TGNC clients to rate the level of appropriateness of the therapist's approach. Transgender nonconforming clients were shown vignettes with a trans-affirmative approach, a nonbinary affirming approach, and a non-affirming approach. Results demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference in the perception of the therapist. Specifically, poorer ratings were given to the vignette of the non-affirming approach, whereas affirming approaches had positive therapist ratings. Thus, disaffirming therapeutic approaches negatively affect the client's perception of the client-therapist relationship (Bettergarcia & Israel, 2018).

### **Rationale, Primary Aims, and Research Questions**

In addition to societal and cultural stigmas, many interpersonal processes negatively impact non-binary experiences and identity development processes (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019). Nonbinary persons face unique circumstances when interacting with family, friends, and social groups, such as proximal and distal stressors that impact physical and mental health (Nadal et al., 2012). Thus, current binary gender norms are inherently challenged when TNGC persons explore their identity, which places TGNC persons in vulnerable positions. Specifically, with therapeutic services, gender diverse persons have historically been met with disaffirming

approaches to their identity development and expression (Nadal et al., 2012). Clinicians must be equipped with an appropriate level of knowledge and competence regarding gender identity, gender expression, and barriers to identity development (Brown et al., 2019).

This systematic review is a comprehensive summary and thematic synthesis of existing literature regarding the identity and interpersonal experiences of TGNC persons who exist in the current context of gender dichotomization (i.e., the gender binary). The review aims to answer three primary questions with regard to non-binary relational experiences and identity development processes: (a) What are the identity-related experiences of nonbinary individuals in the context of gender dichotomization?, (b) What are the social and relational experiences of non-binary individuals in the context of gender dichotomization?, and (c) What are the psychotherapy and counseling experiences of nonbinary individuals in the context of gender dichotomization? The author hopes to provide a review that is valuable and insightful for therapists, researchers, and academic others interested in learning about non-binary experiences in addition to encouraging and inspiring future areas of research to be more representative for gender diverse populations. Additionally, this systematic review hopes to present the primary themes noted in source articles as a way to highlight trends in research relevant to TGNC experiences. This is meant to further support the importance and need for research with the TGNC population.

## Chapter II: Methods

### Systematic Review Approach

This study utilized a qualitative systematic review approach. A thematic synthesis was conducted to combine the results of qualitative studies to provide a deeper, contextualized understanding of TGNC experiences and identity processes in the current context of the gender binary system. Synthesizing studies together in this manner provides a rich understanding of the experiences of the TGNC population. This thematic synthesis incorporated guidelines from the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (PRISMA-P)* and was informed by the review standards, guidelines, and recommendations from the Cochrane Collaborative, the Campbell Collaborative, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the National Academy of Sciences (Higgins & Green, 2011; Moher et al., 2009).

Additionally, the Joanna Briggs Institute recommended describing all steps in the review, such as the decision-making processes, comprehensive searching, and synthesis of findings that authentically represents the collection of data from accumulated studies when writing a systematic review from a qualitative methodological approach (Lockwood et al., 2017).

Following suggestions by Timulak (2009), additional credibility checks, such as secondary reviewers or independent analysts, provided useful support when gathering qualitative data and identifying themes. Credibility checks also included the primary researcher and secondary reviewers' positionality via a reflexivity statement for the purposes of reducing biases. *PRISMA-P* guidelines for qualitative data described a 17-item checklist for preparing a systematic review (Moher et al., 2009). Specifically, Moher et al. (2009) explained that identifying general article information, rationale, objectives, eligibility criteria, all intended information sources, strategies for searching, data management, selection process, participant

perceptions, experiences, and noted themes, as well as the risk of bias in collected studies, are important guidelines when formulating a systematic review.

## **Eligibility Criteria**

### ***Inclusion Criteria: Source Eligibility***

Studies found in US-based and international academic, peer-reviewed journals were considered. Reports and white papers commissioned by private organizations, books, and book chapters were also eligible for inclusion. To reflect the most current scholarship, published dissertations were considered to deepen the breadth and depth of the current contextualization of non-binary experiences.

To explore identity processes and interpersonal and therapeutic experiences, the author included studies from international journals in this review. International journals may offer insight into socio-political, cultural, and systemic issues that TGNC persons face that may provide depth and insight for US-based clinicians who are working with the TGNC community. All source articles were in the English language as some languages are gendered, which was likely to impact translated sources when communicating TGNC experiences outside of the binary system. Only sources published after 2000 were eligible for inclusion in this review, as it provides more current terminology that better represents the TGNC community.

### ***Study Eligibility Criteria: Participants, Research Variables, and Settings***

The target populations examined by this review, gender nonbinary and TGNC persons, are underrepresented in the literature and have rarely been a focus of mental health research. Thus, each study included participants who identified outside of the gender binary. Studies included descriptions of either (a) identity processes such as identity developmental experiences, identity formation, and the sharing of identity, (b) a relational experience such as interpersonal,



romantic, familial, academic, employment, or (c) experiences in psychotherapy or mental health counseling. Participants' age range, to meet inclusion criteria, was 13 and above, as qualitative descriptions of identity and relational experiences are likely to differ significantly due to developmental factors. There were no research settings excluded from this review. Since this population is rarely researched, all data collection settings have been made eligible for inclusion, including college/university campuses, forensic settings, and community-based locations.

### ***Research Design and Data Collection Eligibility Criteria***

All of the source articles were identified as using qualitative methodology in this review. Additionally, all qualitative research strategies have been considered, such as phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, case study, and participatory methods. Mixed methods studies were also eligible if qualitative data was analyzed and reported separately. Data collection within included studies included surveys with open-ended and forced-choice questions, interviews, or other written or verbal textual material (e.g., personal journal entries, social media posts) to obtain phenomenological experiences in the participant's own words. Included studies conducted some formal analysis via a thematic analysis, a narrative synthesis, or other qualitative analysis to integrate and conceptualize the participant's responses. Systematic reviews that utilized qualitative data were also eligible for inclusion. Additionally, dissertation quality is quite variable; thus, a quality appraisal was conducted and reported for each study when assessing for inclusion. Dissertations were rated using the ISQA form and a criteria of three points or higher was required for inclusion.

### ***Exclusion Criteria***

The following types of sources were excluded from this review: conference presentations, unpublished materials, and non-academic articles (e.g., magazine articles, newspaper articles,

blog posts). To maintain quality, the author did not consider data from these sources. Studies focusing exclusively on transgender as transgender men or transgender women were not eligible for inclusion, as it does not capture the non-binary or gender non-conforming population pertinent to this systematic review. Studies focusing exclusively on the medical experiences of the TGNC community were also excluded.

## **Search, Screening, and Selection Processes**

### ***Information Sources***

Electronic databases served as the primary search resource for this review. A comprehensive electronic literature search was conducted utilizing EBSCOhost, PsychINFO, Scopus, PubMed.gov, ProQuest Central, and SAGE Journals Online.

### ***Search Terms and Search Plan***

A comprehensive list of search terms was identified to collect appropriate studies for this review (see Appendix A). Related synonyms for most terms were identified to capture the full searching capacity of each database. Search terms used to locate articles related to four major themes: non-binary populations, identity developmental processes, interpersonal relationships and experiences, and experiences in psychotherapy or counseling. Considering differences in each database's ability to add specifiers, terms and acronyms related to qualitative data were added to the list of search terms (e.g., interview, focus group, phenomenological, case study, vignette, etc.). On electronic databases, these search terms applied to titles, keywords, abstracts, authors, and references of all articles. Once the list of search terms and synonyms were identified, the terms were grouped and assigned a numeric code. The primary (excluding synonyms) search term used to identify the target population was *gender nonbinary*. Additionally, the primary search term used to document identity developmental processes was

*identity development*. The primary search terms used to identify relational experiences were *family relationships, romantic relationships, interpersonal relationships, school and/or work experiences*, and lastly, *therapeutic relationships*. Next, the *gender binary* was searched to capture studies relevant to TGNC experiences in the context of gender dichotomization. Finally, *qualitative* was included to gather qualitative studies regarding the identity, relational, therapeutic experiences of the TGNC community. A comprehensive search plan was developed using predetermined combinations of the key search terms to obtain literature relevant to each research question (see Appendix B). Appendix C presents the template that was utilized to document each search conducted, which included the search date, along with the number of records that result from the search.

### ***Screening and Selection of Studies***

The study selection portion consisted of three phases: the initial screen (i.e., screening of abstract, title, and keywords and removal of duplicates), full-text screen, and final decision. The authors, title, and year of all studies identified in the search process have been input into the Screening and Selection spreadsheet (see Appendix D). Duplicates were then deleted. This researcher and research assistants then screened titles, keywords, and abstracts to identify potentially relevant articles (i.e., articles discussing the TGNC experiences and identity development processes). Sources that did not reflect the population or research variables were excluded, with reasons for exclusion documented. It is important to note that during the abstract screening process, research assistants also reviewed the ‘participant section’ of the source articles to determine if inclusion criteria was met. A quality appraisal process was used to determine whether dissertations met inclusion criteria. Quality was assessed by an Individual Study Quality Appraisal Form for Systematic Reviews (ISQA) developed by faculty through the

researcher's academic program (Harrell, 2021). Specifically, information on strength of literature, clarity and specificity of research aims, quality of research design, adequacy of sample characteristics in the context of research aims, appropriate use of data collection tools, clearly described data collection processes, appropriateness of analysis for research questions and type of data, discussion of limitations, and attention to diversity within the sample were all rated on a scale from weak to exemplary. Ratings were based on presence, appropriateness, and detail within the source article. The researcher then reviewed the remaining articles' full text to determine if inclusion and exclusion criteria were met.

Final decisions were made in collaboration with a second reviewer to go over flagged articles that were identified by the author. Flagged articles were identified based on the author's uncertainty of application of inclusion criteria. The purpose of flagging articles and utilizing a second reviewer was an attempt to minimize errors and ensure the validity of the selection and screening of identified studies. A third reviewer has also reviewed 25% of the results to ensure consistency in final decision-making for inclusion. The articles chosen were randomly selected full-text studies and all discrepancies were discussed and noted. A total of two discrepancies were present. These two discrepancies were regarding the appropriateness of language and gender identity descriptors. Words like "transsexual" and "transvestite" were listed in these two articles as gender identity labels. Upon second review with the third reviewer, these articles were excluded. No other discrepancies regarding eligibility were identified. Once a consensus was reached regarding the selection decision for each article, studies that meet criteria were marked with a "Y" for "yes" in the Screening and Selection spreadsheet to indicate that the study met eligibility for selection into the systematic review. Studies that did not meet criteria were marked with an "N" for "no" to denote that the study has not met eligibility, and the reason for exclusion

was described (see Appendix D). Sources that meet inclusion criteria were then selected for the systematic review extraction and analysis process.

## **Data Collection and Extraction**

### ***Development of the Data Extraction Form***

This qualitative systematic review was designed to synthesize the existing body of relevant literature in order to explore identity developmental processes and interpersonal experiences within the TGNC population. To facilitate clear identification of this information, the Data Extraction Form (see Appendix E) was developed based on a version of a data extraction form for systematic reviews modified from Effective Practice and Organization of Care (EPOC; Glenton et al., 2019) that was subsequently modified by the author's doctoral program faculty. The extraction form was then pilot-tested and refined by the author and reviewed by the dissertation chair. The following general extraction categories were utilized: *general information about the study* (date form completed, title, author, report I.D., source/publication type, publication status, document language), *study methodology* (specific qualitative inquiry approach, data collection description, sample size, interview questions, etc.), and *participant characteristics* (age, gender identity descriptions, race/ethnicity, etc.). Additional extraction categories included the following variables: *identity processes; interpersonal, social, relational experiences; and psychotherapy, counseling, mental health experiences*. These listed variables are an area of focus for this systematic review (see Appendix E).

The data extraction form was filled out for each selected study. In sections where the information was not available, the reviewer indicated "not available," or not applicable, the reviewer indicated with a "-." After all data was extracted from selected studies, a graduate research assistant completed a second independent extraction from a random set of studies

independently to check for accuracy. Discrepancies were discussed by the researcher and assistant until a consensus was reached.

## **Data Extraction Variables**

### ***Study Documentation and Identification***

In the first section of the Data Extraction Form, Study Document and Identification, the author included the following variables: (a) an assigned document identification number, (b) author(s) name and full document title, and (c) publication year. Each source document was assigned a three-digit identification number beginning with the number 001 and continuing consecutively until each source document had received a three-digit code. In the second section, the author included the following variables: (d) full-text screening, (e) published study, articles, dissertations, books, (f) participant labeled as transgender nonconforming, and (g) inclusion of the topic relevant to the research questions specific to this systematic review. These were coded as yes, meaning the source articles met criteria, or no, if the source articles did not meet criteria.

### ***General Information***

In the second section, General Information, the author included the following variables: (a) date form completed, (b) initials of person extracting data, (c) source/publication type, and (d) source name. The first variable in this section documented the date that the Data Extraction Form was completed. The second variable documented the person extracting the data. The third variable recorded the source of the document (e.g., peer-review journal, book or chapter, dissertation, etc.).

### ***Methodological Information***

In this section, the author included the following variables: (a) aim of the study, (b) methods: general design, and (c) methods: specific design/approach, (d) key conclusions of study

authors, (e) researcher reflexivity statement. Documenting the general aim of the source material described the source article's purpose. The methodological approach was also documented and identified in each study, with a column denoting the specific design/approach and key conclusions noted by the author. The author included the variable of the researcher reflexivity statement to indicate whether the study author(s) included acknowledgment and awareness regarding the influence of their lived experiences on the research process.

### ***Conceptualization and Assessment of Research Variables***

In this section, the author included the previously mentioned research variables pertinent to this qualitative systematic review: (a) gender identity, (b) identity-related experiences, (c) relational experiences, (d) social/interpersonal relationships, (e) family relationships, (f) romantic relationships, (g) academic/work experiences, and (h) psychotherapy and counseling relational experiences. For each primary research variable, the method of assessment (e.g., measure, definition, observation, interview question, archival, etc.) was extracted. The theory, model, and cultural perspective used to inform the article was also identified.

### ***Participant Information***

The following variables were included in this section: (a) population of interest, (b) recruitment methods, (c) sample size, (d) age, (e) gender description, (f) how gender information was collected, and (g) race/ethnicity. The focus was directed towards gender-related participant information to assist with identifying the uniqueness and heterogeneity of the participant's gender identity and expression (e.g., gender description, the definition of gender, protocol for collection of gender information).

### ***Setting Information***

This section included the following variables: (a) study geographical location and (b) data collection setting (e.g., mental health care, university or college, community). The first variable was utilized to document the geographic location of the study. This allowed the author to document any regional trends in research, nonbinary experiences, and differences in gender expectations. Documenting the setting allowed the author to observe any patterns in the types of experiences nonbinary persons may have had in different geographic locations.

### ***Analyses Conducted***

In the sixth section of the Data Extraction Form, Analysis Conducted, the author included the following variables: (a) qualitative analyses conducted, (b) how themes were coded, (c) how the data was reviewed (e.g., second reviewer), and (d) how were discrepancies and biases handled. The first variable described any classifications or categorical patterns used to arrange or organize data. The following criteria focused on how data was organized, reviewed and how researchers attempted to address discrepancies and biases.

### ***Identified Themes***

The author reviewed the results and discussion of each article to identify and extract themes relevant to the primary research questions of this review. This included identity developmental processes, family relationships, romantic relationships, interpersonal relationships, school and work-related experiences, and psychotherapeutic experiences. Specific themes were included to assess for their presence in the articles reviewed. These were identified based on the preliminary review of the literature. An "other" category was included in each theme section to extract themes not specifically included in the extraction form. The author extracted themes provided by source article descriptions.



### ***Identity Developmental Processes***

The author used this section to document descriptions of identity developmental processes for nonbinary persons from the selected articles. This section included the following variables: (a) identity development, (b) identity exploration, (c) identity formation, (d) identity experiences, (e) identity disclosure, (f) identity acceptance, and (g) identity rejection. Any descriptions relating to the variables listed above were documented and extracted as stated in the source article. For variables not discussed within the source, "-" for "not reported" was noted.

### ***Family Relationships***

In this section, the author documented information regarding family relationships such as family conflict, family dynamics (before and after coming out), family beliefs, family challenges, and family rejection/acceptance. The purpose of this section was to document nonbinary family-related experiences and related interactional processes as a result of the person's nonbinary identity.

### ***Romantic Relationships***

The author utilized this section to document descriptions of romantic relationships and romantic experiences for the non-binary participants in the selected studies. This section included the following variables: (a) disclosure of identity to partner, (b) transitioning/coming out at different stages of the relationship, (c) romantic and intimacy-related experiences, and (d) partner acceptance/rejection.

### ***Social and Community Experiences***

In this section, the author documented experiences related to the following themes for the TGNC study participants: (a) community acceptance, (b) identification and experience with the transgender and non-binary community, (c) shifts in social dynamics after identity disclosure (d)

interpersonal conflict, (e) acceptance/rejection by peers, (f) experiences related to building a chosen family, and (g) use of pronouns.

### ***Work and School-Related Experiences***

In this section, the author documented the following themes in the selected studies: (a) discrimination/harassment, (b) sense of safety with identity expression/disclosure, (c) identity disclosure to co-workers or classmates/professors, (d) acceptance/rejection at work/school, and (e) TGNC experiences at work/school.

### ***Therapeutic Experiences***

In this section, the author documented the following themes related to therapeutic experiences described by TGNC study participants: (a) therapeutic alliance/rapport, (b) positive/negative therapeutic relationships, (c) disclosing gender identity to the therapist, (d) exploring gender identity with the therapist, (e) affirmative or non-affirmative treatment experiences, (f) experiences with diagnosing, and (g) mental health experiences. The purpose of this section was to identify TGNC's experiences within the mental health field.

### ***Key Themes, Outcomes, and Results***

In this section of the Data Extraction Form, overarching themes identified in each article have been listed to assist with the synthesis and integration of collected data. Variables documented in this section are as follows: (a) identity-related themes, (b) family relationships related themes, (c) romantic relationships related themes, (d) interpersonal relationships related themes, (e) school/work-related themes, (d) therapeutic/mental health-related themes. The purpose of this section was to document themes identified by the author(s) of each study that were relevant to this dissertation's research questions.

### ***Conclusion and Follow-up***

The final section of the extraction form, Conclusions and Follow-up, documented the following variables: (a) key conclusions of study authors, (b) study author's recommendations for future research, (c) determination if the study directly addressed a research question, (d) general take-aways, (e) specific take-aways regarding implications for practice, (f) salient study limitations, and (g) and references to other relevant studies. The first variable in this section described the main conclusions reached by the authors of each source document. This variable was important as it allowed the author of this review to analyze the integrated and synthesized ideas collected by the authors of each source document.

### **Data Extraction Procedures**

The data extraction process entailed the author accessing the electronic copy of the Data Extraction Form, reviewing each source document completely by reading the full text, and electronically entering all relevant data points outlined in the Data Extraction Form. To control for bias and the accurate capture of information, a random sample of source documents with completed extraction forms were independently reviewed by a master's level research assistant. Any discrepancies or inaccuracies identified in this auditing process have been discussed with the author, so that the appropriate corrections were made. All completed Data Extraction Forms were stored and maintained electronically.

### **Quality Appraisal**

The quality of each study was appraised using the ISQA (see Appendix F). This assessment tool developed at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University, and represented an integration of existing critical appraisal forms (Harrell, 2021). The ISQA appraised the quality of collected data including the strength of literature foundation

and rationale of the study, clarity and specificity, quality of methodological approach, sample selection and characteristics, data collection tools and processes, analysis and presentation of data, discussion of study limitations, and consideration of culture and diversity. Culture and diversity considerations are important for the TGNC population because approaches, methods, and tools may lack inclusivity and relevance for this culturally diverse population. Each item was assessed on a 4-point scale (3 = strong; 2 = good/adequate; 1 = weak; 0 = missing). Thus, the author evaluated the quality independently for each included article. After the author independently appraised the quality of the source article, a second master's degree student reviewer independently assessed a randomly selected 25% of source articles using the ISQA as a way of increasing validity of the appraisal. No discrepancies were found between the author's ratings and the second reviewer's ratings (see Appendix F).

## **Data Management, Synthesis and Analysis Plan**

### ***Data Management***

In this qualitative review, individual study data was transferred from the Data Extraction and Quality Appraisal forms used into an Excel database (see Appendices E and F). This full database was an extensive and thorough spreadsheet that contained all of the extracted data and appraisal information for all of the studies (see Appendix G).

### ***Data Synthesis and Analysis Process***

For data to be synthesized and analyzed, an interpretative and integrative approach was used to identify themes in the available studies as a way to deeply conceptualize and understand identity developmental processes that occur in the context of gender dichotomization as well as gender diverse relational, interpersonal, and therapeutic experiences.

Guidelines for analyzing data for a qualitative systematic review offered by Timulak (2009) and Sandelowski et al. (1997) have been applied. According to Timulak (2009) and Sandelowski et al. (1997), qualitative researchers often use conceptual frameworks to develop domains as areas of focus to help guide data collection and research. The author utilized the descriptive-interpretive approach during the data analysis phase. This involved categorizing collected data into domains that reflected the research questions. Once all the extracted data was entered into the Excel database, identified themes were inductively coded and synthesized into overarching themes present in current literature. Subthemes were also analyzed through an inductive process as a way to find nuanced themes present in the current literature. To accomplish this, the author first utilized a deductive coding approach based on the research questions presented in this dissertation. For example, when gathering data on identity related experiences within the TGNC community, the author used concept-driven coding to understand identity developmental processes. Using coding terms like identity expression, formation, experience, as well as identity acceptance and rejection allowed the author to extract data related to identity developmental processes within the TGNC community.

The author then used an inductive coding approach when doing line-by-line coding. During the phase of data synthesis and analysis, the author and research assistants read through extracted data and placed data into evidence tables that reflected this systematic review's research questions. Once data was organized based on identity development, family experiences, romantic experiences, social and community experiences, work and school experiences, and therapeutic experiences, the author and research assistants summarized data under concept-driven codes reflective of each research question. Timuluk (2009) emphasized the importance of maintaining the integrity and meaning of extracted data to reduce the threat of losing important

contextual factors. Thus, only exemplary direct quotes from participants were extracted and documented to honor the voices of non-binary participants and provide direct examples that related to the research questions in this systematic review. According to Sandelowski, Docherty, and Emden (1997), the goal of a qualitative thematic analysis is to account for all important similarities (i.e., themes) and differences (e.g., possible areas for future research) across studies.

### ***Reporting of the Results***

A Preliminary Evidence Table of Included Studies was developed to summarize general research characteristics of each study include the (a) authors and year, (b) specific study design, (c) number of participants, (d) gender description, (e) age, (f) study aim, (g) key findings and outcomes, and (h) quality appraisal rating. Six evidence tables were constructed to report data gathered from source articles regarding each of the research questions: (a) identity developmental experiences, (b) family related experiences, (c) romantic related experiences, (d) social and community related experiences, (e) work and school related experiences, and (f) therapeutic experiences. Data is presented that informs each research question.

### **Researcher Reflexivity Statement and Research Assistant Social Locations**

Reflexivity is defined as thoughtful, conscious self-awareness (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2019). Awareness of my biases regarding the influences of cultural, social, and political systems was held in frame during all phases of search, screening, data collection, data management, and interpretation. Throughout this process, I reflected upon my perspectives and discourses regarding the binary system, as well as broader systemic barriers and access points related to TGNC experience. It was important to examine my perspective, as well as evaluate the research process, method, and outcome. Recognition of context, positionality, and influences

regarding my identity also brought awareness to the data selection and data analysis in this qualitative inquiry (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2019).

I am a non-disabled, middle-class, educated, U.S. born, nonbinary, queer-identifying, bi-racial (Native American and German) and white appearing, agnostic, young adult (Pronouns: They/Them/Theirs). With consideration to my different identities, it has been essential to recognize the potential influence my positionality and lens has had on my approach, interpretations, and data gathering. My attention to potential biases concerning my previous experiences has been vital for addressing how my approach towards this systematic review was impacted and influenced. Additionally, recognition of my privileges, access to resources, and worldview was key to considering my agenda for this systematic review as I attempted to organize and present qualitative data, as well as my justification for utilizing qualitative data. As I am non-disabled, white-appearing, middle-class, educated, and U.S. born individual, I hold a voice with many privileges that likely impacted the accurate communication of nonbinary experiences from source articles whose identities differ from mine. Specifically, with regard to the BIPOC community, differently abled individuals, and those who are financially disenfranchised. These populations are historically and presently oppressed, and my effort to be aware of the dimensionality of my identity was crucial when approaching each piece of data.

With respect to my gender identity, I have spent most of my adulthood exploring personal identity processes as it relates to my gender sense. I am acutely sensitive to my positionality as a non-binary researcher interested in a population that I deeply connect with. Specifically, I am aware of my positionality regarding my desire to give voice to an underrepresented population as a nonbinary researcher, therapist, and community member, which inherently influenced how data was collected, managed, and interpreted. Thus, my

rationale for choosing a qualitative approach was influenced by my desire to give voice to an underrepresented population.

My positive and negative experiences during my own gender exploration were also held in frame as I navigated challenges in neutrality. With the use of four research assistants, and the support of my chairperson, I utilized awareness and in-depth discussions to maintain reflexive analysis. Additionally, I engaged in a continuous examination of how I have influenced this research project and am influenced by the research. My goal throughout this systematic review was to be transparent in how my worldview has shaped my interpretation of the results. Awareness and examination allowed for transparency and discussion of how I utilized and understood the source articles throughout all research phases. This also assisted my research assistants with managing their own biases, assumptions, and countertransference, which was essential during all phases of the data collection and extraction phase.

The first research assistant is a differently abled, lower-middle-class, educated, U.S. born, queer-identifying, white, agnostic, transgender man (Pronouns: He/Him/His, They/Them/Theirs). His geographical upbringing shaped his worldview and provided him with experiences of privilege and oppression, which inherently shapes digestion, interpretation, and discussion of source articles. Their continuous examination of how they have influenced and been influenced by the research was noted during the discussion phase of data extraction. The second research assistant is non-disabled, educated, Indian-born, working-class, Southeast Asian-appearing, cisgender female (Pronouns: She/Her/Hers). The third research assistant is non-disabled, educated, Indian-born, working-class, middle eastern appearing, cisgender male (Pronouns: He/Him/His). All research assistants met with me weekly to discuss the source articles, reactions to the content, and any discrepancies in the data extraction portion of this review. Positionality



and worldview were also discussed as the both of them were not as knowledgeable about the TGNC community. Lastly, the fourth research assistant assisted with the validity and reliability check and engaged in reflexive analysis at all levels of support. They identify as disabled, now middle-class, raised in a low-income household, educated, U.S. born, nonbinary, queer-identified, white, pagan adult (Pronouns: They/Them/Theirs/She/Her/Hers). All research assistants met with me to discuss researcher reflexivity practices and the inherent influence identities have on one's positionality and lens when it comes to data analysis.

## Chapter III: Results

### Study Selection

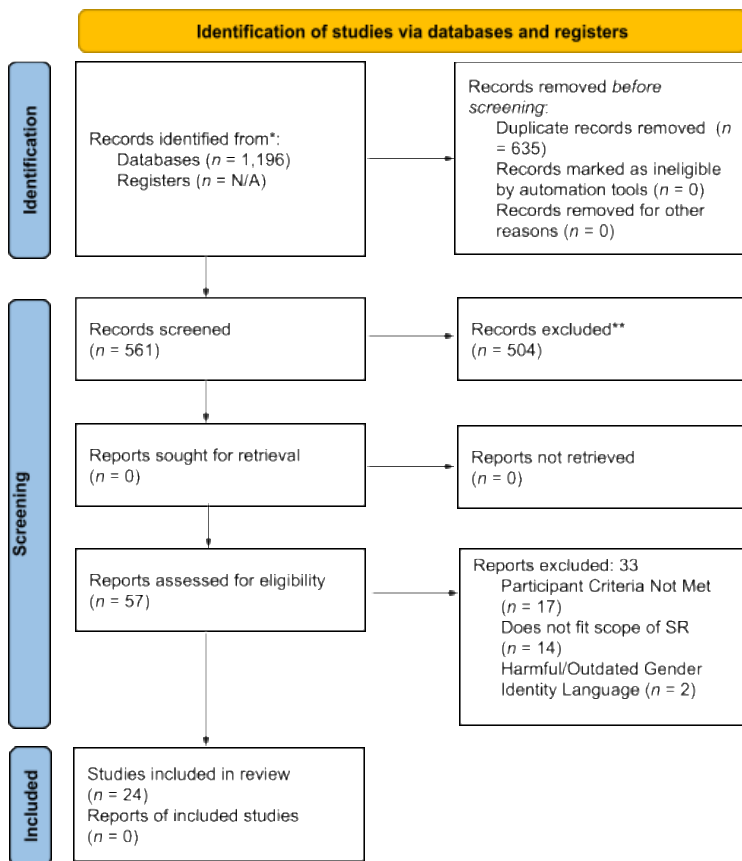
A total of 14 database searches were conducted to identify sources eligible to address the research questions. As noted in the *PRISMA* Flow Diagram (see Figure 1), these electronic searches yielded 1,196 articles, of which 635 were identified as duplicates and removed. Of the remaining 561 sources, 504 articles were excluded as they focused on sexual minorities, binary transgender experiences, medical experiences, or homogenized transgender and gender non-conforming participant results. Of note, out of the 504 articles that were excluded, nine of them were dissertations. Five of the dissertations focused on sexual minorities, one focused on same-sex parenting, one on the medical needs of transgender participants, and one focused on binarily identified transgender person's experiences with heterosexism and cisgenderism. Lastly, one source article focusing on non-binary experiences in higher education received an overall quality appraisal rating of "weak," excluding it from this systematic review due to ill-defined participant section and lack of clarity on research design and data collection process.

A full-text screen was conducted on the remaining 57 articles to determine their eligibility for inclusion in this integrative review. A total of 33 studies were excluded, with 17 of the articles being excluded due to not meeting participant criteria (e.g., not on the TGNC population). An additional 14 studies were excluded as these studies did not directly address the research questions or scope of this review. Lastly, two studies were excluded due to harmful and outdated language (e.g., "transsexual"). For the articles that included results on the experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming participants, the writer and the assigned research assistant reviewed the article together. This allowed for critical analysis for identifying qualitative data that met inclusion criteria. Ultimately, 24 sources were included in this

qualitative systematic review. Fifteen sources provided qualitative data on the nature of TGNC participant experiences regarding identity developmental processes, 13 described relational experiences in family, work, and social settings, and two described TGNC participants' therapeutic experiences. It is important to note that four source articles had strong overlapping themes that covered several domains (e.g., identity and family experiences, and work and social experiences).

**Figure 1**

*PRISMA Flow Chart*



### General Characteristics of Included Studies

Preliminary Evidence Table presents general information for each of the 24 selected studies (see Appendix H). Preliminary Evidence Table offers salient details from each source

article while highlighting the aim of the study and key findings. The second column is “Specific Study Strategy/Design,” which describes the study's specific qualitative methodological approach. Of the 24 studies, 13 described their method or analytic approach as thematic analysis, four described their analytic approach as grounded theory, three described their analytic as narrative analysis, three described their analytic approach as content analysis, and one described their method as an autoethnography. The column titled “Participants (N)” identifies the number of participants in each study which ranged from 1 to 500 participants. The third column, “Gender Description,” identifies the description, definition, participant-ascribed gender label, or conceptualization of the participants' gender identity as noted by the source article. In some cases, an asterisk has been placed next to the items listed in this field. The asterisk is utilized to identify studies that enrolled participants who identified as binary trans persons and nonbinary trans persons, but still differentiated resulting data between binary and nonbinary identified participants. Of the 24 source articles, eight included participants with binary transgender identities but presented results separately for binary and nonbinary gender identities (e.g., Craig et al., 2021; Farmer et al., 2020; Fiani and Han, 2019; Hall & DeLaney, 2021;).

Since this review is specifically focused on TGNC or nonbinary participants, data and study findings on other participants have been excluded from the evidence tables. Thus, only data focusing on the TGNC population has been extracted, analyzed, and presented in this systematic review. The next column offers the mean age or the age range of the study participants, with the majority of the studies falling within the age range of 18 to 25. Next, the “Aim of the Study” provides an overview of the researcher’s goal or overarching purpose of the source article. “Key Findings and Outcomes” provides a summary of each source article's main, overall findings. The final column, “Quality Appraisal,” lists ratings from the Individual Study

Quality Appraisal Form to denote the overall quality of the source article. Thirty-eight percent of the studies were rated strong, 54% of the studies were rated good/adequate, and 8% of the studies received a weak rating. Quality appraisal results are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For each data point not identified within the source document, “Not Reported” was recorded in the evidence table.

### **Identity-related Experiences**

Fifteen of the 24 source articles primarily focused on identity-related experiences within the TGNC population. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage of studies discussing identity related themes. Identity formation, identity exploration, and identity experience were each identified in all 15 articles discussing identity related themes. Identity development and identity rejection was identified in 87% of the included source articles. Additionally, identity disclosure was discussed in 53% of the source articles. Of note, identity acceptance was only identified in 40% of the studies.

**Table 1**

*Frequency of Identity Related Themes*

Total N = 15	Identity Development	Identity Exploration	Identity Formation	Identity Experience	Identity Disclosure	Identity Acceptance	Identity Rejection
<i>n</i> of Studies	13	15	15	15	8	6	13
Percentage	87%	100%	100%	100%	53%	40%	87%

Collectively, these studies identified the identity-related themes of identity development (i.e., stages of identity development), identity formation and expression, identity experience, identity disclosure, and identity acceptance and rejection. Identity development, identity exploration, identity formation, and identity experience were the most studied type of identity-related experiences (Austin et al., 2020; Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Barsigian et al., 2020;

Bradford et al., 2019; Conlin et al., 2019; Craig et al., 2021; Darwin, 2017; Farmer et al., 2020; Fiani & Han, 2019; Flint et al., 2019; Goldberg & Kovalanka, 2018; Goldberg, Kovalanka, & Dickey, 2019; Jones et al., 2016; Losty & O'Connor, 2018; Pardo, 2019; Stachowiak, 2017; Stewart, 2017; Wolff et al., 2017; see Appendix I).

Of the articles presenting data on identity-related experiences for the TGNC population, one source article provided data specifically on identity formation with themes focusing on androgynous or non-stereotypical gender presentations, de-categorizing gender, and attaining neutrality when navigating body ideals centered on feminine and masculine characteristics (Galupo et al., 2021). Another source article also presented data specific to identity exploration and finding support and affirmation from romantic partners who encouraged internal discovery and identity negotiation when developing their gender sense (Galupo et al., 2018). Thirteen sources provided data on identity rejection experiences within the TGNC community (Austin et al., 2020; Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Barsigian et al., 2020; Bradford et al., 2019; Conlin et al., 2019; Craig et al., 2021; Darwin, 2017; Fiani & Han, 2019; Goldberg & Kovalanka, 2018; Losty & O'Connor, 2018; Pardo, 2019; Stachowiak, 2017; Wolff et al., 2017).

For example, articles referencing identity rejection shared participant narratives of TGNC persons navigating internalized transphobia and gender policing, which was described as engaging in marginalizing activities directed at the self in order to fit larger cisgender narratives. Five source articles provided data on identity acceptance, specifically from an internal sense of acceptance that engendered pride, evoked authenticity, and instilled confidence (Austin et al., 2020; Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Craig et al., 202; Goldberg & Kovalanka, 2018; and Stachowiak, 2017).

## Family Relationships

Six of the 24 source articles focused on family-related experiences within the TGNC population. Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage of studies discussing family related themes. Family experiences, family dynamics, family beliefs/culture, family rejection, and family acceptance were present in six of the six articles. Specifically, family experiences and family rejection were identified in 67% of the studies, and family dynamics were present in 50% of the articles. Lastly, family beliefs and culture, family challenges, and family acceptance were present in 33% of the studies.

**Table 2**

*Frequency of Family Related Themes*

Family Related Experiences	Total N = 6	Family Experiences	Family Dynamics	Family Beliefs/Culture	Family Challenges	Family Rejection	Family Acceptance
n of Studies		4	3	2	2	4	2
Percentage		67%	50%	33%	33%	67%	33%

Specifically, Johnson et al. (2020) and Craig et al. (2021) reported that TGNC participants' experienced parental rejection and social exclusion that were reported as major factors leading to financial difficulties like housing insecurity and homelessness. With regard to family challenges, TGNC community members noted experiences of harassment, transphobia, homophobia, and silencing from their parents. Additionally, some TGNC persons chose to forgo posting online or sharing their identity on the internet out of fear of repercussion or being recognized or being “outed” (Craig et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2020). Additionally, Johnson et al. (2020) and Craig et al. (2021) reported that participants use online platforms to combat family rejection and build belonging. Both source articles concluded that perceived rejecting behaviors exacerbated mental health problems and led to adverse psychosocial consequences, while

supportive behaviors were related to perceived positive psychosocial consequences (see Appendix J).

### **Romantic Relationships**

Five of the 24 source articles focused on romantic-related experiences within the TGNC population. Table 3 presents the frequency and percentage of studies discussing romantic related themes. Specifically, general romantic experiences and identity disclosure to a significant other were identified in 80% of the studies, and partner acceptance and partner rejection were present in 60% of the articles.

**Table 3**

*Frequency of Romantic Related Themes*

Romantic Related Experiences	Total N = 5	Romantic Experiences (General)	Disclosure of identity to partner	Partner Acceptance	Partner Rejection
n of Studies	4	4	4	3	3
Percentage	80%	80%	80%	60%	60%

Five source articles provided data on romantic relationship experiences within the TGNC community (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Conlin et al., 2019; Galupo et al., 2018; Goldberg & Kivalanka, 2018; Morris, 2021; Pulice-Farrow et al., 2017). Of the five source articles, themes such as romantic experiences (general), identity disclosure to partner, and partner acceptance and rejection were discussed. Specifically, Galupo et al. (2018) and Pulice-Farrow et al. (2017) both presented results on microaggressions and micro-affirmations and the socio-emotional burdens and benefits of a TGNC person’s experience in the context of romantic relationships. Additionally, some TGNC persons exclusively had or sought out relationships with nonbinary or binary-identified trans people, noting the desire for micro-affirmations, identity understanding, and acknowledging microaggressions as a way to reduce socio-emotional burdens when



navigating gender identity (see Appendix K). Under partner rejection, microaggressions such as misgendering, deadnaming, and gendering acts of intimate body parts left participants feeling “dysphoric,” and “deeply uncomfortable” (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2017). With regard to partner acceptance, micro-affirmations such as the partner changing their language to match the TGNC person’s gender sense affirmed and validated the person's gender identity (Galupo et al., 2018; see Appendix K).

### Social and Community Experiences

Eleven of the 24 source articles focused on social and community related experiences within the TGNC population. Table 4 presents the frequency and percentage of studies discussing social and community related themes. Community acceptance and rejection and microaggressions were present in 82% of the studies Shifts in social dynamics and interpersonal conflict were present in 73% of the studies, and acceptance and rejection by peers and chosen family experiences were present in 55% of the studies.

**Table 4**

*Frequency of Social and Community Experiences*

Social and Community Experiences	Total N =	Community Acceptance/ Rejection	Experience with building community belonging	Shifts in social dynamics	Interpersonal conflict	Acceptance/ Rejection by peers	Chosen family Experiences	Microaggression
n of Studies	11	9	8	7	7	6	6	9
Percentage		82%	73%	64%	64%	55%	55%	82%

Eleven source articles provided data on social and community-related experiences within the TGNC community. Collectively, these eleven studies provided data on community acceptance and rejection, community belonging, shifts in social dynamics, interpersonal conflict, acceptance/rejection by peers, chosen family, and microaggressions (Austin et al., 2020; Barbee

& Schrock, 2019; Bradford et al., 2019; Conlin et al., 2019; Craig et al., 2021; Farmer et al., 2020; Fiani & Han, 2019; Goldberg & Kivalanka, 2018; Hall & DeLaney, 2021; Jones et al., 2016; Stachowiak, 2017). Specifically, Stachowiak (2017), Hall and DeLaney (2021), and Farmer et al. (2020) highlighted experiences with community rejection, such as “gender policing” and the impact that constant reminders of gender norm expectations have on the TGNC community. Additionally, significant distress was noted by a lack of validation and acceptance from community members, with the added pressure to express their gender identities within a binary framework. (see Appendix L). Goldberg and Kivalanka (2018), Bradford, et al. (2019), and Barbee and Schrock (2019) noted themes of tension between the transgender communities and the larger LGBTQIA+ community guided by larger cisgender master narratives.

Across these source articles, reference to being “trans enough” or working through interpersonal dynamics of doing trans “appropriately” appeared within the source articles results. Conlin et al. (2019) and Fiani and Han (2019) provided insight into the TGNC perspective of “inclusive spaces,” reporting that participants experienced further rejection from their micro-communities and shared feelings of “invisibility” and exclusion when attempting to build community belonging. Austin et al. (2020) described rejection and marginalization in non-affirming spaces as a strong predictor of suicidal ideation due to a lack of connection and isolation, as well as thwarted belongingness. Contrarily, all six source articles referenced the importance of community belonging, fostering authenticity, and finding refuge in online communities, a virtual space that allowed for anonymity and flexibility in one’s gender journey (see Appendix L).

## Work and School Experiences

Ten of the 24 source articles focused on work and school related experiences within the TGNC population. Table 5 presents the frequency and percentage of studies discussing work and school related themes. Specifically, themes of discrimination and harassment were present in 100% of the studies and sense of safety with identity disclosure, identity disclosure to co-workers, acceptance and rejection at work/school, and nonbinary experiences at school were present in 70% of the studies. Nonbinary experiences at work were present in 60% of the articles and disclosing identity to classmates/professors were present in 50% of the articles (Austin et al., 2020; Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Farmer et al., 2020; Flint et al., 2019; Goldberg & Kunalanka, 2018; Jones et al., 2016; Pardo, 2019; Ullman, 2020; Wolff et al., 2017).

**Table 5**

*Frequency of Work and School Experiences*

Work or School Related Experiences	Total N = 10	Discrimination and/ or Harassment	Sense of Safety with identity disclosure/ expression	Disclosing identity to co-workers	Disclosing identity to classmates/ professors	Acceptance/ Rejection of Identity at Work/ School	Non-binary experiences at school	Non-binary experiences at work
n of Studies	10	7	7	5	7	7	7	6
Percentage	100%	70%	70%	50%	70%	70%	70%	60%

Of the ten studies, one source article focused exclusively on work related experiences within the TGNC community. Specifically, with regard to work related experiences within the TGNC community, Ullman (2020) shared results highlighting the perceived impact of outness and employment opportunities. Ullman (2020) noted that several participants felt that their visibility as gender diverse negatively impacted employment opportunities and progression in their careers and had less general participation in their school community as educators. Specifically, participants shared feeling unsafe, vulnerable to harassment and discrimination, and

often felt ostracized from employment opportunities when their gender diverse identities were shared with employers (see Appendix M).

Austin et al. (2020) highlighted experiences with discrimination, such as gender segregation occurring in schools that were noted to be inherently harmful to those existing outside the gender binary. With regard to the TGNC student's sense of safety, two subthemes appeared. Goldberg, Kunalanka, and Dickey (2019), Jones et al. (2016), and Farmer et al. (2020) shared similar results, noting the effort put forth by the TGNC community to navigate safety concerns and identity expression. Additionally, some TGNC students chose to forgo correcting others for misgendering them for the sake of protecting their TGNC identity, as well as their social and emotional health. Barbee and Schrock (2019) and Pardo (2019) also provided data with regard to a sense of safety when disclosing their identities or expressing themselves authentically. Specifically, researchers noted that TGNC persons felt safer when presenting as more cis than trans and generally felt constrained by gender norms in the workplace (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Pardo, 2019, see Appendix M). Goldberg, Kunalanka, and Dickey (2019) and Flint et al. (2019), and Wolff et al. (2017) shared results highlighting the LGBTQIA+ centers at their respective colleges as a safe haven to express and explore identity, as well as build a sense of community belonging. Overall, the ten source articles referencing TGNC person's school experiences highlighted themes of safety and the dynamism of negotiating identity within context and environment.

### **Experiences Related to Psychotherapy**

Seven of the 24 source articles focused on therapeutic related experiences within the TGNC population. Table 6 presents the frequency and percentage of studies discussing therapeutic related themes. Mental health experiences were present in 71% of the studies, while

negative psychotherapeutic experiences were present in 43% of the studies. Positive psychotherapeutic experiences and affirmative versus non-affirmative treatment experiences were discussed 29% of the time, and identity disclosure and exploration with a therapist were present in 14% of the studies. Of note, 0% of the studies referenced TGNC experiences related to receiving diagnosis or therapist over identification or minimization regarding gender identity.

**Table 6**

*Frequency of Therapeutic Related Themes*

Total N = 7	Therapy Alliance/ Rapport (General)	Positive psycho-therapeutic experiences	Negative psycho-therapeutic experiences	Disclosing identity to a therapist	Exploring identity with a therapist	Affirmative v. Non affirmative treatment experiences	Mental Health Experiences
n of Studies	2	2	3	1	1	2	5
Percentage	29%	29%	43%	14%	14%	29%	71%

Collectively, these seven studies provided data on therapeutic alliance and rapport, positive and negative psychotherapeutic experiences, identity disclosure to a therapist, identity exploration with a therapist, affirmative and non-affirmative treatment experiences, and general mental health experiences (Austin et al., 2020; Conlin et al., 2019; Farmer et al., 2020; Fiani & Han, 2019; Hall & DeLaney, 2021; Jones et al., 2016; Losty & O'Connor, 2018; see Appendix N). Of note, only two source articles primarily focused on the TGNC population's therapeutic-related experiences (Conlin et al., 2019; Hall & DeLaney, 2021). Five of the seven source articles provided data therapeutic-related experiences, but this was not the aim or focus of the study (Austin et al., 2020; Farmer et al., 2020; Fiani & Han, 2019; Jones et al., 2016; Losty & O'Connor, 2018). Specifically, researchers noted mental health experiences such as experiencing a broad range of emotional impacts of genderism, such as depression, anxiety, stress, angst, isolation, rejection, and invisibility. Additionally, TGNC students were more likely to utilize

counseling resources from government-funded schools than compared to Christian schools (Farmer et al., 2020; and Jones et al., 2016). According to Austin et al. (2020), positive online experiences that connected TGNC persons to other community members were found to be a strong mitigating factor against mental health concerns like self-harm and suicidality.

### **Quality Appraisal**

The majority of the studies included in this review received an “adequate” appraisal rating ( $n = 13$ , 54%). In comparison, nine sources received a “strong” appraisal rating, and two received a “weak” rating. In the studies with weak ratings, Darwin (2017) and Ullman (2020) did not list salient study limitations nor clearly define their population of interest. Neither source article provided a researcher’s reflexivity statement, noted their positionality, or clearly defined the context of their study. Darwin (2017) and Ullman (2020) received weak ratings on “strength of literature foundation and rationale for study” and “quality of research design or methodological approach.” These weak ratings informed the quality of the background and rationale for the qualitative research, as well as the quality of the rationale for the design chosen, appropriateness of research questions, clear description of the design and methodological approach, and strength of design characteristics utilized (see Table 7). Despite the two source articles receiving a “weak” rating, they still offer relevant and meaningful data that adds depth and breadth to this systematic review.

Of the nine source articles that received a “strong” appraisal rating, there were current and relevant references, sufficiently comprehensive background literature, clarity and specificity of research aims, a clear rationale for the design chosen, clearly described data collection procedures, transparent description of the development of themes from raw data, and attention to diversity within the sample. Additionally, 58% received a strong rating for the strength of the

literature foundation and rationale for the study and clarity and specificity of research aims, objectives, questions, and hypotheses (see Table 7). For use of data collection tools (e.g., scales, observations, interviews, etc.) and data collection processes, 67% of the source articles received a good/adequate rating, denoting the strength of the qualitative methodology. Of note, 33% received a weak rating for consideration of culture and diversity, an aspect of research that has been historically underdeveloped with regard to diversity within the sample, inclusion of culturally appropriate methods and tools, use of unbiased language, and the use of appropriate terminology. Lastly, when completing the quality appraisal, none of the criteria were noted as missing, and only one article had a “not reported” rating for the analysis and presentation of data.

**Table 7**

*Quality Appraisal Outcomes*

N = 24	Strong	Good/Adequate	Weak
Strength of Literature and Rationale for Study	<i>n</i> = 14 (58%)	<i>n</i> = 8 (33%)	<i>n</i> = 2 (8%)
Clarity of Research Aims/ Objectives/ Questions/ Hypotheses	<i>n</i> = 14 (58%)	<i>n</i> = 10 (42%)	<i>n</i> = 0 (0%)
Quality of research design or methodological approach	<i>n</i> = 10 (42%)	<i>n</i> = 10 (42%)	<i>n</i> = 4 (17%)
Sample Selection and Characteristics	<i>n</i> = 4 (17%)	<i>n</i> = 17 (71%)	<i>n</i> = 3 (13%)
Data Collection Tools (Scales, Observation, Interviews, etc.)	<i>n</i> = 6 (25%)	<i>n</i> = 16 (67%)	<i>n</i> = 2 (8%)
Data Collection Processes	<i>n</i> = 6 (25%)	<i>n</i> = 16 (67%)	<i>n</i> = 2 (8%)
Analysis and Presentation of Data	<i>n</i> = 10 (42%)	<i>n</i> = 10 (42%)	<i>n</i> = 3 (13%)
Discussion of Study Limitations	<i>n</i> = 10; 42%	<i>n</i> = 8; 33%	<i>n</i> = 5; 21%
Consideration of culture and diversity	<i>n</i> = 5; 21%	<i>n</i> = 11; 46%	<i>n</i> = 8; 33%

## **Chapter IV: Discussion**

In conducting an integrative systematic review of the literature, the primary author set out to examine and present the current state of research relevant to TGNC persons' experiences in the context of a binarily set world. After completing a thorough review, the author aimed to report these findings concisely to offer researchers, clinicians, and policy-makers meaningful takeaways. This discussion section includes reflections on how the results inform the research questions, critiques of the research reviewed, and implications for the mental health treatment and need for affirmative practices when providing services to the TGNC community.

### **Identity Development**

This integrative literature synthesis illustrates that identity-related experiences are diverse, nuanced, and unique to the TGNC community. This community navigates how their gender identity is formed, expressed, and explored. Much of the research included in this review was focused on how individuals navigated their gender in the context of a binarily set world, how internal and external gender roles and norms were negotiated or challenged, and how the TGNC population navigated gender identity with consideration to the intersectionality of their identities (e.g., sexual orientation or race/ethnicity). Most of the included studies denoted the heterogeneity of the TGNC community, highlighting the need to create space in research that does not homogenize the TGNC population.

Additionally, as noted in the source articles, most TGNC persons explored and navigated gender identity in virtual spaces. Although most source articles referred to the building of safety and the beginnings of identity exploration in online settings, there is still a dearth of support in physical spaces. In most cases, TGNC persons experienced microaggressions, marginalization, physical and verbal attacks, misgendering, and lack of support from school systems, jobs, and



mental health providers with regard to the individual's gender identity (Austin et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2020).

With regard to identity development, several source articles referred to the late onset of identity formation, noting that learning about nonbinary gender identities often occurred in early-mid adulthood rather than during adolescence and early adulthood, primarily through online spaces (Bradford et al., 2019; Conlin et al., 2019; Fiani & Han, 2019). Specifically, Barsigian et al. (2020) highlighted that participants across generations identified language as a key issue in their ability to identify outside of the binary, noting that the lack of language affected participants' identity developmental processes and the recognition of their genderqueer identity when attempting to communicate to their family, friends, and other key support systems. According to Barbee and Schrock (2019), the process of un-gendering called for gender nonconforming persons to draw on subversive cultural codes to bend binary concepts. Similarly, Pardo (2019), Flint et al. (2019), and Stachowiak (2017) shared participant narratives that balanced or alternated between gendered self-concepts as a way to practice uniqueness, otherness, or androgyny while simultaneously identifying and disidentifying from social constructs that restrict or limit the fluid movement within and out of the gender binary. This was further conceptualized as a continuous navigation between internal (intrapsychic) and external spaces.

In online spaces, there were ample opportunities to ask for support and advice about beginning one's gender journey, as well as opportunities to learn about gender identity labels, and non-medical and medical means for altering the presentation of their bodies (Darwin, 2017; Goldberg & Kivalanka, 2018). Craig et al. (2021) presented themes such as "(Re)Defining and (Re)Creating" offline spaces for the TGNC population as a way to live more authentically while

still maintaining safety. Specifically, participants noted that the safety felt in online spaces influenced how they wanted to experience and live their life offline, which increased confidence in identifying as nonbinary or genderqueer (Craig et al., 2021).

Several subthemes also appeared when looking at identity experience, identity exploration, and identity formation. Specifically, several source articles noted that identity exploration is an ongoing process that can involve identification and dis-identification with one's biological sex, negotiation to constructing one's gender identity in the context of one's environment, and the tension between one's gender sense and the pressure to exist within a binarily set world - all with the hope of moving towards an integrative self (Craig et al., 2021, Flint et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2016; Losty & O'Conner, 2018; Stachowiak, 2017; Stewart, 2017). In addition to this exploration, there is a nuanced and individualized experience for each TGNC person.

For identity formation, several sub-themes emerged. Specifically, Bradford et al. (2019) summarized gender fluidity as a fluid, yet viscous aspect of identity that is stable, enduring, and consistent rather than transitional. This is noted in other source articles that referenced identity formation as an ongoing process, specifically, with the aim of obfuscating others' gender assumptions (Barbee & Schrock, 2019). Phrases like "genderless," "gender-blended," "genderfuck" and "doing gender," were created or taken on by the TGNC community as a way to reject the gender binary and "redo" gender in a way that aligns with the TGNC person's own gender sense (Barbee et al., 2019; Darwin, 2017; Pardo, 2019; and Stachowiak, 2017). Additionally, with identity formation, gender expressed itself outwardly within the TGNC community. TGNC narratives of gender expression appear to diverge from binary transgender journey narratives with regard to medical means of transitioning or aligning with one's gender

sense, but appear to converge with regard to dress, styling, pronoun changes, and social transitioning (Fiani et al., 2019). Of note, Goldberg and Kunalanka (2018) reference that many participants did not want hormone replacement therapy (HRT), while Jones et al. (2016) shared participants' desires to socially, medically, and legally transition. Thus, the urgent need to disentangle research practices of homogenizing the transgender community with the TGNC community is reflected in the diverging narratives.

Of the 15 source articles discussing identity-related experiences, eight source articles referenced identity disclosure, six source articles referenced identity acceptance, and ten source articles referenced identity rejection. Of the eight source articles referencing identity disclosure, the subtheme of maintaining safety and navigating when and how to disclose gender identity appears to emerge. Firstly, with regard to safety, TGNC persons appeared to balance the desire to feel validated and live authentically while also balancing the need for privacy and navigating the "path of least resistance" (Darwin, 2017; Fiani & Han, 2019; Goldberg & Kunalanka, 2018; Losty & O'Connor, 2018). Secondly, with regard to the degree of "openness," TGNC narratives highlighted the desire to have their identity affirmed by peers with the use of correct pronouns while also noting the psychosocial stressors resulting from fear of rejection and lack of peer support (Conlin et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2016; Stewart, 2017). According to Austin et al. (2020), Goldberg and Kunalanka (2018), Barbee and Schrock (2019), acceptance from peers, building an online community, and the process of ungendering increased confidence to engage in their gender journey authentically. Additionally, this process of ungendering through deconstructing gender norms and expectations led to higher satisfaction with gender expression and increased identity acceptance overall (Barbee & Schrock, 2019). Thus, with regard to identity disclosure

and identity acceptance, there appears to be an interpersonal interaction that can promote the TGNC person's own identity acceptance as they navigate the complexities of coming out.

With regard to identity rejection, two subthemes emerged. Firstly, TGNC persons appeared to report similar master narratives to the transgender community of doubting the legitimacy of their gender nonconforming identities, describing the process of ungendering to cause potential anxiety, internalized transphobia, and gender policing (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Bradford et al., 2019; Fiani & Han, 2019; Stachowiak, 2017). These narratives can be seen throughout the transgender and gender nonconforming community as they navigate larger heterosexist and cisgenderism dynamics that have historically oppressed the transgender and gender nonconforming communities.

Secondly, Conlin et al. (2019) spoke to the theme of the Identity-Expression Divide, which is described as external concerns to gender expression such as exclusion or harassment, or "not being trans enough." This brings about issues of rejection within and outside of the TGNC community and the rigid criteria for belonging that the TGNC person may face when trying to build a sense of community within the larger transgender community (Conlin et al., 2019). Craig et al. (2021), Austin et al., (2020), and Losty and O'Connor (2018) also speak to the struggle of discrimination, marginalization, and TGNC persons voicing their psychological needs due to fear that their identity will be the subject of rejection. This delicate balance of maintaining and managing important relationships while also living authentically to one's gender sense continues to be seen throughout these TGNC narratives. Additionally, throughout these source articles, coming out, being out, and expressing oneself appear to take on a heavy psychological and psychosocial burden within the TGNC community.

Themes across articles that focused on identity development noted that adopting a non-binary gender identity and rejecting the binary was an emotional process that relied on social support, resources, and validating experiences (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Fiani et al., 2019). Additionally, gender was identified as a social construct that could be dis-aligned or realigned to match their current gender sense (Pardo, 2019; Stackhowiak, 2017). This was evidenced in how TGNC persons navigated and negotiated external, internal, and virtual spaces. The process of negotiation and navigation can be a psychological burden for TGNC people who are attempting to live authentically, which is critical to the well-being of TGNC children, teens, and adults.

### **Social and Community Experiences**

This integrative literature synthesis looks at relational experiences within several domains: family, romantic, and interpersonal relationships, as well as work and school experiences.

#### ***Family Related Experiences***

Utilizing retrospective data from adult participants, two source articles aimed to describe parental behaviors and the impact these parents had on the TGNC child's identity development and overall quality of life. In the two source articles discussing family related experiences, themes of rejecting and accepting parental behaviors were navigated in the context of family beliefs and cultures, which lent to a nuanced and contextualized experience that the TGNC participant navigated within a family system (see Appendix J). Johnson et al. (2020) and Craig et al. (2021) also noted that rejecting parental behaviors exacerbated mental health problems, while affirmative parental behaviors were perceived to have positive psychosocial consequences. Additionally, Craig et al. (2021) identified online spaces to be particularly important for TGNC persons who were faced with rejecting parental behaviors as a way to build community

belonging. Additionally, with rejecting behaviors, participants also noted internalized transphobia and the additional layer of stress when family ties were cut (e.g., financial instability/housing insecurities). These psychosocial harms can cause a myriad of mental and social health concerns that impact the individual's overall health and how they navigate identity developmental processes (e.g., identity acceptance versus identity rejection).

### ***Romantic Related Experiences***

In the three source articles discussing romantic relationships, identity validations promoted the health and love of romantic partnership, while microaggressions negatively impacted how the nonbinary participants navigated their identity expression and formation in the context of their relationship (see Appendix K). Specifically, Barbee and Schrock (2019) and Galupo et al. (2018) noted that participants often sought out other TGNC partners as a way to reduce the burden of communicating and advocating for gender-affirming support. Additionally, participants who experienced identity validation in romantic relationships also felt affirmed in their worthiness of being loved. As noted above in family related experiences, this can play a pivotal role in mitigating psychological stressors if the nonbinary person had previously experienced rejecting parental behaviors. Conversely, microaggressions in romantic relationships appeared to compound nonbinary persons' negative attitude towards themselves (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2017). These findings suggest that identity acceptance from important others can mitigate adverse mental and social health outcomes, while identity rejection worsens the health and wellness of the TGNC community.

### ***Social and Community Experiences***

In the six source articles discussing interpersonal experiences, themes of ungendering in social contexts and the navigation of visibility and invisibility with regard to gender identity

were noted across these included source articles (see Appendix L). With regard to ungendering the self, Barbee and Schrock (2019), Fiani and Han (2019), and Bradford et al. (2019), noted the process of ungendering as an external and internal process (e.g., autobiographical reasoning, co-constructing new narratives/language around nonbinary identities, and obfuscating gender determinations through balancing corporeal signs of one category with accouterments of another). These internal and external negotiations of how to live authentically and live in a way that is aligned with one's gender sense is unique to each person. Additionally, the fluidity of these internal and external navigations was not only dependent on social situations, but also the history and lived experiences of the nonbinary person and the never-ending day-to-day ebb and flow of how one negotiates gender expression.

As for themes related to visibility and invisibility, Conlin et al. (2019), Goldberg and Kuvalanka (2018), and Austin et al., (2020) highlight the duality of being known and unknown with consequences for both when navigating gender expression and formation. A unique aspect of the TGNC community appears in the need to have their gender identity validated and acknowledged, while also balancing the need for privacy and safety. According to Conlin et al. (2019) participants reported a unique form of invisibility in the subtle biases revealed through misgendering, as well as overt forms of discrimination such as invasions of privacy. Participants noted that this experience with perceived invisibility and discrimination made it difficult to express their gender identity openly. Austin et al. (2020) noted that participants often used online spaces as a way to counteract victimization and marginalization. These online spaces also provide more shielding when it comes to identity expression and formation, allowing the TGNC community to make decisions on when and how they come out in online spaces.

### ***Work and School Experiences***

In the seven source articles discussing work and school experiences, themes of identity exploration and building kinship as well as the potential for facing microaggressions grounded in larger socio-political norms, cisgenderism, and heterosexist beliefs were identified (see Appendix M). Specifically, Ullman (2020) noted that the lack of policies in place surrounding gender diversity and inclusivity was a substantial barrier to TGNC persons feeling safe when navigating internal and external campus spaces. Conversely, TGNC persons who had safe spaces on campus noted an increased sense of safety and ability to build community connections (Goldberg, Kivalanka, & Dickey, 2019). These findings suggest that cultivating safe spaces on and off campus, and within workspaces could lead to building community connection as well as an internal sense of safety when navigating gender identity in different contexts.

### **Therapeutic Experiences**

A general theme of emotional trust and safety, environmental and physical safety, choice and collaboration, empowerment, and a need for providers to be knowledgeable about the TGNC community were noted in the results of the two source articles discussing therapeutic related experiences (Conlin et al., 2019; Hall & DeLaney, 2021; see Appendix N). These themes also align with the interpersonal needs discussed above. Specifically, across all articles, there appears to be a relationship between emotional trust and safety and the TGNC person's feelings of validation and ability to live authentically. According to Conlin et al. (2019) and Hall and DeLaney (2021), therapist knowledge of the TGNC community cultivated a sense of safety as well as lessened the TGNC person's burden to educate their providers. Thus, the importance of being known and seen in a therapeutic setting with regard to the nuanced navigation of gender identity appears to be an important factor for the TGNC community.



Overall, TGNC persons noted positive therapeutic experiences when providers practiced cultural humility, acknowledging TGNC person's lived experiences, while also naming gaps in the providers knowledge and allowing the TGNC individual to be the expert in their identity. Conversely, TGNC persons reported negative therapeutic encounters when providers appeared ill-prepared to work with identity-related concerns, did not know about the TGNC community, or relied on stereotypes (Conlin et al., 2019; Hall & DeLaney, 2021). Not only is there a call for providers to expand upon their knowledge of the LGBTQIA+ community, but to engage in cultural humility when working with new and diverse populations. Cultural humility can be defined as an active and ongoing process of the mental health provider cultivating awareness of their gaps in training regarding different cultural identities, factors, and experiences while also noting how the provider's own identity shows up in the context of the therapeutic relationship (American Psychological Association, 2017). This will continue to promote the TGNC community's willingness to engage in mental health services when needed.

### **Critical Evaluation**

It is important to note that though these studies aimed to understand TGNC gender identity in the context of identity developmental processes, interpersonal relationships, and therapeutic experiences, many articles did not identify or name significant cultural factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or generation cohort. This is particularly concerning with regard to gender identity and identity development processes as these cultural factors can significantly influence how TGNC persons navigate, express, and formulate their gender sense. This integrative synthesis aimed to understand TGNC person's experiences across life domains with a specific focus on the role of gender identity. However, the author did identify a few articles where intersectionality received some attention. When source articles did reference

intersectionality, participants shared that family values, religious beliefs, and financial stability were integral factors to how they navigated their gender identity (Conlin et al., 2019, Craig et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2020).

Failure to examine cultural diversity factors like race and ethnicity continues to be a barrier in research. Studies appeared to primarily recruit white participants, which does not represent the TGNC community in their entirety. The results of the studies may not apply to subgroups within the TGNC community based on race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and other dimensions of diversity. Not only does this continue to be a problem in research, but it is particularly important to note when looking at factors of identity and how one's cultural factors, mores, values, and beliefs inform gender identity.

With the intersection of gender identity and cultural identities, there were contextualized and enriched discussions on gender identity developmental processes noted throughout the source articles. Data presented by Conlin et al. (2019) and Pardo (2019) described participant experiences with regard to their intersecting identities, such as race, nationality, and sexual orientation that further differentiated their identity developmental processes, especially when highlighting the ways in which gender and sexuality informed each other. Additionally, internal interactional processes that occur in the context of one's lived experiences and in the context of micro-, meso-, and macro- systems provided deepened and nuanced understanding of how TGNC persons experienced gender identity exploration and formation (Conlin et al., 2019; Pardo, 2019). Specifically, Pardo (2019) described participants engaging in "gender blending," the act of manipulating gendered social constructs of femininity and masculinity through clothing, makeup, and hairstyles, as a way to inform their internal gender sense while also communicating outwardly that they were not restricted by gender norms. Conlin et al. (2019)

spoke to how gender identity can inform sexual orientation and vice versa, and how this process is ongoing and complex and often requires multiple labels to describe and define gender identity and sexual orientation.

According to Côté and Turgeon (2005), qualitative research makes it possible to study complex phenomena, but to do so, the context of the researcher's roles and the study are clearly defined. This highlights the emerging need for systematically organizing information when presenting research for peer review and critical appraisal. Additionally, there are many ways that qualitative research can be critically analyzed, but it is important to note that the credibility of the research is based on the clarity and rigor of the research process (Côté et al., 2005). Moving forward, it will be important that researchers and practitioners approach their work from positions that honor the intersectionality of the TGNC person's identity when serving these communities (Collins et al., 2021). Specifically, it is important to include participants that center BIPOC narratives and include cultural factors such as race and ethnicity. Additionally, obtaining narratives from different age cohorts (e.g., 65+) can also provide unique insight into how previous generations navigated gender identity in the context of different socio-political and cultural frameworks. These findings are consistent with general psychological research that utilizes relatively homogenous samples, which is a critical issue when attempting to explore identity-related experiences of historically marginalized groups (American Psychological Association, 2017).

### **Diversity in Community**

It is noteworthy that in assessing gender identity, each source article asked for gender descriptions and identities with an open-ended survey, interview question, or attempted to provide a long list of options for participants to choose from. If the survey question was closed-

ended, such as a forced choice option, the researchers often left a space for an “other” or “fill in the blank ” option (Austin et al., 2020; Barsigian et al., 2020). This continues to be a hurdle when shifting conceptualizations of gender identity that lives beyond the binary spectrum.

Across all included source articles, researchers referenced gender identity development as an ongoing process where they continuously and concomitantly negotiate the social and felt sense of their genderqueer identity, and their sense of being and becoming genderqueer (Stachowiak, 2017). The process of ungendering, identifying and disidentifying, recreating and redefining speaks to the unique navigation the TGNC community takes on as they move through their gender journey (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Craig et al., 2021). The TGNC and nonbinary folk present with beautifully diverse gender identities that span within and outside of the gender binary. We see new language, restored language, new ways of aligning to one’s gender sense, and cultural and historical ways of breathing back life into a deeply heterogeneous community. This stable but viscous nature of gender formation lends itself to the unique representations across this community.

### **Living Beyond the Binary**

The articles identified for this systematic review combined to provide depth and breadth to the nuanced and diverse lived experiences that the TGNC community faces. The qualitative studies gave breath to the voices of a historically marginalized community. The results of this systematic review suggest that when gender expansive and non-binary persons experience love and support from their family systems, there were perceived psychosocial benefits, but when faced with rejection, experiences of internalized transphobia, poorer quality of life, and negative mental health outcomes prevailed. Faced with these challenges when living beyond the binary exposes the TGNC community to additional layers of minority stress, furthering the need for

education, resources, and community support. Additionally, MST argues that stigma and prejudice directed at sexual orientation lead to psycho-social stressors that have adverse effects on mental, emotional, and physical health (Meyer, 2003, 2020). These psycho-social stressors like rejection, harassment, lack of resources, and marginalization are also reflected in TGNC narratives noted in this systematic review. According to Hoy-Ellis (2023), as MST expands to encapsulate gender identities, consideration of a “life course” perspective is brought into frame to consider how a person experiences their identity in the context of historical, social, and political contexts that shape personal experiences and TGNC narratives. These considerations are important to have in frame as TGNC persons seek mental health treatment, utilize resources, and build a sense of community belonging as these psychosocial stressors can be barriers to utilizing resources effectively.

Furthermore, gender identity development is a deeply personal and nuanced process that is heterogeneous in nature, requiring navigation and negotiations through interpersonal relationships, and within systems such as employment, academia, and mental health (Barsigian, 2020; Bradford et al., 2019; Fiani & Han, 2019). These negotiations and navigations happen internally, externally, and within the context of the TGNC person’s lived experience (Austin et al., 2020; Craig et al., 2021; Darwin, 2017). Through language, gender expression, and ungendering social selves, there is a dynamic, creative, and active approach to how people live beyond the binary. Other studies punctuate the importance of gender expression through deconstructing social selves, bending the binary, and what participants heartwarmingly labeled as “genderfuck,” which can be understood as the TGNC person challenging and redefining gender norms (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Goldberg, Kivalanka, & Dickey, 2019). Of particular importance, the TGNC community tended to lean away from medical modifications when

moving towards a more authentic gender sense, but not wholly, further emphasizing the unique and individual journey that is taken on by persons in the TGNC community. Thus, there is no one correct way to live beyond the binary, but there does appear to be a consensus that one's gender journey is ongoing, non-linear, and with the aim of moving towards authenticity and acceptance.

### **Treatment Considerations and Implications**

It is not possible to further the conversation around offering adequate treatment for the gender-expansive population without also addressing current treatment barriers and implications for adequate training. Firstly, inadequate training, education, and resources for mental health providers are a barrier and burden for the TGNC community as it places weight and responsibility on educating providers (Snow et al., 2019). Secondly, personal concerns, such as fear of being pathologized or stereotyped, as well as the potential of sitting with incompetent mental health professionals, including those who are unknowledgeable, ill-informed, and unsupportive; and affordability factors are noted themes within this integrative synthesis and further supported by a thematic analysis conducted by Snow et al. (2019). These barriers to treatment maintain and further the mental health disparities in the TGNC community. Thus, when looking at this through a systems framework, there is an evident need for a systems change that not only promotes the education of current and incoming providers but reduces barriers to affirmative treatment services.

With regard to implications for training, this can potentially directly address issues related to provider's competency and confidence when providing affirmative mental health treatment to the TGNC community. According to the American Psychological Association, APA Task Force on Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons (2021), guidelines 15 and 16

specifically address the psychologist's responsibility to strive for furthering their education on sexual minority persons and to take on an affirmative stance in all aspects of treatment, research, education, and training. Relevant training in affirmative practices at the onset of one's education as a mental health professional promotes a culture that names the barriers to LGBTQIA+ affirmative care, the mental health disparities within the LGBTQIA+ community, and provides guidance to increase treatment engagement and effectiveness with clients from the TGNC community.

Additionally, with only two included source articles focusing on qualitative analysis of TGNC persons' mental health treatment experiences, it is not possible for this author to effectively reach conclusions or highlight trends in the treatment of TGNC persons. However, larger narratives are echoed in the themes present in Hall et al. (2021), such as TGNC persons seeking out LGBTQIA+ identified mental health providers, noting positive interactions with providers who had knowledge of the LGBTQIA+ community, and the importance of needing unconditional positive regard when building rapport. Although some issues noted above appear to be more endemic than others, provider incompetence appears to be a common factor that is more easily addressed through further education and practice of cultural humility (Snow et al., 2019).

### **Implications and Contributions**

This systematic review investigated non-binary identity developmental processes as well as TGNC relational experiences (across multiple domains) in the current context of gender dichotomization. It was the first systematic review to examine gender nonconforming identity development and experiences related to living outside of the gender binary. This review contributes to the body of literature that integrates a collection of available qualitative research

on TGNC narratives. Specifically, the results are meant to improve the understanding of how TGNC individuals experience identity processes beyond the gender binary as well as interpersonal, familial, social, academic, employment, and therapeutic experiences.

### ***Call to Action***

To shift a culture beyond the gender binary, structural, institutional, and political systems must stretch and grow in ways that work with the dynamism of gender identity. Honoring intersectionality allows for the honoring of the complex and nuanced lived experiences of those who identify with the TGNC community. According to the American Psychological Association, APA Task Force on Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons (2021), psychologists must attempt to recognize the influence of institutional discrimination that exists for sexual minority individuals, as well as the need to promote change. Acknowledging systems of power and privilege, one's role in these systems, as well as the biases that negate, influence, or motivate us, will be the steppingstone to looking towards changing systems of oppression. For mental health providers, operating from a place of cultural humility is particularly crucial as it takes a destigmatizing stance and moves towards a more balanced power differential within the therapeutic setting. With only two included sources focusing on mental health treatment, it is not possible for this author to effectively reach conclusions or highlight trends in the treatment of TGNC persons. However, guidelines for psychological practice with sexual minority persons reflect similar needs with regard to the treatment of TGNC persons. Additionally, this current gap in research calls for further exploration before one can discern what is most effective for treating TGNC persons. There is, however, ample literature that highlights the treatment of the LGBTQIA+ community as a whole.



According to Cicero et al. (2020), there are notable differences in the health of transwomen (TW), transmen (TM), and gender nonbinary (GNB) adults. Additionally, findings indicated that TGNC adults with health insurance have greater odds of fair/poor health than TW and TM with health insurance; and transgender adults who also identify as a sexual minority have increased odds of having poorer health outcomes than transgender adults who identify as heterosexual (Cicero et al., 2020; Henry et al., 2021). These notable health disparities give further rationale to not only value the heterogeneity of the TGNC community, but also to promote cultural shifts systemically that lessens the barriers to LGBTQIA+ Affirmative mental health services. The current research names the following components of affirmative and effective treatment: validation, peer support, empathic service providers, and methods that allow for engaging in the exploration of intense emotions (Call et al., 2021; Hoy-Ellis, 2023). Dickey (2017) highlighted the unjust burden placed on TGNC patients, who are often expected to educate their health providers. It is imperative that providers take on the responsibility of seeking appropriate education around transgender and gender nonconforming health and health care issues (Dickey, 2017). This need calls for providers to take on the burden of education while also cultivating a safe and brave space that promotes authenticity to one's own gender journey. Lastly, when supporting the TGNC community, cultivating an affirmative space also includes furthering one's knowledge of the community as a way to lessen the burden of the TGNC person having to continuously educate and advocate for their right to take up space.

To change the culture of the binarily set world is to create space for TGNC master narratives to be heard and respected across different interactional experiences, internally and externally. Those who provide education, employment, and mental health services should seek additional education on how to create an affirmative space and culture that is welcoming, safe,

and respectful. Additionally, instituting proper training for educators and mental health providers to ask about gender identity, regardless of individual presentation, promotes a needed shift in how gender is approached and understood. Similarly, parental and familial educational programs offered by institutions providing other types of government assistance will help provide parents and families with tools for navigating conversations about gender identity.

According to Platt et al. (2022), transgender and gender nonconforming clients reported significantly higher anxiety relative to cisgender clients, and gender nonconforming clients presented with the highest anxiety and depression scores, even when compared to transgender clients. These findings are particularly concerning when looking at the lack of education, support, and resources seen across systems, institutions, and communities. Not only does family support appear to mitigate distress and mental health concerns, but gender nonconforming clients have to navigate minority stress in addition to family rejection, which can increase levels of suicide attempts and the misuse of drugs and alcohol (Coburn et al., 2022). In addition, Coburn et al. (2022) spoke about the psychological wellbeing of transgender and nonbinary people of color (POC). Specifically, Coburn et al. (2022) highlighted results that TGNC persons reported significantly higher levels of community connectedness compared to transgender people, and that community connectedness was significantly and positively associated with psychological well-being for both groups. Thus, starting at the micro-level of how research and the field of psychology acknowledges and gives voice to a uniquely diverse TGNC, people of color can provide insight into how gender identity and race/ethnicity intersect.

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that this systematic review is not without its limitations. Most of the included studies were reviewed by one researcher, the primary author, making the data

vulnerable to unintentional researcher bias. Additionally, the effort to provide an accurate thematic review was also an area of concern and was being addressed through the use of a master's level second reviewer to minimize inaccurate thematic codes and potential biases. Another potential limitation was that this systematic review only incorporated qualitative data, which may have limited a fuller conceptualization of pertinent data useful to understanding nonbinary experiences.

Several studies were made up of samples that contained transgender participants who identified on the binary, providing terms such as transman and transwoman as self-ascribed by the participants (Craig et al., 2021, Farmer et al., 2020, Fiani & Han, 2019, Galupo et al., 2018, Goldberg, Kuvalanka, & Dickey, 2019, Hall & DeLaney, 2021, Johnson et al., 2020, Wolff et al., 2017). This is a particular problem in the literature as it homogenizes a diverse and historically marginalized group, placing TGNC, genderqueer, nonbinary, and many other gender identities under the transgender umbrella. Some studies also emphasized participants who identified with their sexual minority status and added gender identity as an additional descriptor rather than a focus in the source articles. In such cases, this author made every attempt to isolate data pertinent to TGNC-identified persons; however, it is possible that inaccurate conclusions may have been drawn when analyzing, synthesizing, and organizing data. The majority of the included studies utilized a qualitative approach; however, some sources utilized quantitative assessment measures. In addition, interviewing techniques and descriptors of gender identity varied across studies. Such variance complicated the data synthesis process, given that data collection processes were so varied.

Additionally, most of the included studies did not provide a researcher reflexivity statement or make reference to researcher positionality. This is an essential component of

qualitative research as it addresses potential biases during all phases of the research process. When doing research on a marginalized population, especially with regard to identity, it is important to consider the intersectionality of the person's identity and how their identity interacts on personal, social, political, economic, and structural levels of experience (Collins et al., 2021). The most notable limitations seen throughout the source articles were the lack of representation of the BIPOC community, further perpetuating the homogenization of participants in psychological research, as well as homogenizing the TGNC community.

Despite potential limitations, this qualitative systematic review offers a valuable contribution to the literature. The author aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the TGNC community in the context of gender dichotomization, as this community continues to be underrepresented in the current literature. Additionally, this review's findings are a timely and significant addition to existing research. Lastly, an inherent strength of a qualitative approach provides breadth and depth to the area of study that further conceptualizes, analyzes, and attempts to synthesize available data about nonbinary identity developmental processes and interpersonal experiences. Thus, future research would benefit from deepening the conceptualization of how we understand identity development and gender identity with the hopes of moving towards heterogeneous frameworks that allow for culturally, socially, and psychologically relevant understandings of the TGNC community.

### **Future Research**

There is minimal research focused on gender-expansive populations. At times, even though the larger study sample contained participants identifying outside of the gender binary, data was often lumped together with binary trans identities, suggesting a lack of focus on the needs of the GNC community. Additionally, a necessary and important step within research

would be to first acknowledge that nonbinary persons' experience identity developmental processes uniquely and diversely within and outside of the gender binary, while also considering that gender identity is intrinsically intertwined with other facets of one's identity, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, geographical location, SES, and so on (Barbee & Schrock, 2019; Bradford et al., 2019; Conlin et al., 2019). Future research would benefit from disentangling binary trans persons and gender nonconforming persons as a single group (Pardo, 2019). Rather, the separation of these populations would deepen our understanding of the nonbinary and gender expansive community.

In order to be culturally responsive, future studies should make an effort to report data in a way that clearly identifies the experiences of each community represented in the study sample. Specifically, clear definitions of gender identity appeared to be absent in a few included source articles and many excluded source articles used outdated definitions and conceptualizations of gender identity. Additionally, most of the sources presented in this review represented studies that took place in major metropolitan areas, school settings, or focused on participants who were white. Small, localized, urban samples exclude nonbinary participants who may live in more rural communities. These communities historically and typically lack resources and community connections for those at risk for marginalization and oppression. Research has also historically underrepresented the BIPOC community. Without diversifying the sample across multiple domains of identity, researchers miss valuable data pertinent to understanding nonbinary identity developmental experiences and interpersonal experiences from multiple lenses, cultures, and worldviews. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of these nonbinary persons' experiences, efforts must be made to document the depth and breadth of these experiences, as opposed to focusing on capturing demographics that tend to be more easily identifiable. The

qualitative sources had small sample sizes, yet they provided rich testimonial data, a continued strength of qualitative data that can aid our understanding.

As more research is conducted to better understand the experiences of the TGNC community, it would be helpful to investigate the impact of family relationships, community resiliency, patterns of coping, and the benefits of aligning with one's gender sense. As researchers continue to seek understanding of the lived experiences of the TGNC community, it is also important to delve into the resiliency, pride, and strengths of the community as a way to promote the health and wellness of nonbinary individuals. This will allow future mental health providers, allies, and community members to take on affirmative, supportive, and advocacy approaches that will assist with breaking down harmful cisnormative narratives that marginalize and oppress gender-diverse people. There are also notable gaps in literature regarding TGNC experiences in therapeutic and family relationships, highlighting the need for research to better understand how TGNC persons navigate family dynamics and therapeutic encounters.

## **Conclusions**

Despite its limitations, this qualitative systematic review is a much-needed contribution to the literature. Transgender nonconforming and nonbinary persons are underrepresented in the current literature, and the findings of this review are a timely, and significant addition to existing research. Understanding the limited research available on nonbinary experiences, the author has been intentional in including research studies that provide data reflecting the depth and breadth of nonbinary identity and relational experiences that are not subsumed under the transgender umbrella. Additionally, the intentional exclusion of source documents published before 2000 has further allowed this review to document relevant, culturally emergent, and gender-affirmative

perspectives that are not grounded in the considerable history of pathologizing, marginalizing, and fetishization seen in earlier research.

### **Cultivating and Maintaining Pride**

Of the shared participant narratives presented in this systematic review, notable experiences of navigating and exploring gender identity, and building community are seen commonly among the TGNC community. Experiences of rejection, isolation, marginalization, and microaggressions were also communicated throughout included source articles. However, it is important to note the resiliency, pride, excitement, and joy shared within the TGNC community. According to Austin et al. (2020), overwhelming stories of hope and community building were reported from TGNC participants who found and cultivated safe havens in online formats. Goldberg and Kuvalanka (2018) shared TGNC narratives reflective of allyship and TGNC persons' positive experiences of coming out to friends and family, highlighting the socio-emotional benefits of deepening meaningful connections while also honoring the authenticity of one's gender identity. Barbee and Schrock (2019), Stachowiak (2017), and Craig et al., (2021) spoke of internal benefits such as confidence, self-affirming practices, and living authentically in one's gender sense; further suggesting that the TGNC can exist joyfully outside of the gender binary in spaces where there is genuine and validating exploration of one's gender identity and lived experience.

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## APPENDIX A

### Search Terms

<u>Search Term ID#</u>	<u>Primary Term</u>	<u>Synonyms/ Alternate Forms</u>	<u>Notes</u>
01	Gender Non-binary	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited"	Transgender: Umbrella term of non-cisgender experience
02	Identity Development	"Identity Exploration" OR "Identity Formation" OR "Identity Experience" OR "Identity Disclosure" OR "Identity Acceptance" OR "Identity Rejection"	
03	Family Relationships	"Family Experiences" OR "Family Dynamics" OR "Family Interactions"	
04	Romantic Relationships	"Romantic Relationship" "Intimate Relationship" OR "Romantic Experience" OR "Intimate Experience" OR "Dating" OR "Marriage" OR "Couple" OR "Domestic" OR "Partner"	
05	Interpersonal Relationships	"Friendship" OR "Interpersonal Relationship" OR "Community" OR "Social Relationship" OR "Community Connection" OR "Interpersonal Experience" OR "Interpersonal Dynamic" OR "Interpersonal Interaction"	
06	Psychotherapeutic Relationships	"Therapy" OR "Mental Health" OR "Mental Health Experiences" OR "Therapeutic Experiences" OR "Psychotherapy" OR "Counseling" OR "Mental Illness" OR "Well-Being" OR "Support Group"	
07	"School" OR "Work"	"School" OR "Work" OR "Employment Experiences" OR "Academic Experiences"	
08	Gender Binary	"Gender Binary" OR "Gender Dichotomization" OR "Dichotomization"	
09	Qualitative	"Interview" OR "Focus group" OR "Phenomenological" OR "Case study" OR "Vignette"	

APPENDIX B

Comprehensive Search Plan

<u>Search Type</u>	<u>Databases or Sources</u>	<u>Search Term ID(s)</u>	<u>Search Syntax or Instructions</u>	<u>Fields to Search</u>	<u>Specifiers</u>
Electronic Database	EBSCOHost ; PsychINFO	01, 02	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited") AND ("Identity" OR "Identity Development" OR "Identity Exploration" OR "Identity Formation" OR "Identity Experience" OR "Identity Disclosure" OR "Identity Acceptance" OR "Identity Rejection"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	EBSCOHost ; PsychINFO	01, 03	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Family" OR "Family Relationships" "Family Experiences" OR "Family Dynamics" OR "Family Interactions"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	EBSCOHost ; PsychINFO	01, 04	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Romantic Relationship" "Intimate Relationship" OR "Romantic Experience" OR "Intimate Experience" OR "Dating" OR "Marriage" OR "Couple" OR "Domestic" OR "Partner"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	EBSCOHost ; PsychINFO	01, 05	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Friendship" OR "Interpersonal Relationship" OR "Community" OR "Social Relationship" OR "Community Connection" OR "Interpersonal Experience" OR "Interpersonal Dynamic" OR "Interpersonal Interaction"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	EBSCOHost ; PsychINFO	01, 06	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Therapy" OR "Mental Health" OR "Mental Health Experiences" OR "Therapeutic Experiences" OR "Psychotherapy" OR "Counseling" OR "Mental Illness" OR "Well-Being" OR "Support Group"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English

Electronic Database	EBSCOHost ; PsychINFO	01, 07	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "School" OR "Work" OR "Employment Experiences" OR "Academic Experiences"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	EBSCOHost ; PsychINFO	01, 08	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Gender Binary" OR "Gender Dichotomization" OR "Dichotomization"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	Scopus; ProQuest Central; SAGE Journals Online; PubMed.gov	01, 02, 09	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Identity" OR "Identity Development" OR "Identity Exploration" OR "Identity Formation" OR "Identity Experience" OR "Identity Disclosure" OR "Identity Acceptance" OR "Identity Rejection" AND "Qualitative" OR "Interview" OR "Focus group" OR "Phenomenological" OR "Case study" OR "Vignette"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	Scopus; ProQuest Central; SAGE Journals Online; PubMed.gov	01, 03, 09	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Family" OR "Family Relationships" "Family Experiences" OR "Family Dynamics" OR "Family Interactions" AND "Qualitative" OR "Interview" OR "Focus group" OR "Phenomenological" OR "Case study" OR "Vignette"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	Scopus; ProQuest Central; SAGE Journals Online; PubMed.gov	01, 04, 09	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Romantic Relationship" "Intimate Relationship" OR "Romantic Experience" OR "Intimate Experience" OR "Dating" OR "Marriage" OR "Couple" OR "Domestic" OR "Partner" AND "Qualitative" OR "Interview" OR "Focus group" OR "Phenomenological" OR "Case study" OR "Vignette"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English

Electronic Database	Scopus; ProQuest Central; SAGE Journals Online; PubMed.gov	01, 05, 09	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Friendship" OR "Interpersonal Relationship" OR "Community" OR "Social Relationship" OR "Community Connection" OR "Interpersonal Experience" OR "Interpersonal Dynamic" OR "Interpersonal Interaction" AND "Qualitative" OR "Interview" OR "Focus group" OR "Phenomenological" OR "Case study" OR "Vignette"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	Scopus; ProQuest Central; SAGE Journals Online; PubMed.gov	01, 06, 09	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Therapy" OR "Mental Health" OR "Mental Health Experiences" OR "Therapeutic Experiences" OR "Psychotherapy" OR "Counseling" OR "Mental Illness" OR "Well- Being" OR "Support Group" AND "Qualitative" OR "Interview" OR "Focus group" OR "Phenomenological" OR "Case study" OR "Vignette"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	Scopus; ProQuest Central; SAGE Journals Online; PubMed.gov	01, 07, 09	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "School" OR "Work" OR "Employment Experiences" OR "Academic Experiences" AND "Qualitative" OR "Interview" OR "Focus group" OR "Phenomenological" OR "Case study" OR "Vignette"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English
Electronic Database	Scopus; ProQuest Central; SAGE Journals Online; PubMed.gov	01, 08, 09	"Gender Nonbinary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Gender Binary" OR "Gender Dichotomization" OR "Dichotomization" AND "Qualitative" OR "Interview" OR "Focus group" OR "Phenomenological" OR "Case study" OR "Vignette"	Title, Keywords , Abstract	*Years: 2000-2020 *Type: Peer-reviewed articles, Dissertations, Book and Book Chapters *Qualitative Method; Qualitative S.R. *English

## APPENDIX C

### Search Documentation Record

Search Date	ID#	Type of Search	Database/Source	Search Term ID#s	Search Syntax or Other Guidelines for Search	Fields Searched	Search Specifier: Years	Search Specifier: Publication Type	Other Specifiers	No. of Records
7/1/2019	001	Electronic Database	EBS COHost; PsycINFO	01, 02	"Gender Non-Binary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Gender Nonbinary" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Identity" OR "Identity Development" OR "Identity Exploration" OR "Identity Formation" OR "Identity Experience" OR "Identity Disclosure" OR "Identity Acceptance" OR "Identity Rejection"	Title, Keyword, Abstract	2000 - 2020	Peer-Reviewed Articles, Dissertation, Books, Book Chapters	Qualitative Method; Qualitative Systematic Review; English	40
	002	Electronic Database	EBS COHost; PsychINFO	01, 03	"Gender Non-Binary" OR "Gender Expansive" OR "Gender Nonconforming" OR "Gender Nonbinary" OR "Transgender Nonconforming" OR "TGNC" OR "Gender Diverse" OR "Pangender" OR "Omnigender" OR "Genderqueer" OR "Agender" OR "Two-spirited" AND "Family" OR "Family Relationships" OR "Family Experiences" OR "Family Dynamics" OR "Family Interactions"	Title, Keyword, Abstract	2000 - 2020	Peer-Reviewed Articles, Dissertation, Books, Book Chapters	Qualitative Method; Qualitative Systematic Review; English	14





APPENDIX E

Data Collection and Extraction Form

Extractor's Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Extraction \_\_\_\_\_

Document ID#

Authors and Year ( <i>last names of authors and Year of publication, e.g., Johnson, Jones, and Jackson 2011</i> )

Full Document Title

Research Variables

Notes:
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General Information

Date form completed ( <i>dd/mm/yyyy</i> )	
Initials/ID of person extracting data	
Source/Publication Type ( <i>journal, book, conference, report, dissertation, abstract, etc.</i> )	
Source Name ( <i>Title of Journal, Book, Organization, etc.</i> )	
OTHER:	
Notes:	

## 1. Design Characteristics and Methodological Features

	Descriptions as stated in report/paper	Location in text <i>(pg &amp; ¶/fig/table)</i>
Aim of the study		
General Method (Quant, Qual, Mixed)		
Design or Specific Research Approach		
Key Conclusions of Study Authors		
Researcher Reflexivity Statement		
Other		
Notes:		

## 2. Assessment of Research Variables

RESEARCH VARIABLES RELATED TO NON-BINARY POP	Conceptualization/Definition and Source (Theory/Conceptualization /Model/Cultural Perspective/Definition used to inform)	Assessment in Interview or other Data Collection	Location in text <i>(pg &amp; ¶/fig/table)</i>
1. Gender Identity (Term and Label)			
2. Identity-related experiences			
3. Relational experiences			
3a. Social/Interpersonal Relationship(s)			
3b. Family Relationship(s)			
3c. Romantic Relationship(s)			

4. Academic/Work Experience(s)			
5. Psychotherapy/counseling relational experiences			
Notes:			

### 3. Study Participant Characteristics and Recruitment

	Description as stated in report/paper	Location in text <i>(pg &amp; ¶/fig/table)</i>
6. Population of Interest		
7. Recruitment Methods		
8. Sample Size		
9. Age		
10. Gender Description		
10a. How was gender information collected?		
10b. Participant definition of Gender (or summarized by article author)		
10c. Protocol for Gender identification (open versus forced choice)		
11. Race/Ethnicity		
12. Other		
Note		

#### 4. Setting Characteristics

	Descriptions as stated in report/paper	Location in text  (pg & ¶/fig/table)
13. Study Location		
14. Data Collection Setting(s)		
15. Other		
16. Other		
Notes:		

#### 5. Analyses Conducted

	Description as stated in report/paper	Location in text  (pg & ¶/fig/table)
17. Qualitative Analyses conducted (e.g., Content Analysis; Narrative Analysis; Discourse Analysis; Thematic Analysis; Grounded Theory)		
18. How were themes coded?		
19. How was the data reviewed?		
20. How were discrepancies and biases handled?		
Notes:		

## 6. Identity Developmental Processes

	Present? YES or NO	Description as stated in report/paper (as stated by authors); Sample quote only if really representative across studies or powerful (participant quotes are optional)	Location in text  (pg & ¶/fig/t able)
21. Identity Development (Ex. Noted stages based on identity developmental stages - When did the person know?)			
22. Identity Exploration (How did they navigate their Gender?)			
23. Identity Formation (How did their Gender express itself?)			
24. Identity Experience (What was it like for the above experiences?)			
25. Identity Disclosure (How, when, and results of disclosure)			
26. Identity Acceptance (Integration of identity into intersecting parts, results from acceptance)			
27. Identity Rejection (Internalized)			

transphobia, identity fracture, results from rejection)			
28. Other			
29. Positive/Negative Themes			
Notes:			

## 7. Family Relationships

	Present? YES or NO	Description as stated in report/paper (as stated by authors); Sample quote only if really representative across studies or powerful (participant quotes are optional)	Locati on in text  (pg & ¶/fig/ta ble)
30. Family Experiences (General)			
31. Family Conflict			
32. Family Dynamics (before and after coming out: shifts/changes due to coming out)			
33. Family Beliefs/Culture			
34. Family Challenges			
35. Family Rejection			
36. Family Acceptance			
37. Other			

38. Positive/Negative Themes			
Notes:			

## 8. Romantic Relationships

	Present? YES or NO	Description as stated in report/paper (as stated by authors); Sample quote only if really representative across studies or powerful (participant quotes are optional)	Locatio n in text (pg & ¶/fig/ta ble)
39. Romantic Experiences (General)			
40. Disclosure of identity to partner (outcome, process, shifts in dynamic)			
41. Transitioning/Co ming out at different stages of the Relationship (ex. Beginning versus mid- relationship)			
42. Partner Acceptance/Rejec tion			
43. Other			
44. Positive/Negative Themes			
Notes:			



## 9. Interpersonal Relationships

	Present? YES or NO	Description as stated in report/paper (as stated by authors); Sample quote only if really representative across studies or powerful (participant quotes are optional)	Locati on in text  (pg & ¶/fig/t able)
45. Community Acceptance			
46. Identification and Experience with building community belonging			
47. Shifts in social dynamics			
48. Interpersonal conflict			
49. Acceptance - Rejection by peers			
50. Chosen family (experiences related to building family bonds with a social group)			
51. Microaggressions (e.g., misuse of pronouns			
52. Other			
53. Positive/Negative Themes			
Notes:			

## 10. School OR Work-Related Experiences

	Present? YES or NO	Description as stated in report/paper (as stated by authors); Sample quote only if really representative across studies or powerful (participant quotes are optional)	Locati on in text  (pg & ¶/fig/t able)
54. Discrimination and/or Harassment			
55. Sense of Safety with identity disclosure or expression			
56. Disclosing identity to co-workers			
57. Disclosing identity to classmates/professors			
58. Acceptance of Identity at Work/School			
59. Rejection of Identity at Work/School			
60. Non-binary experiences at school			
61. Non-binary experiences at work			
62. Other			
63. Positive/Negative Themes			
Notes:			

## 11. Psychotherapeutic Experiences

	Present? YES or NO	Description as stated in report/paper (as stated by authors); Sample quote only if really representative across studies or powerful (participant quotes are optional)	Locati on in text  (pg & ¶/fig/ta ble)
64. Therapeutic Alliance/Rappo rt (General)			
65. Positive psychotherapeu tic experiences			
66. Negative psychotherapeu tic experiences			
67. Disclosing identity to a therapist			
68. Exploring identity with a therapist			
69. Affirmative versus Non- affirmative treatment experiences			
70. Experiences with diagnosing			
71. Mental Health Experiences			
72. Therapist overidentificati on/minimizatio n			
73. Other			
74. Positive/Negati ve Themes			

Notes:			
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### 13. Noted Themes: Key Outcomes/Results

	Present? YES or NO	Description as stated in report/paper (as stated by authors); Sample quote only if really representative across studies or powerful (participant quotes are optional)	Location in text  (pg & ¶/fig/table)
75. Identity-Related Themes			
76. Family Relationship(s) related themes			
77. Romantic Relationship(s) related themes			
78. Interpersonal Relationship(s) related themes			
79. School or Work-related themes			
80. Psychotherapeutic or mental health-related themes			
81. Other			
Notes:			

## 14. Conclusions and Follow-up

Component	Description as stated in report/paper	Location in text  <i>(pg &amp; ¶/fig/table)</i>
82. Key conclusions of study authors		
83. Study Author's Recommendations for Future Research		
84. Does the study directly address your review question? <i>(any issues of partial or indirect applicability)</i>		
85. Your Take-Aways: General		
86. Your Take-Aways: Implications for Practice		
87. Salient Study Limitations (to inform Quality Appraisal)		
88. References to other relevant studies		
89. Other publications from this dataset		
90. Further study information needed?  <i>(from whom, what, and when contact info)</i>		
91. Correspondence received  <i>(from whom, what, and when)</i>		
Notes:		

## APPENDIX F

### Individual Quality Appraisal Form

#### INDIVIDUAL STUDY QUALITY APPRAISAL FORM FOR SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

Developed by Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D., Pepperdine University

Author(s) and Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Study ID# \_\_\_\_\_

1. Methodology: \_\_\_\_\_ Qualitative  
2. Specific Design/Inquiry Approach: \_\_\_\_\_

RATING SCALE: Strong=3 Good/Adequate=2 Weak=1 Missing=0 N/A

3. Strength of Literature Foundation and Rationale for Study: \_\_\_\_\_  
(POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS: current and relevant references, background literature sufficiently comprehensive, Need/Rationale for study clearly stated, etc.)
4. Clarity and specificity of Research Aims/Objectives/Questions/Hypotheses: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Quality of research design or methodological approach: \_\_\_\_\_  
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS: provides rationale for design chosen, appropriateness for research questions, clear description of design and methodological approach, strength of design characteristics utilized  
QUALITATIVE CONSIDERATIONS: consistent with specific practices relevant to the inquiry strategy (e.g., phenomenological study, case study, grounded theory, etc.), triangulation, audit trail
6. Sample Selection and Characteristics: \_\_\_\_\_  
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS: detailed description of sample characteristics, adequacy of sample characteristics in the context of research aims, detailed description of recruitment and selection of participants; rationale provided for sample size; inclusion and exclusion criteria indicated as relevant  
QUALITATIVE CONSIDERATIONS: sample size appropriate for inquiry strategy; rationale for sample characteristics
7. Data Collection Tools (Scales, Observation, Interviews, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_  
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS: rationale for selection, appropriateness for assessing variables, development of study-specific tool or process clearly described, piloting, pretesting; QUALITATIVE CONSIDERATIONS: appropriateness for inquiry strategy and purpose; data collection process described clearly/comprehensively.
8. Data Collection Processes: \_\_\_\_\_  
(POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS: data collection procedures clearly described in sufficient detail, intervention strategies and implementation described in detail, quality of data collected, design-specific considerations such as attrition in RCTs, saturation in grounded theory, etc.)
9. Analysis and Presentation of Data: \_\_\_\_\_  
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS: appropriateness of analysis for research questions and type of data; results presented clearly and comprehensively; usefulness and clarity of any tables, graphs, and charts  
QUALITATIVE CONSIDERATIONS: textual data and/or direct quotes reported and used effectively; transparent description of the development of themes from raw data
10. Discussion of Study Limitations: \_\_\_\_\_  
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS: identifies and discusses limitations in the context of design/strategy utilized  
QUALITATIVE CONSIDERATIONS: transferability, credibility, transparency,
11. Consideration of culture and diversity: \_\_\_\_\_  
(POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS: attention to diversity within sample, includes culturally appropriate methods and tools, avoids biased language, uses appropriate terminology, etc.)
12. OVERALL RATING: EXEMPLARY STRONG GOOD/ADEQUATE WEAK  
(e.g., all "3"s) (e.g., mostly "3"s) (e.g., mostly "2"s) (e.g., mostly "1"s)

# APPENDIX G

## Full Text Database

Document Info				General Information				Design Characteristics and Methodological Features															
Document ID#	Authors and Year	Title	Research Variables	Date form completed	Extractor	Source/Publication Type	Source Name	Aim of Study	General Method	Design/Specific Research Approach	Key Conclusions of Study Authors	Research Reflexivity Statement											
Assessment of Research Variables							Study Participant Characteristics and Recruitment																
Gender Identity (Term and Label)	Identity-related experiences	Relational experience	Social/Interpersonal Relationship(s)	Family Relationship(s)	Romantic Relationship(s)	Academic/Work Experience(s)	Psychotherapy/Counseling relational experiences	Population of Interest	Recruitment Methods	Sample Size	Age	Gender Description	How was gender information collected?	Participant definition of Gender (or summarized by article author)	Protocol for Gender identification (open versus forced choice)	Race/Ethnicity							
Setting Characteristics		Analysis Conducted				Identity Developmental Processes																	
Study Location	Data Collection Setting(s)	Qualitative Analyses: conducted	How were themes coded?	How was the data reviewed?	How were discrepancies and biases handled?	Identity Development (Ex. Noted stages based on identity developmental stages - When did	Identity Exploration (How did they navigate their Gender?)	Identity Formation (How did their Gender express itself?)	Identity Experience (What was it like for the above experiences?)	Identity Disclosure (How, when, and results of disclosure)	Identity Acceptance (Integration of identity into intersecting parts, results)	Identity Rejection (Internalized transphobia, identity fracture,	Positive/Negative Identity Developmental Themes										
Interpersonal Relationship Experiences							School OR Work-Related Experiences																
Community Acceptance/Rejection	Identification and Experience with building community belonging	Shifts in social dynamics	Interpersonal conflict	Acceptance/Rejection by peers	Chosen family (experiences related to building family bonds with a social group)	Microaggressions (e.g., misuse of pronouns)	Positive/Negative Themes	Discrimination and/or Harassment	Sense of Safety with identity disclosure/expression	Disclosing identity to co-workers	Disclosing identity to classmates/professors	Acceptance of Identity at Work/School	Rejection of Identity at Work/School	Non-binary experiences at school	Non-binary experiences at work	Positive/Negative School/Work Related Themes							
Family Relationship Experiences							Romantic Relationship Experiences																
Family Experiences (General)	Family Dynamics (before and after coming out: shifts/changes)	Family Beliefs/Culture	Family Challenges	Family Rejection	Family Acceptance	Positive/Negative Family Relationship Themes	Romantic Experiences (General)	Disclosure of identity to partner (outcome, process, shifts in dynamic)	Transitioning/Coming out at different stages of the Relationship (ex. Beginning versus mid-	Partner Acceptance/Rejection	Positive/Negative Romantic Relationship Themes												
Psychotherapeutic Experiences							Noted Themes: Key Outcomes/Results				Conclusions and Follow-up												
Therapist Alliance/Report (General)	Positive psychotherapist experiences	Negative psychotherapist experiences	Choosing identity to a therapist	Exploring identity with a therapist	Alternative versus non-affirmative treatment experiences	Experiences with Mental Health Diagnosing Experiences	Therapist overidentified on/minimized Themes	Positive/Negative Therapeutic Related Themes	Family Relationships related themes	Romantic Relationships related themes	Interpersonal Relationships related themes	School/Work related themes	Psychotherapeutic Key or mental health related themes	Key conclusions of study authors	Study Author's Recommendations for Future Research	Does the study directly address your question?	Your Take-Aways: General	Your Take-Aways: Implications for Practice	Salient Study Limitations (to inform Quality Appraisal)	References to other relevant studies	Other publications from this dataset	Further study information needed?	Correspondence received

## APPENDIX H

### Preliminary Evidence Table

Authors and Year	Study Strategy/ Design	Participants (N)	Gender Description	Mean Age or Range	Study Aim	Key Findings and Outcomes	QA
Austin, Craig, Navega, McInroy 2020	Grounded Theory	N = 260*	Non-binary, multiple gender identity labels, transgender & gender diverse (TGD)	Age Range: 14-22 y/o	Researchers use grounded theory methodology to explore the emotional and interpersonal processes that promote TGD youth well-being via ICTs.	Results show TGD youth have used online spaces to find an alternative socioemotional environment in which they are able to present authentically as themselves. Additionally, narratives of online spaces being life-saving further echo the importance of building a sense of community/belonging within the TGNC community.	Good / Adequate
Barbee and Schrock (2019)	Thematic Analysis	N = 17	Participants were sought with “nonbinary” identity labels for interviewing purposes	Most interviewees were between 18 and 23 years old, although three were 29 – 35 and one was 63	Researchers explore how people who do not identify exclusively/consistently as women or men (i.e., nonbinary people) navigate a culture that bifurcates people into a binary category. Researchers focus on the process of un/gendering social selves to differentiate between personal definitions and social presentations of self.	Results suggest that participant’s identity work involved ungendering social selves with the aim of refuting or obfuscating audiences’ binary gender attribution. Participants reported that ungendering often involved balancing corporeal signs of one category (e.g., breasts or facial hair) with accouterments of another. Evidence suggests resistance to binarily gendered discourse culture by adopting and persuading others to use ungendered names, pronouns, and sexual identities.	Good / Adequate
Barsigian, Hammack, Wilson, Morrow, & Russell (2020)	Thematic Analysis	N = 30	Genderqueer	Age Range: 18-59 Age Range Groups: Equality 18-25, Visibility 34-41, Pride 52-59	The study sought to contextualize the experiences of genderqueer people by examining intersections of gender with sexual orientation and other social identities, along with experiences of community. In particular, how generational differences might affect genderqueer individuals’ ability to understand their own gender experiences and to find affirming community spaces.	Three major theme were present: (a) unintelligibility: genderqueer people face challenges in identifying, naming, and expressing their gender due to the constraints of everyday language and material culture; (b) managing stigma through challenging oppression: GQ people manage stigma by naming and challenging the gender binary, often in relation to other forms of oppression; and (c) connection beyond mainstream LGBTQ communities: GQ people can find connection outside of mainstream LGBTQ spaces, such as through ethnicity-based or sexual subcommunities.	Strong



Bradford, et al., (2019)	Thematic Analysis	N = 25	Sample consisted of 25 adolescents and emerging adults from five cities in the United States who identified as genderqueer	Mean Age = 21.28; SD = 3.20	The aim of this study was to provide description of the intrapsychic experiences of genderqueer individuals and describe the way in which genderqueer individuals navigated these narrative constraints.	Results suggest that genderqueer identity development trajectories may mirror those of other sexual and gender minorities insofar as the achievement of a genderqueer identity may be followed by a period of decreasing centrality of the consolidated identity.	Good / Adequate
Conlin, Douglass, Larson-Konar, Gluck, Fiume, & Heesacker (2019)	Content Analysis	N = 14	Study defined gender identity as one's internal sense of their own gender, and gender along or outside of a continuum. Identity labels such as nonbinary, genderqueer, or outside the category of male or female were used.	Mean Age: 24yo	Qualitative exploration of nonbinary gender identities from a counseling framework	Results suggest that there is current gaps in research due to lack of visibility of the TGNC community. Results also suggest that gender identity is not necessarily the same as gender fluidity, and gender is somewhere between fluid and stable.	Strong
Craig, Eaton, Kirkland, Egag, Pascoe, King & Krishnan (2021).	Narrative analysis- This digital photo-elicitation study	N = 23*	Transgender and gender diverse (TGD) youth	Age Range: 14 to 29; Mean Age: 21.37	Researchers explored sexual and gender minority youth (SGMY) experiences and challenges related to identity and disclosure, and their ability to cope in vibrant ways.	Results highlight the TGNC person's integration of self in online and offline spaces, noting themes of identity acceptance and formation with emphasis on online spaces providing opportunity to grow and evolve in safe ways and cultivate feelings of belonging.	Strong
Darwin (2017)	Virtual ethnography, content analysis	500 threads on Reddit	Genderqueer (GQ) identities were conceptualized as an active and involved process of "doing nonbinary gender," with "nonbinary"	Mean Age: 18 to 50	This virtual ethnography asks (1) how do people attempt to "do non binary gender"; (2) under what circumstances does non binary gender "succeed" in interactionist terms; and (3) does the doing of nonbinary gender contribute toward the redoing or undoing of	Results suggest that there is not one way to "do non-binary gender" and that the diversity within the TGNC community does not benefit from a homogeneous framework as it does not give voice to the diversity, uniqueness, and depth to the community as a whole. Additionally, results suggest that larger transgender master narratives may not suffice in reflecting narratives within the TGNC community and the TGNC community may better benefit from building and voicing narratives that reflect their diverse community.	Weak

			used as the umbrella term under which GQ falls		(binary) gender?		
Farmer, Robbins, Keith, and Mabry (2020)	Content Analysis	N = 10*	transgender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, gender-fluid, non-binary, or gender on the gender spectrum (other than cisgender).	Age Range: 18-24 y/o	Researchers explore transgender and gender expansive (TGE) students' experiences of genderism while attending women's colleges and universities.	Results suggest that TGE students hold experiences of institutional betrayal, marginalization, and oppression while also holding narratives of courage, self-determination, and resilience as a way to combat systemic oppression in higher education.	Good / Adequate
Pulice-Farrow, Brown, and Galupo 2017	Thematic Analysis	N = 233*	Four categories they most identify with: transfeminine (n = 21), transmasculine (n = 64), gender nonconforming (n = 80), or agender (n = 65).	18-60	The study focuses on the following: How do transgender microaggressions impact relationship dynamics with romantic partners? This article emphasizes the importance of the relational context in which microaggressions are received in romantic relationships.	Results suggest that nearly half of TGNC participants in romantic relationships experiences microaggressions by their romantic partner and noted that positive experiences and micro affirmations served as an acknowledgment of their gender identity and in turn, affirmed their gender identity.	Good / Adequate
Fiani and Han, 2019	Thematic Analysis	N = 15*	Binary and non-binary transgender and gender non-conforming	mean: 32.07 ; range: 24-53	Researchers set out to center the voices of TGNC individuals and how the TGNC participants navigate and negotiate identity, and the social and emotional strains and benefits of living authentically to one's gender sense. Researchers also looked at overall quality of life and mental health disparities noted in TGNC narratives.	Results suggest greater heterogeneity in identity developmental processes than previously theorized, revealing several nonlinear critical processes in gender identity formation. Specifically, non-binary participants described passing/blending as unattainable and endorsed a sense of learned helplessness, de-emphasizing the importance of passing/blending. Additionally, non-binary participants began identity exploration and disclosure later than binary participants, relied heavily on community support, and faced experiences of fetishization parallel to larger transgender narratives.	Strong

Flint, Kilgo, and Bennet (2019)	Narrative Analysis	N = 8	Agender and Nonbinary - as described by participants	Age Range: 18-27	Researchers explored how nonbinary and agender students navigate the space of a college campus - both as the literal navigation of physical place and as an always-in-process becoming with and in the place of higher education.	Findings emphasize the dynamism of space: students are not simply moving across a static geography; rather, they are constantly interacting with and reorienting to the space of campus.	Strong
Goldberg and Kovalanka (2018)	Thematic Analysis	N = 7	All participants identified as nonbinary trans. They described a variety of identities: nonbinary (2), gender nonconforming (2), genderqueer, demigirl, and gender-resistant	Age Range: 18-22	The goal of this exploratory study was to gain insight into the experiences of nonbinary students in higher education, using data from two focus groups with seven undergraduates who held nonbinary gender identities.	According to key findings, participants identified a range of experiences from positive to negative regarding visibility of gender identity, need for support, and policy changes as a way to challenge cisnormative structures in higher education. Additionally, results suggest that identity development is a prevalent factor in this phase of life, both online and in person.	Strong
Goldberg, Kovalanka, & Dickey (2018)	Thematic analysis	N = 91*	Trans/transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, gender nonconforming	Mean Age: 27.91 years	Researchers explored binary and nonbinary trans student experiences in higher education as a way to examine experiences unique to their social positioning in institutions of higher education.	Findings suggest that TGNC graduate students face challenges in higher education such as misunderstanding by faculty, staff, and even their peers, invisibility, and holding the burden to challenge cisnormative norms through educating staff, faculty, and peers or correcting and advocating for affirmative treatment.	Strong
Galupo, Cusack, Morris 2021	Thematic Analysis, Phenomenological	N = 76	Participants describing their gender identity as nonbinary, genderqueer/fluid, transmasculine/trans man, agender, trans-feminine/trans woman, bigender, and woman with a transgender history.	Age Range: 18-65	The present study focused on trans and nonbinary (TNB) individuals who have an androgynous or non-stereotypical body ideal, with attention to how their body ideal is conceptualized and maintained.	Results noted four central themes that describe the meaning TNB individuals use to describe their androgynous or non-stereotypical body ideal: 1) Attaining Neutrality and De-Categorizing Gender; 2) Disaggregating Gender Expression; 3) Managing Gender Dysphoria; and 4) Achieving Authenticity. Results of the present study expand the current body ideal literature by including TNB narratives and by focusing specifically on the ways an androgynous body ideal is conceptualized and maintained.	Good / Adequate

Galupo, Pulice-Farrow, Clements, & Morris, 2018	Thematic analysis	N = 161	Gender nonconforming and agender	Mean Age: 22	Researchers examined the nature of micro affirmations that the TGNC community may experience in romantic relationships.	Findings highlight the nuanced negotiation of nonbinary identity within interpersonal relationships and differentiates it from the transgender literature that has focused, more often, on binary transgender experience. Findings also suggest that micro affirmations were supportive of TGNC identity in the context of romantic relationships, highlighting the importance of using affirming language, correct pronouns, and acknowledgement of gender identity in small but meaningful ways.	Good / Adequate
Hall and DeLaney (2021)	Thematic Analysis	N = 100*	Identity label terms such as "nonbinary," "genderqueer," "trans man," "trans woman," "transmasculine," "transfeminine," "trans men," "trans women," "non-binary," "genderqueer," or "other."	At least 18 years of age. The ages of the participants were not collected	This study applied a trauma-informed care (TIC) framework to explore transgender and gender-expansive (TGE) adults' experiences with mental health and community support. The study sought to explore community support needs and positive beliefs about mental health providers among TGE adults.	Results suggest that TGNC persons experience positive and negative therapeutic encounters, such as mistreatment and misgendering from providers. Additionally, TGNC persons actively sought LGBTQ providers or providers who appeared knowledgeable about gender identity and related concerns as a way to lessen the burden of educating providers. Open-mindedness and humility were also strong factors when finding a provider who built a safe and affirming space.	Good / Adequate
Johnson, LeBlanc, Sterzing, Deadorff, Antin, Bockting (2020)	Thematic Analysis	N = 24	Participants used terms to describe gender identity: trans female, trans male, female, male, nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid, nonbinary trans guy, two-spirited, genderfluid transman, agender.	Age Range: 16-20 years of age	Researchers describe two aims: (a) to describe the spectrum of specific parental behaviors across three categories—rejecting, supportive, and mixed behaviors—and (b) to describe the perceived psychosocial consequences of parental behaviors on the lives of trans adolescents.	Results suggest that rejecting parental behaviors exacerbated mental health problems within the TGNC community and led to adverse psychosocial consequences, while supportive behaviors were related to perceived positive psychosocial consequences.	Good / Adequate

Jones, Smith, Ward, Dixon, Hillier, Mitchell (2016)	Narrative Analysis	N = 189	Respondents were identified as AFAB and AMAB: female at birth (72.5%), a smaller group were assigned male (26.5%) and two were not assigned a sex.	Mean Age: 19 y/o Age Range: 14-25 y/o	Researchers explore school experiences of Australian transgender and GD students', with particular consideration of recognition of their gender identity in documentation, experiences of puberty and sexuality education, treatment by staff and students, and other forms of provision.	Results suggest that it could be useful if teachers and school leadership were trained in appropriate, supportive behavior and language towards gender diverse and transgender students, such as the use of appropriate language as a way to build upon students' sense of safety.	Good / Adequate
Losty & O'Connor (2018)	Grounded theory	N = 6	Non-binary identity	18+ years of age	This study aims to go into aspects of the psychological realities of people identifying themselves as non-binary.	Key findings suggest that tension, power, and privilege can negate important areas of research when uplifting and empowering TGNC voices, thus bringing about concerns with researcher biases that may not accurately or fully capture TGNC stories, narratives, or experiences.	Strong
Pardo, 2019	Thematic Analysis, Mixed Method	N = 170	Gender Nonconforming	Mean Age: 28.7 years, Age Range: 18-56 years	Researchers explore current narratives about gender identities and expressions among a sample of self-identified gender nonconforming people who were assigned female at birth. Researchers used a transpersonal lens to unearth themes of gendered self-concept and self-expression as they differ from cultural norms and expectations.	Results suggest that there are several underlying domains such as behavior, dress/style/appearance, and transitional status that may be involved with constructing gender identity. Additionally, research supports a new theoretical framework within which trans and gender nonbinary fit within a developmental framework, noting that participants had stable self-concept of gender that was fluid and flexible. Participants in this study developed a core understanding of the authentic self beyond the physical self.	Strong
Stewart (2017)	Autoethnography, abductive approach	N = 1	A Black MoC-NB/GQT* person - self-identified through an Autoethnography	N/A	Researchers seeks to answer the following questions from a non-binary perspective: What is (a) man, not embodied but philosophically? If not embodied, what is the possibility and function of men? Moreover, what does it mean to desire/embrace/claim masculinity beyond gender embodiment?	This grounded autoethnography reviewed masculinity as a Black NB/GQT* and how the intersectionality of his identities impacted and informed his sense of resiliency and relationship with femme-ness. Results suggest that this individual does not and cannot be removed from masculinity, black resilience, nor femme-ness, and that all things exist and interact in meaningful ways.	Good / Adequate

Stachowiak (2017)	Grounded Theory with Thematic Analysis	N = 10	Self-ascribed label as "genderqueer"	Age Range: 21 to 38	The aim of this study was to understand the felt sense of gender, and internal and external oppression. (i.e., the ways GQ persons negotiate their identity related to the social construction of gender, the felt sense of gender, and gender as becoming are analyzed and discussed.	Results suggest that genderqueer identities is a space of contention, tension, and negotiation that is continuously and simultaneously navigated in social and felt sense spaces of their genderqueer identity.	Good / Adequate
Ullman (2020)	Grounded Theory	N = 16	N = 7 Female to Non-Binary n = 11 Male to Non-Binary n = 13 Female to 'A different identity' n = 4 Male to 'A different identity' n = 3	-	Researchers aim to investigate gender and sexuality diverse (GSD) educators' workplace experiences with the aim of understanding how GSD-inclusivity and awareness in schools impacts these educators' sense of wellbeing and professional identity.	Results suggest that gender diverse teachers experience inequitable workplace experiences due to larger cisnormative/heteronormative expectations, negatively impacting individuals' sense of personal and workplace wellbeing.	Weak
Wolff, Kay, Himes, & Alqijay (2017)	Grounded theory - Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis	N = 8	Genderqueer (N=3), Undecided (N=1), Transgender men (N=3)	Mean = 26.4	Researchers sought to answer the following question: How do TGNC students who attend or attended a CCU describe their overall college experiences and campus climate toward TGNC persons?	Findings suggest that TGNC students experienced multiple forms of systemic oppression within CCU environments, such as structural barriers, larger social norms and religious beliefs, and political underpinnings from "don't ask, don't tell" policies. Results highlighted experiences of interpersonal stigma, such as verbal harassment, physical violence, and microaggressions, which participants noted to negatively impact beliefs about themselves, sense of belonging, increasing reports of internalized transphobia.	Good / Adequate

APPENDIX I

Identity Related Experiences Evidence Table

Doc info	Identity Developmental Processes							Noted Themes: Key Outcome/Results
Authors and Year	Identity Development	Identity Exploration	Identity Formation	Identity Experience	Identity Disclosure	Identity Acceptance	Identity Rejection	Identity-Related Themes
Austin, Craig, Navega, McInroy 2020	-	This affirming space allows TGD youth to engage with others as their authentic selves, often for the first time, creating a safe context which fosters processes of healing and growth	ICTs (Information & Communication Technologies) often enable authentic self-expression not possible offline. Provided language to be able to describe oneself, and a space that was safe	Evidence suggests that access to the internet and a broad range of information and communication technologies (ICTs) represents a key source of resilience in the lives of TGD youth and adults. Being online allowed them to experience a sense of belonging that they could not get from their family or friends.	-	Online experiences boosted confidence in ways that translated to offline experiences and an overall stronger sense of self online experiences helped them see their identities, lives, and circumstances in new, better, and more affirming	Pervasive experiences of marginalization and the potential mental health challenges, may also contribute to youth's feelings of being a burden. Internalized homophobia, transphobia, and expectations of rejection contribute to the perceived incompetence, self-criticism, self-hatred, and severity of suicidal ideation in nonbinary youth.	5 themes gathered from analyses, 2 relating to identity-related experiences. 1. finding an escape from stigma and violence, 2. experiencing belonging, 3. building confidence, 4. feeling hope, and 5. giving back. Negative: Suicidality, depression, internalized-transphobic, social/familial rejection, experiences of violence and harassment.
Barbee and Schroek (2019)	Knowledge of cultural codes that are used to categorize people into binary men or women is essential to ungendering or identity work.	Altering physical appearance with the goal of subverting the binary and evading gender attribution.	Participants reported decorating and transforming bodies to neutralize or contradict culturally defined signifiers of gender to block others from determining gender.	Ungendering self-conceptions evokes positive emotions: liberation, pride, and confidence.	-	Ungendering leads to emotional benefits and authenticity.	When ungendering social selves, presenting as nonbinary can lead to feeling: anxious, ashamed, fearful, and angry.	Adoption of gender identity and rejection of binary identity is an emotional process where the benefits outweigh the burdens.
Barsigian, Hammack, Wilson, Moran	Across generations, individuals identified language challenges as a key issue in the ability to identify	Educational and activist spaces are important in developing a sense of identity and sociopolitical consciousness	Difficulty in developing gender expression that causes others to recognize identity as genderqueer.	TGNC persons noted harassment and discrimination based on perceptions of gender ambiguity, and the complexity	-	-	Sociopolitical consciousness is important for allowing genderqueer people to combat internalized stigma and work	Language is limited and creates challenges when navigating gender development. There are

row, & Rus sell (2020)	outside the gender binary.	.		of revisiting one's identity across the life span.			towards social change.	difficulties in developing a gender expression that would be recognized as genderqueer.
Bradford et al., (2019)	Transnormativity plays a role in shaping individual identity development and intra-group dynamics.	Exertion of agency over bodies and identities regarding transition, as an important piece of gender development.	Gender Fluidity: gender identity fluctuating over time. Diversity in Gender Transition: no singular transition trajectory fits everyone.	Differing definitions of "being masculine" or "being feminine." Gender fluid folks intrinsically recognize their past and future gender as differing from their current gender.	-	-	Internalizing negative narratives can lead to some viewing their own gender fluidity as stressful or upsetting and to doubt the legitimacy of their identity.	GQ individuals navigate narrative constraints. There is a consistent and enduring flux in an individual's sense of their own gender identity. Gender expression should not be conflated with gender identity.
Conlin, Douglas, Larson-Konrath, Gluck, Fiume, & Heesacker (2019)	Identity development depends on knowledge that nonbinary identities exist. Cultural identities intersect with gender. Identity development is a process of questioning and reformulating identity through adolescence and adulthood.	Gender conceptualized as an ongoing complex process of exploration.	Gaps between feeling gender discomfort and exploring gender identity. Expression can vary from day to day and for some nonbinary identity does not prohibit them from a more binary expression of gender.	Catalyst for recognizing their gender identity was a considerable level of discomfort in who people were or were trying to be. Intersecting identities create diverse experiences. Gender can be fluid or stable. Gender presentation may vary even if identity is stable	Selective disclosure: at certain times or with certain people.	-	Identity Expression Divide: exclusion and harassment from within transgender community. Invisibility and Stressors: Negative stereotyping, misgendering, erasure. Discrimination: impacts career, social life, and health.	1. Identity development is unique to the individual. 2. Identity-Expression is influenced by internal & external concerns. 3. Negative experiences: misgendering, invisibility, harassment. 4. Positive experiences-self advocacy and connection.
Craig et al., (2021).	Redefining and recreating offline spaces to live as authentically as possible while maintaining safety.	Identity as a process of working towards an integrative self. Various online and offline process contribute to the ways people become authentic and whole versions of themselves.	Individuals define offline life in ways that promote safety while affirming identity.	Sexual and gender identities are common intersectional challenges for youth. Their cultural identities also influenced self-image and their connection and value amongst others.	Individuals may have an online and offline "persona" in an attempt to maintain control over the perception of themselves by others.	Curation is a process that promotes identity development: Curation allows participants to seek safety, affirm intersecting identities, and build confidence.	Discrimination causes internalized conflict between identity and experiencing challenges with mental health.	Working "towards an integrative self" online and offline with themes of reflecting & knowing, discrimination & intersectional challenges, (re) defining & (re) creating, growing & being.



Darwin (2017)	Online spaces and communities provide places where individuals can explore and develop gender identity.	Participants in the same online communities have different relationships to their gender and to language used to describe gender.	Not all people have internalized a sense of binary accountability. Some do not experience themselves as gendered at all. By rejecting the gender binary as a natural and inevitable referent, nonbinary people redo gender- at least within themselves. Some nonbinary individuals actively exploit naturalized gender binary as a tool for gender mobility.	Coming out as a relatively difficult experience due to the public's lack of awareness about gender diversity compared to sexual diversity.	NBs are tasked with explaining the social construction of gender when correcting misgendering, some do not bother to come out at all beyond groups of other NB community members. Some come out to select family members and partners. Accounts of sexual and romantic relationships ending due to coming out as nonbinary have been shared.	N/A	Many accept misgendering from strangers who they will never see again, it is harder to accept misgendering from family members. Some worry that their families will not understand. Members of the community convey a sense of obligation to come out to sexual partners. This process is particularly intimidating because partners may no longer wish to be with the person. Accounts of breakups occurring due to coming out have been shared in social media communities.	This virtual ethnography of the GQ community on Reddit aimed to answer three questions: How do people attempt to do gender beyond the binary? Under what circumstances does nonbinary gender become recognizable—and thus successful—according to the interactionist model? Does this doing of nonbinary gender contribute toward the redoing or undoing of (binary) gender?
Fiani and Han, 2019	Identity development tied to developmental stages: different phases of identity development occur in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.	Identity exploration processes: identity selection, navigating names, reclaiming self/body, navigating disclosure, navigating self-presentation, increased flexibility, transition amnesia, and activism / educating others. Supportive factors: social support, validating experiences.	Non-binary narratives demonstrate earnest attention to the role of clothing in gender presentation and perception by others.	Passing/blending is unattainable; therefore, non-binary folks may emphasize the importance of passing and instead endorse preferences for one pole or the other of the gender binary. To maximize safety, participants described explicitly modifying their self-presentation within a given context.	Identity disclosure navigation involves two overarching concerns: safety and passing/blending.	-	Personal challenges involved grappling with internalized transphobia and/or trans negativity.	Non-binary individuals experience later onset of gender exploration when compared to binary people. Social support, resources, and validation positively impact gender identity development. Challenges to identity development include: lack of information/resources, internalized transphobia/trans-negativity, and learning how to perform gender.
Flinn, Kilgo, and Bennett	Comfort as a negotiation between internal and external spaces.	Construction of identity in the Southeastern US involves embodied and visceral	Desire for identity alignment with internal and external selves conflicted with knowledge that becoming visible	Some choose not to correct misgendering even in spaces considered to be progressive and inclusive.	-	-	-	Constructing Identity: interaction between external and internal identity developments

(2019)		negotiations.	as nonbinary or agender affects their safety.					and negotiations.
Golberg and Kuvana (2018)	The internet is a valued source of initial information to aid in identity development.	Gender identity exploration can start online before moving offline. Establishing connections with other TGNC people is an important part of exploration.	Desire for use of medical interventions such as HRT varies by individual.	Internal struggle and psychological work prior to entering different social contexts.	Balance of desire for privacy with desire to be gendered appropriately. 2. Sharing birth names is seen as a potential invitation for harassment.	TGNC friends are regarded as key support and gender affirmation sources. As well as role models for expansive identity and authenticity.	-	1. Identity exploration varies based on life phase. 2. Balancing privacy and Authentic Expression: pros & cons of visibility and advocacy.
Jones, Smith, Ward, Dixon, Hillier, Mitchell (2016)	One-fifth of the survey participants indicated that they 'did not care' which pronoun is used, possibly reflecting the trend towards non-binary and inconsistent identities. Nearly 1/3 of the students in the survey had always questioned their gender identity.	Participants repeatedly identified their explorations as ongoing.	For some survey participants, social transitioning mainly involved not conforming to gender norm. Participants desired to have a full transition i.e. name, clothes, sex reassignment surgery' to gain social acceptance and feel 'better'. However, 40% of the survey participants did not want to have a medical transition.	Participants' stories suggested that their age and perceived inexperience impacted on opportunities to proceed with legal transitions such as changing a passport, despite over half (54%) of the survey participants wanting to do so.	Some participants stated they had their gender formally changed on school records, while others shared that they did not feel safe declaring their gender identity at school.	-	-	Identity as a complex process that involves ongoing exploration
Losty & O'Connor (2018)	There are differing experiences of history of identification and dis-identification from biological sex during childhood. Identification with the non-binary gender caused comfortability within themselves. A sense of tension between the mind with regard to the future was found in narratives illustrating that identity	Identification as non-binary begins after the 'discovery' or 'realization' of the non-binary gender category. Involvement in LGBTQ+ community increases knowledge of gender variant identities and re-positioned these as valid expressions of gender. Discovering non-binary gender category allows individuals to put their	Discovery of non-binary gender category allows for people to put their unique experiences of identification into context and make sense of the confusing and/or hostile feelings experienced earlier in their lives.	Non-binary gender language is an important aspect of identity and provides support when disclosing identity to others. the diversity of the non-binary gender experience could at times act as a barrier to feeling connected to a community of like-minded individuals. Mixed experiences of how quickly preferred name and pronouns are used by others. Various levels of	Invalidation of non-binary gender within family relationships leads to varying levels of distress and poor mental health. Keeping aspects of the self separate from family due to feelings of uncertainty regarding how this info might be received. Tensions between wanting to	-	Being seen as biological sex by family members and not as gender identity creates a sense of being seen yet unseen within the family dynamic. There's a sense of an anguished thought process between wanting to share gender identity with others yet wanting to protect the self against the potential of being invalidated by them.	Three core interrelated themes: a developing non-binary gender, correct and incorrect language, and being seen and unseen. They also highlight the potential for the non-binary gender person to experience a sense of tension within their mind.

	was still in formation.	experiences of identification and dis-identification with their biological sex into context.		severity in discomfort occur when misgendered.	be seen and unseen in order to protect the self.			
Pardo, 2019	Consistent narratives in identification as "unique," "other", or "androgynous" genders.	Embodiment of gender extends past social constructions and gender expression, it is a core aspect of people's internal selves.	Nonbinary individuals may behave in genderless or gender-blended ways, not restricted by gender norms. Daily gendered behavior can vary from day to day.	Exploration as a journey towards authenticity.	-	-	-	NB gender core identities involve themes of gendered self-concept, expression in behavior, dress style and appearance, and surgical body modification. A transpersonal lens highlights themes of being, becoming, and transcendence beyond the body.
Stachowiak (2017)	Gender as becoming. Simultaneous identification with and disidentification from social constructs that define individuals to move freely within and out of the binary.	Tension between sense of self and social construction of gender. Feelings of inner conflict with felt sense of gender occurs when time is spent adhering to the norms of social construction of gender. Identifying as genderqueer seen as empowering.	Desire is not to pass as either gender but to express self as a combination of both.	Tension between social construct of gender and felt sense of gender results in continuous negotiations of self. Gender seen as becoming, rather than a fixed identity.	-	Acceptance that existing as genderqueer involves tension created by queering the binary. This tension is viewed as necessary and beneficial to the process of becoming.	Individuals knowingly spend time participating in their own gender oppression via gender policing themselves.	Gender is about three distinct experiences: gender as a social construction, gender as a felt sense, and gender as becoming.
Stewart (2017)	-	The relationship between conception and perception reflects how culture orders senses into hierarchical arrangements	Trans people make sense of themselves through being in community with other trans people.	Claiming genderqueer identity requires a refusal of the binary.. The refusal impacts relationships with members of those communities creating a pressure for genderqueer folks to become a human worthy of engagement and fellowship.	Disclosing identity related discomfort in spaces of ciswomen feminists is met with confusion and attempts to refute gender self-determination.	Gender essentialism as a way to become a human worthy of engagement and fellowship in the eyes of binary gendered groups.	-	Black non-binary and gender queer trans identity related to existing outside the perceptions of society, being both perceived and left unseen.

APPENDIX J

Family Related Experiences Evidence Table

Document Info	Family Relationship Experiences						Noted Themes: Key Outcome/Results
Authors and Year	Family Experiences	Family Dynamics	Family Beliefs/Culture	Family Challenges	Family Rejection	Family Acceptance	Family Relationship(s) related themes
Austin, Craig, Navega, McInroy 2020	-	-	-	-	Some participants were escaping from rejection in their own non affirming homes, often describing their online relationships with words like “family,” “home,” and “community.”	-	-
Barbee & Schrock (2019)	Others embodied binary gender to sustain social relations with family	-	-	-	-	-	-
Craig, Eaton, Kirkland, Egag, Pascoe, King & Krishnan (2021)	TGD Youth reports higher instances of family conflict, bullying, and violence.	Participants that live with family members that are unaccepting of their gender and sexual identities reported using online platforms to escape the turmoil offline. One participant described how they used clothing to promote their identity while avoiding confrontation or conflict with their family members.	Participants who reported to have strained or conflicting relationships with their families also presented an understanding of their parent's values and cultural differences.	Most participants declined to have photos published per this theme, as the photos frequently referred to family and intimate relationships in their lives. Most participants noted a strong relationship with cultural and family values, despite the internal concern about disclosing their queer identities.	One participant used a photo of pigeons to discuss their stressors with their family to remind them of their relatives and how they just threw them out and didn't care or want anything to do with the participant.	An investigation of Latinx/a SGMY found that youth leveraged those intersections in ways that supported their own and their families' understanding and reflection of familial expectations and supports.	Family Dynamics/Values : where youth reflected upon their family's values and indicated some understanding as to why their values may influence the hardship or rejection they are facing.

Goldberg and Kuvalanka (2018)	Participants reported that family would more readily accept their trans identities as valid if they identified as binary trans rather than nonbinary trans, which was viewed as an “invalid” identity.	-	-	-	-	-	-
Johnson, LeBlanc, Sterzing, Deadorff, Antin, Bockting (2020)	Participants reported perceived adverse social consequences related to rejecting parental behaviors, such as cutting off ties from parents and extended families, as well as financial and housing instability. Some participants reported that their perceived lack of parental support resulted in financial and housing instability.	Participants shared how distressful rejecting parental behaviors were psychologically painful, with a majority of participants reporting that one or both parents reacted negatively during their initial gender identity disclosure. Some reported parents who simultaneously exhibited supportively and rejecting behaviors. The most common example of this was parents who affirmed their child's gender and provided emotional support but simultaneously did not allow their child to access gender-affirming medical services.	Multiple participants shared their experiences of living with multiple systems of oppression. Others shared how experiencing homophobia or transphobia from people of the same racial or ethnic group compounded internalized feelings of low-self worth when dealing with racism and transphobia.	Majority of participants reported that parental reactions involved harassment, transphobic and homophobic comments in their presence, some reporting that this behavior extended into public interactions, such as attempting to out them in public. Some participants reported that instead of offering empathy, their parents would ridicule or criticize them. Some participants shared that parents restricted their instrumental support after learning of their gender identity.	Participants consistently shared how distressing rejecting parental behaviors were on them psychologically. One participant shared that his mother's rejecting behaviors caused him to internalize negative feelings about himself. Participants whose parents exhibited mostly rejecting behaviors reported that they believed that feeling rejected by their parents exacerbated their own mental health problems.	Some participants reported having parents who immediately accepted their gender identity and made sincere efforts to affirm it during their child's initial disclosure. These parents responded with curiosity and a lack of judgment, and communicated their intentions to be supportive, even if they did not have prior knowledge about trans issues.	Six Narratives were presented: (a) non affirmation, (b) harassment, (c) empathetic failures, (d) daily activity restrictions, (e) instrumental support restrictions, and (f) blocking access to gender affirming medical procedures. Participants' narratives also revealed six types of supportive parental behaviors related to their gender identity: (a) identity affirmation, (b) self-education, (c) emotional support, (d) advocacy, (e) instrumental support, and (f) assistance obtaining gender-affirming medical care.

Jones, Smith, Ward, Dixon, Hillier, Mitchell (2016)	-	One participant reported staying silent about gender identity to avoid affecting their mom's career: 'I was at a Christian school and my mum worked there as a teacher. I had this fear that if I told one of my friends my secret, it would cause my mother to lose her job'.	-	-	Participants also reported family rejection and (verbal and physical) abuse to be a common experience for these students	-	-
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## APPENDIX K

### Romantic Related Experiences Evidence Table

Doc Info	Romantic Related Experiences			Noted Themes: Key Outcome/Results
Author s and Year	Romantic Experiences (General)	Disclosure of identity to partner (outcome, process, shifts in dynamic)	Partner Acceptance/ Rejection	Romantic Relationship(s) related themes
Barbee and Schrock (2019)	Participants used nonbinary- based sexual identity labels and sometimes encouraged partners to do the same. Also, because of a partner's sexual identity, over half exclusively had or sought out relationships with nonbinary or trans people.	Participants sometimes capitulated to binary discourse when seeking social pleasures. Because sexual acts typically involve deploying a unclothed sexually dimorphic body culturally coded as a binary gender identity, many sought nonbinary partners.	Because a straight or gay identity positioned not only oneself but one's partner as binarily gendered, they refuted binary-based sexual definitions and sought partners who did the same.	1. Seeking out romantic relationships with other nonbinary or binary-identified trans people so their partners sexual identity does not implicate themselves as binary
Conlin et al. (2019)	In-person friends and romantic partners were also common sources of support for participants.	-	-	-
Pulice-Farrow , Brown , and Galupo (2017)	40.8% of all participants in this sample acknowledged any sort of microaggression from a romantic partner, such as resistance to using correct pronouns or identity labels.	Participants' responses focused on their partner's unwillingness to let go of a specific sexual orientation label, minimizing, ignoring, or dismissing their gender identity. Participants described other microaggressions that minimized their own identity while centering on their partner's identity, for example centering their partner's cisgender identity in order to maintain the status quo and not disrupt the dynamics of their romantic relationship	Participants experienced their partners using incorrect language for body parts or making their preferences based on body parts explicit. These types of microaggressions typically left the participant feeling "dysphoric," "deeply uncomfortable," "demeaned," and less confident as a sexual partner. Participants described partners using inappropriate gendered language. Participants also described microaggressions in which their partner did not advocate for them	Theme: (1) gendering body/intimacy; (2) gendered preferences/roles. The gender binary affected aspects of relationships, ranging from expectations during sex to the experience of gender role behavior within the relationship. Microaggressions affected how individuals navigated gender identity. Theme: Participants described microaggressions that revealed a distinction in how partners negotiated their gender identity in public/private spaces.
Galupo , Pulice-Farrow , Clements, & Morris , 2018	Participants reported that their romantic partners often fulfill additional social support roles without traditional support from family. Participants described feeling affirmed by their partners' efforts to actively learn about nonbinary identities and defend them through correction or allyship.	Partners communicated to nonbinary individuals the primacy of their identities - allowing for authenticity to be central and the active process of identity formation to be expressed through dress or language. For participants, the avoidance of unwanted language was affirming. Participants described that some of the hurt experienced with microaggressions was mitigated with their partner's acknowledgment and this served to, in turn, validate their identity.	Participants named identity affirmation experiences as partner switching language, understanding of the nuanced negotiation of nonbinary identities, how small micro affirmations are powerfully received by TGNC persons. Participants noted that micro affirmations validated worthiness, affirmed TGNC identity, and offered reassurance to TGNC persons that a nonbinary identity does not exempt them from love.	Four sub-themes were present: (1) acknowledges real identity; (2) validates worthiness; (3) avoiding unwanted language; and (4) acknowledges microaggressions. Participants felt affirmed through their partners' active endorsements of their gender identity, and intentional use of language or behaviors in order to affirm participants' nonbinary identity.
Goldberg et al., (2018)	-	Both cisgender friends and partners were named as supports, serving as "sounding board[s]"	-	-

APPENDIX L

Social and Community Related Experiences Table

Doc info	Social and Community Related Experiences							Noted Themes: Key Outcome/ Results
Authors and Year	Community Acceptance/ Rejection	Identification and Experience with building community belonging	Shifts in social dynamics	Interpersonal conflict	Acceptance/ Rejection by peers	Chosen family	Micro-aggressions	Interpersonal Relationship related themes
Austin, Craig, Navega, McInroy 2020	Rejection: Specific minority stressors experienced among trans youth such as emotional, verbal, and physical rejection from family, peers, and other important individuals in their community network. Acceptance: Social support, a sense of belonging, and ability to live authentically are key sources of resilience among TGNC persons	Participants reported using online spaces to escape victimization. Participants who experienced their own healing through positive online interactions had a desire to give back to other TGNC persons. TGNC Narratives recounted feelings of disconnection in their offline worlds that contrasted sharply with the sense of belonging and connection they experienced online.	As participants experienced their own healing and growth through positive online interactions, they had a deep desire to give back to others in similar situations	One participant described experiencing physical harassment and bullying because they don't define themselves with a gender.	Participants described feeling rejected and marginalized in non-affirming spaces, and a low sense of belonging. Researchers spoke about the strong predictor of suicidal ideation due to thwarted belongingness.	Participants describe escaping from stigma and rejection in their non-affirming homes through online spaces. Participants described online relationships /spaces with words like "family" and "home" and "community."	Some participants were escaping from the rejection and marginalization in their own non-affirming homes, often describing their online relationships and spaces with words like "family," "home," and "community."	1. Experiencing belonging 2. Giving Back
Barbee and Schrock (2019)	Some experienced marginalization in presumably LGBTQ-friendly spaces.	Participants also ungendered social selves by using and compelling others to use discourse that challenged gender binarism	All participants emphasized that it was emotionally exhausting to live as non-binary in a binary world.	Encouraging others to refer to them via gender-neutral pronouns, which often elicited worse reactions than changing names.	Neutralizing gendered names helped signify ungendered social selves and create opportunities to educate others about their nonbinary identities.	participants typically felt that LGBT communities were more affirming than their families of origin.	Interviewees faced direct policing that ranged from curious questioning to harassment, and often deferred to being binarily gendered due to limited emotional energy and threats of violence.	Participants were cognizant of how their bodily features could be read as binary and often crafted their appearance with the aim of obfuscating others' gender determinations.
Braford, Rider, Cat	The phrase "even within trans communities" demonstrates the ways that transnormative	Participants described divergent experiences within the trans community, ranging from warmth and solidarity to conflict	Participants described actively altering their linguistic self-	Participants reported that stress of being misunderstood had adverse	Participants described the manifestations of cisgenderis	Co-constructing genderqueer identities in the context of master	Participants noted coping styles such as positive self talk or	Cisgenderism was experienced within and outside of



Alpa, Morrow, Berg, Spencer, & McGuire (2019)	social pressures—which may be internalized and reinforced within the transgender community.	and aversion.	presentation based on their current environment in order to be perceived as legitimate or valid.	consequences for their subjective well-being, resulting in self-hate and self-harming behavior.	m within interpersonal contexts, such as educating or correcting others who had limited knowledge about TGNC persons.	narratives involve participants in reorienting their relationships to language and creating new language when necessary.	explicating connections between past and present selves; participants were actively engaged in co-constructing new narratives applicable to GQ identities.	the Transgender community, often reflecting rhetoric that TGNC persons are not "trans enough"
Conlin, Douglas, Larson-Konar, Gluck, Fieme, & Heesacker (2019)	1. Participants noted that their sexual orientation was more accepted than their gender identity, and noted concerns like exclusion, harassment when expressing gender identity, as well as the feeling of being invisible, especially with respect to perceived visibility in general society.	1. Some participants described feeling this [invisible] way even within typically inclusive spaces such as feminist, LGB, and transgender communities, and the added stressors of finding their own micro-communities of understanding and acceptance. Participants reported finding shared support in online communities like Tumblr and Reddit, and support specifically from trans-inclusive groups	Participants noted how experiencing microaggressions can stoke fear of future harassment and negatively impact one's career, social life, and health.	One participant noted the frequency with which they are misgendered and the difficulty in constantly correcting others. Participants also discussed more overt forms of discrimination like being asked about their genitals by almost strangers.	In-person friends and romantic partners were also common sources of support for participants.	Participants reported primary sources of social support to come from either (a) online communities or (b) close friends or romantic partners.	Participants reported a unique form of invisibility in the subtle biases revealed through misgendering. Perceived invisibility and discrimination led many participants to experience difficulties expressing their gender identities openly	One theme was feeling like their nonbinary identity was invisible and lack of awareness of nonbinary identities.
Craig, et al., (2021).	-	Participants reported learning from other TGNC persons in online communities which cultivated connections, promoting feelings of affirmation and comfort with their intersecting identities.	-	-	-	-	Participants described discrimination in many forms. Racism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia	-
Farmer, Robbins, Keith, and Mabry (2020)	Participants described how pervasively their appearance was evaluated by the CCU. Participants noted feeling evaluated by their adherence to gender norms, specifically female gender norms.	-	-	-	-	-	Participants reported trans bias as misuse of or disregard for pronouns, persistent use of deadname by faculty or staff, and gender binary assumptions in residence life.	-

Fiani and Han, 2019	Participants cited interpersonal challenges, one of which was exclusion from binary TGNC communities	Non-binary participants placed much greater emphasis on the importance and necessity of community.	One participant described a person in their life who said she was accepting of their nonbinary identity but they noticed a shift in the person's voice, speech and body language that communicates a lack of acceptance.	Participants described implicit forms of oppression (e.g., dehumanized or exoticized).	Others imposing identity on the participants for example 'you're not a boy, you're a girl'	Social support included peers, family, larger communities, and partners. Social support provided role models and sources of information to support gender exploration.	Participants described overt verbal, physical, and sexual discrimination. Experiencing fetishization was common in non-binary participants.	1. Other-imposed identity, 2. exclusion from binary TGNC communities 3. others tolerating but not accepting, 4. challenges in relationships with partners
Goldberg and Kuvshina (2018)	Acceptance: Select cisgender people were also described as important sources of support and affirmation as participants explored their gender identity. Rejection: some students articulated tensions within TGNC subcommunities, whereby they perceived pressure to "do" trans "appropriately". Participants shared themes of having to prove their transness	Several participants relayed stories of the "sharing economy" that existed online by, and for the benefit of, trans individuals; for example, used binders were offered up to those who could not afford one. Participants noted the reality that LGBTQ groups and spaces, such as those on campus, were mostly made up of sexual minorities rather than gender minorities	Participants found that in expressing their gender identities, they encountered resistance, misrecognition, and invisibility, even from people who claimed to be progressive and to accept trans (binary) people. Participants interpreted such responses in the context of dominant metanarratives regarding trans identities: suggesting that their identities were unauthentic.	Participants espoused complex dynamic gender identities, which sometimes prompted them to indirectly or directly try to interrupt and complicate cisgender discourse.	Acceptance: Friends in both high school and college were often powerful models of gender possibilities — particularly nonbinary-identified friends, who inspired participants to realize what was possible regarding their gender expression.	TGNC friends, especially friends who were nonbinary trans, were regarded as key sources of support and identity affirmation. Select cisgender people were also considered important sources of support and affirmation as participants explored their gender identity.	Participants encountered people online who, for example, appeared to be advocates and information bearers (e.g., they were trans) but were ignorant of or held negative views of nonbinary trans people. Participants balanced their desire to be correctly gendered by others with a desire for privacy.	Themes: Tensions and complexities within and across LGBTQ spaces.
Hall & DeLaney (2021)	Participants reported notable distress due to lack of validation and acceptance from others within the trans community. Many felt pressured to express their gender identities according to the restrictive expectations of	Some expressed feeling alienated from the LGBTQ+ community based on their gender identities, while others focused on the exclusionary behaviors of other TGE people. Participants called for "more non-binary acceptance from the greater trans community."	-	-	-	-	-	-

	their peers.							
Jon es, Smi th, War d, Dix on, Hill ier, Mit chel l (20 16)	-	-	-	Gender based hate often occurred in school settings. 90% of participants who experienced physical abuse thought about suicide.	-	-	Participant Quote: "The school principal said he will never call me a male or use male pronouns until I have my gender reassignmen t therapy done."	-
Stac how iak (20 17)	All participants described childhoods and adulthoods at both home and school filled with gender policing and constant reminders that it is 'a serious offense to violate gender norms'	-	Participants reported rupturing the hegemonic notion of gender to create different modes of non- normative thinking, like queering gender norms through dress	-	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX M

Work and School Related Experiences Table

Document Info	Work and School Related Experiences								Noted Themes: Key Outcome Results
Authors and Year	Discrimination and/or Harassment	Sense of Safety with identity disclosure/expression	Disclosing identity to co-workers	Disclosing identity to classmates/professors	Acceptance of Identity at Work/ School	Rejection of Identity at Work/ School	Non-binary experiences at school	Non-binary experiences at work	School/Work related themes
Austin et al., (2020)	Participants felt that gender segregation (such as lining up in rows of boys and girls) was too often applied at school.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barbee and Schrock (2019)	Participants discussed presenting as binary at work in ways that did not “match” their bodies, reporting that presenting as binary evoked more respect at work.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Farmer, Robins, Keith, and Mabry (2020)	Participants acknowledged an unsupportive, hostile campus climate manifesting in harmful administrative policies, negative staff attitudes and social interactions and gender-based microaggressions that occurred in person and through social media. Participants also shared experiences of faculty, staff, or students who would	Students reported feeling unsafe in expressing their gender identity authentically in school settings.	Participants perceived that administrators adhere to the traditions and history of the institution, with no indication of openness toward gender diversity in the future vision of the institution.	"People at my school, including professors, will evaluate student appearances and report them to the university to ensure that they are following the transgender guidelines" Participants noted that if their gender identity fell outside of cisgender norms, gender policing and administrative actions would take place to	Many participants found their resident assistants in student housing to be the most supportive and inclusive peers regarding gender diversity.	Nonbinary students reflected that they were not acknowledged at all.	Students in these academic circumstances felt unjustly invisible in their gender identities: "As a nonbinary individual who was unable to bind, I felt like I gained unfair safety in the realm of ignorance because I was assumed female." Participants described genderist attitudes among staff,	Participants described an overall lack of awareness of gender diversity at women's colleges. Trans bias was described as manifesting in a variety of ways: misuse/disregard for pronouns, dead naming by faculty or staff, and gender binary assumption	Themes were identified: (a) expectations of conduct, roles, and appearance determined by gender binary adherence; (b) lack of awareness or understanding of gender diversity; (c) campus climate; (d) self-advocacy and resilience; (e) incongruen

	report a student to the administration if they were perceived to be transitioning to a gender other than their assigned sex at birth.			silence them.			faculty, and peers on their campuses.	s in residence life practices.	cies and mixed messages; and (f) the emotional toll and impact of genderism.
Flint, Kilgo, and Bennett (2019)	Participants' noted contradictory experiences when navigating their campus, such as feeling fairly safe when navigating their external environment, but feeling fairly unsafe when navigating campus systems.	Participants shared narratives recounting their first experiences visiting the LGBTQ+ center on campus, describing feeling reassured, confident, and validated in their identity and would be respected. Participants noted that the existence of a physical space allowed for connections, a sense of safety, and comradery that the center cultivated.	Participants shared that in the LGBTQ+ Center, staff and faculty are able to write their names on the paper leaves to tape to a tree; this serves as a way to disclose their identity to coworkers and to students.	One participant reflected on how they chose not to correct pronouns in some spaces on campus where they are involved. Students' expression of their gender became a negotiation between internal conceptions of self and external spaces, environments, and forces.	One participant described a construction paper tree that takes up a wall of the LGBTQ+ Center.. Students, faculty, and staff have written their names on the leaves, taping them to the branches to create a visible and colorful network of layered and interconnected chosen family and kin.	One participant shared a story of being heckled and harassed while walking down the fraternity row on campus.	Participants recounted there is an embodied and visceral negotiation to constructing identity as nonbinary students on campus in the south. This construction is specific and particular to the context of the Southeastern United States.	Thinking beyond the checklist of best practices and moving toward a reimagining of spaces in higher education to consider the layered plurality of space.	Threaded through these narratives is the importance of claiming and taking up space, whether through the physicality of a LGBTQ+ resource center, through gender expression, or through kinship networks formed with other students.
Golberg and Kuvshin (2018)	Microaggressions in College: Participants reported that professors and staff were described as asking for pronouns – but their follow up (in terms of pronoun use) was inadequate and sometimes insensitive.	Participants reported that college classes sometimes offered valuable knowledge and conceptual tools for understanding their gender identities and gender more broadly. Participants spoke to weigh the tradeoffs of speaking up versus staying silent.	Participants spoke about weighing the tradeoffs of speaking up versus staying silent. Expressing their gender authentically meant potentially being behind, hypervisible and vulnerable, which posed challenges to their well-being	-	Participants reported that college offered a space where they could try on different labels and pronouns with less judgment (in contrast to family). Friends in both high school and college were often powerful models of gender possibilities—particularly nonbinary-identified friends, who inspired participants.	Openness about their birth names was recognized by group members as potentially inviting insensitive comments from cisgender peers.	For nonbinary trans college students, the challenges of expressing their identities via names and pronouns was especially salient within the university system. Challenges such as lack of clarity on name changing processes as well as altering documents were noted amongst	Participants recommended the recruitment, hiring, and retention of openly nonbinary trans faculty, administrators, and staff, who could serve as important models and supports.	College in particular had enabled our participants to actively explore their gender identities (e.g., via exposure contact with other TGNC people), thus illustrating the dynamic relationship between identity and context/environment

							TGNC students.		
Golberg, Kuvana, & Dickey (2018)	Most students indicated concerns about physical/emotional safety affected how they presented their gender on campus. Among the participants who expressed safety concerns, many shared that they were worried that their trans status might invite rejection, ridicule, and possibly violence-the likelihood of which they felt was enhanced, in some cases, by the religious/political conservatism of their graduate institution, or, the region in which it was located. nonbinary students more often provided examples of misgendering and negative treatment.	Four of these 15 students, all of whom were AFAB, asserted their sense that gender nonconformity was more acceptable among persons assigned female at birth, and, thus, they presented in a more masculine manner without safety concerns. An additional three participants described their campuses as progressive and "LGBTQ-friendly," which contributed to a sense of safety whereby they did not feel the need to modify their gender expression or presentation. Finally, three students noted that they "dressed however [they] want[ed]," despite feeling "not fully comfortable because of others' judgment."	Three participants noted that had it not been for their advisor's support and affirmation of their trans identity, they may not have "survived" the stress of graduate school.	Students were sometimes uncomfortable correcting others or asking them to use gender-neutral pronouns and thus stayed silent, relying on concealment as a strategy for survival. One participant shared that their dissertation advisor, who is aware of their gender identity, exclusively refers to the participant using the wrong pronouns. They stated that this was upsetting and frustrating, but they have not corrected her yet because they don't feel comfortable doing so because of the culture within their department.	Participants described positive experiences with advisors and supervisors, even though these faculty were not necessarily highly aware of TGNC issues or identities and were described as "kind and respectful" in regard to their trans identities. Participants voiced appreciation for their advisors, who tended to "apologize" or "correct themselves" if they accidentally misgendered them, and who demonstrated a commitment to learning and "doing better."	Participants described patterns of misgendering and microaggressions from faculty and staff, and phrases such as "You go girl" despite knowledge of the students' chosen pronouns.	Nonbinary students reported greater frequencies of misgendering: 18.5% of binary students said this happened sometimes or often compared to 76.6% of nonbinary students. As an agender and nonbinary identified student noted, "Because I am nonbinary, it is impossible for them to gender me correctly unless I have informed them of my gender and/or pronouns."	Participants were aware of existing power differentials and thus were often "scared" to address instances of misgendering. Ten participants, described positive experiences with advisors and supervisors, whereby they felt that even though these faculty were not highly aware of TGNC issues or identities, they had made a strong effort to learn from and respond to them, and were described as "kind and respectful" in regard to their trans identities.	Themes of misgendering, power differentials, and fear of retribution in higher education were noted in the narratives of TGNC students. Themes focused on participants' experiences with faculty, staff, and other students attending to both blatant and subtle instances of cisnormative practices and language, and also attended to participants' emotional responses to trans negative treatment.
Jones, Smith, Ward, Dixon, Hillier, Mitchell	TGNC participants reported significantly more behaviors related to self-harm and attempt suicide. Participants felt that gender segregation was too often	Participants reported that there was a lack of structural support and inclusion in sexuality and puberty education in most transgender and gender	One participant spoke about maintaining silence about her gender identity to avoid affecting a family member's career. Her	Just under one-tenth of transgender and gender diverse students surveyed had formally changed their gender on their school records. About half of	Younger survey participants, 14-17 year-old, were more likely to have been provided with trans-inclusive counseling at school.	25% of the survey participants reported that they avoided their schools because they cannot conform to the gender stereotypes dominant	Two-thirds of the participants rated their schools' education on gender and sexual orientation as mostly inappropriate. Students at Christian	-	-

(2016)	applied at their school (e.g., changing rooms and toilets). Students whose teachers' use of pronouns, name or identity, was perceived as 'mostly inappropriate', experienced increased abuse from peers and suffered poorer educational outcomes compared to those whose teachers used appropriate language.	diverse students' experiences, and other deficiencies which may perhaps be better addressed by holistically rethinking how schools operate in relation to gender diversity both structurally and in the curriculum.	mom was a teacher at the Christian school she attended and she feared that her coming out would cause her mother to lose her job.	the group felt that changing their gender on their school record was a key part of their educational experience.		within these contexts, including 50% of those in Christian schools. Participants reported receiving no teacher support were more likely to leave school, and, twice as likely to hide at lunch.	schools were most likely to indicate that their sexuality education was mostly inappropriate; none found it mostly appropriate. In relation to puberty education, over half of the participants' reported provisions were mostly inappropriate.		
Parado (2019)	Respondents in the gender nonbinary group also reported feeling constrained by gender norms in the workplace.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ullman, J. (2020).	Participants reported verbal, physical, psychological and employment-related discrimination as perpetrated by students, teaching colleagues, executive staff members and the parent community	Participants spoke about their lack of access to safe, suitable facilities, including – but not limited to – toilet facilities.	Of the 44 gender diverse survey participants, 32 identified as "out" in their school communities, 16 only to colleagues.	-	20 participants reported not experiencing discrimination	TGE teachers spoke of the deeply personal and regulatory nature of their experiences of workplace discrimination, including intentional misgendering by colleagues, students, and mocking of their physical appearance	One participant noted that her school had the resources for inclusivity work however they weren't using any of those resources for LGBT inclusivity.	Several participants felt as if their visibility as gender diverse had impacted employment opportunities, career progression, and general participation in school community life.	1. Lack of policies in place surrounding gender diversity and inclusivity 2. discrimination and harassment 3. larger political and sociocultural climate impacting gender diverse educators experiences in the workplace

Wolff, Kay, Himes, & Alquijay (2017)	TGNC students experience disproportionately high rates of verbal, physical, and sexual harassment and threats of violence on college campuses. Participants reported a contrast between policies toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual students and TGNC students.	Participants did not regret keeping their gender identities concealed in college, noting it would not have been safe for them to out themselves due to restrictive and highly rejecting environments toward TGNC issues.	One participant reported having been intentionally misgendered by his work study supervisor.	Participants described their appreciation for supportive professors and noted that faculty support was very explicit via written correspondence or being present at GSA/QSA meetings.	Three participants reported that they relied on on-campus affirmative groups which offered mentorship from older students, social support, and information about sexuality and gender.	Participants' descriptions of their campus environment suggested a much more explicit means of silencing TGNC students	Several participants stated that they did not know any other TGNC person in college, feeling largely devalued and dehumanized on the basis of their gender identities at non-affirming CCUs.	Participants reported rejection on campus on a more global scale after affirming faculty and staff received adverse consequences for supporting TGE students	1. invisibility of TGNC identities 2. Rejection of TGNC Expression and Identities 3. Ambivalence and Psychological Conflict 4. Resilience and Campus Support Systems
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APPENDIX N

Therapeutic Related Experiences Evidence Table

Doc ume nt Info	Psychotherapeutic Experiences									Noted Themes: Key Outcome/ Results	
	Aut hors and Yea r	Therapeutic Alliance/ Rapport (General)	Positive psychotherapeutic experiences	Negative psychotherapeutic experiences	Identity Disclosure to therapist	Identity exploration with therapist	Affirmative v. Non affirmative treatment experiences	Exp w/ dx	Mental Health Exp		Ove r iden tifi catio n min imi zatio n
Aus tin, et al. 202 0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A vast number of responses described the life-saving nature of online experiences	-	-
Con lin, et al. (20 19)	Participants noted the importance of counselors' knowledge of gender identity to feel safe.	Participants reported that support of their non- binary identities resulted in positive experiences and led to future seeking of MH treatment.	Some participants expressed negative experiences in counseling because their counselor inappropriately connected gender identity to unrelated childhood trauma	-	-	Many participants found tremendous support through counseling, others reported facing ignorance, bias and assumption making among counselors.	-	Among participants, the consensus is that when undergone with humility and respect, counseling can play a pivotal and supportive role in the lives of nonbinary individuals.	-	-	
Far mer , Rob bins , Keit h, and Ma bry (20 20)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Participants described a range of emotional impacts of genderism, including depression, anxiety, worry, stress, angst, isolation, rejection, invisibility, disconnection, trouble sleeping, feeling unsure of oneself, and overarching feelings of not belonging.	-	-	

Fiani and Han (2019)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	There is a significant lack of understanding regarding TGNC people among professionals and lay society
Hall and DeLaney (2021)	Participants viewed trust, humor, and emotional safety as crucial to building therapy alliances. Equitable therapeutic relationships served to offset the power dynamics. Participants preferred providers who had prior experience with the TGE population, noting the process of educating people to be exhausting.	Most participants who reported positive experiences described instances in which their counselors appreciated their subjective experiences, whereas those who spoke negatively of providers described encounters with stereotypes and discriminatory behavior. Positive experiences stood out to respondents because they were the exception rather than the norm	Participants shared experiences of provider's dismissive behavior, and discrimination or exclusion based on sobriety, disability, language, race, and other identity and lifestyle characteristics.	Participants often felt the need to protect themselves against challenges, ranging from microaggressions and gatekeeping to assaults on their identities	Some felt that processing their emotions with their counselors heightened their self-awareness and contributed to their personal growth beyond the immediate therapeutic context	Many participants outlined suggestions for affirmative care such as avoiding unnecessary conversations about surgeries and acceptance of identity, as well as practicing acceptance and validation which were noted as especially crucial to participants' healing processes in the aftermath of traumatic events.	-	Participants were more willing to express themselves when people with whom they interacted understood their experiences and validated the challenges they faced. Participants stressed the need to ensure that institutions and mental health providers were reasonably informed about TGE issues.	-	Five themes: (a) emotional trust and safety, (b) environmental and physical safety, (c) choice and collaboration, (d) empowerment, and (e) cultural and gender issues
Jones, et al. (2016)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Participants who attended government schools were more likely to use counseling provision as compared to Christian schools.	-	-
Losy and O'Connor (2018)	-	-	Discomfort and guilt were observed upon unintentionally using incorrect pronouns in supervision.	-	-	-	-	-	-	Themes of trust and mistrust were reflected in the TGNC participant narratives of seeking MH services.