LEARNING TO THRIVE IN A BINARY WORLD:

UNDERSTANDING THE GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF NONBINARY

INDIVIDUALS AND WAYS TO BOLSTER WELLBEING

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is a love letter celebrating my community, specifically the individuals who shared their histories, their resilience, their love, and their hope. Those interested in this project gave what they could at the time, even if the best choice was to withdraw. I see you, I celebrate you, and I am honored to have curated your experiences in this dissertation. In my role, I have experienced a range of emotions, especially joy, gender affirmation, and love. Each of you has moved me. When I began this journey, I had no idea what special places you would occupy in my heart. You are all partners with me in this eminent achievement of my education and career. For this, no words can fully convey my appreciation for you. Thank you for your trust and vulnerability – they are invaluable and unforgettable.

This dissertation is for anyone who is nonbinary, who is exploring their gender, or who loves someone who is nonbinary. I dedicate this dissertation to the seventeen remarkable participant researchers:

Boots, Catkin, Cory, Dylan, E., Gabi, H.G., Jynx, Kai, Kristy, Nat, Noel, Rowan, Sky, Timothy, Tristan, and one who preferred to simply be referred to by a number (PR #1).

I promise to continue working towards mutual liberation and wellbeing – through empowering nonbinary individuals, bringing greater awareness about our community, and enlisting others to help create meaningful change to reduce corrosive factors and increase promotive factors of our wellbeing.

Love, Respect, & Solidarity,

Killian

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This has been a long journey with many travel companions and guides. I want to take a moment to challenge the misconception that collaboration or anything other than solo work lessens the individual efforts or rigor of the final product. All too often, we perpetuate this idea that is situated within unnecessary individualism and an unhelpful hierarchy of accomplishments. That being said, my support network has made the arduous process of earning a Ph.D. to be more manageable and enjoyable. Moreso, they have challenged me to be a better researcher, teacher, colleague, and overall person. I want to thank the primary contributors to my work, including my dissertation committee, mentors, colleagues, trans and nonbinary communities, and the Indianapolis community. Thank you, and I look forward to continuing to grow this culture of mentorship.

Dissertation Committee

Several folx merit individual mention, starting with my dissertation committee members, who have been a source of wisdom and support despite hectic points in their career, including acclimation to a new university, advancements to administration, large grant-funded projects, and plans for their legacy after a long and meaningfully career. All the while, they created time to support my work.

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lesson plans. It is also worth noting that you were an excellent director while I was in the master's program and teaching during the doctoral program.

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Additional Mentors

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I am gifted with a fantastic community of collaborators who mutually push each other and broaden our understanding. You all inspire me, and I will never run out of ideas. So much so, I have to accept that we cannot conduct all the outstanding studies and write all the meaningful manuscripts that we have conceived.

Keith Miller. Thank you for assisting me in completing the initial codebook for this study. I find great joy in our discussions that beautifully blend theory, research, policy, community organizing (social work practice), personal wellbeing, and systemic change for a more progressive world.

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Bill Kinney (sibling). You have always been a passive supporter of me, playfully joking but never judging. I am proud to have you as my brother, a warm-hearted and compassionate sibling.

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My Indianapolis Communities

As I reflect on my wellbeing as a fully-present nonbinary person, the local mutual aid and LGBTQ groups have played a central part in being grounded and connected to change. The Indianapolis mutual aid/harm reduction and queer groups I want to acknowledge and thank include: Indy10, Indy Street Medics, The Never Alone Project (Jes and Josh Cochran), and Queering Indy. The year 2020 was challenging for many reasons. Working alongside the great people in these organizations and community groups created opportunities to channel my feelings and energy in a meaningful way so that I could simultaneously be present and complete this dissertation during one of the most difficult years.

Trans and Nonbinary Community

I am incredibly thankful for everyone in the trans and nonbinary communities across the Midwest, especially those who reached out to collaborate on this study. I also

want to thank the community organizations that shared my recruitment flyers and spread the excitement about the study. Additionally, all the participants in my previous studies have contributed to the dissertation. The trans and nonbinary folx in my life enrich my experiences and fuel my work. This dissertation is the culmination of countless musing about gendered experiences and ways to celebrate trans and nonbinary lives.

Finally…I am thankful for you, the reader, who has taken time to read this beast of a dissertation. For my gender diverse readers, I hope you find an abundance of affirmation. I hope everyone finds this work broadens your views, sparks critical consciousness, and inspires you to act.

Let's commit to creating a more genderfull world!

PREFACE

Transgender people are Gods and Goddesses [and deities]. We walk this earth in our most vulnerable truth. We share our perspectives and challenge the unholy patriarchy. We have the capability to heal and make people think critically about gender, expression, roles, stereotypes, love, and sex. Through our existence of healing and power, we are criticized and often suffer violence…

Throughout western history, in our culture, our media has shared commentary on transgender bodies that is comical, sexist, embarrassing and vile. I see these comments made by people who fear. There is a fear to live outside personal borders of comfort and creation that do not give people the tools to live. Thus, causing the fear to live. Through this oppression and violence towards transgender bodies, shame has surrounded those who have desired to live and love with transgender people. This shame causes more violence and ignorance.

Although there is shame surrounding people who live and love with trans people, there are those brave enough to stand in their skin and have no fear to live. When you're transgender and find love, you can really see how love is revolutionary. You see how your truth is transformative for others and restorative towards creating a culture of acceptance, but mostly love. This is how we, Gods and Goddesses [and deities], change the world. We share our truth with the world to restore culture, connection, and rid the world of violence against people – through our voices, our expression, our bodies, and our love. (Thomas[1], 2019, p. 3)

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[1] Sylvia Thomas (she/her) is an American Poet and trans activist who has performed Nationally and Internationally. This excerpt is from the introduction to her self-published book titled *Divine* (contact the author at www.patreon.com/sheissylvia). I met Sylvia through the community and am proud to call her my friend. I knew I wanted to include her work in my dissertation after seeing her perform for the IUPUI Harvey Milk Dinner. You can see her perform at the upcoming World Pride 2021 (copenhagen2021.com).

M. Killian Kinney

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Traditionally, gender has been viewed through an essentialist lens with fixed biology-based traits or polarized gender norms between women and men. As awareness of gender diversity grows, increasingly more people identify as nonbinary – or not exclusively a man or woman. Despite a growing literature on the experiences of binary transgender individuals, little has been explored regarding experiences unique to nonbinary individuals. The research that does include nonbinary individuals focuses primarily on adverse risks and outcomes. As such, a dearth of empirical research exists to understand the unique experiences of nonbinary people and how they relate to wellbeing. A qualitative participatory action study using PhotoVoice was conducted virtually to address the identified gaps in the literature on nonbinary individuals concerning gendered experiences and wellbeing. Prevailing theories of wellbeing informed the study along with minority stress theory and the resilience literature to account for environmental factors of oppression and individual and community resilience. A sample of 17 nonbinary adults in the Midwestern United States was recruited using convenience sampling and participated in online group discussions and individual interviews. The findings were reported in sections corresponding with the three study aims: 1) Explore core dimensions of wellbeing as defined by nonbinary individuals, 2) Identify promotive and corrosive factors of that wellbeing, and 3) Provide recommendations to bolster nonbinary wellbeing. The findings provided a thorough description of how nonbinary individuals

perceive their wellbeing concerning their gender and as part of a marginalized

population. Thematic analysis identified nine wellbeing themes for how participants

conceptualized their wellbeing (e.g., *Exploring gender identity and expression*, *Being

connected to community*, etc.), seven themes of promotive and corrosive factors of

wellbeing (e.g., *Positive, accurate, and nuanced representation*, *Coping skills to manage

minority stressors*, etc.), and three themes of recommendations (e.g., *personal*,

interpersonal, and *professional*) with eighteen strategies to bolster wellbeing among

nonbinary individuals and communities. The significance of the findings to social work

was discussed, including practice application and advocacy. This study contributes to

PhotoVoice methodology, wellbeing literature, and trans literature.

<div align="right">Bryan G. Victor, Ph.D., MSW, Chair</div>

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFAB – Assigned female at birth

AMAB – Assigned male at birth

ASAB – Assigned sex at birth. The *sex* given to a child at birth, most often based on the

    child's external anatomy.

Enby – A shortened version or alternative to nonbinary.

Folx – A queer reuse of the word folks.

LGBTQ – An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.

SNCGE – Socially nonconforming gender expression

Trans – Prefix or adjective used as an abbreviation for transgender**.**

WPATH – World Professional Association for Transgender Health

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Be all that you can be! Thrive! Flourish!...It's time to start a new
conversation; a conversation that focuses on the positive stories of our
lives. These positive narratives can help us meet life's challenges, grow
through all of our experiences, and enhance our sense of well-being."
(Riggle & Rostosky, 2012, p. 98)

Gender is an ever-evolving social construct that impacts all of our lives, whether

through affirmation, invalidation, or erasure. Traditionally, gender has been viewed

through an essentialist lens with fixed biology-based traits or polarized gender norms

between women and men. More recently, awareness of the diversity within gender has

been growing (Aulette & Wittner, 2015). In addition to the social constructions of gender

and gender norms, gender identity is the internal sense of self (Brown & Burill, 2018),

which can be communicated by presentation (e.g., clothing, accessories, mannerisms) and

interactions with others through their gender expression (Moradi et al., 2009). When a

person's social presentation does not reflect their gender, transitioning by social (e.g.,

name, pronouns, hair, and clothing) and/or medical interventions (e.g., surgery, hormone

therapy) can help them develop an affirming gender expression.

Gender expectations and norms are embedded in society and imposed on their

citizens; the experiences that are socially regulated according to gender expectations and

norms will be hereafter referred to as *gendered experiences*. That is, roles (e.g.

professional careers, sports) and presentations (e.g., clothing, make-up, hair style) are

socially ascribed as for men or women. For example, roles stereotypically considered for

men include medical doctor, pilot, STEM scientist (science, technology, engineering, and

mathematics) and correspondingly for women include nurse, stewardess, and social fields

(sociology, social work, etc.). All experiences are gendered experiences, yet when

functioning from within social expectations and norms (i.e., *staying in your lane*[2]), the

gendered element of experiences may not be noticed. Conversely, for those who

transgress these gender norms and expectations (i.e., *steps out of their lane*), like trans

and nonbinary individuals, they are made aware of their gender through resistance and

push-back. For example, women are greatly underrepresented in STEM sciences and

women who choose to pursue STEM often encounter an unwelcoming academic

environment (Ramsey et al., 2013) as well as face being outnumbered by men and

negative stereotypes about women in the field (Van Veelen et al. 2019). Worthen (2014)

argued that reducing homophobia would contribute to a greater diversity of gendered

experiences. Building on this, it could be argued that reducing transphobia could also

contribute to the greater inclusion of expansive gendered experiences. For nonbinary

individuals whose gender identity and expression do not align with binary gender norms,

the current sociopolitical environment is problematic – disaffirming, excluding, and

perpetuating harm to nonbinary individuals.

Determining the number of individuals that identify as nonbinary is difficult given

that researchers often combine binary transgender and nonbinary people together in a

broad "transgender" category. Cruz (2014) cautions that important differences of

experiences may be obscured when aggregating groups such as this. Indeed, Vincent

(2016), raises concerns that the generalized label of transgender could privilege binary

transgender identities while creating erasure for nonbinary gender identities as well as

those with intersectional identities of race and ethnicity. According to current national

estimates, between 0.6% and 5.0% of adults in the United States claim a gender identity

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[2] The colloquial language of staying in your lane and similar were rooted in participant researcher's
language and expression of social pressure to conform to binary norms.

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within this broad transgender category (Herman et al., 2017; Transgender Law and Policy Institute, n.d.). Within transgender and nonbinary studies that group all non-cisgender participants together, including large national studies, up to 40% of participants reported a nonbinary gender identity (Grossman et al., 2016; Harrison et al., 2012; James et al., 2016; Keuroghlian et al., 2015; Reisner et al., 2016).

An increasing number of individuals of all ages are identifying as nonbinary (Eisenberg et al., 2017; Herman et al., 2017; James et al., 2016; Wilson & Kastanis, 2015), defined as a gender that is not exclusively a man or woman (Moradi et al., 2009; Vincent, 2016). "Society has given us two, and only two, sets of gender rules, and those who live outside of those rules are *challenging genders"* (Brown & Burill, 2018, p. 7). Similar to binary transgender individuals (i.e., trans women, trans men), nonbinary people challenge traditional gender rules and are often categorized under the transgender umbrella. Yet, unlike binary transgender identities, nonbinary gender identities are not constrained by the dichotomy of man or woman (the gender binary) and may not be static (i.e., gender fluid) (Brown & Burill, 2018). When gender diversity becomes conceptualized more broadly (e.g., nonbinary genders), these numbers will likely increase even more (Richards et al., 2016). Much of this growth has been attributed to the emergence of language describing gender diversity and the increased availability of information and community online (Barker, 2014), as well as increased visibility and social acceptance (Flores et al., 2016).

This growing community of nonbinary individuals can lead to a richer understanding of nonbinary gendered experiences and inform ways to enhance their wellbeing. Gendered experiences are shaped both by cultural context (e.g., social norms

around gender) (Worthen, 2014) and the subjective experience of navigating one's surroundings as a particular gender (e.g., deciding which bathroom to use) (Moran & Sharpe, 2004). Just as Worthen (2014) suggested that decreasing homophobia requires more research that contextualizes gendered experiences among bisexual men and women, this study will explore the gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals in the context of wellbeing with the hope that the findings will be used to reduce transphobia and enhance nonbinary wellbeing.

Background of the Problem

The research on trans and nonbinary individuals has been overwhelmingly concerned with deficits and adverse outcomes (e.g., suicidality, depression, anxiety, low employment, murder, gender dysphoria), which centers the focus on survival and coping rather than endorsing long-term goals of resilience and wellbeing (Bradford et al., 2019; Perrin et al., 2019; Stanton et al., 2017). Researching risks and adverse outcomes has been useful to understand gendered experiences of immediate and short-term concern, such as safety and survival (e.g., Grossman et al., 2016; Smith, 2016; Wernick et al., 2017). For example, awareness of minority stress factors around bathroom usage on the daily lives of transgender and nonbinary individuals has been helpful to understand health problems (e.g., frequent urinary tract infections, restrictive eating), oppose harmful bathroom bills, and inform organizational policies around use of binary bathrooms and installation of all gender bathrooms in schools, workplaces, and public spaces (e.g., libraries, restaurants). Addressing urgent issues and unmet needs is important, however, such an approach does not advance a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing (Stanton et al., 2017). Another critique has been the absence of community-involved research with

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gender diverse populations (Withey-Rila et al., 2021). When considering long-term wellbeing, a different approach is necessary. In the face of limited information, more research is warranted to understand the gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals and their relationship to wellbeing in order to serve the community appropriately and effectively.

Nonbinary Identities

As it is currently understood, nonbinary is an umbrella term used to represent individuals who either do not identify as exclusively a man or woman (James et al., 2016; McNabb, 2018; Vincent, 2016) or whose gender falls outside of the gender binary (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017). This may include varying degrees of femininity and masculinity, another gender entirely, or a combination of genders. A range of terms are used by those who identify with the nonbinary category including nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid, genderfuck, bigender, and trigender, among many others (Brown & Burill, 2018; Harrison et al., 2012). Sometimes nonbinary is shortened to "NB" or "enby" (Bergman & Barker, 2017). However, NB has been previously used by POC activists in the acronym NBPOC which stands for non-Black people of color (Smith, 2017). Writer and activist, Mardoll (2018), a white nonbinary person, blogged about being asked by Black activists not to co-opt NB. With respect for this request, while recognizing the expanding list of nonbinary gender identities and limitations of assigning a label to a community, nonbinary or enby (not NB) will be used throughout this paper to describe the gender identities and gendered experiences that fall under this category. This language excludes the hyphen (i.e., non-binary) to center these identities rather than position them as non-normative or *other* to the norm.

Cisnormativity and Gender Diversity

The dominant Western classification of gender as binary has led to gendered
expectations attached to masculinity and femininity. That is, the gender binary is
validated and reinforced by socio-political gender norms throughout interpersonal
exchanges, education, media, policy, and structural systems (Davis, 2009).
Cisnormativity is the ideology that only two genders exist and that gender is synonymous
with the sex assigned at birth (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016). In other words, cisnormativity is
the assumption that everyone is cisgender (e.g., all those assigned male at birth will
identify as a man) (Bauer et al., 2009). Cisgender individuals are those whose sex and
gender identity align (McGeeney & Harvey, 2015) and, therefore, may not experience
resistance to the gender binary and lack awareness of the pervasive ways in which it is
reinforced. The gender binary is a product of cisnormativity and the dominance of it
contributes to systematic erasure of nonbinary individuals in research (Ansara & Hegarty,
2014) and healthcare (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017), among other domains. Any gender
identity and expression that does not adhere to this cisnormative paradigm is generally
considered to be an anomaly (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011b), and individuals may be
punished for this transgression of gender norms (Dietert & Dentice, 2009).

The existing literature on cisnormativity focuses primarily on its manifestation in
health care settings, where it creates a barrier to accessing services (Logie et al., 2019).
This focus may be due to the pressing need for accessing gender-affirming medical
interventions and the challenges faced by trans and nonbinary individuals during these
pursuits. Without critical evaluation, gender and sex have been conflated in research and
practice (Moradi et al., 2009), including medical records, mental health forms,

identification cards, and many more, further reinforcing the authority of the gender

binary. There is a need to extend the literature beyond health care to include other

domains of nonbinary individuals' lives to understand their gendered experiences

holistically.

The gender binary and social expectations of gender norms create unique

challenges for gender-diverse individuals as they traverse social landscapes that do not

reflect nor affirm their gender identities (Davidson, 2016; Nuru, 2014). Binary

assumptions about gender inherent to cisnormativity are inaccurate and can be harmful to

everyone but are especially so for gender diverse individuals (Halberstam, 1998;

Markman, 2011; Wilchins, 2002a, 2002b). Reinforcement of the gender binary – while

potentially validating for binary transgender individuals – is particularly problematic to

anyone who does not identify as exclusively a man or a woman, as they are inherently

removed from the equation and identified as atypical (Davidson, 2016).

Similar to cisnormativity, transnormativity or when transgender is conceptualized

as binary (e.g., trans woman, trans man) can also be exclusionary towards nonbinary

individuals. Though binary transgender individuals may be more easily understood as

transitioning from one binary gender to another, nonbinary individuals do not fit into pre-

existing normalized categories of gender (Davidson, 2016), contributing to unique risks

for this population. When compared to binary transgender individuals, research has

shown that those with visible gender nonconformity experience higher levels of gender-

based discrimination and violence (Bockting et al., 2013; Grant et al., 2011; Harrison et

al., 2012; Reisner et al., 2016), as well as PTSD symptoms (Reisner et al., 2016).

Alternatively, the inclusivity of all gender identities can create meaningful dialogue and

reflection about gender that is helpful to nonbinary individuals and those around them

(Barker, 2014). As one mother beautifully stated:

> I wanted to give my child a gift. The gift of seeing people as more than
> just a gender. The gift of understanding gender as complex, beautiful, and
> self-determined. I hadn't considered how much of a gift I'd also be giving
> myself. While curating an experience for Zoomer [child] to come to their
> own identity, I inadvertently started taking a closer look at mine too.
> (Myers, 2020, p. 97)

Wellbeing

Curiosity to understand the concept of wellbeing and its predictors has existed

since the ancient Greek philosophers first deliberated on the concept of happiness and

goodness (McMahon, 2006). Contemporary conceptualizations of wellbeing range from

multi-dimensional (Mansfield et al., 2020) to a Hedonic-Eudaimonic[3] scheme (Wood,

2021). From a capacity perspective, van der Deijl (2020) argues for the individuation of

wellbeing, that is wellbeing measured by functioning and capabilities, rejecting

subjective measures. According to Wood (2021), there is currently a wellbeing boom

with an industry of wellness, self-care, and self-help, which has contributed to

misunderstandings and confusion about wellbeing. Mansfield et al. (2020) consider the

debates over elements and measurements of wellbeing to indicate the complexity of the

concept, which still has no agreed upon definition. For the purpose of this dissertation,

wellbeing is defined as a state of thriving in which a person's basic needs are met, and

they are able to comfortably and safely be themselves and pursue their goals in their

current environment. Thriving is characterized by a positive self-identity, satisfaction and

fulfillment in life, and conditions that help people achieve their goals (Riggle &

Rostosky, 2012).

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[3] These concepts will be discussed in chapter 2 under subjective and psychological wellbeing.

In connection to the current dissertation, recent research has begun to focus on positive aspects of transgender and nonbinary experiences (Gibson et al., 2016; Toomistu, 2018), including resilience within the community (Breslow et al., 2015; Meyer, 2015). Examples include Asakura and Craig (2014); Bockting et al. (2013); Lewis (2008); Singh (2013); Singh and McKleroy (2011); Singh et al. (2014). Despite this positive shift in the literature focusing on resilience, a resilience framework has been critiqued (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2005; Shaw et al., 2016) and deemed insufficient for this study. Instead, this study will concentrate on wellbeing with the theoretical underpinnings presented in more detail in Chapter 2.

Why Focus on Wellbeing and not Just Resilience?

The synonymous use of similar terminology has created challenges for exploring wellbeing. Despite distinct differences, resilience has been used interchangeably with wellbeing (Schultze-Lutter et al., 2016) ; however, this underplays the importance of resilience to wellbeing. Similarly, promotive and corrosive factors which are associated with wellbeing have not been distinguished from protective and risk factors which are associated with resilience. The primary difference between resilience and wellbeing frameworks – which also overlap – is the level of study and intervention. Resilience is a restoration to equilibrium after being offset by something (e.g., minority stressors) (Brom & Kleber, 2008; Holling, 1973). Further, resilience concerns coping with adversity at the individual level (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2005) through protective and risk factors that ameliorate or increase the probability of harm. Recent literature suggests that resilience is multi-directional, moving in many directions including moving forward through adversity and beyond – individuals "bouncing back" from adversity—or

"bouncing forward" with their lives (Clark, 2021, p. 13). In comparison, the primary concern of wellbeing is to improve a person's life to be better-off (Bradley, 2015) – to elevate the level of equilibrium for resilience to return. Individual perceptions of wellbeing (Diener, 1984) and multiple dimensions of wellbeing in a person's life (Ryff, 1989) have been used as mechanisms for promoting wellbeing and recognizing the individual and environmental roles, including promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing.

Resilience is a crucial promotive factor for obtaining and maintaining wellbeing, particularly in experiences of adversity (Ryff, 2014). Ungar et al. (2005) described resilience to signify individual, family, and community capacities that can be enhanced so that at-risk populations have the ability to overcome adversity. It is a powerful accomplishment when gender minorities muster resilience within an oppressive environment (Mizock & Lewis, 2008), particularly considering the increased risks from trauma among trans and nonbinary individuals. While valuing the contributions of resilience, Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2005) argued for the need to move beyond resilience, rather than seek to revise the concept, to understand wellbeing, oppression, and liberation. In addition to how people restore their equilibrium, resilience through an ecological lens provides invaluable contributions that consider how systems respond to stressors and how this impacts the individual (Clark, 2021). In this study, resilience is considered an integral part of the overarching experience of wellbeing that addresses the role of the environment (e.g., discrimination, access to service, gender-based violence, etc.), which is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing, particularly among marginalized populations.

Subjective Wellbeing and Psychological Wellbeing

In wellbeing literature, the two prevailing theories are subjective wellbeing (SWB) and psychological wellbeing (PWB) (Disabato et al., 2016; Schultze-Lutter et al., 2016). SWB posits wellbeing to be the result of living a life of maximum pleasure and minimum pain (Diener, 1984; Gallagher et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2001). SWB focuses on how an individual experiences their life as measured by cognitive elements, assessing life satisfaction both in the domains of their life (e.g., school, work, family) and globally, as well as pleasant and unpleasant affective elements (Diener, 1984). In contrast to SWB that focuses primarily on internal components of wellbeing, PWB also considers mutual influence with the environment. PWB asserts wellbeing to be a result of self-actualization and a balance of meaningful engagement in multiple dimensions in one's life (self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and a sense of personal growth) (Ryff, 1989). Together, wellbeing can be conceptualized as a life full of pleasure (SWB) with one fulfilling their full potential (PWB).

Despite the complexity of wellbeing, a comprehensive conceptualization of wellbeing that incorporates a holistic approach that includes marginalization and resilience and a community perspectives has not been studied – among nonbinary individuals and other marginalized populations. Some environmental factors (e.g., social support) have been sparsely included in wellbeing theories; however, the impact of hostile environments is an area of consequence for marginalized populations that has been limited in the wellbeing literature. Similarly, the assumption of equity in previous theories of wellbeing make them of limited application to marginalized populations (Bradley, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

The foundation of the social work profession is a commitment to promoting the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities, especially the most marginalized (NASW, 2017). This commitment has been evident with LGBTQ people, and only more recently have social workers started to recognize distinctions between nonbinary and binary transgender identities. Transgender studies have increased, though they have often been through a binary frame (Vincent & Manzano, 2017), perpetuating what is frequently termed *nonbinary erasure* (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017). When included, a narrow representation of nonbinary identities is often presented. Frequently, this visibility has been to highlight microaggressions, discrimination, and victimization (APA Task Force on Gender Identity and Gender Variance, 2008; Currah et al., 2006; Nuttbrock et al., 2010; Stanton et al., 2017). As such, there is a dearth of empirical research to understand the unique experiences of nonbinary people (Brown & Burill, 2018; Richards et al., 2016), especially related to wellbeing.

With consideration for marginalized populations, personal strengths and the social environment are critical factors in fostering wellbeing. Rather than a deficit-based assessment of an individual, recent research has acknowledged the role of society's lack of acceptance in adverse outcomes among gender-diverse individuals (Beek et al., 2016). Rieger and Savin-Wiliams (2012) suggest that hostile social environments may compromise wellbeing, indicating that healthy social environments may promote wellbeing. The popularity of positive psychology has also been a catalyst for moving attention towards positive phenomena (Vázquez et al., 2009; Vaughan & Rodriguez, 2014), which focuses on personal strengths and contributing factors to wellbeing

(Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). However, despite increased interest in ways to support and enhance wellbeing (Brown & Ryan, 2003) and increased attention to transgender issues, the factors contributing to nonbinary wellbeing have not been explicitly explored. Succinctly, no previous study has asked nonbinary individuals how they conceptualize their wellbeing and what factors might promote or corrode that wellbeing.

Purpose of the Study

In response to the identified need for understanding wellbeing of nonbinary individuals, this study used PhotoVoice, a participatory action research (PAR) method, to explore wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. The aims of this study were to:

1) Explore core dimensions of wellbeing as defined by nonbinary individuals

2) Identify promotive and corrosive factors of that wellbeing, and

3) Develop recommendations for intervening at multiple levels of the social ecology to bolster wellbeing.

The goal is to achieve these aims while centering nonbinary voices and, ultimately, to raise social awareness and inform affirming practice and policies among social work practitioners and other social service professionals.

This study will contribute a better understanding of wellbeing among nonbinary individuals in an effort to mitigate the challenges they face as well as support thriving despite the binary world in which they exist. The Institute of Medicine (2011) has called for a priority of empirical research on factors that contribute to the health of LGBTQ communities. Recommendations from Bauer et al. (2009) for trans-inclusive research include:

(a) participation of trans and nonbinary individuals in research;

(b) awareness of cisnormativity in language, including research questions;

(c) prioritizing trans-specific research topics;

(d) diverse representation of trans and nonbinary individuals and unique needs within the subsegments of the community;

(e) research priorities that are identified by trans and nonbinary people;

(f) culturally competent research that avoids pathologizing questions or approaches to research;

(g) translational research that informs textbooks as well as healthcare professionals' curriculum, training, and continuing education.

These recommendations and the Institute of Medicine's priorities were considered when designing this study, as evidenced by the topic, PAR methods, reflexivity, efforts to recruit a diverse sample, and dissemination plan for the findings. Overall, this study contributes to an understanding of the gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals by investigating the concept of wellbeing and factors that promote or corrode that wellbeing from community member perspectives.

Research Questions

The PhotoVoice study presented in this dissertation seeks to answer the following research questions:

1) How do nonbinary individuals conceptualize wellbeing in relation to their gender identity?

2) What factors promote or corrode wellbeing for nonbinary individuals?

3) What are nonbinary individual's recommendations for intervening at multiple levels of the social ecology to bolster their wellbeing?

Convenience and snowball sampling were used for the sample of 17 nonbinary individuals who, at the time of the study, were at least 18 years old, lived in the Midwestern United States, and had the technology to engage in a virtual study. Visual data and transcriptions were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings report the nonbinary conceptualization of wellbeing, promotive and corrosive factors to their wellbeing, and recommendations for policy and practice. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Indiana University (Protocol #2002503741).

Significance of the Study for Social Work Research and Practice

At the foundation of the social work profession, the core value of social justice calls for ethical social work practice and requires cultural competency and advocacy to create change for marginalized and vulnerable populations, including gender minorities (National Association of Social Workers, 2017). Nonbinary individuals have been identified as a marginalized population in the literature and, therefore, germane to social work research and practice. Social justice for this population includes health equity, legal representation, and social inclusion, among others. This study intends to identify ways to bolster wellbeing among nonbinary individuals and, indirectly, to move the goal of social justice from surviving and coping to thriving. The study findings can contribute to the social work grand challenge to "ensure healthy development for all youth," "advance long and productive lives," "eradicate social isolation," and "achieve equal opportunity and justice" (Bent-Goodley, 2016, p. 197).

Regardless of the field or level of practice, practitioners will have clients or work along-side individuals who are gender diverse at some point in their careers (APA Task Force on Gender Identity and Gender Variance, 2008). Without cultural competence and comfort working with gender-diverse individuals, social workers may cause more harm than good. The National Association of Social Workers (2017) clearly states in the Code of Ethics that the primary mission is to "enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (para. 1). This code includes values of the inherent worth of all individuals and striving for diversity and equality. While widely known, some social workers may not feel prepared to work with gender minorities, while others may hold transphobic attitudes based on religious or political ideologies (Chonody et al., 2014) or do not feel comfortable facilitating difficult discussions (Sue & Constantine, 2007).

However, research has shown that social work students' attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals are neutral or even negative (Craig et al., 2017; Logie et al., 2007; Rankin et al., 2010). Additionally, within social work classrooms, LGBTQ students reported hetero- and cisnormativity (Austin et al., 2016; Craig et al., 2017; Craig et al., 2015; Dentato et al., 2016), which were described as rarely disrupted by instructors (Atteberry-Ash et al., 2019). In response to such injustices, Atteberry-Ash et al. (2019) call for social work educators to address microaggressions in the learning environment by disrupting harmful discourse and replacing it with constructive learning opportunities among both students and faculty. This study will

identify corrosive factors to wellbeing that can also be addressed and replaced by promotive factors in the classroom and other settings in nonbinary individuals' lives.

Social workers, in particular, have the opportunity to improve the lives of gender-diverse individuals in direct practice, education, research, and policy. In particular, Compton & Galaway (1994) emphasized to social workers the significant role of the environment in the impediment or fulfillment of individuals' and their community's needs. Unlike other professions, social workers have a dual mandate to address the individual and community and bring about change on a global scale (Goldstein, 1992; Reichert, 2011). Social service professionals can assist clients by learning how to promote positive transgender and nonbinary identities and how to process coming out and deal with marginalization (Riggle et al., 2011). Markman (2011) argues that allyship for gender minorities is an ethical obligation for social workers. According to Potts and Brown (2005), anti-oppressive research can be a tool for community building, self-discovery, building change, and emancipation as well as a framework for inquiry in direct interventions, community building, and policy analysis. Social workers practice at all levels and can, therefore, apply anti-oppressive research everywhere, including education, health care, and government (Potts & Brown, 2005). Before meaningful change can occur, more information about nonbinary individuals is necessary to educate and train social workers to provide affirmative care and advocate for social justice.

Summary of Methodology

This study used participatory action PhotoVoice methods designed to center the voice of participants and work towards creating meaningful change. Due to the COVID pandemic and social distancing, the study was conducted virtually with seventeen

nonbinary adults living in the Midwest with access to the required technology. Data was collected through online discussions posted to a dedicated Canvas course and individual photo-elicitation interviews on Zoom. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. A codebook was created collaboratively with a cisgender heterosexual colleague, who povided an outsider perspective, to increase rigor and trustworthiness. Additionally, analytic memoing and consultation throughout data collection and analysis.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized by five chapters. This first chapter introduced the core topics of wellbeing and nonbinary individuals and establish the importance of this dissertation. In the next chapter, I review the unpinning theories of subjective and psychological wellbeing and provide a detailed literature review and critique of the extant literature related to nonbinary wellbeing. In Chapter 3, I describe my methodology. In Chapter 4, I present the research findings. Finally, in chapter 5, I situate the findings in comparison to the literature and conclude the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

"The reason transgender people are so persecuted in this world is because
we have the audacity to be honest and say, 'I am capable of
transformation.' Our role, historically and ancestrally for thousands of
year as transgender people is to teach the world that metamorphosis is
possible. And, in fact, not only is metamorphosis possible, but it is
essential." – Alok V. Menon

The following literature review will synthesize the extant literature on gender

diversity and wellbeing, detailing findings specific to nonbinary identities when possible

and otherwise reporting on analogous lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer

(LGBTQ) identities. The first section will situate nonbinary individuals by providing

conceptual and historical context. The following section will evaluate the prevailing

theory of psychological wellbeing (PWB). According to Witkin and Gottschalk (1988),

"social theories are abstract generalizations that serve to define and give structure to

human experience" and "provide explanation, coherence, and moral direction for the life

experiences of people" (p. 218). A brief summary of SWB and PWB theories will be

followed by a critique using a framework developed by Witkin and Gottschalk (1988)

that centers the critique within social work values. As informed by wellbeing theories, the

literature review is organized into intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systematic factors of

wellbeing, within which promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing are identified and

discussed.

Situating Nonbinary Identities, Individuals, and Gender Expressions

Social Construction of Gender

To understand nonbinary identities, first, a critical evaluation of sex, gender, and

the dominant Western social construction of gender is necessary. At the foundation, sex

is based solely on biological indicators (e.g., genitalia, chromosomes). In contrast, gender

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has been defined as an abstract internal sense of self (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011b; Brown & Burill, 2018), with others describing gender as non-physical characteristics (Zandvliet, 2000), as relational (McNeilly, 2019), and as performative (Butler, 2004). According to McNeilly (2019), "Gender is how we organize relationships, create meaning, identify people" (p. 37). Collectively, gender is a complex concept in everyone's life, especially for trans and nonbinary individuals.

The dominant gender binary assumes that each person is either a man or a woman based solely upon biological sex. Accordingly, individuals are assigned a sex at birth – infants with a penis are assigned male at birth (AMAB), and infants with a vulva are assigned female at birth (AFAB). For individuals whose physical or chromosomal characteristics do not fit within what is considered male or female sex norms, they may be labeled intersex. Regardless of assigned sex at birth, gender is a socially-defined and self-designated identity and, as such, anyone can identify as nonbinary or outside the socially constructed categories of man and woman.

While gender has been widely recognized as a social construction since the 1960s, the conceptualization of gender has varied from a fixed, mutually exclusive binary of male or female sex (conflation with sex) to multifaceted continuums of sexual and gender identity (Bockting et al., 2009; Vade, 2005), the latter emphasize that gender is not inherently dichotomous (Vincent & Manzano, 2017). The work of Garfinkel (1967) and Kessler and McKenna (1978) made theoretical advances to separate the conflation of sex and gender further and the assumption of sex as a determinant of gender. However, these arguments fell short by assuming two categories of gender (Hines, 2007). That is, they failed to recognize the diversity of gender identities. Likewise, the gender binary has

been critiqued as an oversimplification (Lauria, 2017) that does not include nonbinary as a distinct gender identity category (Markman, 2011). Despite new explanatory models, the debate between essentialism (e.g., only two genders based on simplified biology) and constructionism (e.g., gender expansiveness) continues (Moradi et al., 2009).

Complexity of Gender Identity and Expression

Next, the construct of gender must be further understood as gender identity and gender expression. Despite intermingled use of language, these concepts have been presented from multiple perspectives. Put simply, Zandvliet (2000) defines gender identity as "the sum of a person's non-physical and non-biological characteristics that determine their sense of being male, female or neither or any combination" (p. 181). Whereas Butler (2004) describes gender [expression] as performative and, therefore, interacting with and in relation to others. A collection of perspectives are represented in Greve's (2002) statement:

> I have since learned that gender is not as simple as biological sex (which can be altered); nor can we simplify and limit gender's definition to social constructs. I believe gender to be a combination between biology and social roles. We all choose to express our gender in different ways – our styles of dress, how we show emotions, what hobbies we enjoy, and who we hang out with are just some of them. For some people, this means limiting how they are in the world; for others, it means challenging stereotypes. (p. 249)

Summarizing these perspectives, Davis (2009) posits that gender is both an abstract internal self (i.e., gender identity) and a social identity (i.e., gender expression) that is reciprocally influenced by, and influences, interpersonal interactions and relationships (i.e., the environment).

A challenge to expansively conceptualizing the construct of gender is the minimal consideration for environmental factors, as gender has been predominantly studied as an

internal identity. Conversely, McNeilly (2019) states that "gender is how we organize relationships, create meaning, [and] identify people" (p. 37). The WHO (2015) also describes the concept of gender as "the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women" (p. 8), expanding the definition of gender to include considerations for the environment even if also missing gender diversity. The relationships between gender identity, gender expression, and social norms of gender are notably crucial to gender identity development (Tobin et al., 2010). The gendered experiences of those with a gender expression that does not conform to social norms cannot be fully understood without considering the environmental exchange. A fundamental perspective in social work practice is person-in-environment, which considers the individual as part of the physical and social environment in which they exist and recognizes the reciprocal relationships between them (Barker, 2003), which is no less important when assessing gender development and gendered experiences. Similar to David (2009), a dynamic conceptualization of gender informs this dissertation as one's internal sense of self (gender identity) that is presented in a multitude of ways and interacts with one's environment (gender expression with consideration for external factors).

Socially Nonconforming Gender Expressions[4] (SNCGE)

The literature has described what I term *socially nonconforming gender expressions* (SNCGE) as gender expressions (e.g., clothing, accessories, mannerisms)

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[4] Language is often used to describe a person as "gender nonconforming" (GNC), as in TGNC for transgender and gender nonconforming. However, this language is intentionally not used here because A) a person is not nonconforming (just a person is not illegal) and B) a person can conform to their gender, regardless of social expectations. Nonconformity will still be used to appropriately describe gender expression that does not conform with social expectations.

that diverge from or contradicts the expected gender norms of masculinity or femininity (Brown & Burill, 2018) or are considered atypical (Domm, 2017). This nonconformity is based on the assumed gender of the individual, and it could be argued that this assumption of gender nonconformity is also relative. For example, an observer who subscribes to binary gender norms might label anyone who does not fit their expectations (e.g., feminine clothing on a person perceived as a man) as gender nonconforming. However, an individual may not identify their gender expression as gender nonconforming. It could be argued that nonbinary individuals inherently have SNCGE considering gender norms are based on binary genders (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017). Just as not all nonbinary individuals fit the nonbinary stereotype (white, able-bodied, skinny, tall, and androgynous), not all nonbinary individual's gender expressions are socially nonconforming – gender expression is not indicative of one's gender identity.

Those with an SNCGE are viewed as a challenge to the dichotomy of cultural norms of gender (Monro, 2003), to whom society responds with stigmatization and rejection (Burgess, 1999). The additive stress resulting from SNCGE contributes to a higher prevalence of anxiety, depression, and substance use found among lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals as compared with heterosexual counterparts (Graham et al., 2011). An SNCGE has more frequently been studied among cisgender LGB adults and youth (e.g., D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006; Graham et al., 2011; Rieger & Savin-Williams; 2012) than among trans and nonbinary individuals. However, when SNCGE is studied among gender diverse individuals, it has been found to predict psychological distress among trans and nonbinary individuals (Domm, 2017) and increase vulnerability among nonbinary individuals (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017). In a

community-based sample of trans and nonbinary adults (*N*=412), gender identity and/or

expression were found to be the most frequently reported reason for discrimination (83%)

and significantly associated with higher scores for PTSD symptoms (Reisner et al.,

2016). Similarly, Domm's (2017) dissertation about the impact of minority stressors on

psychological distress (N=156) found an SNCGE to be the strongest correlate of

psychological distress among LGB individuals compared to other minority stressors (i.e.,

harassment/discrimination, family of origin, isolation), which was speculated to be in part

due to the chronic hypervigilance of rejection based on perceptions of gender expression

that did not conform to societal expectations.

Nonbinary individuals with visible SNCGE experience higher levels of gender-

based discrimination and violence when compared to binary transgender individuals

(Bockting et al., 2013; Grant et al., 2011; Harrison et al., 2012; Reisner et al., 2016) as

well as PTSD symptoms (Reisner et al., 2016). Similarly, nonbinary individuals with

SNCGE reported significantly more frequent rates of misgendering (e.g., using incorrect

pronouns or honorifics) than binary transgender individuals (McLemore, 2015). Frohard-

Dourlent et al. (2017) posit that if a state of transitioning with the related challenges is

also a state of vulnerability, then nonbinary individuals who have an SNCGE are

perpetually in a state of vulnerability. Further, cultural discomfort with SNCGE creates

challenges in the daily lives of nonbinary individuals in both informal and formal

settings, which may lead to increased states of vulnerability (e.g., stigma,

marginalization, and discrimination) (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017; Grossman et al.,

2016). Nonbinary individuals may also face pressure to transition (on the binary) from

family, partners, and even within the LGBTQ community, contributing to insecurities

concerning "not [being] trans enough" (Lewis, 2008, p. 133). Higher rates of suicidal ideation and frequency of attempts were found among nonbinary individuals with an SNCGE compared to binary transgender individuals (Grossman et al., 2016). Perceived burdensome and thwarted belongingness were found to be significant for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. Grossman et al. (2016) attribute the higher rates of suicidality among nonbinary youth with an SNCGE to lack of support, social stigma, and internalized transphobia related to their nonconformity.

Alternatively, SNCGE may play a critical role in wellbeing among nonbinary individuals, depending on the support within the environment. When SNCGE are supported through adult advocacy (e.g., asking and using correct pronouns and name), youth with SNCGE have been found to feel safer in their educational environments (Smith, 2016). Rieger and Savin-Wiliams (2012) suggest that the social environment is pivotal in the relationship between an SNCGE and wellbeing by explaining the environment as a source of prolonged stress due to discrimination based on nonconformity that can compromise wellbeing. A barrier has been the exclusion of nonbinary individuals with an SNCGE from gender identity development models (Smith, 2016). Due to this lack of understanding and discrimination, nonbinary individuals may face unique challenges associated with navigating interpersonal engagement and their gender expression (Nuru, 2014), both of which pose potential risks for adverse psychosocial outcomes. More research focused on SNCGE among nonbinary individuals is needed to better understand this relationship and inform effective interventions.

Historical Context and Cultural Traditions About Gender

We are everything. We are all races, various body types, speak different languages, diverse economic classes, and especially different genders. We

are everywhere and nowhere, exactly where you would believe and nowhere you expect. We are living, dead, breathing, loud, and silenced. (Thomas, 2019, p. 3)

Only more recently have gender identities and expressions garnered serious attention in mainstream discourse (Lovelock, 2017; Nisley, 2010); however, nonbinary identities are not a new phenomenon. The origin of nonbinary identities is unclear (Vincent, 2016), especially with language changes over time that can make tracing roots of trans and nonbinary identities challenging (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017). However, some indications of gender expansiveness are present in documents and academic writing across cultures and throughout history (APA Task Force on Gender Identity and Gender Variance, 2008; Feinberg, 1996; Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017; Vincent & Manzano, 2017). A comprehensive anthology of gender diversity throughout history is beyond the scope of this dissertation; therefore, only a few historical examples of gender nonconformity and nonbinary identities – as they are currently conceptualized – are discussed here in order to provide some historical context for nonbinary individuals and communities.

The ancient concept of androgyny has been defined as both masculinity (*andros* is man in Greek) and femininity (*gyne* is woman in Greek), neither, or an inversion of gender norms (Hogan & Hudson, 1998). A prime example, *teddy girls* were young working-class individuals assigned female at birth in 1950s post-war London who dressed in nostalgic androgyny characterized by tailored jackets, rolled up jeans, and up-pinned curly hair, representing a rebellion against conventional gender and social class (Bell, 2014). Writings on androgyny from the 1970s and 1980s expanded the discussion of gender with resistance to gender norms and may have been precursors to the

contemporary concept of nonbinary identities (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017). It can only be speculated how many of these previous examples of gender nonconformity may have been individuals who would identify as nonbinary, if the concepts and language were available to them at that time.

In the 1990s, the term *genderqueer* emerged to describe persons who reject the gender binary and gender norms without physical modification (Schilt, 2010; Stryker, 2008; Vincent, 2016). Similar to *teddy girls*, queer in genderqueer has been described as signifying "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, and the dominant" (Halperin, 1997, p. 62). Genderqueer is a nonbinary gender identity claimed by primarily by young, white, college students (Alderson, 2013; Beemyn & Rankin, 2011a). This term continues to be used today and was the most frequently written-in gender not listed option in the 2008 National Transgender Discrimination Survey (NTDS), the first comprehensive study of transgender and nonbinary experiences and health outcomes in the United States (Harrison et al., 2012). By 2015, the label nonbinary (31%) had surpassed genderqueer (29%) as the selected gender identity among the nonbinary subset in this large national sample (*N*=27,715) (James et al., 2016).

In recent years, the media presence of nonbinary characters has continued to grow with benefits and challenges (Higley, 2019; Lovelock, 2017; Romriell, 2019). Nonbinary identities have been featured on the covers of National Geographic (Henig, 2017) and Time Magazine (Steinmetz, 2017). Wikipedia, the crowd-sourced information page, includes a page titled *List of fictional non-binary characters* (animation, books, comics, film, television, theater, video games) that is actively updated (Wikipedia, 2021). Some mainstream content that features nonbinary characters include *Steven Universe* (2013-

2019), *and The Princesses of Power* (2018-2020), *Billions* (2016-present), *Star Trek: Discovery* (2020), *Good Omens* (2019), *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist* (2020-present), *Zoolander 2* (2016 film), and *John Wick: Chapter 3 – Parabellum* (2019 film). It should be recognized that many trans and nonbinary roles continue to be played by cisgender individuals, despite the increasing availability of trans and nonbinary actors. Notably, some nonbinary animated characters are voiced by nonbinary individuals, such as Shep by Indya Moore (American actor), Double Trouble by Jacob Tobia (American writer and LGBTQ activist), and Val/entina Romanyszyn by Asia Kate Dillon (American actor) (Wikipedia, 2021). It is not surprising that the animated show *Steven Universe* has numerous nonbinary characters since the show was created by Rebecca Sugar, who identifies as nonbinary and has shared that the characters have been a way to express themselves (Romriell, 2019).

Thus, the media is a powerful tool for both reinforcing the status quo and catalyzing change. Cisnormative media and subsequently informed everyday actions serve to perpetuate and reinforce gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes (Higley, 2019; Wenhold & Harrison, 2021). Even worse, negative or harmful representation of trans women was found to increase negative attitudes towards trans women (Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018), which may have similar results across gender diversity. Conversely, media representation that challenges gender norms can change attitudes about gender (Cooper, 2002, Wenhold & Harrison, 2021). When transgender stories are accurately shared, they can help their audiences understand how transgender individuals navigate the world (Lovelock, 2017). According to Romriell (2019):

> Representation in media is important to any gender identity because it
> conveys understanding and respect. The more representation people have

in the media and throughout Hollywood, the more that others are exposed to these identities, which helps those of various gender identities feel more valid in their experience. (para. 19)

This statement reflects the sentiment of gender diversity and acceptance as being beneficial for everyone of all genders, just as Wilchins (2002c) described the intent of the gender movement to liberate all people from the "pernicious, divisive, and destructive insanity called gender-based stereotypes" (p. 297). All this considered, positive trans representation and constructive confrontation of transphobia is likely to promote transgender acceptance.

Yet, despite a historical presence of third genders documented in communities of color (e.g., Hijra in India, Muxe in Oaxaca, māhū of Hawai'i, and two-spirit people in First Nation Tribes), the gender-expansive movement has been painted with a broad brush as an emerging gender identity predominantly among white, college-educated, young adults (Alderson, 2013; Beemyn & Rankin, 2011a). A cast member from Caitlin Jenner's reality show critiqued this very problem in a remark that Jenner's coming out story is "the one we finally listen to, when we've been ignoring the stories of Black and Latina trans women" (Lovelock, 2017, p. 749). Further, the over-representation of white trans celebrities simultaneously idealizes whiteness and others Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) trans folx[5] (Lovelock, 2017). Like changing minds through representation in media, Black and Brown trans and nonbinary activists – such as Alok Vaid-Menon, Jacob Tobia, Jazz Jennings, Janet Mock, and Laverne Cox – are extremely important for POC representation of gender diversity. Platforms known for showcasing trans and nonbinary perspectives, discourse, and community building include YouTube,

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[5] Folx is a queer resuse of the word folks.

TikTok, Twitter, Reddit, Tumblr, and Discord (Buss, 2020; Fink & Mililer, 2014; Raun, 2016; Simpson & Semaan, 2021; Withey-Rila et al., 2021). In particular, Tumblr has been discussed as a platform for challenging cisgender, heterosexual white dominance and creating space for more representation that is inclusive of complexity with intersectional identities (Fink & Miller, 2014). However, these platforms have also been called out for problematic algorithms that silence and erase trans and BIPOC voices (Simpson & Semaan, 2021). As we fight for diverse representations of nonbinary identities, BIPOC representation must be central in this cause.

Prevalence

Despite challenges in data collection due to the growth and diversification of nonbinary identities (Richards et al., 2017; Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017), some prevalence estimates exist. Increasingly more youth and young adults are reporting their gender as transgender or nonbinary, with current national estimates ranging from 2.7% - 13.0% of those under 24 years old (Eisenberg et al., 2017; Herman et al., 2017; Wilson & Kastanis, 2015), indicating a greater out representation among young adults compared to older generations. Safer, more inclusive environments may be a contributing factor to a growing number of youth and young adults identifying as nonbinary (Budge et al., 2013). A state representative study of 12-17-year-old youth in California (N=1,594) found that 27.0% described their gender expression as nonconforming, of which 20.8% selected androgynous (Wilson et al., 2017). Conversely, a large school-based sample in Minnesota (N=81,885) found 2.7% of 9th and 11th graders identified as transgender, nonbinary, or gender-questioning (Eisenberg et al., 2017), indicating that geography and sociopolitical climate may play a role in outness of transgender and nonbinary youth. These increased

numbers may speak to the benefit of progressive environments but also begs the question of what happens to individuals in less progressive areas. Similarly, these factors may also limit the available information and awareness of gender diversity.

Ultimately, population estimates from representative samples are needed to fully grasp the prevalence of nonbinary identities (Van Caenegem et al., 2015). Furthermore, unlike many of the discussed studies, it is essential that data collection of gender not be based on the gender binary, and that *binary transgender* and *nonbinary* identities not be collapsed into a single category. Despite the importance of including gender diversity questions in research for accurate prevalence data (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017), the current political climate and heightened hetero- and cissexism led to a removal of all sexual orientation and gender identity-related questions from the 2020 American census (Wang, 2017). Regardless, it is anticipated that the number of people openly identifying as nonbinary will continue to increase (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011b; Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017).

Theoretical Underpinnings of Wellbeing

The wellbeing literature is replete with competing theories of wellbeing, primarily rooted in the hedonic and eudaimonic traditions, with varying conceptualizations and measures as well as numerous modern wellbeing theories. The two prevailing wellbeing theories are subjective wellbeing (SWB) and psychological wellbeing (PWB) (Disabato et al., 2016; Schultze-Lutter et al., 2016). SWB centralizes happiness obtained from pleasure (Ryff, 1989) and exemplifies the hedonic tradition in which the ultimate goal of wellbeing is to live a life that maximizes pleasure and minimizes pain (Diener, 1984; Gallagher et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2001) or by increasing the presence of positive

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emotional affect while decreasing the negative effect (Kahneman et al., 1999). Rooted in the eudaimonic tradition, PWB posits wellbeing is derived from a meaningful life and assumes that individuals strive for self-actualization (Gallagher et al., 2009), in which one can reach their richest human potential through living life fully (Ryan et al., 2008; Ryff, 1989).

Some modern examples of wellbeing theories include physical wellbeing (Thatcher & Milner, 2014), employee wellbeing (Jain et al., 2009), occupational wellbeing (Warr, 1992), family wellbeing (La Placa et al., 2013; Milligan et al., 2006), spiritual wellbeing (Azarsa et al., 2015), existential wellbeing (Cohen et al., 1996), community wellbeing (Buot et al., 2017; Hird, 2003), and societal wellbeing (Zainuddin & Russell-Bennett, 2017). While developed with certain contexts in mind (e.g., the workplace), in general, these theories explain common elements related to SWB and PWB wellbeing.

Modern critiques of the SWB and PWB are whether a meaningful difference exists to distinguish one from the other (Coyne, 2013; Disabato et al., 2016; Kashdan et al., 2008, Kashdan et al., 2009; Sheldon, 2013). In U.S. studies, SWB and PWB were found to be moderately to highly correlated (.78-.92) (Gallagher et al., 2009; Keyes et al., 2002), which was higher than in the U.K. (r=.76) (Linley et al., 2009), indicating less independent distinction. In their global sample to assess cultural differences. Disabato and colleagues (2016) analyzed discriminant validity between measures of SWB and PWB found a nearly complete overlap (r=0.96) and concluded that both were measures of an overarching wellbeing construct. This suggested lack of distinction is important to

note for different pathways to exploring wellbeing; SWB and PWB have been described in greater detail below.

Subjective Wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing (SWB) can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophical debates about the meaning of happiness and morality of doing-well and being-well (Diener et al., 1999). In modern times, the popularity of SWB has partly been in reaction to the disproportionate focus on the individual's negative states in social sciences, particularly identified in psychology literature. Alternatively, subjective wellbeing (SWB) exemplifies the hedonic tradition in which the ultimate goal of wellbeing is to live a life that maximizes pleasure and minimizes pain (Diener, 1984; Gallagher et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2001) or to increase the presence of positive affect while decreasing the negative affect (Kahneman et al., 1999). Epicurus, a Greek philosopher and earliest proponent for the principles of hedonic well-being, espoused that "pleasure is the beginning and goal of a happy life" (Epicurus, 1993, p. 65), teaching that people naturally withdraw from pain and are drawn to pleasure and, therefore, people should capitulate to their nature (Epicurus, 1993; McMahon, 2006).

SWB focuses on how an individual experiences their life as measured by cognitive elements and affective elements (Diener, 1984). Cognitive elements are assessments of life satisfaction both in the domains of their life (e.g., school, work, family) as well as globally. Life satisfaction is both experiential and cognitive - for one to assess their life as satisfying, they must have had experiences of feeling fulfilled, as well as have judged their life as satisfying according to a subjective personal standard (Sumner, 1996). Positive or pleasant affects (joy, confidence, efficacy) and negative or

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unpleasant affects (shame, anger, fear) are influenced by experiences (Diener, 1984). SWB is measured by 1) life satisfaction, 2) positive affect and 3) negative affect with high SWB resulting from high satisfaction, the frequent presence of positive affect, and infrequent, or absence of, negative affect and the opposite for low SWB (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1997).

Diener (1984) identified three core concepts of SWB. First, SWB is subjective. As such, SWB is not defined by objective conditions (e.g., wealth) (Kammann, 1983), which are viewed as possible influencers but not inherent to SWB. Second, SWB is measured by both negative and positive affects, with the understanding that the lack of one is not the same as the presence of the other (Diener, 1984; Vázquez et al., 2009). Last, measures of assessing life satisfaction may include multiple domains but are typically analyzed as a global judgment of satisfaction in one's life, which can vary in the time frame from a couple of weeks to a lifetime (Diener, 1984).

Wilson (1967) postulated that (a) "the prompt satisfaction of needs causes happiness, while the persistence of unfulfilled needs causes unhappiness" and (b) "the degree of fulfillment required to produce satisfaction depends on adaptation or aspiration level, which is influenced by past experiences, comparisons with others, personal values, and other factors" (p. 302). Wilson's first postulation informs a bottom-up approach that assumes there are universal human needs, and if circumstances permit one to fulfill these needs, one will result in happiness (Diener et al., 1999). However, demographic factors were found to have small effects on SWB. Wilson's second postulate has only, more recently, been addressed as research has shifted towards a top-down approach to identify individual factors that influenced the perception of experiences (Diener et al., 1999).

Building upon early SWB work, research continued to confirm early determinants and has expanded to include external factors, contributing to a stronger theoretical understanding of SWB (Diener et al., 1999). For example, the concept of the *hedonic treadmill* or *hedonic adaptation* explains that each individual has a baseline level of happiness to which they return after short-term experiences of happiness or unhappiness (Frederick & Lowenstein, 1999) and which adapts with experience and expectations (Seligman, 2002).

Diener and colleagues' (1999) review of modern SWB theory highlighted an evolving focus towards disposition, coping, and adaptation that stresses the importance of the interaction between the person and their environmental factors. According to Bradley (2015), SWB is a relevant approach to identifying indicators of well-being among marginalized populations, whose personal standards or expectations of life-satisfaction are assessed and adapted with experiences. For example, Nussbaum's (2011) work centers wellbeing on elements of dignity, of which ten central capabilities include *control over one's political and material environment*. With adaptation as a central component of modern SWB theory, exploration of external factors may play an essential role in advancing the next contributions to SWB (Diener et al., 1999).

Psychological Wellbeing Theory

Aristotle's (1947) *Nicomachean Ethics* is an historical foundation for PWB, in which the goal of life is not merely feeling good. Instead, enacting happiness is considered the greatest achievable good (Ryff, 1989). This goal is also achieved through living according to their *daimon*, which has been described as one's "true self" (Norton, 1976, p. 5), one's full potential (Waterman, 1993), or unique contributions to the world

that one can then bring into reality (Ryff, 2014). Thus, the eudaimonic tradition of happiness is a byproduct of living a good and authentic life and not the primary goal (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 2008), a contrast from the hedonic tradition in which happiness from pleasure is central (Ryff, 1989).

The current conception of PWB was developed by Ryff (1989), which synthesizes psychological development, humanism, and clinical psychology (Gallagher et al., 2009). Specifically, the antecedents to Ryff's (1989) theory of PWB are Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs, Rogers' (1961) perspective on becoming a fully functioning person, Jung's (1933) theory of person and collective unconsciousness, Von Franz' (1964) process of individuation, Allport's (1961) theory of personality, Erikson's (1959) stages of psychosocial development, Buhler's (1935) tendencies of human development and fulfillment, Neugarten's (1968, 1973) descriptions of personality change in middle age and late-life, and Jahoda's (1958) criteria of positive mental health.

Based on review of the existing theoretical and research literature, Ryff (1989) identified six dimensions for optimal wellbeing that become the foundation for PWB: (a) self-acceptance, (b) positive relations, (c) autonomy, (d) environmental mastery, (d) purpose in life, and (f) a sense of personal growth. *Self-acceptance* is described as having a positive perspective about oneself, which is essential for well-functioning and self-actualization. *Positive relationships with others* are interpersonal interactions that are characterized as warm and trusting with empathy, affection, and a deeper connection with others. *Autonomy* refers to qualities of independence, freedom, self-determination, the ability to internally regulate behaviors, and an ability to internally evaluate themselves and their environment. *Environmental mastery* is characterized by an ability to

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manipulate one's environment to find the most suitable setting for one's mental health, which may include seeking out, creating, or avoiding environments based on an assessment of the effect on psychological functioning. *Purpose in life* refers to an intentional sense of purpose and direction in one's life that incorporates goals setting and achievement. *Personal growth* is the process of continually developing and challenging one's abilities (e.g., life-long learner) and, thus, increasing one's potential throughout life (Ryff, 1989).

Current and Future Directions in Wellbeing Research

Wellbeing has been used with populations within the LGBTQ community (e.g., Bauermeister et al., 2010; Domm, 2017) and, recently, with transgender individuals (Bouman et al., 2016; Stanton et al., 2017). However, wellbeing studies have yet to concentrate exclusively on nonbinary individuals. That said, wellbeing theory has demonstrated adaptability with different populations and allows research to concentrate on the dimensions that are most pertinent to an individual or population. The potential exists to explore wellbeing among nonbinary individuals with attention to both internal assessments of wellbeing, as well as attention to the quality of interactions with one's environment. That is, wellbeing research with nonbinary individuals has the potential to capture the various ways that gendered experiences – mediated by the environment – hold the potential to promote and/or corrode wellbeing for nonbinary individuals, phenomena which to date have not been fully studied.

A number of critiques and evolutions in wellbeing theory are relevant to research with nonbinary individuals. Coan (1977) critiqued the minimal consideration for the influence of individuals' unique experiences (e.g., culture, history) and identities (e.g.,

ethnicity, class) as a gap in wellbeing theorizing. Ryff and Keyes (1995) also recognized the possible missing structural dimensions of wellbeing theory to understand additional group differences. Further, asymmetry may exist within wellbeing due to assumed equity and the lack of distributive justice, disproportionate resources, and potential for happiness (Bradley, 2015). Despite awareness for the need for validation with diverse populations, few theories or research on wellbeing have addressed these gaps. Diener and colleagues (1999) call for further investigation into the interaction between the person and environmental factors, including predictor variables of wellbeing for people with differing values, goals, ability to cope, and cultures, from which to understand the role of adaptation in the process of wellbeing.

The two prevalent theories of wellbeing, PWB and subjective wellbeing (SWB), are distinct, yet overlapping, theories that contribute different valuable perspectives to the exploration of wellbeing. For instance, PWB alone may not be the best theory for exploring wellbeing among marginalized populations, such as nonbinary individuals, whose environments contribute to inequality and oppression. SWB can complement PWB, emphasizing the lived experience of the individual and their assessment of affective experiences and life satisfaction. SWB also contributes an outside-in approach that asks, "How do external events, situations, and demographics influence happiness?" as well as an inside-out approach that seeks to explain how individual perceptions contribute to variability in wellbeing (Diener et al., 1999). However, SWB has been criticized for being short-term, and at the expense of studying long-term characteristics of wellbeing (e.g., self-actualization) (Ryff, 1989), this may not be accurate for marginalized populations whose (emotional) affective experiences may have enduring

consequences that were not considered initially when theorized and tested with primarily (cisgender,) white, middle class, adults (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

According to Ryan and Deci (2001), evidence suggests that wellbeing is best studied as a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon, including both SWB and PWB. Similarly, a discriminant validity analysis between SWB and PWB among an international sample (*N*=7,617) from 109 countries across six continents and in 16 languages and using 20 scales (235 items) found SWB and PWB to be highly correlated and, rather than distinct constructs, are part of a larger overarching construct of wellbeing (Disabato et al., 2016). Thus, rather than seen as competing theories of wellbeing, PWB and SWB can complement each other (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008) and contribute to a shift towards more comprehensive theorizing of wellbeing that could incorporate the environmental factors while retaining the subjective experience of the individual. For example, Nussbaum's (2011) work centers wellbeing on elements of dignity, of which ten central capabilities include *control over one's political and material environment*. Optimally, a new approach to wellbeing could also be directly applicable to social work practice for improving wellbeing among marginalized populations at the micro, mezzo, and macro level.

Critical theories, such as minority stress theory and feminist queer theory, have the potential to expand wellbeing research with attention to marginalization, internalization, and sociopolitical power structures. From a clinical perspective, assessing wellbeing can increase awareness of assets and challenges in an individual's life and help assist empowerment in decision-making for improved wellbeing. Additionally, this approach could be used with individuals and communities to help strengthen arguments

for programming and policy changes to help individuals to thrive. I propose an approach to wellbeing that could extend our assessment and development of wellbeing in the sense of time and magnitude, considering long-term wellbeing and wellbeing at a community level, especially among marginalized communities. At the time of this writing, the literature has explored the impact of racial microaggressions on wellbeing (e.g., Helm, 2013; Ong et al., 2013), but none have explicitly explored the effects of gender-based microaggressions and aggressions on wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. In order to understand the range of influences on wellbeing – both corrosive and promotive – a brief discussion of minority stress theory, microaggressions, biological weathering and allostatic load is warranted, along with a consideration of resilience and minority strengths.

Influences on Wellbeing

Minority Stress Model

Meyer (2003) developed the minority stress model, which theorized that marginalized individuals experience diminished mental health that results from social environments that are harmful and stressful due to stigma, prejudice, and discrimination. Minority stress refers to the additional stress that marginalized groups experience due to prejudice and discrimination (McLemore, 2018). Minority stressors can be experienced on a continuum from proximal (subjective, felt stigma that is internally experienced) to distal (objective, enacted stigma that is directly experienced) with the harmful effects resulting from not only directly experienced prejudice but also anticipated discrimination, concealment of identity, and internalized stigma (acceptance and internalization of negative message about one's identity) (Herek, 2009; McLemore, 2018; Meyer, 2003).

Meyer (1995, 2003) developed the minority stress model for cisgender LGB men and women (McLemore, 2018); however, it has since been applied to other marginalized populations in the LGBTQ community, including trans and nonbinary individuals' gendered experiences with stigma (e.g., Brewster et al., 2012; Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Kelleher, 2009; McLemore, 2018; White Hughto et al., 2015).

An adaptation of minority stress with trans and nonbinary individuals by Hendricks and Testa (2012) followed the original idea of stressors on wellbeing with consideration for the unique needs of gender identity along with two additional proximal stressors – *expectations of violence and discrimination* and *internalized transphobia,* defined as "feelings result[ing] from a negative appraisal of one's self-worth related to victimization and a lack of community resources that lead many [trans and nonbinary] people to see themselves as a burden to society" (Grossman et al., 2016, p. 14). Recent studies exploring minority stress found similar associations between enacted and felt stigma and psychological distress among trans and nonbinary individuals (Bockting et al., 2013; Domm, 2017; Rood et al., 2016) with enacted stigma ranging from seemingly innocuous comments to physical assault to death threats based on transphobic media and religious ideology (Rood et al., 2017).

The minority stress model has been used to explain the discrimination, marginalization, and erasure[6] that nonbinary individuals face in many systems of their lives. Many factors can pose a threat to wellbeing, including daily microaggressions – "[f]or major segments of society, macrosocial factors such as disempowerment and

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[6] Erasure is the intentional (individual or systemic) exclusion of a minority group from social, political, or historical contexts. For example, the exclusion of trans people in LGBTQ history, such as the role Marsha P. Johnson played in the pivotal 1969 Stonewall riots.

injustice work insidiously against wellness" (Cowen, 1991, p. 406). Stigma and discrimination have been found to place nonbinary individuals at increased risk for health disparities (Poteat, German, et al., 2013). Further, a between-groups comparison using the 2008 NTDS data showed that nonbinary participants ($N_{nonbinary}$=860) experienced significantly higher levels of gender-based discrimination and violence than binary transgender respondents (Harrison et al., 2012). Some nonbinary individuals report anticipating rejection "anytime they left home and entered a public space" with psychologically deteriorating thoughts and feels associated with this anticipation (Rood et al., 2016, p. 156). Though valuable for understanding marginalization, the Minority Stress Model has been critiqued for reinforcing a deficit-based approach to understanding the experiences of marginalized individuals without consideration for their strengths (Perrin et al., 2019).

Microaggressions

The concept of microaggressions emerged in the 1970s in the context of racial microaggressions (Pierce et al., 1978), which were defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (p. 65), and have since been applied to other marginalized populations (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Microaggressions can manifest in three primary ways: Microinvalidations (e.g., exclusionary bathroom policies; often unconscious), micro insults (e.g., transphobic slurs; often unconscious), and micro assaults (e.g., being attacked; often conscious), which can all lead to environmental (macro-level) microaggressions (Sue, 2010). Nadal et al. (2012) categorized these daily systemic

microaggressions experienced by trans and nonbinary individuals in the following contexts (a) public restrooms, (b) the criminal justice system, (c) emergency health care, and (d) government-issued identification.

Sue (2010) discusses several possible responses to microaggression and the impact those responses have on an individual's confidence and security. *Attributional ambiguity* concerns a person experiencing confusion and doubt about ambiguous experiences of questionable microaggressions with well-intended individuals. In *response indecision,* a person deliberates on the best response, such as wanting to address the microaggression while avoiding defensiveness. The *time-limited nature of responding* is the consideration for the time between the microaggression and response before the topic is passed when a reply could feel disruptive. A challenging response is *denying experiential reality,* when a person cannot or will not recognize that a loved one could have a bias and microaggress against them and, therefore, engage in self-deception and denial. Last, *impotency of action* is inaction based on the belief that little or no good would result from addressing the microaggression. This last response is typical and may signify hopelessness, giving up or conservation of energy (Sue, 2010).

Microaggressions faced by nonbinary individuals include being called by a former name, experiencing erasure in the documentation, and being asked to explain their gender (Brown & Burill, 2018). Additionally, trans and nonbinary individuals experience frequent misgendering by others, which has been reported to be stigmatizing, with the higher frequency of misgendering associated with more negative feelings about themselves and their gender identity (McLemore, 2015). According to Sue (2010), well-intended invalidations can be the most detrimental due to the hidden and even

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unconscious demeaning messages. Frequent misgendering was suspected to be related to weak social support networks (McLemore, 2018).

Microaggressions towards SNCGE have been well established with mixed trans and nonbinary samples and associated with higher rates of discrimination (Bockting et al., 2013; Domm, 2017; Grant et al., 2011; Harrison et al., 2012; Reisner et al., 2016). But few explicitly capture the gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals (e.g., Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017), whose SNCGE may be intentionally connected to their gender identity and for which microaggressions may have a more significant detrimental impact. In other words, it could be argued that nonbinary individuals whose gender expression is nonconforming may face additional stressors and choices about when to strategically express their gender. As in other areas of research about gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals, this is missing from the literature.

Aggressions

Nonbinary individuals face pervasive direct and indirect acts of aggression across the systems in their lives. In 2008, the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force launched the groundbreaking National Transgender Discrimination Survey (NTDS), which was the first large-data study to comprehensively explore experience of discrimination among trans and nonbinary adults (N= 6,450) in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands (Grant et al., 2011). The findings showed that, across settings (retail stores, restaurants, hotels, and transportation), nonbinary participants experienced higher rates of unequal treatment (31.0%-46.0%) and verbal harassment/disrespect (34.0%-49.0%) compared to binary transgender individuals (18.0%-31.0% and 25.0%-37.0%) (Grant et

al., 2011). Concerning housing, nonbinary individuals were less likely to own homes (24.0%) compared to binary transgender individuals (30.0%), and less likely to move due to bias (28.0% compared to 44.0%), but considerably less likely to be evicted (6.0% compared to 13.0%) (Grant et al., 2011).

When compared to binary transgender individuals, the literature has been inconsistent on whether nonbinary individuals experience more (e.g., Grant et al., 2011; Harrison et al., 2012) or less discrimination (Grant et al., 2011, less rejection; Reisner et al., 2016, less daily discrimination). This indicates the need for more consistent research in this area with specific attention to the types of microaggressions and aggressions experienced by nonbinary individuals (e.g., pronouns, bathrooms).

Structural Stigma

Stigma research has been critiqued for a micro-level individual and interpersonal focus that does not factor the larger environmental pressures of structural stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001), which was informed by institutional racism that perpetuates racism by institutions and ideologies (see Ture & Hamilton, 1992; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Hatzenbuehler and Link (2014) define structural stigma as the "societal-level conditions, cultural norms, and institutional policies that constrain the opportunities, resources, and wellbeing of the stigmatized" (p. 2). Cumulatively, microaggressions and aggressions can signify a hostile and invalidating climate that threatens wellbeing among marginalized populations (Sue, 2010). The literature on experiences of daily microaggression supports the importance of studying environmental impacts on wellbeing among nonbinary individuals to ameliorate these harmful interpersonal and environmental factors. Hatzenbuehler (2016) argues for the inclusion of structural stigma

in stigma research due to the consistent adverse impact on individual-level stigma processes (e.g., identity concealment, Pachankis et al., 2015), health inequalities (e.g., internalized transphobia and suicidality, Perez-Brumer et al., 2015), and interference with mental health interventions (e.g., stigma-reduction education, Reid et al., 2014). Structural stigma helps explain why some folx flourish while others do not (Hatzenbuehler, 2016), supporting the inclusion of environmental factors in this study.

Biological Weathering and Allostatic Load

Minority stress has a cumulative effect on mental and physical health (Nadal et al., 2016), diminishing psychological wellbeing (Deitz, 2015; Nadal et al., 2015; Sue et al., 2008). Further, chronic exposure to stressors can have a biological impact on individuals – biological weathering (Mustanski et al., 2016). Biological weathering has been described as:

> [A] phenomenon of an earlier onset and poorer prognosis for illness across multiple chronic diseases… Such weathering among African Americans and other disadvantaged communities is driven by the cumulative impact of repeated exposure to psychological, social, physical, and chemical stressors in their residential, occupational, and other environments and by coping with these stressors. (Williams et al., 2016, p. 2140-2141)

What Geronimus et al. (2010) describes as "stress-mediated wear and tear on the body" (p. 21) can contribute to health disparities such as breast cancer (Williams et al., 2016), inflammation (Simons et al., 2018) (that can contribute to disparity in other conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, and cirrhosis), and bio measures of aging and shortened life expectancy (Geronimus et al., 2010).

LGBTQ individuals who experience greater levels of microaggressions report more health-related problems (Sue, 2010); however, LGBTQ research is just beginning to expand on mental health effects to explore the biological effects of marginalization. A

latent class analysis of LGBTQ participants (*N*=248) found four classes, of which two classes of LGBTQ youth were at high risk for depression and PTSD symptoms, those with moderate and increasingly victimization and those with high, steady LGBTQ-based victimization (experiences of verbal and physical threats or assault) compared to classes with decreasing (high or low) victimization (Mustanski et al., 2016). However, only 7.3% of the baseline and 4.7% of the follow-up participants identified as transgender, disallowing a differential analysis between cisgender and transgender LGBTQ youth, which could provide insight into identifying which populations are reporting decreasing victimization, as well as those reporting increasing victimization.

An indicator of biological weathering is allostatic load (AL) (Williams et al., 2016), which is overexposure to stress hormones that over years of chronic life stressors can erode at the function of essential body systems (McEwen, 1998; McEwen & Seeman, 1999; Seeman et al., 1997). A typical response to stress is a short-term increase in the sympathetic nervous system; however, persistent exposure to stressors can lead to chronic overstimulation (AL) with deteriorating effects on cardiovascular, metabolic, and inflammatory systems (McEwen, 1998). The toll of allostatic load on the body may contribute to the development or advancement of a range of health conditions including heart disease, diabetes, susceptibility to infection and slower healing, cancer, and accelerated aging (Geronimus et al., 2010, p. 21). Concisely, AL is one way to measure biological dysregulation (e.g., high cortisol levels) resulting from the cumulative burden of stressors (Williams et al., 2016).

Given the chronic experiences of transphobia among trans and nonbinary individuals and the accumulative allostatic load from coping with microaggressions, it is

likely that they experience similar additive tolls to their health. Despite this logical connection, there is a lack of research exploring the long-term physical health impacts of stress-related stigma among trans and nonbinary individuals. Wallien et al. (2007) were the first to study physiology correlates (cortisol levels, heart rate, and skin conductance levels) with stress among children with gender dysphoria (*N*=25) compared to a control group (*N*=25) any psychiatric complaints (presumably all cisgender, not including transgender children without gender dysphoria). While not all factors were significantly different from the control group, the findings did show more anxiety among children with gender dysphoria, as indicated by elevated skin conductance levels and more negative emotions (Wallien et al., 2007).

Minority Strengths Model

Years after presenting the Minority Stress Model, Meyer (2015) argued for a more comprehensive theoretical exploration of minority stress among LGBTQ individuals that also incorporates resilience factors for LGBTQ health. According to Perrin et al. (2019), no such model yet existed. From this gap, Perrin et al. (2019) proposed the Minority Strengths Model created to incorporate strengths, both individual and communal, to build resilience for improved mental and physical health outcomes. This model was empirically tested with a racially-diverse sample of LGBTQ individuals (*N*=317), nearly 25% of which identified as transgender, nonbinary, or intersex[7]. The strengths found to have a significant path included social support, identity pride, resilience, community consciousness, and self-esteem. Perrin et al. (2019) recognized that these variables are several of many paths to wellbeing among LGBTQ individuals. A

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[7] The 24.61% (*n*=78) included trans men, trans women, intersex, and other. Though these identities were reported collectively, it is important to note that intersex individuals may not identify as transgender.

central intention of the Minority Strength Model was to stimulate a strengths-based approach to research with marginalized populations (Perrin et al., 2019), which has been adopted in this study along with the minority stress model for a holistic understanding of wellbeing among nonbinary individuals.

Resilience

Meyer (2015) defined resilience as "the quality of being able to survive and thrive in the face of adversity. It includes anything that can lead to more positive adaptation to minority stress and thus, mitigates the negative impact of stress on health" (p. 210). Resilience has predominantly been studied at the individual level, as an internal process isolated from the person's environment in which systems shape their experience and opportunities throughout their life (Shaw, 2016). When conceptualized as a personal quality or process that allows a person to adapt, buffer, and survive minority stress (Bruce et al., 2015; Hill & Gunderson, 2015; Meyer, 2015), it is resilience *despite* adversity. This does not address and, arguably, even reinforces the very systems that resilience is intended to help people to overcome (Shaw et al., 2016). These conceptualizations of resilience have been critiqued for perpetuating the narrative of beating great odds (e.g., cancer, abuse, poverty) through enough hard work, which places the responsibility to overcome adversity squarely on the individual (Shaw et al., 2016). "Perhaps the most insidious aspect of promises of individual salvation in the self-help aisle is that they make us feel bad about ourselves" (Ungar, 2018, p. 24). This approach simultaneously obscures and inadvertently reinforces the problematic structural and systemic variables that influence the individual's experiences and that the approach was intended to help the individual overcome to promote wellbeing – "the problem and proposed solution are

misaligned" (Shaw et al., 2016, p. 36). Shaw and colleagues (2016) argued for a more comprehensive conceptualization of resilience. For some time, there has been a call for an ecological approach to resilience that considers the influence of systems on resilience (Shaw et al., 2016; Ungar, 2012).

An Ecological Approach to Resilience

An ecological approach to resilience emerged and centered the environment in one's ability to cope, survive, and thrive. As Unger (2018) succinctly stated, "the stresses that put our lives in jeopardy in the first place remain in our environment" (p. 5) and, therefore, must be addressed. Ungar (2018) posits that it is a well-resourced individual (not just in quantity but in meaningful resources to that individual) who thrives:

> It is true that as human beings, we have internal resources to help us thrive in the most emotionally and physically damaging situations, but those internal resources are seldom of much use unless we are also given the external resources we need to succeed. (p. 6)

Importantly, "resilience is almost always more nurture than nature" (p. 18). Reviewing the literature, Ungar (2018) found the following shortlist of frequent resources for resilience: 1) Structure, 2) Consequences, 3) Intimate and sustainable relationships, 4) Lots of other relationships, 5) A powerful identity, 6) A sense of control, 7) A sense of belonging, 8) Rights and responsibilities, 9) Safety and Support, 10) Positive Thinking, 11) Physical well-being, 12) Financial well-being (p. 19-20). Masten (2014) categorized similar resilience factors according to adaptive systems (e.g., family, social networks, educational systems, communities), highlighting the essential role of our environments and systems in promoting resilience. Further, Masten (2014) posits resilience as a framework for action that includes setting positive goals, tracking positive and problem outcomes, and strategizing for the future (prevention, promotion, and protection).

Ultimately, the importance of resilience to wellbeing is in the help to resist day-to-day threats of marginalization and to re-establish wellbeing. An ecological approach to wellbeing bridges the gap between wellbeing theories and minority stressors with modes for internal coping and external support to weather an unaccepting environment. Through an ecological understanding of resilience, the priority for practice and policy work to change the environment to better support the individual is strengthened.

Promotive and Corrosive Factors of Wellbeing

Similar to the rationale for studying wellbeing with resilience as an important component to coping with othering, corrosive and promotive factors – rather than risk and protective factors – were selected as the appropriate mechanisms for understanding the gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals and their wellbeing. Patel and Goodman (2007) recommend that more attention be given to promotive factors that "actively enhance" wellbeing (p. 705). It is from this that promotive factors will be used in this study to define factors from individual to systemic levels that actively enhance wellbeing. van Gelderen et al.(2013) noted that promotive factors affected the relationships between stigmatization and harmful behavior as well as stigmatization and subjective wellbeing. Likewise, Patel and Goodman (2007) stated that "a better understanding of promotive factors may contribute in powerful and potentially unexpected ways to our understanding of health in general, mental health in particular, and other aspects of social thriving" (p. 706). Alternatively, promotive factors have also been described as assets and resources that contribute to resilience and wellbeing (Hill & Gunderson, 2015).

Less frequently used in the literature, corrosive factors are mostly discussed in studies with POC, in which corrosive factors have been identified as discrimination and racism (Diemer et al., 2016; Etowa et al., 2015). When examining factors that diminish wellbeing among marginalized populations, the language *corrosive* fits the appropriate effect of pervasive, stigmatizing, toxic behavior and environments on wellbeing. Corrosive factors will be defined in this study as factors that deteriorate wellbeing from individual to systemic levels. The role of the environment has been recognized for the corrosive effect of adversity on wellbeing, as well as the promotive effect from favorable conditions (Asakura, 2016; Cowen, 1991). A qualitative study of nonbinary individuals (*N*=10) noted differences in comfort with their gender identity on a 10-point scale, on which internal comfort was reported to be much higher (*M*=8.44, *SD*=1.24) than external comfort (*M*=5.06, *SD*=1.21) (Kinney, 2018). Factors that negatively impact wellbeing have been well-documented; however, fewer studies exist that inform about promotive factors of wellbeing for LGBTQ populations, especially for subgroups within the community (Haas et al., 2011).

The Literature on Wellbeing Among Nonbinary People

Employing the broad sense of wellbeing as *thriving* or *flourishing* (Bradley, 2015), wellbeing among nonbinary individuals will be explored as a complex, multidimensional concept. Wellbeing has been conceptualized as occurring at numerous levels, including individual, family, community, and society (Zainuddin & Russell-Bennett, 2017). Similarly, Ryff's (1989) PWB model identified six foundational dimensions of interlocking perspectives of wellbeing in an individual's life. This literature review focuses on identified variables of wellbeing and other variables that take

into consideration marginalization, which has been missing from previous wellbeing theories. Building upon existing wellbeing theories, the literature review is organized by intrapersonal factors, interpersonal factors, and systemic factors of wellbeing. Working within the limited literature specific to nonbinary individuals, overlapping populations (e.g., Trans and nonbinary or LGBTQ collectively) will be used when necessary to provide existing knowledge about a pertinent topic.

Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and Systemic Factors of Wellbeing

> [A]mple literature explores the relationship between body, mind, and environment and health and wellness suggests that this interaction is complex, recursive, and reticulate and always implicated in keeping people well, assisting individuals in regenerating their trauma, and helping individuals and communities survive the impact and aftermath of calamity and ordeal. (Saleebey, 1996, p. 300)

In contrast to a deficits-based emphasis on pathologizing and othering, the strengths perspective identifies values and assets of an individual, group, or community along with an appreciation for the impact of the environment (e.g., trauma, discrimination) (Saleebey, 1996, 2006). Subjective experiences of wellbeing are valuable because "people react differently to the same circumstances, and they evaluate conditions based on their unique expectations, values, and previous experiences" (Diener et al., 1999). Additionally, Saleebey (1996) posited that one's environment could be a source of learning, both from formal and everyday experiences, that can help individuals identify their strengths and build resilience.

Increasing attention has been directed towards the influence of environmental factors on wellbeing (SWB; Asakura, 2016; Milligan et al. 2006), aligning with the foundational social work perspective of person-in-environment that takes into consideration discrimination and unjust systems (Germain, 1991). This shift creates

opportunities to identify and assess the impact of marginalization on individuals and communities as social workers are called to do. Stotzer et al. (2013) noted the importance of the "[p]hysical environments and the less tangible but equally important quality of 'climate,'" particularly as a determinant of access to services. The culture in which a person is immersed is a crucial component of the environment that influences wellbeing (Diener et al., 1999).

The extant literature is synthesized and related to wellbeing among nonbinary individuals and the analogous LGBTQ populations, when nonbinary-specific information is not available. In alignment with ideas posited by positive psychology such as the internal and external focus of strengths (Vaughan & Rodriguez, 2014) and models of wellbeing that include subjective, psychological, and objective measures of wellbeing (Hird, 2003; Milligan et al., 2006) or measurements of wellbeing from the proximal (personal) to the distal (societal) (Cummins et al., 2003), the literature review is organized into intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systemic factors of wellbeing. The intrapersonal factors represent internal or subjective experiences that impact wellbeing (e.g., positive identity, internalized transphobia), while external or environmental influences on wellbeing (e.g., social support, experienced microaggressions) will be discussed within the interpersonal and systemic factors of wellbeing. Promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing may exist within each category of factors of wellbeing.

Intrapersonal Factors of Wellbeing

Gender Dysphoria

Gender identity and expression and ones' environment has played a critical role in nonbinary mental health and access to health care especially when dysphoria is

experienced. Vrouenraets et al. (2015) describes gender dysphoria as experiencing an incongruence between one's assigned sex at birth and one's gender identity and expression; however, not all those who are incongruent experience distress (Beek et al., 2016). A paradigm shift is occurring from a deficit-based assessment of an individual towards acknowledging the significant role of society's lack of acceptance, contributing to adverse outcomes. Due to pressure to reduce stigma, the conceptualization of gender dysphoria has changed in the DSM-5 from the diagnosis of gender identity disorder to gender dysphoria, which shifted to a framework of gender on a spectrum and less binary language (Beek et al., 2016). The DSM-5, however, is still critiqued for perpetuating binary genders rather than a more expansive understanding of gender and expression (Argüello, 2018). A diagnosis of gender dysphoria also continues to be controversial over gatekeeping access to medical interventions and fosters mistrust towards service providers (Collazo et al., 2013).

For those who experience gender dysphoria, it has been shown to dissipate among binary transgender samples after transitioning due to the guidance and gender affirmation from binary gender norms (Dhejne et al., 2016). When working with nonbinary clients with gender dysphoria, Benestad (2010) recommends de-genderizing body parts (particularly genitalia) and practicing erotic pleasure with sex organs to disrupt the "wrong body" narrative and increase body affirmation and positivity. Davey et al. (2014) examined the theoretical link between gender dysphoria and low perceived support, which could contribute to decreased PWB among binary transgender men and women attending a national gender identity clinic (N=103) and a matched cisgender control group. As hypothesized, transgender men and women with gender dysphoria scored

lower on perceived social support and lower on PWB measures, and social support was found to be a significant predictor for PWB (Davey et al., 2014).

A gender dysphoria diagnosis is especially problematic for nonbinary individuals who, compared to their binary transgender peers, often do not report gender dysphoria at the same frequency or intensity and should not be precluded from receiving gender-affirming interventions (Devor, 1996; Kinney, in preparation), nor does gender dysphoria and/or pursuit of medical gender-affirming interventions infer someone is nonbinary (Vincent, 2016). In a grounded theory study of nonbinary adults living in the Midwest (*N*=10), the majority of respondents did not express gender dysphoria, and the dysphoria that was expressed was framed in regards to engagement with others and their bodies (e.g., seeing breasts and assuming a female identity) (Kinney, in preparation). Furthermore, the desire to transition is not perfectly correlated with distress (Alderson, 2013), and healthcare policies that require a diagnosis of gender dysphoria will continue to be a barrier to care.

Friedler (2019) raises a thoughtful question about outcomes for nonbinary individuals who do not identify with these gender norms. With consideration for the diversity within the nonbinary community, the paths to transition are just as varied (Ferguson, 2017). Just as being nonbinary is not indicated by whether or not a person has gender dysphoria, it is also not contingent on whether they pursue medical transitioning or not (Vincent, 2016). Similarly, some nonbinary youth who do not intend to pursue surgery have reported being excluded from transgender groups due to the focus on surgical interventions (Wilchins, 2002b). Nonbinary individuals report that the 'known all my life' narrative is not authentic for them, and neither is a linear transition; as one

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person stated, "my transitioning will evolve in unexpected ways over the course of my life. I am transitioning without an end" (Ferguson, 2017, para. 4).

Gender Euphoria

A new narrative is emerging of gender euphoria, defined as "the affirming ways that gender experiences and presentations can be joyful and actualized positively" or as a way to affirmingly describe what it feels like to be who we are (Withey-Rila et al., 2021, p. 243-244). The concept of gender euphoria has been discussed more frequently in closed social media support groups (e.g., a nonbinary top surgery support group where it was posed, "What is your recent gender euphoria?"), indicating a reframing around gender and body image towards thriving occurring within communities. As Benestad's (2010) succinctly stated, "positive gender fulfillment is euphoric" (p 227). A growing collection of trans literature includes content about *gender fulfillment* or gender euphoria including hair removal by professional electrolysis (Bradford et al., 2019), facial feminization (Ashley & Ells, 2018), and pronouns and chosen names (Gridley et al. 2016; Muzzey et al., 2021).

This shift from dysphoria to euphoria focuses on the positive aspects of being gender diverse and belonging to this resilient and resourceful community. Arguably, gender euphoria is an integral facet of seeing gender diverse individuals holistically, from someone who is part of a marginalized population who suffers consequences of their environment to folx who thrive despite the challenges they face. Though only beginning to appear in the literature, gender euphoria is already recognized as an important part of trans and nonbinary wellbeing. To further understand gender euphoria among nonbinary

individuals, the topic was explored in connection to wellbeing when it emerged among participants in this study.

Coping and Adaptation

Possessing strong coping skills for navigating minority stress is thought to be essential for promoting psychological wellbeing (Budge et al., 2014; Butler, 2004). However, in addition to the corrosive effects of discrimination on mental health, stigma and oppression may also inhibit one's ability to cope (Nurius et al., 2013; Pearlin et al., 2005), especially further traumatizing trans and nonbinary individuals (Mizock & Mueser, 2014). Social support, for example, was found to be a significant predictor of lower anxiety and depression, except when paired with avoidant coping, in which social support is no longer significant, and higher avoidance coping was associated with higher levels of depression (Budge et al., 2014).

According to Vaughan and Rodriguez (2014), sexual and gender minorities use creativity to develop coping mechanisms, such as reframing experience of stigma and discrimination within the context of hetero- and cisnormativity. LGBTQ youth reported social activism to be an important coping process that was a self-affirming way to connect with others and bolster the courage to face adversity (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010). Similarly, self-reflection on adversity was found to build character and improve wellbeing among LGBTQ adults (Asakura & Craig, 2014). Despite the high level of discrimination faced by nonbinary individuals for rejection of social norms, little is known about how they cope and moderate the stress associated with discrimination (Budge et al., 2014)**.**

Resilience

It is a profound accomplishment when gender minorities muster resilience within an oppressive environment (Mizock & Lewis, 2008). Despite the high level of discrimination faced by nonbinary individuals for rejection of social norms or an SNCGE, little is known about how they cope and moderate the stress associated with discrimination (Budge et al., 2014). What is known about nonbinary individuals is that their resilience is bolstered when nonbinary individuals can see themselves positively and when that image is reflected through being seen by those around them (Lewis, 2008; Singh et al., 2011; Singh et al., 2014). Another essential component of resilience among trans nonbinary individuals is the autonomy to define one's gender identity and explore fluidity (Singh et al., 2011). Facilitating factors to resilience among trans and nonbinary adults have been supportive and affirming communities (Singh et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2011). This is not surprising because, according to Ungar (2018), "resilient people tend to cluster together. Find me one individual who is doing well, and I will show you others living and working close by" (p. 159). Social science research has been critiqued for predominantly studying binary gender identities, with few exploring nonbinary experiences of coping and resilience (Budge et al., 2014), identifying a gap for future research.

Internalized Transphobia – "Not Nonbinary Enough."

According to McLemore (2018), self-stigma, or the internalization of negative societal attitudes and messages about a marginalized group in which one belongs, is one of the most impactful proximal stressors. Research has shown that mental health can be adversely impacted by internalizing the frequent negative messages and fear of violence

about trans and nonbinary individuals and the community that are found in social media, the news, conversations with loved ones, and systemic policies (Rood et al., 2017; Withey-Rila et al., 2021). Mental health can be adversely impacted by internalizing the frequent negative messages about trans and nonbinary individuals and the community found in social media, the news, conversations with loved ones, and systemic policies (Rood et al., 2017). For example, the assumption that trans and nonbinary individuals experience gender dysphoria contributes to the 'not trans enough' internalization and doubt among nonbinary individuals (Friedler, 2019), a doubt that sometimes originates from invalidation by other trans and nonbinary friends (Galupo et al., 2014). Additionally, nonbinary individuals may also face pressure to transition to a binary gender (e.g., man or woman) from family, partners, and even within the LGBTQ community, which can also contribute to feelings of invalidation and insecurities about being nonbinary (Lewis, 2008). According to Withey-Rila et al. (2021), a critical role in disrupting internalization of transphobia is understanding how one's sense of self and community plays a role in clinical interventions is needed to address societal barriers faced by the trans and nonbinary community.

Positive Nonbinary Identity

A positive LGBTQ identity has been described as a strong and assured sense of self in the face of adversity that can help overcome future minority stress better and improve wellbeing (Vaughan & Rodriguez, 2014). Even while recognizing the challenges, many trans and nonbinary individuals positively described their lives and wellbeing (Budge et al., 2013; Pitts et al., 2009; Stanton et al., 2017). To combat internalized transphobia, Meyer (2003) suggested positive characteristics of a stigmatized

identity, such as identity importance and social support, could ameliorate the effect of this proximal minority stress on psychological distress. In another study, 75% of trans and nonbinary individuals (*N*=18) who were interviewed about coping during their transitioning process said they were "happy" and even "joyful" while also identifying negative emotions and challenges to transitioning (Budge et al., 2013, p. 627).

For some people, binary options were the only options at the time and have since discovered nonbinary gender identities, which can be a powerful realization and relief (Friedler, 2019). Despite the dominant risk and deficit perspective, many trans and nonbinary individuals experience wellbeing and flourish, particularly those with a positive self-identity (Riggle & Rostosky, 2012; Riggle et al., 2011). In a mixed methods study exploring positive transgender identity (*N*=61), 72% of participants reported feeling very or extremely positive about their gender identity, with the majority of participants (88.5%) reporting more than one positive example (Riggle et al., 2011).

A positive nonbinary identity can also serve to strengthen individual's resilience. Lewis's (2008) seminal qualitative dissertation on resilience among nonbinary individuals (*N*=10) demonstrated that positive self-view and supportive people in one's life were protective factors for building resilience. Similarly, the ability to self-define and self-conceptualize one's gender identity through language and expression has been found to be a critical factor in resilience (Singh et al., 2011; Singh et al., 2014). According to Lewis (2008), resilience is bolstered when nonbinary individuals can see themselves positively and when that image is reflected through being seen by those around them. Interpersonal relationships that allow individuals to be seen and accepted have been

repeatedly found to be significant across the lifespan (Riggle et al., 2011; Vaughan & Rodriquez, 2014).

Interpersonal Factors of Wellbeing

Outness

Outness has been defined as "the degree to which individuals self-disclose their sexual orientation [or gender identity] to others" and "may vary across time, place, and situation" (Whitman & Nadal, 2015, p. 373). The coming out process, particularly a meaningful experience of it, has been described as an essential developmental stage for wellbeing among for LGBTQ people (Asakura & Craig, 2014; Kosciw et al., 2015), in which the level of trans and nonbinary supportive caregivers and environment have a strong influence (Baiocco et al., 2015; Kinney, in preparation). Research has found a direct correlational link between being out and better wellbeing (Kosciw et al., 2010). Further, the corrosive impact of concealing one's gender identity and expression has been found to contribute to elevated anxiety and depression (Budge et al., 2010).

The 2010 NTDS showed that nonbinary individuals were out to fewer individuals and experienced less rejection, which may indicate an intentional method to avoid loss of support that has been established as high among binary transgender individuals (Grant et al., 2011). Considerably fewer nonbinary individuals (35.0%) reported being out to their families compared to binary transgender individuals (64.0%) and fewer reported family rejection due to gender identity (33.0% compared to 43.0%). Similarly, nonbinary individuals reported lower rates of losing close friends due to gender identity (49.0% compared to 61.0%); however, both were high (Grant et al., 2011). The other large national trans and nonbinary dataset, the 2015 USTS, did not provide a comparison for

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outness between binary transgender and nonbinary participants but found that the highest rates of being out were among LGBTQ individuals (62%) and family of origin (53%), followed by health care providers (40%) (James et al., 2016). According to The Trevor Project's (2019a) recent survey, LGBTQ youth are less likely to disclose their gender identity than their sexual orientation and more likely to tell friends than adults, which is significant because an analysis of the LGB youth (*n*=20,202), showed youth with at least one accepting adult were 40% less likely to report attempting suicide in the last 12 months (The Trevor Project, 2019b).

In some cases, outness can be harmful to wellbeing. In particular, it has been found to be harmful when individuals are involuntarily outed by others (Budge et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2015). For some, outness can be a strategic choice that depends on multiple variables, including personal issues (e.g., emotional energy that day), the others who are being told, and the environment (Muzzey et al., 2019). Others may postpone coming out due to a fear of being victimized and losing social support (Anhalt & Morris, 1998; Beemyn & Rankin, 2011b; Kosciw et al., 2012), especially when weighing multiple marginalized identities (Nicolazzo, 2016). In a longitudinal study of stigma management among gays and lesbians (*N*=81), Beals et al. (2009) found that on days when participants decided not to disclose their sexual orientation when given an opportunity, they reported higher wellbeing, as measured by depression, self-esteem, and life-satisfaction scales. Even though outness has been shown to increase victimization, a representative national sample of LGBTQ secondary school students (*N*=7,816) showed the benefits to wellbeing from being out reduced the negative effects of victimization and promoted resilience (Kosciw et al., 2015).

Some explanation for these findings may come from a recent literature review on the effects of perceived discrimination, in which people with concealable stigmatized identities (not immediately visible or known stigmatized identities) were found to face worse mental and physical health outcomes than people with visible stigmatized identities (Schmitt et al., 2014). These individuals may be less likely to seek out such support and to internalize stigma (Chaudoir et al., 2013) or be less likely to have a community with shared stigma (Frable et al., 1998). Additionally, those with concealable stigmatized identities must navigate decisions of when, where, and to whom they may disclose their identity (Goffman, 1963), which some may avoid, thus, contributing to the long-term endurance of stigma and anxiety without social support (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). The varying outcomes of outness speaks to the multiple variables in navigating outness and the need for further exploration, especially as it relates to promoting or corroding wellbeing.

Misgendering

While misgendering can occur among binary transgender individuals, this type of "nonaffirmation" is especially detrimental for nonbinary individuals whose identities are invalidated by other's unwillingness to use gender-neutral language (Testa et al., 2015). Being misgendered has been described as presenting "challenges [to] my hard-won sense of self" (Friedler, 2019, para. 17). According to Brown and Burill (2018), one of the most common microaggressions experienced by nonbinary individuals is misgendering by pronouns, especially after being corrected (Nadal et al., 2016). A study of misgendering among two groups of trans-spectrum individuals (N=115; N=134) found that about a third of respondents reported being misgendered often (30.4%; 32.8%) and reported feeling

very stigmatized when being misgendered (34.8%; 32.8%) (McLemore, 2015).

Significant differences between groups were found for the frequency of misgendering.

On a scale from one ('never') to five ('always'), nonbinary participants reported

significantly more frequent misgendering (M=4.00, SD=0.00) compared to trans men

(M=2.64, SD=1.06) and trans women (M=2.63, SD=1.01) (McLemore, 2015).

Despite the appropriate fit, misgendering among trans and nonbinary individuals

had not been assessed as part of minority stress until McLemore's study in 2018.

McLemore (2018) explored the perceived frequency of misgendering (a distal stressor)

and feeling stigmatized when misgendered (a proximal stressor) as related to minority

stress and found that trans and nonbinary individuals reported frequent misgendering, to

which participants reported feelings of being strongly devalued. Without a differential

analysis of transgender and nonbinary participants, it is unclear if rates differed between

groups. Because nonbinary individuals can have a gender expression that is

nonconforming, they experience elevated stigma that contributes to increased depression,

anxiety, and suicidality (Mizock & Mueser, 2014), particularly among those who use

they/them pronouns. McLemore (2018) also found the frequency of misgendering to be

positively associated with psychological distress, including depression, stress, and felt

stigma. Further, participants who felt more stigmatized from being misgendered also

reported greater psychological distress (McLemore, 2018).

Family Dynamics

The research indicates a need for interventions to support and protect nonbinary

youth to reduce the risk of adverse mental health outcomes. Findings continue to

reinforce the importance of family acceptance, which has been found to be a protective

factor for LGBTQ youth (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Saewyc et al., 2009), a promotive factor for positive health outcomes (James et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2014; Travers et al., 2012), and significantly associated with high self-esteem and life satisfaction among trans and nonbinary adults (Erich et al., 2008; Simons et al., 2013). Specifically, family acceptance has been found to not only be a protective factor against depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation and behaviors (Ryan, Huebner, et al., 2010; Ryan, Russell et al., 2010) but also to promote higher self-esteem, social support, and general health status among LGBTQ youth and adolescents (James et al., 2016; Ryan, Russell et al., 2010; Singh et al., 2014; Travers et al., 2012). In one of the first studies to assess gender nonconformity among LGB youth (N=528), 30% of participants reported negative reactions from parents who discouraged gender-atypical behavior through counseling (8%), punishment or restriction (12%), and insistence to change (53%) (D'Augelli et al., 2006).

Parental support has also been found to affect the wellbeing of transgender youth. The first study using children's reports of social transitioning ($N_{transgender\ chidlren}$=63, $N_{Age-matched\ controls}$=63, $N_{Siblings}$=38) was a longitudinal study examining depression, mental health, and self-worth that found no difference between socially transitioned transgender youth and their cisgender siblings except for slightly higher anxiety, which was consistent with parental perception and national averages (Durwood et al., 2017). Conversely, feeling misunderstood by family members in response to gender identity (e.g., confusion to outright rejection) was reported to contribute to feelings of isolation (Lewis, 2008). Furthermore, higher psychological distress and behavioral problems were reported for youth whose parents were rejecting their gender nonconformity compared to

more accepting parents (Bradley, 2009). Caregivers/parents have a powerful choice in

their child's life; they can choose to shame and reject their child for their child's gender

or educate themselves, grow, and (ideally) celebrate their child and their child's gender,

as Myer (2020) states:

> The goal of gender-creative parenting is not to eliminate gender—the goal
> is to eliminate gender-based oppression, disparities, and violence. The aim
> isn't to create a genderless world; it's to contribute to a genderfull one. We
> as a society have an opportunity to shake up childhood gender
> socialization in a way that creates more healthy and equitable adulthoods
> for everyone. What have we got to lose? The patriarchy? Good riddance.
> (p. 96)

School Environment

In the 2015 *National School Climate Survey* assessing the experience of LGBTQ

youth (*N*=10,528), 23.1% of youth ages 13-21 identified as nonbinary, genderqueer, or

another gender (Kosciw et al., 2016). The majority (56.6%) of the sample reported their

school did not have policies that addressed the needs of gender minority students, which

was offered as a result of not including nonbinary needs (e.g., pronouns, all-gender

facilities). Furthermore, even when anti-discrimination policies are in place, Schindel

(2008) reported from fieldnotes that teachers may not know how to proceed (e.g.,

bathroom usage, pronouns) with gender minority students. In related findings, trans and

nonbinary high school students (subgroup *n*=2,168) reported significantly lower quality

student-teacher relationships compared to cisgender counterparts (Eisenberg et al., 2017).

Other studies have confirmed reports of verbal harassment and feeling unsafe in school

among nonbinary individuals (Harrison et al., 2012; Kosciw et al., 2016; Toomey et al.,

2010). In response to hostile school environments, Wyss' (2004) groundbreaking

qualitative study of trans and nonbinary high schoolers (*N*=24) was the first to illuminate

the many struggles of this population, including avoidance, overcompensation, lying and manipulation to survive, and harmful coping skills (e.g., cutting).

Although hostile school environments have been found to severely compromise the psychosocial wellbeing of LGBTQ youth (Asakura & Craig, 2014), research has found school-related protective factors against adverse mental health outcomes (e.g., depression and suicidality) to include perceived school safety and other caring adults and teachers (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). In particular, the presence of a school Genders and Sexualities Alliance (GSA; previously Gay-Straight Alliance) has been shown to change the culture of the environment and have a significant impact on the wellbeing of LGBTQ youth, as well as lower rates of truancy, tobacco use, alcohol use, attempted suicide, and casual sexual behavior (Poteat, Sinclair et al., 2013). Even without actively participating, the mere presence of a GSA was a strong indicator of wellbeing as reported by LGBTQ young adults (Toomey et al., 2011) and an official sign and support (Goodenow et al., 2006).

Additionally, GSAs are a meaningful venue for youth to engage in gender activism (e.g., establishing all-gender bathrooms in school) (Elliott, 2016; Schindel, 2008). However, Elliott's (2016) ethnographic study of GSAs and queer activism in a Midwest town identified a caveat that the strong influence of institutional and administrative support with cis- and hetero-normativity constraining the effectiveness of a GSA. In contrast to previous findings, Frohard-Dourlent (2016) studied educator perspectives on cisnormativity in schools (administrators, counselors, teachers, other staff; N=62) and found that in some areas GSAs were often centered on sexual orientation with queer students disinterested in learning about gender diversity and educators

uncertain about distinctions and relationships between sexual orientation and gender identity, creating invisibility and exclusion of trans and nonbinary students. Despite the need for support, research has also shown that LGBTQ youth lack access to such protective resources (Asakura & Craig, 2014).

Community Connectedness and Social Support

Given the historical and persistent marginalization of trans and nonbinary individuals, the benefits of belonging to an identity community – namely buffering microaggressions and building resilience and wellbeing – are increasingly important (Perrin et al., 2019; Snapp et al., 2015). Community connectedness and social support have been positively correlated with each other (Frost & Meyer, 2012), indicating the more a person becomes connected to their LGBTQ community they perceive themselves to have greater social support (Perrin et al., 2019).

Research has consistently shown community support to be crucial for wellbeing among trans and nonbinary adults (Meyer & Frost, 2013; Paceley et al., 2017; Riggle & Rostosky, 2012; Seligman, 2002; Stanton et al., 2017). In addition to a sense of belonging, acceptance, and access to valuable resources (Snapp et al., 2015), community connectedness and social support among trans and nonbinary individuals have been associated with positive self‐esteem (Austin & Goodman, 2017), mental health (Pflum et al., 2015), identity development (Snapp et al., 2015), resilience (Mizock & Lewis, 2008), and wellbeing (Stanton et al., 2017) – and even been found to ameliorate stress, anxiety, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) associated with minority stress (Asakura & Craig, 2014; Mizock & Lewis, 2008).

Though critical throughout the lifespan, social support becomes increasingly vital during significant life transitions (Lane & Fink, 2015; Lane et al., 2017), including gender-related transitioning (Muzzey et al., 2021; Snapp et al., 2015). LGBTQ community groups have been identified as essential support networks during the chosen name process among trans and nonbinary young adults, along with families of origin, chosen family, and mental health professionals (Muzzey et al., 2021). Connecting with other gender-diverse persons may be particularly important when embracing one's gender (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010), during the transitioning process (Budge et al., 2013), and for normalization by mutual support from those with shared gendered experiences and escape from stigmatizing environments (Meyer & Frost, 2013).

Despite the known benefits of community connectedness and belonging, finding a community may be challenging for nonbinary individuals due to a lack of acceptance from others who may find binary gender easier to understand from existing gender norms (Budge et al., 2010). Additionally, community groups are complicated in that they are often dominated by white people and do not meet the needs of trans and nonbinary people of color (Muzzey et al., 2021). According to Rankin & Beemyn (2012), nonbinary individuals feel isolated and unsupported even among LGBTQ communities and, as a result, created their own community, often composed of other nonbinary individuals with shared gendered experiences.

Systemic Factors of Wellbeing

Access to Health Care

Access to health care is a social determinant of health and should be prioritized as such (Kcomt, 2019), yet trans and nonbinary individuals have faced pervasive

discrimination in health care and are considered to be a medically underserved population (Giblon & Bauer, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2017). Trans and nonbinary individuals continue to experience barriers to accessing gender-competent providers with barriers including (a) denial of care; (b) providers that were not knowledgeable of trans-specific care; (c) no health insurance; (d) verbal mistreatment by provider (i.e., abusive language); (e) verbal mistreatment within the health care setting; (f) physical mistreatment by provider (i.e., rough handling); (g) physical mistreatment in health care setting; (h) outing oneself to providers; and (i) no identified primary care physician (Kcomt, 2019). Further, gender-based hostility health care can further re-victimize trans and nonbinary individuals (Stotzer et al., 2013).

The Affordable Care Act provided gender-nonconforming individuals increased protections and access to services (The White House, 2013), even though gender diverse individuals still experience gatekeeping (i.e., required professional letters to validate their gender) (Collazo et al., 2013) and discrimination in health care (Grant et al., 2011; James et al., 2016). With the emergence of the World Professional Association of Transgender Health (WPATH) standards of care for transgender and gender non-conforming clients, guidelines have been established with the intent to guide practitioners in providing affirmative care (Coleman et al., 2011). Particular to nonbinary individuals, the most recent version (SOC 7) changed from binary to nonbinary language and included a statement to recommend practitioners to not imposing the gender binary on youth (Coleman et al., 2011). These modifications evidence an increasing professional awareness of nonbinary identities and an established need for more inclusive practices (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017).

Currently, no states provide trans-inclusive health benefits for state employees and six states ban trans-inclusive healthcare insurance (Human Rights Campaign, 2019c). Recently, states like Illinois and Vermont have expanded state Medicaid to include gender-affirming surgeries, though they still require a gender dysphoria diagnosis (Waldrop, 2019). Gov. J. B. Pritzker aptly stated, "expanding Medicaid to cover gender-affirming surgeries is cost-effective, helps avoid long-term health consequences, and most importantly is the right thing to do" (Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, 2019, para. 2). The literature on access to healthcare centers on the following four related topics whose absence or presence may increase access or be a barrier to accessing health care.

Trans-Affirming Healthcare Providers. Trans-affirming health care providers play a significant role in mental health for trans and nonbinary individuals (Pitts et al., 2009). Trans and nonbinary individuals report finding it difficult to locate a trans-affirming provider or a provider who offers services related to medical transitioning (Bauer et al., 2009; Gridley et al., 2016). On the other hand, health care practitioners report feeling ill-equipped to serve the trans and nonbinary community (Lombardi, 2001). A secondary analysis (N=416) comparing trans and nonbinary adults' access to health care found that participants with transgender-affirming primary care physicians were eight times more likely to have pursued a medical intervention than those without (Kattari et al., 2019).

According to the 2015 U.S. Trans Survey (USTS) (N=27,715; $n_{nonbinary} =$ approximately 9,700 or 35%), the largest anonymous survey of trans and nonbinary adults for the purpose of exploring gendered experiences across personal, professional,

and health domains, approximately 24% of nonbinary participants reported negative

experiences with healthcare providers (James et al., 2016). Although fewer nonbinary

respondents reported medical refusal due to bias (14.0%) compared to the overall sample

(19.0%), they reported higher postponement of needed medical care due to fear of

experiencing bias (36.0% compared to 28.0%) (Harrison et al., 2012); which may be due

to findings from Lewis' (2008) qualitative study that nonbinary individuals (*N*=10)

reported frustration from interpreted silence as rejection among mental and physical

health providers.

As a result, nonbinary individuals who have experienced discrimination from

medical professionals may withhold information or postpone/avoid care (Cruz, 2014;

Lewis, 2008), and at rates more frequent than their cisgender LBG peers (Macapagal et

al., 2016). Fear of negative experiences in healthcare settings has led some trans and

nonbinary individuals to self-treat (Bauer et al., 2009) or, to avoid discrimination, pass as

cisgender (Kcomt, 2019). Gridley and colleague's (2016) recommendations for trans-

affirming health care are (1) mandatory training of providers and staff, (2) consistent

correct use of pronouns and chosen name, (3) individual assessment for starting hormone

therapy (rather than a set age), (4) protocol to be applied consistently, (5) patient

navigators specifically for trans patients, and (6) more multi-disciplinary gender health

clinics.

Nonbinary-Inclusive Top Surgery Policies. The progress of trans-inclusive

healthcare has been impressive, yet exemplifies good intentions that sometimes fall short

for the nonbinary community, mainly when policies are written using binary language. A

primary example is top surgery (a type of mastectomy with flattening or masculinization

of the chest for AFAB individuals or a mammoplasty to feminize the chest for AMAB individuals), which increasingly more nonbinary individuals are seeking (Yelland, 2017). Gender-affirming surgery policies are frequently written exclusively for transitioning from male to female or female to male. If the claim does not explicitly support the need to transition to the other gender, it is used as grounds for denial by insurance companies. For those who identify outside of the gender binary, this well-intended policy is far from inclusive. Recent strides have been made to expand healthcare policies to include gender diversity. The CG¬SURG¬27 policy used by BlueCross BlueShield and other large insurance firms was updated in 2018 to change the language from "the individual is a female transitioning gender to become a male" (Unicare, 2017) to read "the individual is a female desiring gender transition" (Unicare, 2018). This simple change in language has powerful implications, and it serves as an example for the further critical assessment of current and new policies to prioritize the elimination of barriers to care for nonbinary individuals.

Denial of Care. A rapid systematic review of access to health care found that trans and nonbinary individuals are 2.34 times more likely to be denied care across their lifetime compared to their cisgender LGB counterparts (Kcomt, 2019). Among USTS respondents, 55% who tried to access transition-related surgery were denied insurance coverage, as well as 25% who sought hormone therapy (James et al., 2016). Despite the pushback, research has shown that insurance for transgender-affirming care is ultimately cost-effective (Padula & Baker, 2017). Similarly, another study found that trans and nonbinary individuals are less likely than cisgender individuals to have health insurance, a primary care physician, or access to healthcare facilities (dickey et al., 2016; Gonzales

& Henning-Smith, 2017). A review of the literature identified the primary barriers for trans and nonbinary access to health care were: "1) experiences with discrimination or outright rejection from services; 2) provider insensitivity or poor treatment while receiving services; 3) problems or concerns with physical environment or 'climate' of social service agencies; 4) difficulty with availability of and accessing appropriate services; and 5) a lack of cultural competence in regard to transgender issues" (Stotzer et al., 2013, p. 67). Additionally, the hostility towards trans and nonbinary individuals in health care can further re-victimizing (Stotzer et al., 2013).

Cisnormativity and Erasure in Health Care. Cisnormativity within health care compromises accessibility to health care through discrimination directly (e.g., physical mistreatment, denial of care) and indirectly (e.g., lack of health insurance through stable employment) (Kcomt, 2019). Cisnormative assumptions in health care reinforce oppression systemically and organizationally and will not change unless addressed at the same levels (Wilchins, 2002a). According to Frohard-Dourlent et al. (2017), there exists a privilege of binary transgender identities, compared to nonbinary identities, within health care that may be due to the assumed linear path of transition *from one gender to the other* that aligns with pre-existing medical and social constructs. While healthcare policies are written on the binary, nonbinary individuals will continue to experience barriers to gender-affirming medical interventions.

Namaste (2000) describes the concept of erasure as a social, cultural, and institutional nullification of trans identities to the point of impossibility. Trans erasure in healthcare can manifest as a lack of consideration of trans and nonbinary needs in policy (Pyne, 2011). A Canadian study explored how erasure manifests in health care using

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community focus group of trans and nonbinary individuals (*N*=85) and identified

informational erasure (e.g., unprepared health providers) and institutional erasure (e.g.,

lack of trans-inclusive forms and policies) to be the source of erasure for trans and

nonbinary individuals (Bauer et al., 2009). Transphobia has often been given as an

explanation for the exclusion and marginalization of trans and nonbinary individuals;

however, the act of excluding trans and nonbinary individuals creates a barrier to

challenging and ultimately undoing the systemic erase of trans and nonbinary individuals

(Bauer et al., 2009). Vincent (2016) posits that healthcare can be divided into gender

transition-related care and other health care. However, this demarcation may contribute to

viewing trans-affirmative health care as a specialty rather than foundational medical

education, which could arguably contribute to less responsibility for trans-competency

and create fewer affirming spaces outside of trans-related care. An important

consideration is that health care practitioners report feeling ill-equipped to serve the trans

and nonbinary community (Lombardi, 2001). "As such, the existence of an actual trans

person within systems such as health care is too often unanticipated and produces a social

emergency of sorts because both staff and systems are unprepared for this reality" (Bauer

et al., 2009, p. 356).

Documentation Policies

Increasing legal and bureaucratic options are emerging for nonbinary visibility. A

comparison of names and gender markers recorded at the Social Security Administration

found that 89,667 people who were likely transgender and had changed their first name

(gendered) and/or gender marker were alive during the 2010 census (Harris, 2015). In

2016, the first person was legally recognized as nonbinary in America when receiving a

driver's license in Oregon (Foden-Vencil, 2016). Legal name change options include gender-neutral names, both masculine and feminine names, or initials only (Richards et al., 2016). The gender-neutral honorific Mx. has been used within the nonbinary community for visibility (Bergman & Barker, 2017) and is slowly gaining traction with entry into the Oxford English Dictionary and standard use with British government forms and Royal Bank of Scotland (Eleftheriou-Smith, 2015). In 2019, the 7th edition of the American Psychological Association's publication manual includes the use of singular *they* pronouns (Lee, 2019). Eight countries have legally recognized a third gender: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Malta, New Zealand, and Australia (Knight, 2015) and Germany (Foden-Vencil, 2016) with available gender marker changes on government documents in most (Pasquesoone, 2014; Richards et al., 2016). The inclusion of a third gender on identification, such as passports, is one way in which governments around the world can begin to acknowledge their citizens according to how they self-identify (Knight, 2015).

Bathroom Bills

Historically, bathrooms have been the battleground of human rights movements for blacks, women, people with disabilities, and now for transgender Americans (Dastagir, 2016). For transgender individuals, public bathrooms have been a space of particular policing SNCGE and subjection to violence from verbal to physical to legal (Bender-Baird, 2015; Cavanagh, 2010). In recent years, bathroom bills have been another form of systemic transphobia and cisprivilege within a larger political and social system that attempts to enforce authority over body functions. The collective bathroom bills began in March 2016 when North Carolina passed House Bill 2 (NC HB2) (North

Carolina General Assembly, 2016). NC HB2 was reportedly a response to several trans-affirming bathroom bills that allowed transgender individuals to use the bathroom according to their gender (Drum, 2016). Conversely, NC HB2 required transgender and nonbinary people to be legally required to use the bathroom that aligned with their assigned sex at birth (Kralik, 2017). Although since being repealed, NC HB2 has ignited sixteen other states to propose similar legislation (Kralik, 2017).

The implications of these bathroom bills placed transgender and nonbinary people at risk of physical and mental health risks as a result of facing daily suspicion, harassment, and hostility. According to the 2015 USTS (James et al., 2016), bathrooms are increasingly dangerous spaces for transgender persons. When attempting to use bathrooms, respondents reported being denied access (9.0%), verbally harassed (12.0%) physically attacked (1.0%), or sexually assaulted (1.0%) with the majority (53.0%) of nonbinary respondents reporting avoidance of bathrooms sometimes to always in the last twelve months for fear of harassment or other problems. For fear of confrontation, 59.0% avoided public restrooms in the last year and 32.0% limited fluid intake to limit necessary bathroom use with 8.0% reporting urinary tract infection or related infections in the past year (James et al., 2016). More so, being denied access to bathrooms has been linked to suicide among transgender individuals (Kutner, 2016).

The argument of bathroom bill proponents has focused on the protection of women and children from the perceived threat of transgender sexual predators (Steinmetz, 2016). Despite the heightened fear, there have been no recorded cases of assault in a bathroom by a transgender person in the U.S. (Dastagir, 2016). Ultimately, the sexual predator argument has been called a *red herring* (Steinmetz, 2016). Arguably,

these policies pose more alarm for the safety of trans and nonbinary students. Wernick et al.'s (2017) secondary analysis of a 2014 public school climate survey found that trans students reported significantly less school safety than their than cisgender students, and that for trans students the relationships of gender to school safety was significantly mediated by feeling safe to use the bathroom.

Despite none being passed, bathroom bills create a hostile environment, of which the impact of hostile public discourse about one's validity and safety has yet to be measured. The Obama administration took a clear stance on bathroom bills with a statement from the department of education and justice directing school administration to ensure that "transgender students enjoy a supportive and nondiscriminatory school environment" (Sanchez, 2016, para. 2). However, the Trump administration rescinded protections for trans students (Peters et al. 2017). Even if legislation passes to allow individuals to use the bathroom according to gender, nonbinary individuals will continue to be excluded unless all-gender bathrooms are present (Wernick et al., 2017). Also, half-measures like private bathrooms were called "humiliating" and made "a public spectacle" of trans students (Liptak, 2016, para. 9). The daily stressors around bathroom use are one of the most frequent and problematic microaggressions experienced by trans and nonbinary individuals (James et al., 2016), and should not be underestimated.

Non-Discrimination Legislation

Under the leadership of President Obama, affirmation and inclusion of sexual and gender minorities were prioritized in legislative and organizational policies, including the legalization of gay marriage and inclusion in non-discrimination policies (Sanchez, 2016). However, in the changing sociopolitical climate, discriminatory state-level

legislation continued to be proposed and passed with negative repercussions, particularly

for gender minorities. As of 2019, only 42% or less states have protections against

discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity for housing (21 states and

the DC), employment (21 states and DC), public accommodations (20 states and DC),

education (15 states and DC), (Human Rights Campaign, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b).

In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly Report acknowledged the

discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, as documented for over the previous two

decades, and has recommended each nation to recognize the rights of transgender

individuals (United Nations, 2011). More recently, the European Union's Council of

Europe (2015) Parliamentary Assembly proposed the transgender-inclusive Resolution

2048. Of the proposed policies, the most nonbinary applicable policies were to remove

the required mental health diagnosis for changing gender markers (6.2.2) and to

recommend countries include a third gender option (6.2.4). Additionally, research

concerning transgender experiences was called for to include discrimination, hate crimes,

suicide prevention, and the effectiveness of anti-discrimination legislation (6.1.3 & 6.3.2)

(Council of Europe, 2015).

Legislative policy is a social determinant of health that impacts health (in)equity

among LGBTQ individuals (Walter-McCabe & Kinney, 2020). Further, exclusionary or

harmful legislation are forms of structural stigma that support health inequities. To

mitigate these adverse outcomes, it has been argued that anti-discrimination legislation

and other protective orders must explicitly include sexual orientation, gender identity and

expression (Walter-McCabe & Kinney, 2020). While sexual orientation has been

accepted in protective policy, gender identity and expression – specific to trans and

nonbinary individuals – has been met with greater resistance. Nonbinary inclusion in

non-discrimination policy has been debated (Grant et al., 2011), reinforcing the need for

future research concerning nonbinary experiences of discrimination that can strengthen

the argument for inclusion and inform national and international non-discrimination

policy to address the unique needs of nonbinary individuals. Nonbinary individuals are a

legitimate population that has existed throughout history and is entitled to human rights,

including full legal protection and access to gender-affirming treatment (Richards et al.,

2017).

Critique of the Literature

Limitations of the Literature

The extant literature was evaluated, and limitations were identified. Relevant to

the current dissertation, studies reviewed have either: (a) not explicitly included

nonbinary individuals within LGBTQ research (e.g., transgender data collection that used

only binary language), (b) conceptualized transgender as an umbrella term yet recruited,

reported, or analyzed data as binary (e.g., Whitman & Nadal, 2015); (c) studied trans and

nonbinary population as homogenous without exploring within-group or between-group

comparisons (Bockting et al., 2013; Cruz, 2014; Kosciw et al., 2010); or (d) excluded

nonbinary participants in data analysis due to insufficient numbers for robust statistical

analyses (e.g., Domm, 2017; Whitman & Nadal, 2015). The latter is raised as an ethical

question regarding responsibility and accountability to participants (Frohard-Dourlent et

al., 2017). These limitations of the literature align with some systematic microaggressions

identified by Nadal et al. (2012), including the use of transphobic and/or incorrectly

gendered terminology, assumption of a universal transgender experience, and endorsement of gender-normative and binary culture or behaviors.

SNCGE, a significant factor among nonbinary individuals, has been studied as a characteristic related to sexual orientation and not gender identity (e.g., D'Augelli et al., 2006; Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2012), perpetuating conflation of the two identities. According to Kosciw, Palmer, & Kull (2015), when gender is studied as gender expression, the data is missing a complexity of gender identity and focusing solely on gender expression, which may not be accurately capturing the population intended. As Durwood et al. (2017) identified, some of these participants may have merely had a SNCGE that was not related to their gender identity (e.g., Reisner et al., 2016). Furthermore, measures for transgender populations have been critiqued for lacking reflection of all identities under the umbrella, especially those not on the binary (Brown et al., 2018). McCarthy (2003) argues that the false inclusion of T in LGBTQ in name only isolates and promotes the invisibility of trans and nonbinary individuals and their experiences.

Concerning sampling, the majority of reviewed research used convenience or purposive sampling, which, despite not being generalizable, are commonly used in social science research with marginalized or hard-to-reach populations (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). However, due to recruitment limited to individuals who are willing to share their experiences related to a marginalized identity, self-selection bias is increased (Budge et al., 2010; Rood et al., 2017). One of the most challenging – yet easily overcome – hurdles in sampling has more to do with the researchers than the sampling methods. As noted earlier, *nothing about us without us* approach (Golding,

2015) may be an important variable in sampling that potentially inhibits some nonbinary individuals from participating in research that feels like an outsider studying a community as a phenomenon. Nonbinary individuals may anticipate microaggressions (e.g., misgendering) or become forced to exert the emotional labor of educating the researchers about the fundamentals of gender identity and expression. Research has shown that LGBTQ people consider research to be intrusive unless conducted by members of their community, whom they are more likely to consider trustworthy (Bridges, 2001; Labaree, 2002; Perry et al., 2004). LaSala (2003) reported that, across studies, participants explicitly decided to participate due to the shared sexual orientation and assessed the researcher "could be trusted to accurately portray their lives" (p. 18).

In addition to a lack of gender diversity, a pervasive lack of racial diversity was evidenced by the large majority of white participants across studies. Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative studies with smaller samples have had proportionately more racial/ethnic and gender diversity among participants with some samples composed entirely of trans and nonbinary or just nonbinary participants. However, very few studies included trans and nonbinary POC participants (see Nicolazzo, 2016; Perrin et al., 2019), although higher rates of discrimination would be consistent with existing LGBTQ literature.

With the few exceptions that identified theories of wellbeing (e.g., Beals et al., 2009; Domm, 2017; Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2012; Whitman & Nadal, 2015), the concept of wellbeing was not explicitly aligned with a theory of wellbeing, which is consistent with the critique that there is a lack of theoretical foundation to guide research (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999). Finally, the wellbeing research among LGBTQ

individuals have predominantly focused on sexual minorities and transgender individuals without inclusion or meaningful analysis of nonbinary individuals.

The strengths of the studies were also noted. Both qualitative and quantitative studies used participatory research approaches that included member checking, community advisory boards with LGBTQ youth and adults, families, teachers, service providers, as well as survey pledge to raise awareness (James et al., 2016; Lewis, 2008; Pitts et al., 2009; Poteat, German, et al. 2013; Ryan, Huebner et al., 2010). Additionally, some qualitative studies provided positionality statements (Budge et al., 2013; Budge et al., 2010), including disclosure as gender minorities (Rood et al., 2016, 2017; Wyss, 2004). With few exceptions, the qualitative studies reviewed were conducted in teams to increase trustworthiness. Finally, some studies used surveys that were conducted with attention to accessibility, regarding more than one language (Ryan, Russell et al., 2010; James et al., 2016), multiple online platforms, and disabilities (e.g., screen reader) (James et al., 2016).

Gaps in the Literature

Based on the review of extant literature, several gaps have been identified. The most salient need is for the inclusion of nonbinary identities within research (Bauer et al., 2009; Domm, 2017; Nicolazzo, 2016; Whitman & Nadal 2015), from intentional recruitment to meaningful inclusion in the analysis. Inclusion of nonbinary individuals would allow for an explicit understanding of how they conceptualize wellbeing along with their gendered experiences and how these experiences impact their wellbeing. Studying intersectional identities (e.g., Budge et al., 2010; Domm, 2017; Whitman & Nadal 2015), particularly concerning gender with race and ethnicity (e.g., Nicolazzo,

2016; Riggle et al., 2011), could increase understanding of within-group (e.g., by age, race, assigned sex at birth) (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2017) and between-groups (e.g., binary transgender and nonbinary) (Budge et al., 2010; Moradi et al., 2009; Riggle et al., 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2001) comparisons and elucidate the unique gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals.

Concerning wellbeing, additional dimensions of wellbeing have been suggested for a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing (Whitman & Nadal, 2015). Underdeveloped areas of wellbeing inquiry that have been identified include coping mechanisms (Budge et al., 2010), adaptation (Diener et al., 1999), environmental factors (Rood et al., 2017), and the cumulative impact of small daily stressors (Diener, 1984; Rood et al., 2016). These indicate that all the pertinent elements of wellbeing are not yet identified nor included in one wellbeing theory. A comprehensive focus on wellbeing that was led by the community could fill these gaps while also progressing the shift of nonbinary literature away from the predominant focus on adverse physical and mental health outcomes.

Collective assessment of the identified gaps in the literature indicates the need for a qualitative exploration. Additionally, it is recommended to involve nonbinary people in identifying research priorities to ameliorate nonbinary erasure, including studies that center the unique gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals (Bauer et al., 2009). Frohard-Dourlent et al. (2017) have proposed that future nonbinary research applies the existing contributions of qualitative research findings to quantitative work; however, a study with an underrepresented population in combination with a need for a broader exploration of wellbeing warrants a qualitative explorative approach before a quantitative

approach (Creswell, 2014). PhotoVoice, which will be discussed further in the following chapter, is a visual participatory action research (PAR) method that aligns with social work values and theories of wellbeing. A strength of this approach is the ability to co-construct the meaning and unique factors of wellbeing in the lives of nonbinary individuals. A clear line of research momentum has been called for gender diverse individuals (Asakura & Craig, 2014; Budge et al., 2010), for which the proposed study could advance both research about nonbinary gendered experiences as well as wellbeing theory.

Chapter 3: Methods

"In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are
wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it."
– Marianne Williamson

This qualitative study used participatory action PhotoVoice methods designed to understand nonbinary conceptualizations of wellbeing and identify promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. PhotoVoice is a participatory action research method that combines community led-data collection and visual methods to create empowering engagement that contributes to advocacy and social change (Hergenrather et al., 2009; Jarldorn, 2019; Latz, 2017). Data were collected using participant-selected photos, group discussions, and photo-elicitation interviews. I assert that interviews or group discussions alone could not adequately capture the subjective perception of wellbeing among the participants, nor could these methods alone collect the degree of richness and textures desired for thoroughly exploring this research topic. Further, visual methods, especially when paired with photo-elicitation, have been praised for efficiency and ability to study abstract concepts such as culture and social interactions (Collier, 1967). Considering the documented erasure of nonbinary individuals (i.e., when nonbinary identities are invalidated or excluded, such as arguments for trans individuals to use the existing binary bathroom of choice without also fighting for all-gender bathrooms) (Bauer et al., 2009; Brown & Burill, 2018; Pyne, 2011), visual methods also offer a valuable tool for increased representation, particularly when accurately representative of the diversity within the population - counter to homogenous nonbinary stereotypes. Given the importance of gender expression, especially a SNCGE, to discrimination (Bockting et al., 2013; Domm, 2017; Grant et al., 2011; Harrison et al.,

2012; Reisner et al., 2016) and gender euphoria (Benestad, 2010; Withey-Rila et al., 2021), visual methods can be a useful tool to document and examine these dimensions of wellbeing.

PhotoVoice was also selected instead of other qualitative methods due to the method characteristics that align well with the social work values (National Association of Social Workers, 2017) and my ethical approach to research. Rooted in the value of *Service*, the primary goal of this study is to address social problems faced by nonbinary individuals and to improve their lives (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang et al., 1998). Further, the approach taken in PhotoVoice is one of collaboration and empowerment, which fulfills the value of the *Importance of Human Relationships*. Similarly, PAR, including PhotoVoice, demonstrates *Social Justice* and *Dignity and Worth of the Person* by the required centering of a marginalized population, with the goal of creating social change (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Hall, 1981; Park, 1993; Tiffany, 2006; Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1997). Regarding the values of *Integrity*, several mechanisms have been outlined in this chapter to ensure the study was completed in a trustworthy manner. Finally, I consider *Competence* to be conducting research – after years of doctoral preparation – alongside a community to which I belong and have several years of experience practicing and researching together.

For these collective reasons and the erasure of nonbinary individuals in previous research, PhotoVoice was selected for this study to center the voice and increase the visibility of the nonbinary community and comprehensively explore the abstract concepts of gender identity and expression, gendered experiences, and wellbeing. This chapter begins with an overview of participatory action research and the PhotoVoice methods

before moving on to the researcher's positionality statement. The PhotoVoice methodology chapter details the sample, recruitment, compensation/incentives, PhotoVoice activities, data collection, data analysis, dissemination, potential challenges and limitations, and mechanisms for trustworthiness.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research (PAR) was developed as a strategy for overcoming the exclusion and oppression of marginalized populations within traditional research methods (Tiffany, 2006). Accordingly, the two driving forces for the creation of PAR were research being conducted by community workers and a need for community empowerment (Brown, 1994). Another impetus was the works of Freire (1970, 1973), who argued for the examination and analysis of one's reality to be in the power of the individuals or community themselves. PAR is distinguished from other methods for the shift in dynamics between researcher and participant from collector and giver to reciprocal educational roles that strive for consciousness-raising about social realities (Hall, 1981; Park, 1993). Further, sharing narratives about how cultural groups heal can be a source of strength and resilience, including inspiration and meaning (Saleebey, 1996) as well as tools for navigating the world (e.g., coping skills, language) (Lifton, 1993). Community engagement in research, notably data collection and analysis, can allow for a more nuanced understanding and interpretation of the data, especially among exploration of emergent phenomena, and increase the trustworthiness of the study (Tiffany, 2006).

PAR has been specifically identified as a method for studying social constructs and power, including gender and its attendant power dynamics (Brown, 1994). Further,

PAR does not ignore the social and historical context of the individuals and their experiences but rather situates the variables within power and privilege (Brown, 1994), in this case, cisnormativity. The six underlying principles of PAR are 1) centering lived experience, 2) collaborative development, 3) focusing on significant topics, 4) partnering with individuals or communities; 5) using innovative approaches, and 6) surpassing the status quo (e.g., structural problems) (Bradbury & Reason, 2003). According to Bradbury and Reason (2003), PAR is an excellent mechanism for social workers who are optimally positioned in practice, policy, and research. The PAR ideology of empowerment, individuals as experts of their experiences, social justice, and creating change align directly with social work values (Brown, 1994). It is noteworthy to recognize the trans and nonbinary research that involves trans and nonbinary authors (i.e., Atteberry-Ash et al., 2019; Benestad, 2010; Breslow et al., 2015; Hill-Meyer, 2017; Meyer, 2015; Walls et al., 2019). Considering the lack of visual representation, the likely influence of visible gender expression on wellbeing, and the relationship between gender nonconformity and discrimination, PAR with visual methods is a fitting approach to explore wellbeing with the nonbinary community.

PhotoVoice

PhotoVoice is a particular PAR method with numerous advantages, including creativity, insightful perspectives, accessibility, flexibility, and beneficence for participants. This innovative method expands qualitative PAR methods to use an art-based approach (Leavy, 2015), which can explore abstract social constructs (e.g., gender and wellbeing) with abundant and meaningful data produced (Bender et al., 2017). PhotoVoice has three primary goals, "1) to enable people to record and reflect their

community's strengths and concerns, 2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and 3) to reach policymakers" (Wang and Burris, 1997, p. 370). Key components of a PhotoVoice study include an introduction to PhotoVoice, training on ethics and use of photography, directed photography, facilitated discussions of photos, participatory evaluation of data, and political action to benefit the community (e.g., exhibit to raise awareness) (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Regarding content and application, PhotoVoice has been used to examine and expose social justice topics and promote action to improve the identified conditions (Beh et al., 2013; Bell, 2015; Carlson et al., 2006). According to the creators Wang and Burris (1997), PhotoVoice is grounded in empowerment education (see Beh et al., 2013; Carlson et al., 2006; Friere, 1970; 1973), documentary photography (see Yoshihama & Yunomae, 2018), and feminist theory (see Bell, 2015; Maguire, 1987). Ingrey (2013) goes as far as to describe PhotoVoice as a genderqueer methodology for its ability to critically deconstruct gender and gendered spaces and pursue gender justice. As an example, PhotoVoice has been used to destabilize the assumptions of gendered spaces in schools by shedding light on the gendered experiences of students in washrooms and other shared spaces in the school (Ingrey, 2013).

A primary advantage of PhotoVoice is that data collection is collaboratively performed by people outside of academia who are not otherwise engaged in a research and policy discourse (Jarldorn, 2019; Yoshihama & Yunomae, 2018), which aligns with the Institute of Medicine's (2011) priorities stated previously. Yoshihama & Yunomae (2018) describe PhotoVoice data collection as "inclusive, collective, and reflexive,"

recognizing participants as experts of their experience and, thus, "engages the very people affected by the issues under investigation, who use photography not only to record but also to analyze community and social issues important to them" (p. 235). As a citizens' documentary photography, PhotoVoice is accessible to anyone with a camera; a professional photographer or equipment is not necessary (Spence, 1995). The messages from photography can be accessible across cultural and linguistic barriers (PhotoVoice.org, 2019a). Flexibility is the fourth and significant advantage of PhotoVoice, in which the methods can be adapted to different groups and topics as well as goals (e.g., needs assessment, asset mapping, and evaluation) (Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Finally, PhotoVoice has also been noted for its potential to promote wellbeing through precipitating community change (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang et al., 1998) and to help humanize findings through photography in social work (Russell & Diaz, 2013). According to Molloy (2007), PhotoVoice *gives people a voice*, which is consistent with social work values of empowerment by collective participation for social action. Empowerment is vital when working with nonbinary individuals who have experienced marginalization and erasure. PhotoVoice recognizes participants as experts of their experience and, thus, "as citizens' documentary photography, engages the very people affected by the issues under investigation, who use photography not only to record but also to analyze community and social issues important to them" (Yoshihama & Yunomae, 2018, p. 235). Considering the stigma faced for SNCGE, the use of self-portraits and open discussion can be an opportunity to celebrate rather than stigmatize

nonbinary gender expressions. Overall, PhotoVoice is a method that fits well for the topic of wellbeing with nonbinary individuals.

PhotoVoice Activities Adapted for Virtual Context

Ideally, in-person methods would have been used to optimize the benefit that has been found from building community while engaging in a PhotoVoice study. Traditional procedures have included up to eight 3-hour weekly in-person sessions (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Hergenrather et al., 2009). However, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary to adapt this study to virtual methods. Gerber et al. (2016) remarked on taking a pragmatic approach to research that includes mixed methods and online modalities. Though a global pandemic was not likely a consideration for them, pragmatism was essential to ensure participant safety in the context of a global pandemic.

This PhotoVoice study was informed by past studies with consideration for feasibility and burden to participants and limitations due to social distancing as a preventative measure for COVID-19. Canvas, a secure (HIPPA and FERPA compliant) cloud-based Learning Management System (LMS) developed by Instructure inc., was the platform used for this virtual study (Instructure, 2020). Tools provided by Canvas for teaching and learning include modules, discussion boards, assignments, and documents. To protect the privacy and security of information, all communication on Canvas uses an HTTPS address with all inbound and outbound traffic encrypted, as well as mechanisms for identity authentication, automatic updates with security patches, and physically secure servers (Instructure, 2020). Though traditionally used with university students, Canvas allows community members to join a Canvas page and has been approved for conducting online research (Gerber et al., 2016).

The goals for each of the developed modules are presented in <u>Table 1</u> (see

<u>Appendix A</u> for details). To prepare participants to best engage in a PhotoVoice study,

training is typically provided with ethical principles, ethical concerns, and obtaining

photographic consent, and fundamental photography skills (Houle et al., 2018; Wang,

1999; Wang & Burris, 1997). Existing PhotoVoice manuals guided this study's training

(see Rosbrow, 2008; Shimshock, 2008; The Detroit Initiative, n.d.). Modules 1-3

provided an overview of PhotoVoice, basic documentary photography, and research and

photography ethics, including ethical consideration questions from Wang (1999).

Table 1
Canvas Module Topics and Activities

Week 1	
Module 1:	To introduce the research and the PhotoVoice project, to introduce each other, and to establish group norms and ways to create a supportive space.
Module Two:	To learn about PhotoVoice and become familiar with the methods, intentions, and possibilities of this project.
Module Three:	To learn about photography (techniques, photo-elicitation, and photo ethics) and to decide on photography options.
Week 2	
Module Four:	To describe discussion expectations and discuss being nonbinary, including gender identity and expression (Activity #1).
Week 3	
Module Five:	To explore wellbeing as a concept, to discuss wellbeing as it relates to gender (2-3 photos each and individual definitions) (Activity #2), and to share wellbeing self-portraits (Activity #3).
Week 4	
Module Six:	To learn about photo-elicitation and complete individual photo-elicitation interviews about promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing (6-8 photos) (Activity #4).

Week 5	
Module Seven:	To discuss the virtual exhibit details, including wellbeing snapshots, exhibit options, and attendee survey questions.
Week 6	
Module Eight:	To discuss the promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing that we identified in the interviews (Activity #5).
Module Nine:	To discuss practice and policy recommendations (Activity #6).
Week 7	
Module Ten:	To complete participation interviews about the PhotoVoice project (Activity #7).
TBD	
Virtual Exhibit:	To raise awareness and celebrate wellbeing in the nonbinary community. Options include: • Website • Digital narrative and people read their narratives (Photo Story or I-movie) • Tick-tocks • Instagram with hashtag

Positionality Statement

Positionality statements are an increasingly common and vital component of

qualitative research that briefly describes a researcher's insider/outsider position as

situated with the research and participants as well and the advantages and disadvantages

of these positions (Holmes, 2014; Qin, 2016; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013;

Wellington et al., 2005). Insider and outsider perspectives can provide a potentially

advantageous or disadvantageous perspective, which may affect the research process

(Hammersley, 1993; Herod, 1999). A typical positionality statement is composed of (1)

the researcher's lenses, (2) potential influence on the research, (3) the researcher's chosen

or pre-determined position about the participants, and (4) their context and an

understanding/explanation as to how, where, and when and in what way the researcher may have influenced the research process (Holmes, 2014). The positions and worldview of the researcher can potentially have an impact on their research, including race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability/chronic illness status, social class, religious/spiritual beliefs, ethics, political values, among others (Bryman, 2012; Greenbank, 2003; Wellington et al., 2005; Sikes, 2004). The use of participatory action research helps integrate the researcher's positionality while centrally retaining the participant's voices (Tiffany, 2006). Aided by reflexivity, the researcher's positionality should be recognized, understood, and disclosed (Cohen et al., 2011; Holmes, 2014; Qin, 2016).

Insider and Outsider Perspectives

Considering positionality to the nonbinary population in this study, I am a nonbinary individual who was socialized as female and is engaged with local and national nonbinary communities. Additionally, I identify as queer, non-Hispanic white, able-bodied, neurodivergent, and 42 years of age at the time of writing. Cumulatively, I have been working with transgender and nonbinary populations for six years. Related research foci include nonbinary gender identity development, gender-based microaggressions, health disparities, and nuanced gendered experiences among this population (i.e., chosen name process). These intersecting identities and gendered experiences can change the researcher's position from insider to an outsider in reference to participants (Holmes, 2014).

As a researcher, I am inherently an outsider, but also I am insider within the nonbinary participants. As a non-Hispanic white person, I wanted to ensure recruitment, inclusion, and retention of nonbinary people of color and underrepresented populations

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(e.g., AMAB, fluid expression, with disabilities). I feared that my whiteness (and an outsider to nonbinary BIPOC) would be a significant barrier to recruiting racially and ethnically diverse participants. My other primary concern about my positionality was my closeness to the community and similar lived experiences that could create blind spots and increase potential bias, which could exist in an assumption of shared gendered experiences with other nonbinary individuals.

To address these concerns, the use of participatory community-engaged methods acts as a check and balance in research design and analysis. I also collaborated with two colleagues who offer an outsider perspective, one who does not work in this area (creation of the codebook) and another who also is an expert in trans health care. Ultimately, I was reflexive and transparent about my positionality throughout the study. Similarly, Oakley (1981) argued ethical and efficacy reasons for transparency during the interview process so that the "interviewer is prepared to invest personal identity in the relationship" (p. 41), for there is "no intimacy without reciprocity" (p. 49).

My Research Approach

Critical and constructivist epistemologies guide my approach to research. Regarding critical awareness of power, I am conscious of hierarchical structures in academia and attempt to avoid replicating that in my research. Simultaneously, I am intentional in using methods that center the voice of participants. My research is also driven by anti-oppressive theory, which argues that individuals have fluid and intersectional identities, in which our experiences are rooted (Crenshaw, 2005; Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Further, the interaction of these identities helps one to understand the oppression and challenges of confronting oppression. Engaging in anti-oppressive work

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requires an awareness of one's individual and organizational power and the use of power in this work (Dominelli, 1996). My research goals are to raise social awareness and inform improved practice with the LGBTQ community.

Research *by*, *with,* and *for* those who have been marginalized was described by Brown and Strega (2005) as *research from the margins*; research that moves the "subjects" and "objects" from margins to "authors" along with the power and validity which that role entails. Similarly, I hope that my dissertation will model this approach by centering the voices of nonbinary individuals, especially those who are often not represented. Researching with communities in which I belong allows me to have an insider perspective that brings the benefit of pre-existing rapport and connections as well as an understanding of colloquial language and unique gendered experiences that do not require participants to educate me as the researcher. According to Wertz and colleagues (2011), contemporary qualitative research is "radically relational" in that self-disclosure and reflexivity by the researcher are part of qualitative rigor (p. 84). Of equal importance, I ascribe to the ethos of *Nihil de nobis, sine nobis* or *nothing about us without us*, an approach rooted in 16th century Poland with a long history of civil rights groups and means insisting on those affected are directly and actively involved in the creation of change in their communities (see Golding, 2015).

Other Power Considerations

An important note is a condition over which I have the least control - my status as a doctoral candidate who is beholden to a dissertation committee. Doctoral candidates must adhere to the topic, methods, and requirements agreed upon with the committee and graduate office and not of their own autonomous accord. Specific demands are placed

upon the content, form, and timeliness of dissertation research. Traditional dissertation format (for which this dissertation is formatted) has been critiqued for not preparing students for the authentic practice of research and publication post-graduation (Thomas et al., 2016; Tronsgard, 1963). Community-engaged dissertation research, in particular, can lack structural support, such as training, development, and funding opportunities (Jaeger et al., 2011).

Committee members and their power dynamics and level of support are other important factors. In a study of four pairs of dissertation advisors and doctoral candidates conducting community-engaged dissertation research, Jaeger et al. (2011) described the potential synergistic relationship when advisors shared the values of community-engaged research and the collaboration modeled equity, co-learning, reciprocity, and mutuality. My committee members were selectively chosen for their commitment to supporting my work and their range of lived experiences. My committee is composed of one woman and three men who are all cisgender and identify as gay (1), lesbian (1), and straight (1) (one declined to answer). One committee member is Black and the rest are white. The committee has a collective 67+ years of experience in practice and/or research with LGBTQ communities/issues (individually ranging from 2 to 30+ years), one of which specializes in trans-affirming health care. With regard to power, three of the four members are in administration – senior professor, graduate program director, associate dean, and former division chief. I consider myself fortunate to have a committee that is egalitarian, challenging, and supportive.

PhotoVoice Methodology

While retaining the core elements delineated by Wang and Burris (1997) and considering potential attrition and the necessary online platform, this study used a ten-module Canvas structure and individual interviews. Through visual data, group discussions, and interviews, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1) How do nonbinary individuals conceptualize wellbeing in relation to their gender identity?

2) What factors promote or corrode wellbeing for nonbinary individuals?

3) What are nonbinary individual's recommendation for intervening at multiple levels of the social ecology to bolster their wellbeing.

Study Sample

For robust data collection and to account for attrition, a sample of 24 participants was recruited. The final sample of 17 participants (groups of 8 and 9 members) is similar to samples in other PhotoVoice studies (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Hergenrather et al., 2009; Houle et al., 2018). Wang (1999) recommended 7-10 people to be the ideal number of participants for a PhotoVoice study for practicality and in-depth discussions. A slightly larger recruitment goal of 12 for each group was not anticipated to interfere with either the quality of discussion or practical issues. This goal also accounted for possible attrition, particularly given the virtual format and stressors associated with the global pandemic and racial uprisings in the United States. Participants who withdrew from the study were sent an optional exit survey (Appendix I).

The inclusion criteria for participation were: Adults age 18 years and older who identify with a gender that is not exclusively a man or woman (including nonbinary,

genderqueer, transmasculine, transfeminine, genderfluid, trigender, agender, etc.), who

currently live in the Midwestern United States (defined as North Dakota, South Dakota,

Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Indiana,

and Ohio), and who had the required technology to participate (internet access and a

computer or smartphone with a camera and audio). The rationale for the boundary of the

Midwestern United States was the distinct sociopolitical climate (e.g., more limited

LGBTQ resources, lack of non-discrimination and hate-crimes policy that protects

explicitly on gender identity and expression) that is different from the coastal

perspectives that are more represented in the literature, and what Herring (2010) calls

"bicoastality." In short, Midwestern LGBTQ/trans and nonbinary communities are

understudied (Stone, 2018).

This PhotoVoice study intended to create an inclusive visual representation of

nonbinary individuals, which can have a strong influence on raising awareness and, as

such, it was a priority of the researcher to collect a diverse sample of race, assigned sex at

birth, age, body type, and current (dis)ability status, among other identities. Lesbian, gay,

bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ) communities have received strong criticism for the

dominant representation by white cisgender gay men and the exclusion of other identities,

particularly LGBTQ people of color (Hutchinson, 1996). Furthermore, LGBTQ people of

color experience additional stressors with multiple accumulations of oppression as racial

minorities and sexual minorities (Balsam et al., 2011). Within transgender and nonbinary

research, similar over/under representations exist. Intentional inclusion of nonbinary

diversity was explicitly stated in the recruitment materials and selected sources for

snowball sampling recruitment. Recruitment was successful with collecting individuals

who could speak across underrepresented intersectional identities except for race and ethnicity.

Recruitment

Convenience and snowball sampling were used with recruitment flyers shared among community leaders, community organizations (particularly those serving underrepresented populations), and others working with trans and nonbinary individuals in the Midwest. Snowball sampling was originally designed to overcome sampling barriers to hard-to-reach populations then later adapted to effectively recruit hidden populations (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Faugier & Sargeant, 1997; Sadler et al., 2010). Additionally, snowball sampling can generate trust through referrals from other persons within the community (Sadler et al., 2010). Participants were recruited through word of mouth by LGBTQ or trans-specific organizations and online communities. Convenience sampling is an appropriate method for exploring new environments and understanding the dominant attitudes (Engel & Schutt, 2013). Flyers were distributed among community leaders, community organizations, and those working with transgender and nonbinary individuals (researchers, practitioners). Interested individuals contacted the researcher for an original screening and to answer any questions about the study. These meetings were intended to increase buy-in and empower participants to recruit others in their community accurately.

Recruitment strategies using community members and organizations can help to engage hidden or hard-to-reach populations (Engel & Schutt, 2013). Non-representative sampling is acceptable in exploratory research with under-studied populations (Engel & Schutt, 2013), as well as when the focus is increasing theoretical understanding rather

than generalizability (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). Snowball sampling is an appropriate method for recruiting marginalized and hard-to-reach populations as well as a fostering potentially meaningful experience – "Being recruited by peers to take part in a research project serves for some as a bridge to civic engagement and fosters intrinsic interest in the questions and issues explored by the study" (Tiffany, 2006, p. i122). According to Wang (1999), individuals with specific characteristics may be recruited for representativeness of certain backgrounds and experiences. To develop diversity within the sample, I sought to recruit participants with connections to communities of color, older and younger age cohorts, and (dis)ability/chronic illness status. Some participants from underrepresented populations were explicitly asked to recruit others with their identities as highlighted as a priority in the recruitment material to expand the previously limited representation in the literature.

Theoretical sampling may also be used as needed to reach the point of saturation, which occurs when no new pattern or theoretical insights emerge (Charmaz, 2014). In addition to saturation, theoretical sampling purposes include providing distinctions between categories, clarifying connections between emerging themes, and confirming categories and their properties (Charmaz, 2014). Theoretical sampling was an option using follow-up interviews if specific information that was either unclear, incomplete, or missing from the previous data; however, this was not needed as saturation was confidently met.

Virtual methods pose a possible benefit for reaching marginalized populations underrepresented in the data, including those who are chronically ill, who may have had barriers to participating in an in-person study. Additionally, offering portions of the study

asynchronously also allowed for participation that could be managed within individuals'
schedules and capacity, which may have appealed to those who are neurodivergent and
introverted as well as individuals who are caregivers or work shifts that interfere with
typical in-person meeting times. Online communities have been as significant as – or
even arguably more significant than – in-person communities, which may not be
accessible or safe for many of these marginalized communities, especially for
transgender, nonbinary, and chronically ill folx. For these reasons, the online recruitment
and study potentially served to better capture a more diverse sample.

Compensation/Incentives and Consent

Though financial compensation can be controversial with ethical concern for
potential coercion, especially with vulnerable populations, a key factor is the appropriate
compensation level (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). In previous Photovoice studies, average
compensation has been a $10 stipend per session (Hergenrather et al., 2009; Houle et al.,
2018). Considering the number of online discussions and interviews, participants
received an incentive of $10 per activity (discussions and interviews). Participants who
complete the entire project received $70. Those who complete at least one identified
activity received a proportionate incentive (at $10 per activity). During the screening
meeting, participants decided from which vendor they wanted their incentives. While
recruitment incentives may be a primary motivation at first, studies have shown this to
turn to intrinsic motivation over engagement in the research (Bianchi et al., 2003;
Tiffany, 2006).

Participants were given an informed consent statement (Appendix J) and
opportunities to ask questions during the screening process. Consent was obtained before

starting the first module. Additional considerations were given for consent for different

uses of photographs, which is discussed in the Photographs section.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection comprised seven activities, including five asynchronous Canvas

group discussions and two individual interviews. The primary sources of data came from

group discussions, photos, and interviews with the participants. Additionally, PAR

involves community engagement and researcher reflexivity that I recorded throughout by

reflexive memos. Not all collected data were presented in this publication. The data

included in this dissertation are identified with an asterisk in Table 2.

Table 2
Data collection Procedures
Canvas Discussions
1.   Introductions (Zoom)
2.   Group norms
3.   Creating a Supportive Space
4.   Questions About PhotoVoice
5.   Photos Ethics (questions by the participants)
6.   Collaborative Decisions About Photo Formats
7.   Being Nonbinary (Activity #1; Appendix B)
8.*   What is Wellbeing (as it relates to gender)? (Activity #2; Appendix C)
9.*   Wellbeing Self-Portrait (Activity #3; Appendix D)
10.   Virtual Exhibit Options
11.   Wellbeing Snapshot Options
12.   Optional Attendee Survey Questions
13.* Promotive and Corrosive Factors of Wellbeing (Activity #5; Appendix E)
14.* Practice and Policy Recommendations (Activity #6; Appendix F)
Interviews
1.*   Photo-elicitation interviews (Activity #4; Appendix G)
2.   Participant Process Interviews (Appendix H)
3.   Exit Interview (optional for those who withdrew) (Appendix I)
Zoom Chats
Note. * Primary data used in this dissertation, other data will be disseminated in future manuscripts. Activities included pimary, secondary, and participant process data.

Each module (except modules 1, 2, & 8) concluded with asynchronous,

unstructured, participant-driven chats for the purpose of checking-in, answering

questions, and community building and maintenance. This information was collected as part of understanding the participant's process of engaging in an online PhotoVoice project.

Demographic Information

Basic screening information was collected during recruitment, including chosen name, pronouns, gender identity, age, and location. For all demographics, participants were instructed that they could provide a categorical response (e.g., nonbinary gender), answer with a description response (e.g., I do not identify with any gender), or to skip/not respond. Unlike traditional collection of demographics early in a study, demographics beyond the basic screening were collected at the end of the study during the participation process interviews. This was intentionally timed after building rapport and framed as "what information do you think is important to paint a picture of our group?" Standard demographic data were collected with consideration for diversity and representation. In addition to the researcher's previously identified standard (i.e., gender, age, race, ethnicity) and nuanced (i.e., culture, belief system, current disability/chronic pain status, neurodiversity) demographics, the participants contributed numerous additional demographics and experiences, including discrimination (employment, healthcare, housing), insecurities (housing, food, medical), environment (Do you live in a rural, urban, or suburban environment?), sexual health (Are you taking Prep?), and other identities (Do you identify as fat?).

Several decisions regarding demographic questions and answering options were based on my interpretation of ethical research practice with a marginalized population. When considering what and how data is collected, I argue that there is gravity in

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understanding what is not answered (e.g., uncomfortable, inappropriate, considered unrelated). Therefore, PRs had the option to skip or not answer a question and these responses are included in reported demographics. Another ethical consideration was comprehensive understanding of backgrounds, for which PRs were asked race, ethnicity, and culture as three distinct questions that allowed for descriptive answers (as alternatives to the common practice of combining race and ethnicity or limited ethnicity options, such as Hispanic/non-Hispanic). Similarly, the demographic question about assigned sex at birth (ASAB) was given careful consideration for respecting the sometimes triggering relationship to this demographic for nonbinary individuals as well as the underrepresentation of AMAB nonbinary and intersex folx. A recent study showed that some trans and nonbinary individuals found being asking assigned sex at birth was troubling and painful (Puckett et al., 2020). With consideration for the research ethical principle of beneficence, this critique required reflection on whether asking ASAB would be more additive than harmful. The potential usefulness of asking ASAB among nonbinary individuals (as ASAB is implied with trans men and trans women) is to provide representation for underrepresented groups including AMAB and intersex individuals. Until greater representation exists, it was decided by the researchers to be important to include along with this context and reassurance that not responding to this question was understandable and acceptable.

Photographs

According to Edwards (1992), the historical role of photography in early social science research was "as a simple…truth-revealing mechanism" (p. 4). Or as S. Warkov stated, "the camera is a wonderful mechanism. It will reproduce, exactly, what is going

on inside of your head" (as cited by Becker, 1974). More precisely, photography can represent the creator's beliefs, biases, ignorance, knowledge, and perspective (Harper, 1998). Becker (1974) cautioned that those taking the photographs must be aware of the theory that guides the photographs to obtain "intellectually denser" photographs (p. 11). To address this concern, the first session included a lesson in photography about documenting experiences and capturing intended messages and feelings (informed by existing PhotoVoice handbooks and consulting with a professional photographer). The collection of photographs about wellbeing presented in session two served as a practice in photo-elicitation before the interviews. Digital photos were sent to the researcher before interviews and meetings. During the PhotoVoice study, several photographs were collected.

Before photos were collected, PRs signed a consent form that identified their preference for use of the photos in the study. They were given a matrix of options to share different sets of photos (wellbeing photos, self-portraits, promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing photos) in different settings (e.g., exhibit to raise awareness, presentations of the data, and publications) or not at all. This form could be updated at any time and two PRs chose to update their form during the study. These options allowed for numerous levels of visibility to accommodate safety and comfort, while empowering PRs. All but one participant opted to have all their photos used in all settings. Selected photos that were permitted to be used in publication will be included in the findings.

Wellbeing Photographs

To enrich the discussion of wellbeing, participants were asked to photograph 2-3 images that exemplify wellbeing to be discussed in the Module 5 group discussion

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(Activity #2, Appendix C). These images, along with their individual definition of wellbeing, also served as a practice in photo-elicitation before the interviews.

Self-portrait photographs

Participants also photographed self-portraits that they feel represented their wellbeing as nonbinary persons. The self-portrait was discussed in module 5 as a group regarding the participant's experience in taking self-portraits and the connection of the self-portrait to wellbeing (Activity #3; Appendix D) as well as during the photo-elicitation interviews among participants who included their self-portrait in their selected photos.

Promotive and Corrosive Factors of Wellbeing Photographs

The photo-elicitation interviews focused on promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing and was preceded by the session one discussion about wellbeing, including the 2-3 photos, individual definitions, and a community conceptualization of wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. With this concept of wellbeing fresh in participant's minds, participants then collected 6-8 photos of their lives that reflected wellbeing as nonbinary individuals. Details of these photos (e.g., format, coloring, editing) were decided by the participants. A list of details were provided to participants in session one to consider before finalizing choices in session two. The 6-8 photos from their life were used for photo-elicitation in the qualitative interviews.

Photo-Elicitation Interviews

In a photo-elicitation interview, photographs are used to guide the interview in collaboration between the researcher and interviewee(s) using themes and open-ended questions (Harper, 1998). Photo-elicitation can be used with individuals or groups with a

wide age range and with those who respond more easily to visual than lexical prompts (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998). The flexible application of photo-elicitation can be used to explore cultural norms and shared meanings and provocatively elicit suppressed views (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998). Participants took 6-8 photographs related to how wellbeing was promoted and corroded in their lives. Due to the number of photos and desired depth of exploration, data for this were collected through photo-elicitation interviews rather than group discussions. Although group discussions are common, PhotoVoice studies have also used individual interviews with similar abstract concepts, including hope (Harley, 2015); stigma, agency, and resistance (Desyllas, 2014); and social exclusion and psychosocial adjustment (Kim et al., 2015). The individual interviews were scheduled to last approximately 60-90 minutes. During the photo-elicitation interview, participants were prompted to discuss how their 6-8 photos related to the concept of wellbeing that was discussed in session two. PhotoVoice studies commonly use Wang's (1999) SHOWeD method questions or an adaptation (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Hergenrather et al., 2009). For this study, a modified version of the SHOWeD questions was created with prompts related to wellbeing (Appendix G).

Photo-elicitation has been found to empower participants with advantages including tangible products for stimulating tacit information such as metaphors and representations, a more egalitarian balance between researcher and participant, and a unique and stimulating approach to participation that produces rich and diverse information (Van Auken et al., 2010). Further, participant-taken photography (rather than taken by the researcher) maintains a focus on the perspective of the participant and their

interaction with their environments (Epstein et al., 2006). Such photos evoke memories and new perspectives while developing trust and rapport (Epstein et al., 2006).

Data Analysis

PhotoVoice data may generate meanings related to issues, themes, or theories, of which one may be a focus, depending on the goals of the project (Wang et al., 1998). For this study, issues and themes were the focus of the analysis. A preliminary scope of PhotoVoice methods used in social work literature showed the most frequently used analysis was general qualitative methods, thematic analysis, and content analysis. Data analysis was conducted by a research team comprised of me, the principal investigator (PI), and one cisgender heterosexual doctoral student who served as a second coder with an outsider perspective during the initial coding for increased accuracy and trustworthiness. Nvivo 12 software (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2018) was used for analysis. This software allowed for the organization of data under themes, parent nodes, child nodes, and grandchild nodes.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted on the broader theme of wellbeing among nonbinary individuals from the Canvas wellbeing discussion (Activity #2, Appendix C) and wellbeing self-portrait discussion (Activity #3, Appendix D), which included the individual definitions of wellbeing and responses to peer's posts. Altogether, the data comprehensively addressed the first research aim about wellbeing conceptualization. The second research aim to identify promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing used analysis of the photo-elicitation interviews (Activity #4, Appendix G) about the Canvas promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing discussion (Activity #5, Appendix E).

Finally, the practice and policy discussion (Activity #6, <u>Appendix F</u>) informed recommendations that completed the third research aim. The data were analyzed according to the following stages outlined by Charmaz (2014).

Initial Coding. In this first stage, the raw interview content – words, phrases, lines, events –were condensed into interpretive summaries (e.g., what is happening) (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher and the second coder conducted initial coding on the transcripts by labeling each text unit (sentences and other small increments) with a code word that captured the essence of the text unit. Gerunds, or words denoting action, were used for codes to create dynamic labels and avoid assigning one-dimensional types to people. The aim of initial coding was to render observation into meaning (Charmaz, 2014). The product of this initial coding was the codebook that was collaboratively created by both coders' review of one participant that provided a loose framework for initial coding of all data.

Focused Coding. In the second phase, the initial codes were synthesized by the most frequent and significant (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher compared initial codes and refined them into focused codes that were conceptual while maintaining grounding in the original meanings. The aim of focused coding was to condense the data to the point of analyzing extensive data to discover patterns and advance the direction of an emerging set of themes (Charmaz, 2014). In this dissertation, focused coding was an iterative process, in which additional themes and nodes were added, collapsed, expanded, and organized during analysis and process notes were recorded.

Axial Coding. The third phase creates a systematic organization of focused coding (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher related the subcategories of codes into newly

defined categories, such as having affirming support/support networks. The aim of axial coding was to create a conceptual structure of that data and develop cohesion of the emerging set of themes related to each of the research questions in this dissertation (Charmaz, 2014). In this study, axial coding was organized by the research aims – dimensions of wellbeing, promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing, and recommendations.

Mechanisms for Trustworthiness

Through approaching qualitative research from a constructivist epistemology, it is understood that the data and interpretation of the data are a collaborative process and that reality is co-constructed (Charmaz, 2014); thus, techniques for increasing trustworthiness are essential (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Williams and Morrow (2009) argue that trustworthiness is the demarcation of qualitative research from other forms of writing, such as journalism or merely anecdotes. Their three suggested categories of trustworthiness were "integrity of the data, balance between reflexivity and subjectivity, and clear communication of findings" (Williams & Morrow, 2009, p. 577). Likewise, Trustworthiness involves critical discourse from multiple different perspectives – insiders and outsiders, scientists and non-scientists – and does not prioritize any one set of interests or values (Wertz et al., 2011). Standards of trustworthiness include triangulation, negative case analysis, member checking, auditing a paper trail (e.g., memoing), and evoking participant action (Rubin & Babbie, 2014), several of which will be used in this study.

Direct Quotes. Direct quotes have been referred to as "authentic citations" (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 112), representing the PRs voice unaltered to enhance trustworthiness

of the findings. According to Patton (2002), direct quotes increase trustworthiness

through supporting the findings by original data, offering contextual clarity, and "the

reader joins the inquirer in the search for meaning" (p. 65). Direct quotes also support

Williams and Morrow's (2009) requirement for data integrity, which was established

through quotes that illustrate and support the interpretation. However, a limitation of

direct quotes is the subjective selection of quotes that resonate with the author,

conceivably leaving other quotes unexamined.

Member Checking. Member checking occurs when researchers consult

participants with observations and interpretations of the data (Rubin & Babbie, 2014) and

is a common practice in qualitative research (Bradshaw, 2001; Clow, 2005; Harper &

Cole, 2012). Naidu and Prose (2018) recommend framing member checking as a form of

accountability practices that strengthen a study. Before dissemination, they suggest that

presentations should be shared with participants so they are aware and consent to the

planned representation of themselves and their communities. Power is an important

consideration when using member checking in analysis as Bradshaw (2001) described:

> All participants in a research collective possess power. Research may be
> largely initiated by one powerful actor (the researcher), but it is then
> translated and transformed with others (research participants), differently
> powerful. In short, research is a fundamentally negotiated process.
> (Bradshaw, 2001, p. 204)

Similarly, member checking can be challenging when negotiating opposition between

participant veto and researcher interpretation of data (Clow, 2005). Naidu and Prose

(2018) suggest creating an environment that is comfortable for debate and clarification

can help increase sharing with less confrontation. According to Creswell (2014), member

checking is best completed with later-stage, cleaned, organized interpretations rather than

transcripts. When used intentionally and appropriately, member checking can be a valuable confirmation and triangulation tool, and even have an intervention effect (Harper & Cole, 2012). However, the usefulness of member-checking relies on creating relationships and an environment that supports comfort with critique, allowing members to challenge the findings. Participatory action research, more so than traditional qualitative methods, is designed to foster such collaboration and critique. Further, thoughtful options for participation, as I offered in this dissertation (see Chapter 4), prime members to think critically about study design and their engagement.

For this study, emerging themes were discussed with participants at two points, but member checking was not the primary source of analysis but rather a guiding confirmation at early stages of interpretation. Individual photo-elicitation interviews included a pointed question about participant's observation of emerging themes from their photos. After initial emerging themes were lifted by the interviews, they were presented to participants in the Canvas discussion on promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing then themes were ranked and modified as needed by participants (Activity #5, Appendix E). Further member checking was reserved as an option if needed during data analysis; however, the data analysis was completed without a need for further clarification. Participants were invited to co-author future publications and all who were asked confirmed interest, which will inherently involve member checking of future manuscripts.

Reflexivity and Reflexive Memoing. Reflexivity is a practice in qualitative studies that involves the researcher(s) reflecting on their background, experiences, and role within the study to recognize how their perspective, including potential biases and

assumptions, may influence as well as contribute value to the study (Creswell, 2014).

Davies (2008) described this as "turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference…at

its most immediately obvious level [reflexivity] refers to the ways in which the products

of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research" (p. 4). In

qualitative research, the social and relational context in which the participant's narratives

are constructed is of great importance (Wertz et al., 2011). Creating and sharing a

positionality statement is one example of reflexivity. According to the principles of

reflexivity, researchers must consider their standpoint in relation to the findings (Wertz et

al., 2011).

Throughout this study, the researcher completed reflexive memoing – recording

the processes of coding, categories, and emerging themes, which provided a valuable

reference and increased the dependability of the study (Charmaz, 2014). Additionally, the

researcher has created a positionality statement in reflection on their power, privilege,

and position in relation to the study population. According to Wertz and colleagues

(2011), "engaging in reflexivity and assuming reflexivity aids us in recognizing multiple

realities, positions, and standpoints – and how they shift during the research process for

both the researcher and the research participants" (p. 169).

Evoking Participant Action. Participant action is inherent in participatory action

research. Challenges include negotiating power dynamics between participants and

researchers, communication with community members, and creating a *common language*

and consensus, which can be time-demanding (Tiffany, 2006). With outsiders, the

researcher must always consider the cultural perspective of the participants (Harper,

1998). Some of these challenges are mitigated by the researcher belonging to the

community and, thus, having a relationship with the community and shared gendered experiences, which lead to more insightful questions and answers without culture shock or need for acclimation (Holmes, 2014). This insider perspective can also be a challenge as it can lessen objectivity and increase potential bias (Kusow, 2003), which highlights the importance of participatory methods (i.e., PAR) used in this study.

Dissemination

Dissertation

The dissertation titled *Learning to Thrive in a Binary World: Understanding Nonbinary Gendered Experiences and Ways to Bolster Wellbeing* will be uploaded to the ProQuest dissertation archives and available on the IUPUI library website (http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/resources/dissertations). Additionally, a copy will be publicly accessible on my professional website (www.KillianKinney.com) and other work-related websites.

Presentations

The findings from this study will be presented at national and international conferences in the field of social work, medicine, and interdisciplinary LGBTQ conferences.

Public Exhibition

When designing this study, a public exhibition at a local cultural center identified by the participants was planned. The exhibition was to include participant-selected images and possible text. In addition to celebrating wellbeing among nonbinary individuals, the purpose of this exhibit was to raise social awareness of the lived experience of nonbinary individuals, particularly representing gendered experiences that

are not pathologized or framed within disparities. A possibility existed for attendees to complete a brief survey; however, a public exhibition was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though possibilities for a virtual exhibit were possible, the momentum for this dwindled as the pandemic raged and social unrest reached a fever pitch over the summer of 2020. Alternatively, an in-person meeting after social distancing was proposed and tentatively planned. Building community is an arguably meaningful action resulting from participation.

Human Participants and Ethical Precautions

The researcher has no conflicts of interest to report. In order to minimize personal biases that could influence the research, several methods for trustworthiness have been conducted throughout the study. The study has been approved by the Indiana University Internal Review Board (Protocol #2002503741 approved May 05, 2020). Possible participants were informed of the potential risks, side effects, and/or discomforts while participating in the study (see Appendix J). Discussing wellbeing (or the related lack of wellbeing) posed psychological risks, such as emotional triggering from corrosive factors to wellbeing. Photography posed an additional risk for a breach of privacy that could open participants to an increased risk of othering (i.e., transphobic internet trolling). Participants were given multiple options to protect their privacy (i.e., chosen name, a pseudonym, or another identifier).

To protect against or mitigate the risk of othering and with respect for privacy, participants were given multiple options for participating. First, participants knew in advance of participation that data would be collected from group discussions, chats, and interviews, allowing participants to make an informed decision about the content of their

photos, knowing how the photos would be used. Second, participants were given the

option to modify their photos for increased privacy and comfort (e.g., blurring, cropping,

and black-barring). Finally, if a participant experienced psychological harm, preparations

were available for referral to a therapist, who had been vetted for providing trans-

affirming care.

Chapter 4: Findings

"I am nonbinary, I am genderfluid, I am queer. I break the rules. I will
shout loud and proud that I am me and I am happy to be me. It took a long
road to get here, and I deserve to be proud and happy." (Kai)

Chapter 4 discusses the sample of participants and findings from the thematic

analysis organized by the three aims. When those who contributed to the study were

asked how they would like to be referenced when sharing the findings, the response was

overwhelmingly *participant* even when given other options, including co-researcher and

community member. To respect their wishes while recognizing each as valued,

collaborating co-researchers[8], the label *participant researcher* (PR) will be used. The

findings of the study are reported in three sections according to the aims to: 1) Explore

core dimensions of wellbeing as defined by nonbinary individuals, 2) Identify promotive

and corrosive factors of that wellbeing, and 3) Provide recommendations to bolster

nonbinary wellbeing.

Sample

Diversity within the sample was intentionally recruited, particularly regarding

race, age, body type, disability status, and neurodiversity, for which all but race were

diversely represented (Table 3). All but one PR identified as white for race (93.8%);

however, more nuanced differences became clear when discussing ethnicity and culture.

Culture was shared in relation to their people (Oglala nation, Taíno Puerto Rico, first

generation immigrant European American, disabled), identity (queer, areligious, Jewish –

not practicing), geography (Midwestern, Midwest transplant from the deep south

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[8] In continuation of discussions about insider-outsider research perspectives (Holmes, 2014) and a *nothing about us without us* approach (Golding, 2015), I have chosen to flip the label research participant to participant researcher, as active contributors to the process.

originally, rural), and history (adopted, "raised Hungarian – pure american – watched it disappear," "orphaned by our own culture…seek out our own soul"). The sample skewed toward those with college experience and degrees, with only one PR not attending college due to being kicked out of the house by their parents. Most PRs had earned a bachelor's degree or higher (58.8%) and 23.6% were current college students, skewing the sample to very educated adults. Participant researchers lived across the Midwest[9] with PRs living in Indiana (*n*=5), Michigan (*n*=4), Ohio (*n*=4), Missouri (*n*=2), Illinois (*n*=1), and South Dakota (*n*=1). When asked about being in the Midwest, one participant described it as "a lot more binary here" and "where transgender clinics are not as common or Planned Parenthood's being defunded, that type of thing..." with the parting message that "...we're also here, too, you can't just dismiss the entire middle of the country because you think we're all hicks" (Cory). Photo-elicitation interviews lasted for an average of 94 minutes (*SD*=29.3, Range=64-182).

Table 3		
Participant Researcher Demographics (*N*=17)		
	M	*sd*
Age (range: 19-50)	30.00	7.40
	f	*%*
Race		
Multiracial[1]	1	5.9
White	16	94.1
Ethnicity		
Ashkenazi	1	5.9
German Irish	1	5.9
Native American	1	5.9
Non-Hispanic	3	17.6
Non-Latinx	1	5.9
White	5	29.4
"White-washed"	1	5.9
Chose not to respond	4	23.5
Current Gender (multiple)		

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[9] "I am so Midwestern it hurts" (Nat).

Agender	2	11.8
Genderfluid	2	11.8
Gender-neutral	1	5.9
Genderqueer	5	29.4
Nonbinary	12	70.6
Transgender	1	5.9
Transmasculine	2	11.8
Pronouns[2] (multiple)		
He/him/his	3	17.6
She/her/hers	2	11.8
They/them/their	17	100.0
ASAB[3]		
AFAB	10	58.8
AMAB	1	5.9
Intersex	1	5.9
Chose not to respond	5	29.4
Identify as disabled / someone with a disability[4]	9	52.9
Identify as neurodiverse / someone with neurodiversity[5]	7	41.2

Note. Demographic categories are listed alphabetically to avoid biased ordering. PRs were given the option to answer with more than one label, reported by frequency for current gender and pronouns.
[1] Multiracial – Puerto Rican and Indigenous.
[2] Pronouns – Notably, none of the PRs in the final sample used neo pronouns; however, two PRs who withdrew before starting used the neo pronouns xie/xex/xyr and zee/zed/zeta.
[3] ASAB – Assigned sex at birth. As one PR noted, "leave off - that is the first thing people immediately jump to." Of the eight PRs who withdrew before or at the start of the study, at least three were AMAB.
[4] Disability – (yes reported) Descriptions included chronic pain, Scoliosis, AGDS, visual disability, and tinnitus. One PR reported a medical condition but did not consider it disabling even though it might be considered a disability.
[5] Neurodiversity – (yes reported) Descriptions included anxiety, depression, ASP, ADHD, BPD, "not neurotypical," "among others." One PR reported they do not apply the label to themselves but have anxiety disorder and PTSD.

Wellbeing Among Nonbinary Individuals

In this section, I present exemplary individual definitions of wellbeing, and identify core dimensions of PRs' wellbeing with quotes to enhance trustworthiness of the findings (see Table 4). Understanding how nonbinary individuals conceptualize wellbeing was triangulated through several sources. First, PRs were asked to define their wellbeing as nonbinary individuals in a discussion post. During the photo-elicitation interviews, they were also asked several questions to further understand conceptualization of their wellbeing. Analyzed together, these data provided a thorough

description of how nonbinary individuals perceive their wellbeing in relation to their gender and as part of a marginalized population.

Personal Wellbeing Definitions

PRs were asked to define their wellbeing as nonbinary individuals to capture their unique perspective of wellbeing through a lens inclusive of marginalized lived experiences. Nine core dimensions of wellbeing emerged across PR's definitions: Feeling safe and secure, having affirming support/support systems, being connected to community, exploring gender identity and expression, feeling comfortable with oneself, being holistically present, experiencing mental and physical health, and having joy (Table 4). These themes were reflected in greater detail when discussing promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing. In addition to the dimensions of wellbeing, several observations are discussed regarding safety and security, materials, environments, and DIY wellbeing.

The following are exemplar definitions of wellbeing that illustrate PR's resilience and the centrality of wellbeing in their lives:

> I feel most well when I have support in my life to take care of my body, mind, and spirit; when I am seen, supported, and affirmed. Finding wellbeing for myself has been about being in a place where I could find acceptance for my expression both internally and externally. It was about creating a framework for myself where I can breathe. (HG)

> My definition of wellbeing is inherently tied with my experience of being nonbinary – even with my many privileges (being white, not experiencing transmisogyny, and more), I have had to fight both my internalized fears and the outside world to be able to experience life as my authentic self. That is why authenticity and growth are so important to my definition of wellbeing – if I am not able to be FULLY myself, or if I feel as though I have to chop my life into discrete pieces that cannot touch, then I do not think I would be able to fully pursue and experience wellbeing. (PR #1[10])

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[10] This participant researcher simply wanted their identified to be a number. All others wanted their chosen name used.

Wellbeing is the state of comfort and happiness in self, surroundings, and situation. High enough levels of this comfort and happiness result in thriving, living to your fullest potential. If I am happy in my life, I can help others be happy in theirs. My thriving helps others to grow and thrive. Being nonbinary is essential to my wellbeing. I would not be comfortable in my own skin if I wasn't able to explore this fluidity…Finding the label of nonbinary opened up so many possibilities to me, letting me explore myself in ways I never would have thought I could and giving me a name for what I was experiencing. (Kai)

Compared with PWB and SWB, PR's definitions align with components of each. The inclusion of harmony and joy in PR's definitions reflect SWB's pursuit of happiness (Ryff, 1989) (e.g., joy and harmony) and PWB's rich life experiences (Ryan et al., 2008; Ryff, 1989), which could be conceptualized as community, health, and opportunity. In chapter 5, a deeper comparison of the wellbeing findings with wellbeing theories will be presented.

Table 4	
Core Dimensions of Participant Researchers' Wellbeing	
Themes	**Example Quotes**
Feeling safe and secure (e.g., to explore gender)	*"When I think of wellbeing, I immediately think of security and safety… I think of wellbeing as the safety to be oneself and nourish oneself."* (Dylan) *"By feeling safe to dress and express my nonbinary gender, I feel mentally healthier."* (Cory) See Photo 2 as an additional example.
Having affirming support / support networks (e.g., friends, family, professional networks)	*"Having that support system that loves me as I am and respects my identity and my pronouns is also a vital factor for my wellbeing. Having people that understand the struggles related to being genderqueer and support me through them greatly benefits me."* (Rowan) *"My definition of wellbeing: Having an inclusive support structure that helps you thrive in a way that feels right to you… In relation to my non-binary identity, this [wellbeing] definition would presume needing a support structure for thriving in my gender identity and expression."* (Timothy) See Photos 14 & 15 as an additional example.

Being connected to community	*"Wellbeing means being in a place (both literally and metaphorically) where you can experience a variety of aspects of life, pursue personal growth/participate in community growth, and exist as authentically as possible."* (PR #1) *"Before [social distancing] this [photo of laptop] would have been a picture of a group of people gathered together, now due to health concerns, my secondary mode of connection to a larger community has become my primary. I have video calls, phone calls, messaging services, and social media to connect with people. Finding creative ways to support each other, to learn, to teach, and share."* (HG*)*
Exploring gender identity and expression	*"As for being nonbinary, wellbeing includes continuing my self-exploration, the examination of how gender influences the ways I achieve wellbeing, and the seemingly simple recognition and acceptance of my gender by other people. Being genderqueer just feels right to me and helps me feel better in the skin I'm in."* (Kristy) *"With a foundation of safety and security, I feel free to show excitement and joy as I continue to explore my gender and expression. When I dress more masc, my husband still kisses me while calling me 'his dapper boi.' I can't help but smile. I get excited to go thrifting for clothing to add to my aesthetics, to embody a combination of both feminine and masculine."* (E.) See Photo 40 as an additional example.
Experiencing mental and physical health (e.g., therapy, medication)	*"Wellbeing to me is doing all that I can, within my ability, to stay healthy in body and mind. This includes many things, including getting enough sleep, eating as well as possible, taking my medications and supplements and following my doctors' instructions, trying to stay positive and focused and not get distracted or overextend myself, and working hard to understand and respect my and my partner's emotional health and take measures to improve it. These are all challenging goals, especially for someone who has disabilities and health problems."* (Catkin) *"Wellbeing is taking my pills every day, three times a day, and having therapy at the end of each week."* (Gabi)
Feeling comfortable with oneself (e.g., in one's skin, in one's environment)	*"...being comfortable with myself delves deep into my gender identity: knowing that I can express myself however I please, and being happy with where I am at any point, whether transitioning or not."* (Rowan) *"Transitioning has offered me comfort and safety in my own body that I struggled to experience before. In addition*

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	to this need for safety being fulfilled, I feel more complete. Coming out has also created this unity between who I've always perceived myself and now how others perceive me. Everything just makes a little more sense. I see this with my comfort in my own sense of being." (Nat)
Being holistically present	*"Wellbeing is the ability to exist, wholly and completely, as yourself with no opposition other than growth."* (Jynx) *"Wellbeing is a sense of inner peace and wholeness."* (Noel)
Experiencing harmony or balance across aspects of one's life	*"My definition of wellbeing is a balance of the physical, emotional and environment providing me with grounding, balance and security."* (Boots) *"To me, wellbeing is having everything in moderation and being able to cope and cope well with variation in day to day life."* (Gabi)
Creating joy	*"I feel like the underlying thing is just a celebration of happiness and joy and contentment… I feel that it's taken me a long time to become content with myself and sure of myself and proud of myself and that's not something I wanna give up any time soon. I feel like that's the underlying theme of all of my photos."* (E.) *"…being securely rooted in my body and in the present, with joy, compassion, and curiosity."* (Noel) See Photo 1 as an additional example.

Photo 1
Title: "Queer Joy" (Dylan)
Photo Description (generated by Dylan): A white nonbinary person wearing a purple hat, denim jacket, gray pants, and black boots, lays on white stones, on back, laughing. Blue skies and yellow trees and water are in the background.

Context: My wicked late submission is a photo of me on a hike in Door County, Wisconsin last fall. Door County is known for its peak foliage and my partner and I are both from New England, so fall foliage is a big reminder of home. At this point in our relationship, my partner and I were long distance. They lived in Milwaukee and I was in Cleveland, so this was a weekend trip for me to visit. This was an absolutely beautiful hike, next to a Great Lake, and the drive up was filled with sing-alongs. The drive home included a stop at the weirdest restaurant I have ever been to (college sports bar x taco bar x pizza x cheesy merch) and a local distillery for Wisconsin's state drink, an Old Fashioned. It was a great day. (Fun fact: this was also a proposal location scouting trip for my partner. Our proposal actually ended up being in Cleveland at our first date spot, but if it was here, during this moment, that would have also been amazing!)
This photo symbolizes a lot of my wellbeing and positive factors. I am wearing a favorite outfit, the outfit that makes me feel like the most me. I am on a hike in a place that reminds me of home. I am with my partner. I am laughing. I felt whole this day. This day I wasn't worried about what I looked like or stressing about anything. I was on an adventure with my partner and I was happy.

Safety and Security

Safety and security are fundamental necessities for anyone, but they are complicated by gender identity and expression. To PRs, safety and security meant spaces where they could express themselves without fear of being hurt, affirming people in their lives, and access to services to meet their needs. Sometimes this meant choosing between feeling safe and gender expression. "Being gender nonconforming or fluid takes a lot more courage…to be out and visible especially in the Midwest since it's so binary…it could be dangerous…especially if you're Black or Indigenous – that magnifies it" (Cory). Similarly, safety concerns and vulnerability were heightened during transitioning when people around them had different knowledge about nonbinary identities in general but especially their gender identity and expression. As an effort to protect against microaggressions and increase safety, some PR reported becoming more careful with who they shared knowledge about their gender. Ways in which PRs safety and security were strengthened by supportive partner(s) ("added security" [Jynx]), pride paraphernalia, and unusual circumstances that concealed gender expression and/or deprioritized others perception of gender (see Photo 2). Regarding the latter, pride symbols increased safety and security for PRs both in seeing it in space and adorning it themselves. For Dylan, pride paraphernalia were an armor:

> I work a lot in my space and my presentation to make sure at least if anything else, if everything else is going to be hostile towards me, that I'm feeling I'm safe, having the armor of myself and then fuck the rest of the world. If I'm wearing my Doc Martens and a denim jacket, no one can touch me!

For E., the ultimate sense of safety and security was to wear pride symbols at work without fear of repercussions, which "lays a firm foundation of safety and security that

my gender and gender expression will have no impact on my livelihood, my career, or my health insurance." Others made their homes that place for safety. Regardless, safety and security was key to PRs wellbeing.

Photo 2
Title: "Androgynous Safety" (Boots)
Context: The Corona Virus has allowed me to cover my face. When I'm in my jackets no one ever calls me ma'am or miss. I feel more protected and safe, even in these uncertain times, because of this.
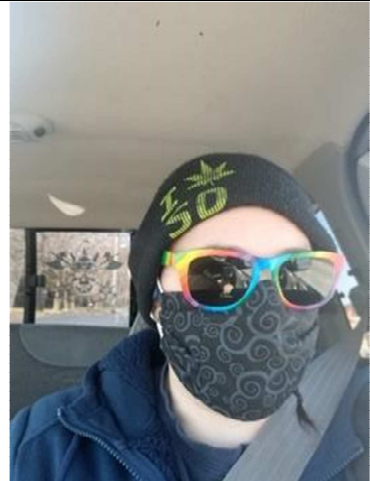
Environments

Across wellbeing definitions and discussions, PRs echoed finding a balance between themselves and navigating their current environments (both affirming and oppressive) to enhance their wellbeing. Despite the environments that people found themselves in, whether through upbringing or necessity (e.g., school, employment, survival relationships), the path to wellbeing described by PRs was through the internal work of self-exploration and acceptance and equally finding or creating external support networks. The environment was central to wellbeing, inhibiting or assisting PRs to figure out where they "fit in" and connect with community. It should be noted that the state of the country during data collection in the summer of 2020 had a distinct influence on wellbeing among PRs. "I'm not going to say [my wellbeing] is perfect because, to be honest, I feel like the thing that's affecting my wellbeing most right now is actually the world being on fire. Like how is anyone's wellbeing right now?" (PR #1). Yet, regardless

of how busy their lives were with responsibilities (school, family, work) – and yes, even a

pandemic and social unrest – wellbeing was considered to be work but worthwhile.

> I have A LOT GOING ON, so wellbeing is extremely important for me
> right now, and part of that wellbeing is taking care of myself as a
> nonbinary person in a world where being nonbinary is not always
> understood or cherished as the valid and wonderful thing that it is!
> (Catkin)

Similarly, resilience to persevere for a better future was common across PRs.

> I feel like I am still at a place where I really have to put a lot of effort into
> my wellbeing – especially right now. I feel like it's not a thing that's static
> day to day – I feel like it's something I actually have to be mindful of and
> put effort into right now, but I don't know that's like a bad thing either.
> (PR #1)

This resilience to marginalization – the daily (micro)aggressions, discrimination across

domains in their lives, and pervasive exclusion, erasure, and invalidation – was an

essential element to their wellbeing. That is, resilience allowed for PRs to persevere to

withstand and overcome the corrosive impact of marginalization.

DIY Wellbeing

In many instances, gender identity and expression was centered within their

overall creation and maintenance of wellbeing. "Being nonbinary is essential to my

wellbeing. I would not be comfortable in my own skin if I wasn't able to explore this

fluidity" (Kai). Part of this was self-acceptance of gender, "Accepting myself and my

identity as a nonbinary person was a huge part of my personal wellbeing today; when I

stopped trying to fit myself into a box, I felt so much happier and more free" (Rowan)

(see Photo 3). The language of *centering* is used to reflect an ongoing process of

intentionally concentrating on gender as part of wellbeing due to being pushed off

equilibrium or out of focus by hostile/unsupportive environments, internalized transphobia, etc.

> When I am out in the world, I often do not feel safe, present, or connected. It's like there is a constant barrage of things trying to take away my identity, or to cause me to question it. Simultaneously, being nonbinary has helped me reach feelings of being safe and social because when I finally figured out who I was, I felt a deep sense of peace and comfort. Knowing that felt like a warm blanket being wrapped around me whispering, "you know who you are, and that is enough." Moments I have in which I can embody this, and especially when people around me embody it too, brings me the most beautiful sense of wellbeing. (Noel)

Photo 3
Title: "Brushes" (Timothy)
Context: This image is of a brush set that I recently bought. I've always worn some make-up, but I've been trying to explore more with eyeshadow recently. To help with that, I bought myself a set of really nice brushes (with proceeds going to GLSEN) after a tough week. This is something that I've been wanting to explore in relation to my gender expression, and for me, it helps me feel better about my face, because I don't feel as masculine when I have some elements that get read in a "femme" way. While it isn't something that every nonbinary person wants, I'm trying to get to a place where some of those more femme elements help me feel more secure in my gender.

Feeling well regarding gender identity and expression contributed to wellbeing in other areas of PR's lives, which speaks to the importance of community care. "I think that exploring and accepting my gender has in many ways lead me to prioritize my wellbeing in all areas of my life" (PR #1). When PRs discussed their wellbeing, it was often connected to giving back – reaching behind to pull others up with them. For example, "If I am happy in my life, I can help others be happy in theirs. My thriving helps others to grow and thrive" (Kai) and "we all contribute to each other's wellbeing" (Rowan). PR #1 summarized wellbeing as a nonbinary person as "sometimes we have to take a DIY approach," such as nonlinear transitioning because each person is unique, but

also sometimes PRs were the first trans person to navigate that space, laying the groundwork for future safety and inclusivity.

Promotive and Corrosive Factors of Wellbeing

In this section, I describe categories of promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing and their connection to the core dimensions of wellbeing (Table 5). Though presented individually, factors are interconnected to each other and wellbeing:

> It is appearing to me that the factors involved with wellbeing are deeply interconnected, things like self-care and therapy. Like safe spaces and affirming healthcare. Representation and self-acceptance. This leads me to hope that by helping people build tools for the internal realities (i.e., therapy, presentation, self-acceptance) that will lead to more community wellbeing and vice versa. (HG)

In some instances, the same factor could be either promotive or corrosive depending on the environmental context in which it was engaged, these are described in the third category of environmentally-contingent factors.

Corrosive Factors of Wellbeing

Navigating a binary world can take a toll on nonbinary individuals and PRs chose not to shy away from their reality of experiencing marginalization. Further, it was in this transparency and forthrightness that they were able to identify promotive and corrosive factors clearly. Or as Boots stated, "*Without transparent conversations about the corrosive factors we cannot be real about the importance of the promotive factors.*" Across participants, various forms of minority stressors emerged as a set of corrosive factors that diminished or threatened PRs' wellbeing. Minority stressors were particularly corrosive to feeling safe and secure, experiencing mental and physical health, and exploring gender identity and expression – dimensions of wellbeing identified in the

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previous section. Several of the most harmful corrosive factors are discussed here in further detail.

Exhaustion from Emotional Labor

To be nonbinary in a binary world was described as exhausting (the most frequently described feeling); exhausting from the emotional labor involved in educating others about gender identity and expression, holding other accountable for misgendering and transphobia, perpetually coming out, and being excluded, all of which took a toll on PRs' ability to be holistically present in some parts of their lives. The most persistent cause of exhaustion was being put in an educator role, whether by other's expectations or self-imposed – the "burden of education being on us" (Jynx) was heavily felt by all PRs, "like it's all on me to make sure that we can treat a trans person with dignity and respect and through these experiences" (Noel). This education extended from individual providers to organizations for free emotional labor (check in-take forms, speak on panels) – typically while not being compensated for their emotional labor or expertise. PRs did distinguish between the extent of exhaustion from being asked questions out of curiosity (typically from a stranger) versus a friend or someone who was perceived to genuinely want to educate themselves to treat trans and nonbinary individuals better, which was notably less exhausting. "My friends when they ask questions, it's like 'ok, yeah, you care about this, you care about me and you care about not messing this up'" (Nat). Conversely, the sentiment towards strangers was to "Google [questions] because I'm really tired of explaining to people that I don't know or I don't know that well" (Nat). For as many PRs who accepted the role of educator, equally as many reported not having the

energy to do so - "I just don't have the spoons[11] for that in this world" (Kristy). This

drain on physical and emotional energy pulled from other sources, which inhibited PRs

from being present in other parts of their lives that were important, such as family and

community; however, many framed it as a necessity for their wellbeing and the wellbeing

of future generations.

Unlike educating, emotional labor of accountability was discussed in two ways;

holding others accountable for microaggressions and feeling accountable to always be *on*

to improve the wellbeing of trans and nonbinary individuals. An important consideration

for understanding the exhaustion when debating whether to hold others accountable is

two-fold. The first harm is the original microaggression, which is followed by trying to

process that harm while also expending the energy to educate others. "[I] also totally

relate with being misgendered and not wanting to or not having the spoons to do

emotional labor to educate someone while you're dealing with the harm they've caused

you. It's exhausting" (Kristy). Regardless of if they corrected others, PRs reported feeling

the need to hold others accountable for harmful discourse and actions.

Another source of exhaustion and emotional labor was from perpetually coming

out or having to explain their gender because it was noted as different, especially when

being othered afterwards. Even when coming out was a positive experience, there was a

level of exhaustion.

> I wasn't worried about [friends or family] at all – it was a little stressful
> and emotionally tiring to tell so many people have basically the same

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[11] Spoon theory is a framework created by Miserandino (2003) for understanding the toll of daily activities
among those with disabilities or chronic illness/pain. Briefly, each person starts the day with a certain
number of spoons based on how big their proverbial cup is and how much they have been able to refill it.
Then, each task during the day costs a different number of spoons. For those who start with less spoons
each day and/or tasks cost more spoons, they have run low or run out of spoons sooner than for those
without similar circumstances.

Table 5

Promotive and Corrosive Factors of Wellbeing

Examples	Example Quotes
Corrosive Factors	
- Exhaustion from emotional labor - Social Control (gender norms and expectations) - Previous traumas - Transphobic interpersonal relationships - Nonbinary exclusion and erasure - Nonbinary stereotype - Policies and politics - Highly gendered spaces - Minority stressors	*"Here I am invisible again. Here I am working on creating space as a leader and instantly invisible and excluded again, even as a leader. And if I'm feeling that excluded, what about the people who are too afraid or don't have the emotional labor to put forward to be visible at all? What about the people who aren't bothering to show up because they already feel like they know they're excluded and not gonna bother?"* (Boots) *"I remember when I chopped off my hair sophomore year of high school – my mom was like 'Now you need to start wearing makeup or else people will think you look like a boy' and I was like 'Why does that matter?' My parents are accepting now, they're just kind-of still adjusting, but still that fucking hurt."* [A] *"Would [gender] be a big part of my life if it was just something we were conditioned to see as normal from the beginning? Probably not. But it is a big part of my life because it informs how I see the world and how people see me and how I question things and it's made me question other things about my politics and other things about other systems of oppression."* (PR #1)
Promotive Factors	
- Natural spaces where gender is de-centered - Resilience - Responsive gender maneuvering - Gender-affirming spaces - Chosen family - Strong support network - Self-care - Community care - Ally advocacy	*"Therapy is a huge part of my wellbeing and finally having a good, queer, therapist has been a key part of how I have evolved as a person."* (Gabi) *"Queer people we're really good at creating spaces for ourselves and for people like us, right? So I've had glimmers of that and it's just – you know, it's like my shoulders can relax, my shoulders can come away from my ears, it's like my back molars can stop touching each other, right? It's a certain comfort and stability… when we can get to that place of feeling safe and secure and connected, like that's the place where we can begin to thrive from. So yeah, being in a space like that is a space that creates growth and creativity and beauty and all of that."* (Noel)

● Social advocacy ● Agency in the painful ● Mastery of wellbeing	*"Probably the best thing for me has been community support – just having people around me who affirm my gender, affirm my pronouns, defend my pronouns when I don't have that capacity or that confidence….I'm in a situation where I can be as free as I want and the external accepts that and reflects that back to me, so it's this loop of we all accept each other, we can all be who we want to be, we can all explore ourselves…I feel like for sure a lot of my wellbeing is centered around my external community and that contributes to my own self-confidence and my own exploration of myself and how comfortable I am doing that."* (Kai)

Environmentally-Contingent Factors

● Self-care ● Self-advocacy ● Representation ● Socially nonconconforming gender expression (SNCGE) ● Materials ● Nonbinary-inclusive resources ● Family of Origin ● Awareness both within and outside of LGBTQ groups	*"Wellbeing is vital for me as a nonbinary person. Since I am part of a vulnerable group that often experiences oppression, misunderstanding, and ridicule, I find myself getting angry sometimes when people misgender me, even after I have told them, or when people act weird about it, or when I get called 'aggressive' for standing up for myself."* (Catkin) *"When I am out in the world, I often do not feel safe, present, or connected. It's like there is a constant barrage of things trying to take away my identity, or to cause me to question it. Simultaneously, being nonbinary has *helped* me reach feelings of being safe and social because when I finally figured out who I was, I felt a deep sense of peace and comfort. Knowing that felt like a warm blanket being wrapped around me whispering 'you know who you are, and that is enough.' Moments I have in which I can embody this, and especially when people around me embody it too, brings me the most beautiful sense of wellbeing."* (Noel) *"You shouldn't have to reject the things you love to wear because someone says you're not 'trans enough'… I've come to reclaim things that I told myself were 'too girly' or 'too masculine' for a nonbinary person. Because, quite frankly, fuck that noise."* (Jynx)

> conversation – at one point I thought about collecting everyone onto a
> Zoom call and just being look, let's have a little mini press conference.
> (Timothy)

While many PRs used humor to cope, Timothy spoke of wishing for an easier way to

come out and be done with that vulnerable and awkward experience. Another PR noted

that their willingness to educate others was high when first coming out, but has since

dwindled. "I think part of that is because who I am now and how people perceive me –

it's who I've always seen myself to be so it feels really exhausting when I meet new

people and I'm clocked[12] as trans" (Nat). They go on to describe the challenge of using

they/them pronouns that simultaneously affirmed their gender as automatically singling

them out as different, which was repeated by multiple PRs. For these reasons, some PRs

felt their nonbinary identity was highly visible by their gender expression with no way to

be authentic and not visibly trans or nonbinary.

　　　　Collectively, this exhaustion from emotional labor had physical, emotional, and

social tolls on PRs' wellbeing. For many, the toll of exhaustion was not being able to

show up in ways that they wanted. A factor in deciding whether or not to engage with

microaggressors was the pessimism that, despite the cost to PRs, others would not learn

from the interaction. "As much as I want to fight and argue with them, you know, it just

really isn't worth it… Definitely there's a lot more energy to output than I have these

days" (Sky). Other PRs spoke of reaching a point of desensitization and protectively

creating distance.

> I'm like "fine, whatever, that's on you – I don't give a fuck," but…it
> sucks…that doesn't feel good – it feels discordant in a way that you don't
> feel fully accepted, you don't feel at home…and so there's always this
> distance that if there were space for nonbinary genders, if there were the

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[12] Clocked is slang for being read or identified as trans or nonbinary.

recognition and the acceptance and the visibility that you wouldn't have to put that distance into place. (Kristy)

The cumulative effect from exhaustion and emotional labor was hard felt.

It makes a lot of sense as to why people are so exhausted and so worn down all the time because before you have to fight battles in your workplace or anything like that, you have to fight battles leaving the house, you have to fight battles on your way to work, you have to fight battles even getting dressed in the morning – making sure that you feel safe and trying to walk through your day and being like what's gonna happen? How do I protect myself? It's exhausting and it's unfair. (Dylan)

Understanding this exhaustion in the context of wellbeing helps to make visible the barriers faced by nonbinary individuals in their pursuit of equity and visibility, which was important to their thriving.

Social Control

Social control was conceptualized as society's direct and subliminal messages about gender identity and expression (cisgender, binary transgender, and nonbinary), and the negative internalization of these messages, such as PRs feeling *not nonbinary enough*. When PRs did not conform to social control, they reported experiencing enforcement of social control from all directions, including peers, family, marketing, and policy (see the policies and politics section). Those with a SNCGE felt a passive resistance in the lack of available tools for expressing their gender (e.g., make-up is marketed for women, masculine clothes are sized for AMAB bodies). More acute was the direct push-back from people in PR's lives who tried to force them to conform to binary gender norms. For example, one PR told of their mom forcing them to wear make-up after cutting their hair short (quote in Table 5). These ongoing social sanctionings contributed to some PRs feeling shame about their gender and, even at some point, attempting to suppress internal

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exploration and/or external expression of their gender. Once out, two primary examples of social control were the pressures to correctly be nonbinary and to pass as nonbinary.

Stereotypes versus empowering representation was fundamental regarding who controls the narrative of social control. An example of social control was the message that medical transitioning lent credibility and validity to nonbinary gender identity and expression. Tristan wanted readers' takeaway to be that you can be *nonbinary enough* with social transitioning alone (e.g., hair, clothing, pronouns):

> For me, I think transition looks like dying my hair and dressing a certain way as much as possible or talking to people about myself in a certain way…it doesn't necessarily look like physically altering the rest of my body…I think that it's important to assert that I am trans enough without doing those things. (Tristan)

PRs who came out later in life expressed feeling imposter syndrome for not knowing sooner, which was further complicated by the false narrative that being nonbinary is a trend. This was described to PRs by their peers. Catkin shared a discussion with a friend who told them, "Yes, I identify as this, but I'm not out, I'm not gonna change anything because it's been 40-50 years. That ship has sailed," to which they responded, "and I'm like it never has sailed, you can always do this!" Another perceived that a social requirement for being trans or nonbinary was to suffer, which was not a shared experience by all PRs. "'To be trans/nonbinary is to struggle'. Since I have not battled and fought for validation and acceptance in this world as a nonbinary person, does that mean I have not earned the right to be nonbinary?" (E.). Similar to the falsehood that one needs to experience gender dysphoria as part of being trans, PRs wanted to clarify that falsehoods about what it is and is not to be nonbinary. Though some PRs did reject things associated with their assigned sex (e.g., the color pink), they eventually came to realize it

was part of this social control and reconciled the former rejection (see Photo 4). Or in some cases, the narrative of hating one's body was especially challenging among those who still loved and celebrated their body (see Photo 5).

Photo 4
Title: No title (Noel)
Context: So initially coming into my nonbinary queer identity was definitely at first saying shun the feminine, right? And I think that's because I had felt so oppressed by femininity and just so trapped by it, you know? Throughout my childhood and my teenage years – I think it makes sense to want to escape the thing that trapped you, right? So at the beginning of this journey, it was about pushing that away as much as I could, just getting away from it for awhile…and I think as the years kind-of went on and I started having more outside support people…who affirmed and supported who I was on the inside – that

is when I kind-of started to allow myself to unravel into who I really truly was and wanted to be…so a big part of that was I was with a partner who is my best friend and will always be my best friend and what was so incredible about him is that he did such a good job of ensuring that my gender identity was affirmed by him, but not making it a big deal and it's hard to describe that balance and I think that people who aren't queer or nonbinary might not understand that very well…but he just did such a great job of always honoring my identity no matter how I expressed it, right? So I could return to this color which is pink…so I really embraced all this pink and this color just brought me so much joy…so being able to return to that was not only a return to Wow – this color brings me a lot of joy! I don't know why it does, but it also returns me to that part of my childhood – that year of my childhood that was beautiful and was happy and was safe – it was just – ugh – I'm telling you! Pink!…the combination of the pink and the glitter – it's just so joyful, you know? And being able to be like oh – I actually deserve to feel that joy, right? So I'm gonna wear this pink, sparkly dress because it brings me a lot of joy, but I'm also going to learn how to sit with myself and understand that this doesn't invalidate my gender identity.

Passing was identified as another form of social control. To this point, even the language passing (and transition) was considered a loaded word by Tristan. Passing as nonbinary was perceived as fulfilling the nonbinary stereotype of androgyny, which was strongly critique:

> I always go back to the idea of passing…and basically we can't pass – not
> in this society…there's no ideal for…for someone who's not binary…I
> mean, maybe there is, maybe it's androgyny which is fairly tall and thin
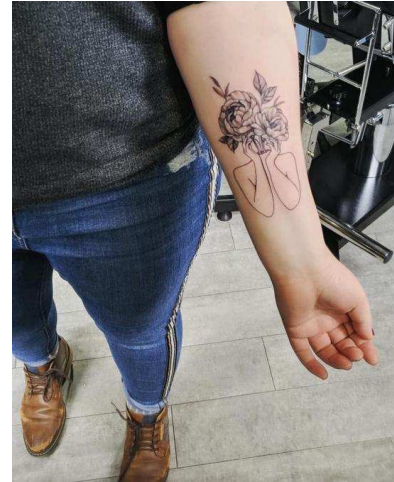> and white and that…but there's no actual nonbinary passing. (Gabi)

For PRs whose gender expression was not visibly nonbinary, some felt the pressure to conform within socially acceptable binary gender norms for safety and comfort - "I really

like my hair short – I would go shorter if it was more socially acceptable in the

community I live in" (E.). The social delegitimization of nonbinary gender expressions

through comparing their journey to others contributed to some PRs self-doubt, pain, and

guilt – "the exact opposite of thriving and wellbeing" (E.). More agency in wellbeing was

Photo 5
Title: "Memoir for my Female Body" (Nat)
Context: This is a photo of my tattoo – my first tattoo – I got it in February…I got this tattoo with my best friend in Tennessee when I went to visit her…it's part of two designs, so the silhouette of the body and then the flowers…so the motivation for this tattoo was mostly the silhouette of a body. I kind-of call this tattoo like a memoir to the female body and love for the female body because transitioning has put me in this weird contradictory place with my body and also my sexuality. So like for most of my coming out, I identified as a lesbian. Now I identify as queer because it's a lot more general, but I identified as a lesbian for quite a while and it was because of the love of the female body. I love women, but how could I love women when I didn't like my own female body and so it took some time to kind-of figure out the difference between gender and sexuality and what you want – it's like who do you want to be and who do you want to fuck and so that was a really hard line because I was like ok, there's a lot of things about femininity and my own body – this is not a masculine tattoo, this is a very feminine tattoo, so there's a lot of things about femininity and masculinity – feminine things I like about myself and masculine things I like about myself, but I don't want to forget that I came from a female body. That my body was originally female, my growing up was female and that there are a lot of things about that that I really loved and that I really appreciate and just because I'm transitioning and going on hormones doesn't mean I don't appreciate that anymore. And like the placement – I looked at a bunch of different arm placements and I was like you know, it kind-of feels tropey or trite, but her arms are placed over her chest and that's how I feel, too – I don't want to know they're there, so I'm hiding something, but that doesn't mean that the feminine - I still do love my body even though there are parts that I don't enjoy.

signified by a dismantling of harmful gendered social norms. "Nonbinary presentation

isn't just one thing. There's no 'right way' to be nonbinary…I think we struggle as a

community to accept this" (Jynx) (see Photo 6). Also, a concerted effort to not internalize

social control – "Within the last 4 years, I have made a conscious effort to celebrate my

journey, my body, and my life" (E.). Overcoming social control was an ongoing battle for

some PRs, "I'm still kind-of reprogramming that internalized societal bias of this is what

nonbinary looks like" (Kai). According to PRs, online platforms (e.g., Tumblr, Instagram,

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YouTube) have had an important role in increasing empowering representation and taking control of social norms, reducing the impact of social control on wellbeing.

Photo 6
Title: "You're Going to Be Amazing" (Jynx)
Context: A series of costume pieces and props (maker credits in the reply to this post). Title is a homage to the podcast "The Adventure Zone." The costumes shown here are some of my favorite or most recognizable.
Wellbeing is being whomever you want and presenting the way you wish. I feel the best and thrive the most when...I'm not myself. I get a lot of fulfillment and happiness out of cosplay, because for however long I'm wearing that costume, I can be whomever I want, and it's a nice escape. Fantasy in the face of harsh reality. But I think it's also important to wellbeing to be able to have fun and have an escape like this.
We all discussed as a group that nonbinary presentation isn't just one thing. There's no "right way" to be nonbinary, just like there's no "right way" to cosplay. I think we struggle as a community to accept this -- because if you're AFAB, and love dresses? Or AMAB and love slacks? You shouldn't have to reject the things you love to wear because someone says you're not "trans enough." I am no less nonbinary when I'm cosplaying a magical girl versus a hunter. Cosplay is how I've come to reclaim things that I told myself were "too girly" or "too masculine" for a nonbinary person. Because, quite frankly, fuck that noise.

Previous Trauma – Transphobic Interpersonal Relationships

Previous traumas were historically reported as negatively impacting PRs wellbeing. Gender-related traumas that were discussed included: Being bullied in their youth; family toxicity (abused, kicked out of home for sexuality and/or gender); church toxicity ("religious abuse"); recently being stalked; harmful healthcare experiences (gynecological pelvic exams, mistrusting or disbelieving providers); emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (familial, romantic, and unfamiliar sources); and witnessing harm done to loved ones (trans partners, best friend's death by suicide). One specific trauma was transphobic interpersonal relationships (e.g., abuse or rigidly gendered relationships) that limited exploration of gender identity and expression.

> I will definitely say that I think my experience as a nonbinary person was delayed because of another previous relationship where they were kind-of transphobic and I never really had the chance to explore that in that

relationship and it wasn't until much later that I felt comfortable doing so after being surrounded by other people who made me feel comfortable enough to explore. (Kai)

Some PRs also spoke of limiting the access of or removing toxic people from their life and surrounding themselves with supportive and affirming folx (see Photo 7):

Daily living is almost always a battle. Sometimes, there's almost nothing I can do to stop these things, so I focus on what I can control; those around/close to me. I choose who has access to my life very carefully. (Sky)

Photo 7
Title: "At Least There's Cake" (Jynx)
Context: I love ice cream cakes…there's a bad story behind this, but I now look at it in an incredibly positive light…when everything goes bad, my old dorm-mates would buy cake and we would be sitting on the floor in our dorm, surrounded by homework and knowing that we had to stay up night and eat cake because whatever, at least there's cake, right? This is at my graduation party…the day that I was supposed to be the proudest that I'd ever been because I had done the thing that I wanted to do – my parents weren't there. And leading up to my graduation was hell…it finally got to the point where it was like this is fucking nothing. It's not important that I graduated. My partner got so fucking pissed off with it that he showed up with this cake and said congrats for fucking nothing because he was so mad at my parents for what they had done – they had delegitimized…That graduation party was ridiculous…Other people were there because those are the people who cared…I think about that when I think about how I've made it – I think about the people who were actually there for me…this is the picture I want people to be like what the fuck is that?! I want them to laugh – that's an ice cream cake and it's a rude message, but also you can tell there's humor – there's a story behind this cake…and it's a positive one – it's one of those when you talk about promotive and corrosive factors – it's both, right? The message is terrible, but how I got it and what it means and why we're joking about it and how we're reclaiming all of these things – that's what the importance about it is…and I think it's important for people to sometimes realize that the most harmful things in your life you can actually weaponized against those people. "You said that my accomplishments were nothing?" You're not gonna get to take part in them anymore. I'm not doing it for you anymore, so – my birthday cakes always have funny messages on them because I refuse to acknowledge it's my birthday.

Identified outcomes of trauma linked to the corrosion of wellbeing included insecurities (body image, abandonment, co-dependence), anxiety ("anxiety itself is a corrosive factor because it's that stress from our own trauma" [Dylan]], depression, inaccessible blocks of

memory, black and white thinking (i.e., attractive or ugly when assessing body image), (complex) PTSD, and dissociations[13].

Nonbinary Stereotype

Building upon the lack of diverse nonbinary representation and narrowing the concept of social control, PRs made a powerful distinction between representation and harmful stereotypes. Two harmful stereotypes were identified: The prevalent nonbinary stereotype (white, able-bodied, skinny, tall, and androgynous[14]) and the *known since birth* stereotype. Across PRs, the nonbinary stereotype of nonbinary (white, able-bodied, skinny, tall, and androgynous) was considered harmful both in the limit representation and in the unrealistic achievement. According to PRs, this stereotype perpetuates "sizeist toxicity" (Timothy), *passing* privilege[15], racism (white dominant), and fetishization. Two primary harms of this stereotype for PRs were strengthening the intertwined relationship between gender dysphoria and body dysmorphia and contributing to negative internalization, such as feeling not nonbinary enough. For example, "Will you look bad? Will you not look good enough to pull off that particular look? – and so then you'll just

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[13] Disassociation ranged from out-of-body experiences to one PR's report of being diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder (DID) but over years of therapy has since integrated. For example, "I realized that I felt less connected to my body" (Rowan).

[14] This stereotype was criticized as hyper-focused on androgyny. Androgyny was described as being conflated with masculinity since an AFAB person might lean towards masculine-of-center to offset assumptions of femininity.
"Androgyny doesn't always look like masculinity" (Tristan).
"I think that it makes sense that trying to look androgynous means trying to look less feminine because you're trying to get away from the binary gender that people want to associate with you – it makes sense that AMAB people – for them androgyny might be more femininizing, right? Like wearing skirts or having longer hair…and I think that it frustrates me that all of these things are in reference to binary gender…and it's like we can't get away from it because even in trying to escape it, I'm still somehow making it all about my assigned gender and the system of binary gender that we have in our society." (Tristan)

[15] Passing privilege is the hierarchical judgement that *passing* (being read as your gender and not identified as trans) is more valid and desirable than being visibly/audibly trans. This is especially harmful to many trans people, including those who transition post-puberty and later in life, those who cannot afford medical transitional treatments, those with SNCGE (who, by default, are read as trans), and especially trans women for whom the toughest criteria and greatest pressure to pass is placed.

look stupid…and so that's kind-of the fun little roller coaster ride that my mind takes sometimes" (Timothy). Cory connected this harm to larger societal issues of sizeism and fatphobia, such as photoshopping models to be skinnier, that are harmful to everyone. "[Nonbinary] is all shapes and sizes and all colors. We don't have to just be one way to be valid." (Sky). Like other stereotypes, nonbinary stereotypes were barriers for PRs to the dimension of wellbeing for feeling comfortable with oneself.

The other harmful stereotype identified was the narrative of knowing one's gender from a young age, which was said to resonate in some ways and not in others. But similar to the nonbinary stereotype, this narrative can be invalidating, especially for nonbinary individuals for whom gender expansive language (e.g. *genderqueer*, *nonbinary*, *genderfluid*, *agender*) has only recently been accessible. Likewise, Jynx argued against the *born this way* narrative because "gender isn't rigid, right, so it's a constant journey…but also you have people like me who never heard the word transgender until I was in college – I didn't know that was a thing and especially not nonbinary, right?" (Jynx). Also, the focus on medical transitioning as a central part of the process that caused PRs to question. "I hesitate to claim [trans label] because I wasn't doing things like looking at surgery at the time" (Kai). Altogether, harmful stereotypes adversely impacted PRs understanding of their gender. But stereotypes were not considered to be all problematic but also useful for visibility and signaling queerness. "I sometimes feel like a stereotype about half-shaved, colored hair…it does make me recognizably queer…and that is important to me – I want to be recognizably queer" (Tristan). Some PRs were optimistic that the corrosive factors of these stereotypes will be

mitigated by increasing awareness about nonbinary identities and expression (see Photo 8).

Photo 8
Title: "Contents may be more fragile than they appear" (Cory)
Context: I found the fragile box and I was like guess what? I'm gonna put a nonbinary flag in it and it's art, you know? Since everybody's like sort-of being forced into gender roles or gender boxes, you could say, I wanted to show that "hey, you don't have to be in a box, the box is actually pretty fragile because people are not stereotypes."

Policies and Politics

Policy and politics were overarching powers (e.g., social control) that influenced the environment in which PRs worked, played, loved, and healed. When un-affirming (remarked as the current status), policies and politics were described as contributing to a toxic cultural climate. "Peace doesn't come easily, especially when not only average strangers love to argue with you to senators making policies that bar you from basic activities'' (Sky). PRs identified adverse policies that limited trans and nonbinary access to public accommodations, sports, and healthcare. For example, Nat described a challenging organizational policy that disallowed disability accessible (also all-gender) bathrooms in buildings built after a specific date. With no all-gender bathrooms nearby, this policy directly impacts their health. Health insurance gatekeeping was also a significant barrier faced by multiple PRs. Regarding legislative policy, all PRs agreed for the need of gender identity and expression to be included in nondiscrimination policy. PRs responses to harmful policies ranged from defiance – "I get to get mad about all the bullshit happening with trans athletes in the world" (PR #1) – to pain – "I have a big heart and it gets sad" (E.). When faced with overwhelming news of anti-trans legislation, some

PRs resorted to limiting their news exposure – "I try to detach myself from them to protect my energy" (E.). The corrosive factor of policy and politics primarily inhibited the wellbeing dimensions feeling safe and secure and experiencing mental and physical health.

Promotive Factors of Wellbeing

Despite the pervasive corrosive factors in their lives, PRs identified numerous promotive factors that allowed them to fulfill the internal dimensions (*feeling safe and secure, exploring gender identity and expression, experiencing mental and physical health, feeling comfortable with oneself, being holistically present*) and social dimensions (*having affirming support networks, being connected to community, experiencing harmony or balance across aspects of one's life, and creating joy*) of wellbeing. The presence of these promotive factors also helped to manage, mitigate, and even neutralize minority stressors, such as spaces that allowed PRs to conserve and replenish their energy. The following expands on several of the promotive factors that surfaced through inductive analysis.

Natural Spaces Where Gender is De-Centered

PRs reported conserving and replenishing energy in spaces where gender is de-centered, which helped them to be better equipped to deal with minority stressors. A shared sentiment across PRs was that nature – as a space in which gender is de-centered – brought immediate benefits and was "vital to my wellbeing because it is where I most feel whole and I am not judged by the plants or animals" (Rowan). Alternative spaces to gendered spaces was a priority for PRs, who were "specifically noticing how more places are…becoming aware of how spaces are gendered" (Noel). For nonbinary individuals

living in a binary world, they were acutely aware of the rigid binary gender norms throughout their lives. Thus, places that de-centered gender were places of respite where they could be grounded in nature, feel productive through nurturing something, and taking care of their mental health. The primary areas where gender was de-centered included animal relationships, gardening, and nature. Animals were very straightforward – animals love unconditionally and do not care about gender. Cory added their cat helped them deal with dysphoria through just laying together – "I'm experiencing my body completely and then with my cat it's like sort-of centering me, bringing me back by focusing on something positive rather than all the negative feelings that dysphoria can bring up."

Photo 9
Title: "Plants" aka Depression Garden (Timothy)
Context: This image is one small part of my much larger container garden on my back porch.
My therapist had mentioned trying out different hobbies and trying to make time for myself and we were talking through some of them and I was like I really used to like gardening…it started off with three or four plants and as the pandemic has continued, the garden has grown both in terms of the size of those original plants but also the number of plants and so it's very much I feel like commentary on how my mental health is at this point. Some of my close friends know more plants means that "ooo, rough week"…the fact it exists is because there's this corrosive thing happening…it is also helping my mental health to be able to take care of something – it's like a very tactile thing of trimming off the dead…leave or when the flowers bloom and they start to die off – trimming those so new ones can come and bloom in their place and it's also grown like a lot!...that one is my lavender, purple basil and jalapeno…so for me, that one was a really cool mix of both the corrosive and the promotive factors…I call it my depression garden, too – that's literally what I've been calling it for the past several months.

Gardens were described as spaces of wellbeing that forced some PRs outside to be with the plants, which had a beneficial impact on their mental health. "Plants aren't gendered – it's just one of those things that – it's there when I have a bad gender day…I still have my plants, I still have my garden to go…to be able to spend time outside" (E.).

Timothy described his collection of succulents and herbs as a "depression garden" that was both a sign of corrosive factors, as well as a means to improving mental health (see Photo 9). Similarly, HG provided a thorough metaphor for gardening to describe the process of nurturing, pruning, providing good soil in parallel to caring for ourselves, and being whole humans in our environment. Furthermore, HG identified the need for sovereignty – to claim ownership and agency in your wellbeing (see Photo 10).

Photo 10
Title: "Sovereignty lessons from the garden" (HG)
Context: This was this morning…out in my garden and the big plant in the center is something called mullein, which it's actually a roadside weed, but it's got a lot of medicinal properties, it's really good for respiratory issues and things…closest to the camera is the herb garden – so there's lavender and mullein and yarrow and all kinds of cooking and medicinal herbs and then beyond that, there's ...and tomatoes and tomatillos and lettuces and greens and the garden is about sovereignty – it's about, has been about claiming those aspects of health for myself, about struggles – it's food security…and I have a lot of allergies and so I have to make a lot of my food and one of the things that's been huge in wellbeing has just been getting to a point where we can grow our own food, where I have access to food that doesn't make me physically ill…that's been – just in wellness in general, that's been huge. That's been one of the things that has allowed me to actually explore the gender presentation side of things – is taking care of the body in general…I also as part of my faith or spiritual tradition more than faith…I do a lot of herbal medicine…and I develop animistic relationships with the plants I use. I have spiritual relationships with the plants that I make medicine with and the more I dug into the stuff for these interviews, the more wholeness – like wellbeing is promoting wholeness and having the opportunity to be in nature, get my hands in the dirt, you know, and have healthy –healthful food options and medicines and treating myself as a whole being has been really fundamental to that. And that – the word for this one was sovereignty. It was like personal power and like claiming my health, claiming my wellbeing, my space and allowing myself to form those connections.

Nature (e.g., park, woods) was also an escape from minority stressors as well as a grounding and healing experience. For some, nature provided moments of mindfulness – "there's something about having your hands in the dirt that's just very grounding" (E.) and to practice mindfulness (e.g., being present). Importantly, nature was also a source of safety, where they did not feel the need to worry about people wanting to attack trans people. "No one gives a fuck who I am on the trail, you're gonna be sweaty, no one cares and so that's freeing and I get to celebrate my body for what it can do" (Dylan) (see

Photo 11). Natural spaces where gender is de-centered meant freedom from corrosive

factors, which significantly contributed to wellbeing through feeling safe and secure,

experiencing mental and physical health, feeling comfortable with oneself, and creating

joy.

Photo 11
Title: No title (Dylan)
Context: Lastly, we leave my house to go on a hike. Featured are my partner and I's feet next to a river we hiked next to last weekend. I am grateful to live within ~30 minutes driving from countless Metroparks, State Parks, and even a National Park. I try to hike at least once a week, if not more. It helps me to slow down and just be present. My grandfather was the manager (now retired) for the majority of the state parks in my home state when I was growing up, so I was always outdoors when I was with him, helping him maintain trails and such. Hiking helps serve as a reminder of how big the world is and the importance of community care (if we don't take care of the earth, humans are also hurt). When I am hiking, I am celebrating what my body can do. I am not focusing on my identity, what I don't like about my body, and no one else on the trail is concerned either. Hiking provides a sense of safety. Just wear the right shoes and listen to your body if you need to slow down and enjoy the view. :)

Resilience

In exploring wellbeing, PRs discussed specific wellbeing needs requiring

resilience, such as overcoming traumas and barriers in their lives and building confidence

through community. Resilience was a priority explicitly identified by several PRs. "I feel

like given sociopolitical factors and such, resilience is something we all need to keep

surviving and eventually thriving in this world" (Kai)**.** The concept of resilience that

endorsed individuality and boot-strapping was critiqued as untrue and countered with the

need for community, relationships, and outside acceptance. From an ecological approach

to resilience, community care provides evidence for mutual sharing of resources and

thriving as interdependent between individuals and their communities. Of the many ways

the PRs demonstrated resilience, two behaviors that connect marginalization and

wellbeing will be detailed: Not abandoning oneself and reframing corrosive or harmful

circumstances to positive, realistic, or useful alternatives.

Not abandoning oneself. Abandoning oneself appeared in both harmful

relationships and in advocacy. PRs discussed not prioritizing their gender identity or

expression in traumatic past relationships that strictly enforced binary gender norms.

> It is [important] to me to always choose myself first. I have been in
> abusive relationships in the past, and relationships that did not affirm my
> identity, and it's super important for my health and wellbeing to ensure
> that I place myself first so I don't get into a situation like that ever again.
> (Noel)

Alternatively, resilience meant prioritizing oneself and changing the external source of

abandonment. Or as E. continued the gardening metaphor, "if the flower's not growing,

you don't change the flower, you change the environment – and being in the right

environment makes all the difference." In particular, environments where people with

SNCGE do not have to limit or censor themselves to avoid trauma were considered ideal.

The second way in which participants abandoned themselves was driven by the recursive

scenario of *it has to be me fixing this*, in which PRs ensured everyone else felt safe,

included, affirmed, etc. "Ultimately, I don't do what makes me happy. I do what I need to

keep everything ok" (Jynx). This abandonment was justified by putting themselves

through the pain to save others from the same experience. E. described shifting from

abandonment to resilience through disrupting comparisons with other's gender journey,

body, and gender expression that caused them pain and guilt. Instead, "I have made a

conscious effort to celebrate my journey, my body, and my life" (E.). Similarly, Noel

declined a job offer upon discovering it was not an affirming work environment (see

Photo 12). Those who recognized abandonment cycles and disrupted them were able to

find a healthy balance without undue sacrifice – thus, promoting wellbeing through

experiencing harmony or balance across aspects of one's life.

Photo 12
Title: No title (Noel)
Context: I took this photo of myself after making the conscious decision not to accept a job offer I received. I've struggled throughout my life to say "no", especially in regard to jobs, or opportunities to make money. In this photo, I felt confident within myself, my knowledge, and what I have to give an organization. There were several aspects of the job that influenced me to not accept the offer, but a big part of it was making the decision to not abandon myself by once again working for an organization that does not have any policy for the acceptance, validation, or protection of LGBTQIA2S+ people (staff or service users). I refuse to work somewhere again where I have to beg and plead to be accepted and respected for who I am, and where the education of the team falls on my shoulders if I want a better place for LGBTQIA2S+ service users… Saying no is hard, I have that trouble too, I don't say no when I see the red flags because I tend to look at money first. It's always good to look after yourself & your morals first though, money comes & goes, but mental health is hard to recover.

Reframing. Reframing was used by PRs to transform less than ideal

circumstances into positive, realistic, and useful ways of understanding and coping. A

prime example of resilience through reframing is chosen families or how queer and trans

people reframed terminated familial relationships – whether abandoned or intentionally

left – as removing toxicity and building healthy supportive people in their stead. One PR

reframed family rejection as freedom and a meaningful turning point in their life:

> I just remember sitting on the floor one night and just being like 'ok, like it
> was my first time of full freedom.' My parents weren't gonna come and
> get me, they couldn't do anything anymore, they told me to never talk to
> them again and that's the summer I started to come out fully.

In a like manner, Kai reframed all life experiences – even marginalization – as

opportunities to learn and become more resilient and strong: "I feel that marginalization

is something that brings us together, helping us build a community and finding support

with each other. It sucks being marginalized, but that shared experience makes us

stronger as a group" (Kai). For one PR humor was a positive way of reframing (see

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Photos 7), "When one has experienced significant pain from marginalization, rejection, trauma, then things like laser hair removal are less significant" (Timothy). Reframing also took the form of disassociating items and activities from the socially gendered connotation. For example, Kristy's love of pink and purple clothes and "abandoning the thought that clothes or colors are gendered…has really got me a long way." Among those who demonstrated reframing, they retained a realistic understanding of the challenges faced by PRs but chose to focus on elements within their control and, chiefly, to find hope. Overall, resilience was a key factor in strengthening PRs' ability to face corrosive factors and to accept and pursue additional promotive factors of wellbeing.

Responsive Gender Maneuvering[16]

When possible, PRs reported reducing exposure to corrosive factors, such as conservative news/media and family members that drained their energy. However, when PRs had to navigate the world and engage with others, PRs leveraged the strategy of what I term *responsive gender maneuvering*. Similar to code-switching strategies used by people of color, responsive gender maneuvering involves adapting gender expression and engagement with others by environment, including people, context, and surroundings. For example, PRs described adapting their gender expression when they knew they would be in conservative, restrictive, or generally unaccepting spaces (e.g., family settings, workplace). "I think it feels safer – like comforting knowing I can switch my masks and present differently based on how I feel" (Cory) (see Photo 45). Responsive gender maneuvering was also engaged in reaction to gendered misunderstandings and

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[16] I created the language of responsive gender maneuvering in the absence of other appropriate language. Both PRs and I struggled with finding language that equally conveys this behavior while not wanting to appropriate POC terminology (code-switching). Or as Kai stated, "I hesitate to say code switching because that's very much like a POC thing."

included direct correcting, indirect correcting, and avoiding, the latter most often used

with strangers. For example, when PRs public with partner(s) and read as cisgender

heterosexual, they used responsive gender maneuvering to navigate uncomfortable spaces

while not expending emotional labor.

> There are advantages in this privilege, but I can't shake that twisted gut feeling every time I'm confronted with that incorrect assumption. And I don't have the spoons to educate all the people who have this misconceived notion about my partner and me. (Kristy)

Another PR shared their feelings of guilt about choosing the responsive gender

maneuvering option of avoidance, "[I am] tired of explaining it and feeling really

conflicted about appreciating the privilege that comes with it sometimes" (HG). Others

felt more comfortable with responsive gender maneuvering due to the safety it provided

but noted the distinction between a choice of safety and survival[17]. Whether for comfort,

security, safety, or all, responsive gender maneuvering was an adaptive strategy

nonbinary individuals employed regularly while facing minority stressors in their daily

lives. Responsive gender maneuvering requires a degree of feeling comfortable with

oneself to not internalize the corrosive experiences of misgendering.

Gender-Affirming Spaces

With the goal of promoting wellbeing, PRs sought acceptance – moving beyond

tolerance – in their environments through gender-affirming spaces. Important gender-

affirming spaces included place of employment and social settings (schools/universities,

interest-based groups, and sports teams). Gender-affirming spaces contribute to the

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[17] Cory continued to discussed the difference between the choices of response gender maneuvering compared to code-switching by POC that could be life-threatening: "it could be corrosive if you have to do it in order to survive – like it's survival switching or survival passing in order to not get killed – that's really corrosive, so I guess it depends on individual situations rather than a broad statement" (Cory).

wellbeing dimensions of feeling safe and secure, having affirming support, being connected to community, and being holistically present.

Gender-Affirming Places of Employment. The discussion about acceptance in work environments centered around the absence or presence of all-gender bathrooms but also included normalizing pronouns and gender-based protections. For those who had gender-affirming work environments, all-gender bathrooms were the most noted indicator. In a group discussion, Rowan shared their experience in a workplace where the bathrooms were updated to all-gender without any emotional labor on their parts and without a big show of self-congratulation, which was interpreted as genuine inclusion (see Photo 24). PRs found it affirming when bathrooms were simply labeled *Associate Bathroom* (indicating it was an all-gender bathroom). Another decisive factor was normalization of pronouns through standard inclusion in email signatures, badges, and other work-related identification. Importantly, when these measures were taken, Kristy noticed that "I didn't really have to have any sort-of primary coming-out to people who I don't necessarily know." Normalization across employees also removed the feeling of being singled out. Removing such hurdles reduced the exhaustion that was corrosive to PRs' wellbeing. Others thought these gender-affirming practices helped with reducing misgendering and increasing accountability to correctly gender them. As an example, Rowan described thriving at work as feeling safe and comfortable to be visible and freely express themselves (through appearance and interactions) while confident and secure that their work would protect them (see Photo 13).
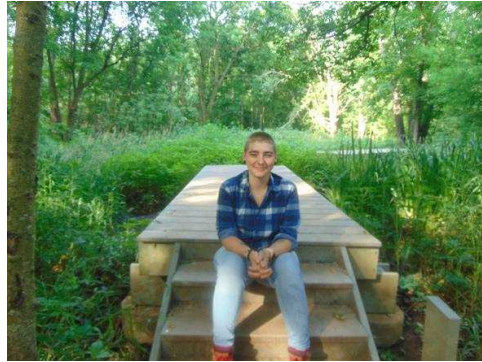
Gender-Affirming Social Settings. The gender-affirming social settings identified were within educational settings and interest-based groups. Educational

settings range from GSAs in high school to undergraduate gender and women's studies (GWS) and, perhaps surprisingly, University Greek Society. College was the first place some came out or even began to explore their gender – "College was a huge thing just being – had to find community in other ways and then making that connection" (Dylan).

Photo 13
Title: No title (Rowan)
Context: This is a photo my coworker took of me for our organization's website. For me, this is what thriving is. I get to work in a park and plant nursery and I am free to be me both inside and outside of the office. We do not have a dress code, and I am able to wear whatever I feel comfortable in on any given day. I am also allowed to dye my hair, keep my piercings, and show my tattoos. Being outside is also vital to my wellbeing because it is where I most feel whole and I am not judged by the plants or animals I am in contact with on a daily basis. I am able to be fully visible at work and am hardly misgendered, even with the volunteers I oversee. I am also able to interact with other nonbinary and trans folx who visit the park or volunteer here, which is incredibly fulfilling. It has become a place of acceptance and visibility.
~
I work with volunteers and that's one thing – they're super accepting at work and they told me that if there's a volunteer that you're doing orientation with and they don't accept your pronouns, they're not welcome to volunteer here and that was a really big deal.

Further, a catalyst was actually meeting other trans and nonbinary individuals. Interest-based groups range widely including the overarching LGBTQ community, kink community, and some niche communities (i.e., arm wrestling). Examples of LGBTQ-specific settings were more frequently cited such as pride events, queer bars, and queer outdoor groups, which also served as safe spaces for exploring gender identity and expression. For example, HG described their kink community hosting events like kinky queer campouts that were valued for being a consent-based space that took into consideration acceptance and comfort for trans and nonbinary individuals (but noted this was not the case in all kink communities). Several PRs belong to some type of gamer community from twitch streaming to cosplay to cons (conventions). Gamer groups were described as a place to escape a binary world and welcoming space where many

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nonbinary individuals congregate (see Photo 22). A very unique community was the arm

wrestling community which was described a comfortable space to be visible and accepted

with half the wrestlers are nonbinary and all-gender bathrooms (see Photos 14 & 15). HG

Photos 14 & 15
Title: "Full Drag" (Kristy) "Cursula's Growl" left and "Cursula's Win" right
Context: Here's some pictures from a recent arm wrestling match where I'm in full drag. I'm generally a quiet queer, but part of my wellbeing is to find ways in which to feel strong and powerful and to connect to my inner badass. There's something really impactful to be had in assuming a persona that doesn't match your gender as a conduit for feeling strong, embodied, mighty, and for me, embracing things that I generally stay away from. I do it about 3 times a year, and the community of amazing and supportive folks that put on this show is the only one I'm part of that includes other trans and non binary people.

(Professional photos used with permission from PR)

Photos 16 & 17
Title: "Silver Dapper" (L) and "Midsummer" (R) (Boots)
Context (L): This picture I took on my way to perform a heathen wedding ceremony. I am an ordained Völva and, as such, I am a powerful and valued member of my spiritual community. Freyja is the Goddess of the Völva. She taught the ways of Seidr to Odin because to be all powerful you must know the magics beyond the binary forces. This is one of my favorite myths and I felt so full of life that day. Accepted by my tribe and performing a service to unite two families. I'll never forget it. This is what I wore under my ceremonial robes and to the receptions.
Context (R): That was me performing a wedding and that was one of the first times I presented in my ceremonial robes and…that was one of the few times within my kindred experience where they accepted my role of that fitting outside the lines and having that power because within our community I should be the one performing those kinds of ceremonies because I lie between those lines – between the gods and the people and I felt really included that day when I usually don't and…I felt like the energy was just crackling off of me from the empowerment of that day…it's been such an emotional labor…to try to get them to understand what I am that that single day when they finally respected it and let it be…I have a lot of good memories of that day.

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found queer LGBTQ outdoors groups to join, such as Unlikely Hikers and Queer in Nature. Sometimes acceptance came from performing specific roles, such as Boots in their culturally meaningful role in performing a wedding (see Photos 16 & 17). Lastly, sports teams included roller derby and rugby. Nat discussed how their presence and advocacy expanded a women's rugby team who were receptive to change into an accepting space for trans and nonbinary people to join and be visible.

Chosen Family

Chosen family was a significant factor to PRs' wellbeing, providing security, affirmation, support, and connection, for which they felt fortunate and considered to be a part of their daily lives. Further, chosen family served to fulfill a PRs' need for stability and unconditional love when not received by the person's family of origin. The confidence that came from the support of chosen family was described as "a reminder that even if/when things get tough…I do still have someone" (Timothy). For Rowan,

Photo 18
Title: "Support is Survival" (Kai)
Context: This photo shows my partner and I. Having people around you that support you wholeheartedly, lifting you up and affirming you, makes all the difference in the world when you are nonbinary. I am the happiest I have ever been thanks to my chosen family. I wouldn't be here without them.
~
It's such a comforting thing to be able to press foreheads together with somebody… there's this bond that is so close and so supportive that you don't have to have the whatever traditional shows of intimacy – this is a very deep personal intimacy that I feel like people don't talk about and I feel like this was a good way to show that support that I get from both her and the people around me and just how big of a difference they make…knowing I have people who back me up 100% - they will always be there, they'll always have my back, they'll aggressively correct my pronouns when people misgender me and it's just so comforting to have that and how much that makes a difference…because I don't think I would be here if it weren't for these people in my life. I don't think I would be – either I wouldn't be here now as I am now where I'm much happier and thriving and just honestly amazed at how good my life is…or – content warning – suicide. I likely wouldn't be here at all…if it weren't for these people being there to be my support system, I don't know what would have happened to me…this is the support I need to thrive.

chosen family "makes me feel better about myself…just knowing I'm loved and accepted for who I am and however I choose to present – it does incredible things for my internal wellbeing." PRs found chosen family through partner(s) (see Photo 18), peers, their extended family, partner(s)' family, and friend's family. For Rowan, creating a home with their partner. Dylan described their partner's family of origin as "unconditionally loving – 'come as you are, we love you already'…it felt like home" (see Photo 19). Members of the two-spirit community welcomed Boots by informally adopting them and formally through offering Boots to take their last name when pursuing a legal name change. Similarly, HG shared a story of a friend who came out as trans and was not supported by immediate family but found support among extended family, who legally adopted them. Importantly, this example also demonstrates that chosen family is not mutually exclusive from biological family or family of origin.

Photo 19
Title: No title (Dylan)
Context: Pictured above is my fiance, Addie (posted with their permission). This was taken in the evening as the golden hour light hit our freshly cleaned apartment with our newly mounted artwork (thanks Addie and sorry I can't disclose what they are from). Addie was on the phone with their dad and laughing about something. I looked and thought "This is home" (the only thing that is missing is our cats, Dad and Fig). Place and home have become integral to my sense of wellbeing. I am very cautious about cleaning and designing a comfortable space because having a nice place to come home to has been a search for my entire life. Addie has taught me about chosen family; their bio family has taught me about unconditional love. It feels encompassed in this photo- family, place, community care, and identity. Addie allows me to be myself, question things, and embrace change. They have been my best friend since high school and we keep finding each other even as gender and names keep changing. Trans love is powerful and you can feel it when you walk into our living room.

Strong Support Network

In expansion of supportive family of origin and chosen family, nonbinary individuals developed strong support networks included peers, mentees, mentors,

colleagues, member of shared race/ethnicity/cultural (e.g., Oglala Nation), among others. These networks helped PRs to weather tough times, process, and celebrate through providing intangible emotional support and acceptance. PRs connected through existing networks by projecting queerness via gender expression. Others met support networks through university (i.e., college co-operative, women's and gender studies [WGS]) as Noel described:

> I have immeasurable gratitude for the opportunity I had to study WGS, as that experience not only helped me understand and cultivate my identity as an asexual agender person, it gave me a community that lifted me up, challenged me, and watered me as I grew.

When few or no known trans or nonbinary people were geographically near, PRs found community online and nearby folx who were affirming regardless of gender (see Photos 20 & 21).

Photos 20 & 21
Title: No titles (Tristan)
Context: This was a picture that my stylist took…she found this place near the salon that somebody graffitti'd on the brick wall outside, "It's Ok to be Weird Sometimes" – and she thought it was cool to have me stand in front of that…she started doing my hair when she was still in cosmetology school, she used to work at the same grocery store that [Partner R] worked at and so they sort-of became friends…[Partner R] and I just cut each other's hair and then started dying my hair just ourselves for seven…so it's weird for me that I go to a salon now…but she's a friend…I went to the salon that day and was like "I don't know what I wanna do for my hair this time" and she was like "why don't we try this" and she made it amazing!
I feel like this is something for me represents – like this is a picture that for me it's about my relationship with her [long-term friend and hair stylist] and someone who really helps – like sees what I want to be presenting and helps me do that and is just a very supportive person…it's very much me from her viewpoint.

For some PRs, support networks intentionally included other marginalized people, specifically other nonbinary individuals. Nonbinary support networks made participants

feel understood, seen, and affirmed. Those interested in social and medical transitioning

asked their trans and nonbinary friends about options, access, and advice and those who

had those experiences were able to educate those in their networks (see Photo 22). Trans

and nonbinary friend were sources of mentorship and information about transitioning

(e.g., coming out, trying on pronouns, safe binding practices, hormone therapy, top

surgery). For Tristan who moved away from their strong nonbinary support networks, it

was greatly missed along with the normalization it provided (i.e., pronoun usage). Rowan

confirmed:

> Having that support system that loves me as I am and respects my identity
> and my pronouns is also a vital factor for my wellbeing. Having people
> that understand the struggles related to being genderqueer and support me
> through them greatly benefits me.

Photo 22
Title: "Where I can be What I Choose" (Rowan)
Context: This is a picture of me and my partner's
Dungeons and Dragons character sheets and dice sets.
This picture represents a game that has brought me
love and acceptance, but also a family. DnD is where
I first used "They/Them" pronouns, with my first
character, to get a feeling of what it would be like to
be referred to in that way. Even though I create fake
characters with their own personalities, I am able to
pour myself into it in any way I choose, and I can
represent myself in any way I desire. Playing DnD
opened up new doors for conversations about gender
identity, and I grew in my relationships with my
friends and roommates to the point where they are now my chosen family.

Other benefits noted were improved quality and healthier relationships, which Nat

attributed to "being a happier, more vulnerable person." The benefits of strong support

networks were also reciprocal – "where we all contribute to each other's wellbeing"

(Rowan) and "evolution as a human being" (Boots).

Dylan encouragingly stated:

> You will find your people – it can be hard, it can be a long road, but you
> will find someone, find your people, you'll be able to create your space,

you will have control over something in your life even when it feels like everything's out of control…especially when you're in that transitional space of figuring out gender and everything.

It was through strong support networks that PRs felt safe and secure, affirmed, and connected, meeting multiple dimensions of wellbeing.

Community Care

Community care among this sample manifested as mutual aid among a group of individuals with a shared lived experiences and goal of nonbinary wellbeing. Such care differs from strong support networks mentioned above based on the multidirectional care and different forms of care (e.g., emotional support and tangible resources and information). At the very least, community care is "looking out for our most vulnerable / being cared for by the community at our most vulnerable times (e.g., homelesssness)" (Jynx). For example, general community care was when Dylan's partner was out of work and people contributed food and money to ensure they had their needs covered. Whereas, community care in relation to gender included celebration and support of gender-related events and experience and "helping others to get to a similar place we are in" (Kai), which may not be understood as significant outside of that person or by cisgender individuals. For example, Jynx's annual celebration of their name change. Or when HG's 15-year-old cousin who had just come out and could not attend pride because it was cancelled due to COVID, they joined their family in creating a small pride parade (see Photo 23).

Sometimes community care was through sharing experiences of transitioning (e.g., hormones, surgery), donating tangible resources for transitioning (e.g., binders, prosthetics), identifying affirming doctors, or ensuring someone secured a safe place to

stay rather than with transphobic family members. Even before transitioning, community care helped PRs feel that they could come out and explore their gender. Community care was also important in moments of gender-related crisis. When E. was at a doctor's office experiencing dysphoria and powerlessness, they reached out to friends via text. "What I did have control of was reaching out for support and feeling – still feeling loved and validated" (E.). PRs reported feeling fortunate knowing they had a community who would undoubtedly be there for them. Many reported being the first or second nonbinary person in spaces and creating that space was to tread a path; the more they tread, the easier it becomes for all those in their community and who come after them. "It's having that support that's enabled me to give that support to other people. It's that kind-of give and take…and it just keeps going" (Kai). Similarly, mentorship inspired those who saw themselves represented in mentors. As an example, Timothy mentors AMAB nonbinary college students, who might not otherwise see themselves represented.

> We've had all these experiences of hate, but because of that, we can all come together and support each other for who we are which is – it's very interesting to realize that – where because of that hate, because of that harm, we can come together and build a healthier, happier place and a happier world for at least ourselves, if not other people. (Kai)

Photo 23
Title: Wellbeing Self-Portrait (HG)
Photo Description: none
Context: This self-portrait was taken at a socially distanced mini-pride parade that was organized for the cousin of a friend. The cousin is 15 and came out as Enby earlier this year, they were super disappointed that they wouldn't get to participate in a pride festival because of Covid. So the word went out and 30-40 of our local community showed up for a surprise socially distanced parade around their neighborhood at the invitation of the youth's parents.
In the picture I am caring for my own health, with a mask and umbrella (since sunburn is a real issue), I am celebrating a part of myself, and welcoming someone else. It was a beautiful affirmation of representation and community, resilience and adaptability.
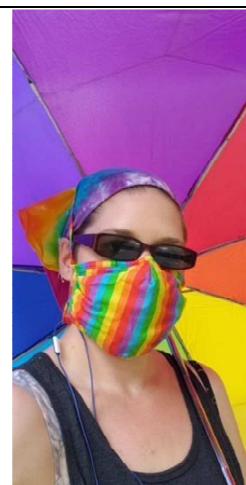
Community care practices created support for PRs to feel safe and secure, have affirming support, explore gender identity and expression, and create joy, contributing to dimensions of wellbeing in each other's lives.

Ally Advocacy

PRs who had experienced ally advocacy reported how it improved their wellbeing and outlook. Having at least one person who saw and supported them was significant. For example, a co-worker who was vocally supportive of his trans family members was perceived to signal their work as a safe space. Ideally, advocacy was completed as a normal part of business (see Photo 24). Other forms of ally advocacy were holding peers accountable through defending pronouns, expanding membership criteria to include trans and nonbinary individuals, and reassigning single-stall bathrooms to all-gender. Ally advocacy boosted PR's confidence to share their pronouns and insist others use correct pronouns, allowing them to be holistically present.

> Honestly probably one of the best work experiences that I've ever had in regards to my gender is people actively defending my pronouns that I worked with…people are paying attention to me saying it and just having that confidence is definitely something I've noticed change in me…how much happier I am…it's incredible. (Kai)

Also, normalization, such as through pronoun usage, mitigated awkward social experiences, such as coming out to new co-workers. I summarize the impact of ally advocacy as beneficial change without the emotional labor.

A caveat about ally advocacy was that meaningful actions were not performative or loud and no one was patting themselves on the back for being a great ally. For some PRs, allies were people willing to hold space for vulnerability. For example, Nat's cooperative community – "these are people that weren't originally equipped to talk about

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trans identities and still are not experts on it, but are willing to listen and willing to hear

me and willing to learn enough to make me comfortable" (Nat). For other PRs, allies

were identified as having empathy over shared marginalization in references to:

> We're fighting the same battle, you know? Some of the stuff on Facebook,
> Pride month is cancelled, it's wrath month now, we're going right for it,
> that whole thing and standing next to other marginalized groups and
> feeling – trying to show support because we've been there. (E.)

Those who actively aligned themselves with PRs were also labelled as "comrades" (E.)

and "accomplices" (Noel) in nonbinary liberation:

> In the realm of support, being more than just an ally. Being an accomplice.
> It is not enough to say, "I don't care what your gender is." Being a
> supportive person involves advocating, educating others, and most
> importantly, taking the time to listen to us. Truly listen to us. (Noel)

PRs voiced appreciation for the allies/comrades/accomplices in their lives, just as they

were proud to be in those roles for other marginalized populations. Allies advocating for

PRs and the nonbinary community supported their feeling safe, secure, affirmed, and

connected.

Photo 24
Title: "We Don't Have a 'Men's' Bathroom" (Rowan)
Context: This one involves a story: When I began my job in January, I was nervous to tell them about my pronouns and gender identity. However, once I did, my coworkers were nothing but supportive. At first, we had two bathrooms--a men's and a women's. I did not voice to anyone how uncomfortable it made me, but I didn't have to. One Monday, I returned to work and saw that someone had changed the signs for the bathrooms, making them both gender-neutral. No one said a word to me about it, no one took credit, no one asked me how I felt. During a staff meeting that week, we talked about splitting tasks to keep the bathrooms clean and when one staff member mentioned "the men's room," our Executive Director replied "we don't have a men's restroom. Do you mean the one on the right?" This, to me, speaks volumes about the support I have at my job. I feel accepted and valued both as an employee and as a person, where every person I work with treats me with dignity and respect. Not only that, but it adds a safe place for any other trans or nonbinary people who may work there in the future or visit our office. One simple act of changing the bathroom signs has changed the future of the organization to one that is inclusive and accepting.

Social Advocacy

PRs were highly engaged in a range of social advocacy for improving the lives of

nonbinary individuals and their environments, which contributed to their wellbeing by

being connected to community, experiencing harmony across identities, and creating joy

for themselves and others. Social advocacy included supporting community-ran

companies, creating nonbinary-specific groups, and designing educational information to

raise awareness about nonbinary individuals. "I think we all have to work to fight to

make those external factors better for other people" (PR #1). In addition to the previous

example of expanding group and organizational inclusion, some specific examples were

when Timothy filed paperwork with the State of Ohio to start an Ace and Arrow

organization, Catkin ran a support group called Queerly Abled for queer folx with

disabilities, Tristan shared a *shit people say* video about their trans experiences on

YouTube, and Boots recorded a video about suicide awareness among gender diverse

individuals that included their person losses (see Photo 25).

Photo 25
Title: "Suicide Awareness" (Boots)
Context: That second photo of me sitting in front of the rainbow flag –
what you'll see in my hands, the papers – I'm actually shooting a video
and talking about suicide awareness and all of those gender-diverse
individuals that I talked about are in those and I have four of them in my
hands ages 15 to 55 of people I personally loved and lost in the last five
years and the video is about what keeps you up at night and…I struggle
with…compulsively advocating and educating people because I'm afraid
if I take a break I'm gonna lose more people and I know we're losing
humans every single day because they're just too tired to keep going in
this fight and they just have to stop and they don't get a second chance to
come back from that, so…holding those memorials in my hands makes it
so – much – more – real.

Helping others was reported to be part of PRs happiness and connected to other identities. For some, community service was part of their upbringing that translated to community care with trans and nonbinary individuals. Advocacy was also a central part of their social justice identity:

> There's also the part of me that is just super…militant in a way…a part of me wants to demand better constantly – I don't think that we should abandon wanting more and wanting better – wanting to be treated better – like I don't think we should abandon that – we should always push for that…but just little things make my day! (Noel)

Photo 26
Title: "Gender Outlaw" (Kai)
Context: This is where I get to be me. I share myself with the community through my stream, hoping to reach out and connect with other enby folx and let them know they aren't alone. I'm happy in this skin, this body, this life. I get to be a gender outlaw, breaking the rules so that we can all be free.
~
When I'm thriving it's just when I'm comfortable in my own skin, sharing myself with the world and that's kind-of what inspired this picture. This is my streaming desk…this is where I'm comfortable sharing myself, this is where I feel like I can reach people and help them discover themselves, too – that's part of what I've wanted to do with my stream that I do…I'm out there and like "hey, yeah, kids, you can be like this, too, if you want" and just being comfortable and happy and giving people the space to see that because I feel like that's not something that gets represented a whole lot…Even now, I'm kind-of thinking like "oh god, there are people who are gonna be looking up to me as a role model" and I'm kind-of terrified of that, but I'm also like "wow, I really hope that I'm a good role model in that regard."

For PR #1, advocating for their community was connected to taking the Bodhisattva vow – "basically what you're saying is I am not going to rest until everyone is free from suffering and that's something that really helps me to sort-of transcend the struggles of being nonbinary and being trans in this world." Some ways that PRs envisioned their goal to advocate for improvement of individual lives and environments was by continuing to be out at work to be visible for others (see Photo 26), being visible on social media "to be a guiding light for others" (E.), and staying connected with advocacy organizations.

I can't change the big wheels that are spinning, but I can change how my little wheel is spinning and resonance is a thing. If I can change how my little wheel is spinning, I can start shifting and rippling out from my point. (HG).

Within the context of advocacy and creating social changes, PRs were cognizant of their locus of control and optimistic for the potential impact of even small changes in their lives.

Agency in the Painful

While acknowledging that marginalization of nonbinary individuals will continue, some PR discussed agency in painful experiences that were promotive to their wellbeing. Mental health was central to possessing agency in the painful. "I'm at the point where I can deal with the trauma and stuff by choice where to me, that's an indication that I'm doing a lot better…I'm able to actually work through the pain rather than being forced to" (Rowan). As an example, Noel engaged in *crying parties*, where a close collective of queer people gathered to share their traumas and cry. Another form of agency in the painful was distinguishing low-stakes and high-stakes of gender expression to meet their expression needs while making decisions to protect their mental health. For example, low-stakes included make-up, painted nails, dyed hair – "I didn't need permission…I didn't need to be a life-altering major decision, I could just dye my hair one night" (Tristan). Whereas high-stakes included pain and recovery, financial investment, and permanent physical changes (e.g., surgery). Lastly, PRs shared stories of being in painful situations (i.e., visiting conservative family) and finding growth in the experience. For example, on a visit to family in the south, one PR[18] assessed that they "stayed way too long" and the visit was adversely impacting their mental health. They reported the

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[18] Name excluded to share information while not inciting familiar conflict.

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situation "force[d] them to significantly reflect on their gender." In reaction, they dyed their hair as a subtle but non-traditional hair color. Their agency in the painful was in their reflection on internal feelings and ways to feel more comfortable expressing their gender. "As tough as that trip was, I feel like it was also a kick in the rear to start exploring things more…and it's been really helpful as a whole." Collectively, possessing agency in the painful were ways in which PRs created and strengthened their resilience within marginalization, which in some cases led to exploring gender identity and expression and making choices to improve their mental and physical health.

Mastery of Wellbeing

Mastery of wellbeing was conceptualized as the access and use of the environment and resources for their wellbeing (e.g., support structures, representation). For several PRs, mastery was a self-identified and self-determined (or DIY) approach to wellbeing. Mastery of wellbeing was impacted by external sources, such as social control and gender norms. Living in restrictive homes (parents or partners) was challenging to mastery of wellbeing. "[Wellbeing] is being happy with where I am in life and willingness to change anything that doesn't suit me, while having the support to do so" (Rowan). PRs leveraged support and services to stand up for themselves to obtain legal name and gender marker changes. Also, establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries were essential to having mastery of wellbeing, such as restricting access to their lives and making allowances to be themselves.

> I will be happier with my life at the end of the day because I'm allowing myself to experience all that life has to offer me emotionally and I'm not breaking myself off because of fear or because of trying to meet the expectations of others. (PR #1)

In addition to creating their own joy, mastery also meant getting their needs met,

including mental and physical health needs, such as taking medication (see <u>Photo 27</u>). In

Photo 27
Title: "Store Bought is Fine" (Jynx)
Photo Description: none
Context: My bathroom counter showing my "as needed" medicines (back row and the inhaler), my daily medications (middle row) and hair dye. I know it's an age-old joke at this point - "If you can't get your own, store bought is fine." But I think about it a lot when I'm struggling. I can't make my own serotonin -- at least not enough of it to keep going. I'm anxious to the point where I shake, so I have medicine for that. Sometimes I can't sleep because of the two above, so meds for that. Oh! And sometimes I can't even breathe....so an inhaler for that. Plus the birth control -- so I'm actually sterile by choice (got the surgery last year), but I still take birth control to try to avoid a period...periods are, for me, some of the worst thing of being a AFAB nonbinary. Nothing like a painful, bloody reminder you don't have the body you want. Added in there, though, to maybe lighten the picture up a bit, is hair dye. Self modification and ways to reinforce something fun. But it's wellbeing because...it's literally what keeps me well. God, I hate saying that, but. It is what it is. To me this represents nonbinary identity because it shows the ability to control things that folks say are inevitable or uncontrollable. Chemical imbalances, for example. Folks say that LGBTQ+ have mental issues for not identifying as straight and cis, but if nothing else, my identity is the one of the only things I know for sure doesn't make me depressed (fighting to exist does, but that's a different story). Happiness came the most when I knew who I was. Hair dye is a reference to appearance control and expression. When we really get to it, isn't it amazing to be able to put your mood into your hair?

order to process the adverse experiences and still have mastery, PRs allowed themselves

to sit with their emotions but not let the emotions consume them. "It's ok to be angry,

though, but at the same time if you get angry every time something happens, you're just

gonna be stressed out all the time, so sometimes you gotta let things go" (Catkin). When

PRs had mastery of their wellbeing, they expressed pride in standing up for themselves

and taking actions to explore their gender identity and expression.

Environmentally-Contingent Factors of Wellbeing

Although less common, some of the identified factors had a dual impact on

wellbeing. That is, they held the capacity to both promote and corrode wellbeing

depending on the context in which they were experienced. This categorization further

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stresses the importance of the environment to wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. The very things PRs need for their wellbeing could also be the source of psychological distress and violence.

Photo 28
Title: "Who I Am" (Rowan)
Context: Right now it's bittersweet…I was approved in court to change my name. I got my documentation wrong, so I had – whenever I sent it in to get my birth certificate changed, they didn't approve of it, but it's approved by court, so I just have to fix some stuff, so legally my name is gonna be changed pretty soon and that's really exciting to me…so this is – like I hate seeing my dead name. I hate it, but it's really, really cool to see written out my chosen name and it's – yeah…yeah, so this is my name change form…I made sure to take the picture of the part where I chose – where I wrote my birth name and then wrote my chosen name underneath it…this [legal name change] is huge for my wellbeing…my mom actually started calling me Rowan recently and that was a really, really big deal and that makes me think of that, honestly…not just how other people refer to me, but also the people who are closest to me and people who used to be unaccepting…I love seeing my name written out – I love seeing my chosen name written out…so this is super promotive for my well-being…the only corrosive part is seeing my legal name, my former name –whatever you want to call it, but everything else – it's just really exciting to me, it's really cool.
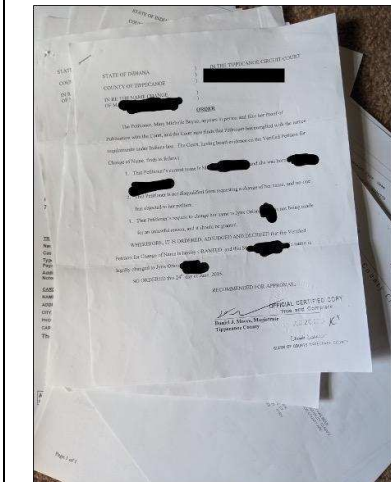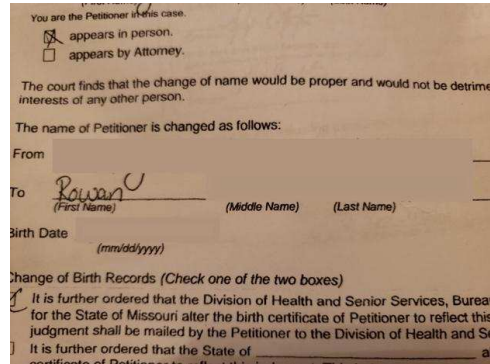
Photo 29
Title: "So it is Ordered" (Jynx)
Context: It is called "It Is So Ordered" because that was the funniest part about – it's in all caps down at the bottom – it says SO ORDERED, 24th of June…that is my name change order…so my friends also celebrate June 24 as my name day…my surrogate day of when I became Jynx…and it was the scariest thing because I had never been to court before…so I dressed to the nines and I was really stiff and rigid and I know I was probably the easiest case that day. It took like three minutes. It was also super frustrating because changing your name is a pain in the ass.
The corrosive bit about it is one that I had to do it that way, but also two, it was so expensive…So one of the happiest days started an incredibly frustrating journey of trying to get the legality of it.

Self-Advocacy

Despite facing daily microaggressions, PRs still advocated for themselves, which was described as equally exhausting (corrosive) as empowering (promotive). Identified self-advocacy settings were relationships, social, employment, the legal system (i.e.,

name change), and health care (i.e., affirming surgery). For example, legal name change includes going before a judge who may or may not be affirming, which was described as "one of the scariest things I've ever done with one of the best outcomes" (Jynx) and "a day I'll remember the rest of my life" (Boots) (see Photos 28 & 29). Over time, PRs found changes in their ability to advocate for themselves. "I've noticed as I've gotten older, I guess or more comfortable in my queerness is I'm more able to stand up for myself" (Kai). Some found it more difficult to expend the energy on self-advocacy, whereas others felt more comfortable, which could vary such as minority stress, intersectional identities (e.g., not having the spoons), and resilience.

The most commonly reported form of self-advocacy was for correct use of pronouns and names – "To make sure people are aware instead of just letting them rely on their assumptions" (Kristy) (see Photo 30). Self-advocacy to directly correct others was especially challenging and draining when it was holding someone accountable who had already been corrected. Conversely, "Being in a space where everybody just lets you tell them your pronouns and immediately accepts…it's just very restful…it feels like I can just be myself and I'm not trying to have to constantly prove who I am" (Tristan). Ultimately, self-advocacy was to create spaces where PRs could feel safe and supported without being on guard for the next microaggression.

Self-Care

In general, self-care was spoken of as a combination of physical and mental care. At a fundamental level, PRs mentioned taking medication and other physical health regimes. Major examples of self-care included therapy, journaling, books, general pampering, and activities that refill their cup. Therapy was a central example of self-care

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among PRs. Some started therapy specifically to explore gender while others were already in therapy for other reasons when gender came to the forefront. Before therapy,

Photo 30
Title: "New Glasses" / "Empowerment and Courage" (Boots)
Context: I am constantly misgendered and I'm usually so deflated by it that I don' t bother to correct people. I need to redo my rx for my glasses and thought I would treat myself to a little visibility and accountability to correct people. This was a definite boost for my self love and I was super excited to get them!
~
Those were a powerful reminder for me to advocate for myself. It's hard for me to correct people with my pronouns because I'm instantly just exhausted - they misgender me and I already know you think I'm invisible, why am I bothering to correct you and this was my tool to help me be like, "no, you've gotta say something," so I can sit here and I can feel it with my fingers.

"[I] basically didn't put any time into [exploring gender] and I would always just kind-of distract myself from thinking about that aspect of my identity in any significant way" (Timothy). HG described therapy as part of their toolbox of coping skills that "have been essential in the ongoing process of coming to peace with all of myself and how I exist in the world" (HG). Journals were the second most common example of self-care. Sometimes journaling was connected to therapy as a way to "process big heavy things" and "feature the progression of who I am" (Dylan). Specifically, Nat prioritized bullet journaling, in which they recorded transition dates and other big milestones for their transition, such as name change and starting hormone therapy (see Photo 31). In addition to a form of relaxation, escapism, and education, books served important roles in PR's self-care. Dylan described their collection of books that "helped me define my identity" and "made me who I am" through exposure to concepts of gender diversity and nonbinary representation and – " the first time I saw my identities celebrated." In this example, self-care was also instrumental in identity development.

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Self-care was also activities that refilled PR's cup and felt good in their body, including exercising, pampering, making art, cooking, and practicing mindfulness meditation and spirituality. Exercise was described as "do[ing] something that makes my body feel good" (PR #1), such as hiking, walking, and gardening. For PR #1, creating art was a form of self-expression and their mental health care. PRs described a complicated relationship to activities that are collectively referred to as pampering, which included painting nails, face masks, and lotions. The relationship to this self-care was challenged by the gendered marketing of these products and services. Some PRs found the gendering of these activities to be a deterrent. For example, Kristy asked, "How can I still do this thing [face mask] that's very caring for myself and my body and not have weird gender feels about it and it's sort-of to detach the gendering of the face mask" (see Photo 32), which suggest a need for new product lines that are all gender. Whereas others found it to be an chance for continued connection with their cisgender women friends, such as Nat and friends getting their nails painted together. Another notable complexity was focusing on one's body in a caring manner among those who have gender dysphoria and/or

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experienced dissociations. Pampering self-care was described as a way to connect with their body in a meaningful and healing way.

Photo 32
Title: "Here's me in a face mask" (Kristy)
Context: Self care is a big component of my wellbeing, and that includes taking care of my body and examining my relationship with it. Honestly, I'm not that great at it, but doing a simple thing - like putting a face mask on my dry skin - can make me feel a lot better. One of the things that I struggle with sometimes is how gendered self care can be, and how many self care items or tasks are generally considered to be more femme. In my everyday life, I often distance myself from femininity in an effort to not be misgendered, and I know very little about skincare and the like. Going down the skin care aisle, or getting a pedicure, or having someone attempt to tame my eyebrows can be really intimidating and those interactions rife with misgendering.

Representation

Positive, accurate, and nuanced representation – more than merely representation – was one of the most significant factors on wellbeing. However, very few of the representations discussed fit these distinctions. Representation is inherently influenced by social norms and partly contingent on who was in control of the narrative; therefore, it varied by the environment from nonbinary exclusions and erasure, to a lack of diverse representation, to empowering representation. When that representation was empowering, it was thought to have a beneficial impact. Conversely, when the representation was stereotyping or tokenizing, the impact was harmful. Growing up with empowering representation was interpreted as helping youth understand their gender earlier. Whereas older adults who come out later in life due to lack of awareness from a lack of representation noticed a dramatic difference.

Nonbinary Exclusion and Erasure. Repeated system exclusion and erasure of nonbinary identities had a corrosive impact on PR's wellbeing. These experiences were

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described as invalidating, depressing, and damaging, which sometimes contributed to negative internalization. "No matter how I express myself, I am not acknowledged for who I am. With so much of my identity being invisible, it's hard to feel valid" (Jynx). SNCGE, especially fluid gender expressions, were both helpful and harmful in that it brought joy from confusing people while hopefully expanding their view of gender but also pain when people still defaulted to a man or woman rather than recognizing their correct gender. Some PRs were told their gender identity was imagined. "That combined with all sorts of other things – it's just another brick in the wall…" (Kai). Even in spaces that were LGBTQ-inclusive, "there's so much erasure that you have lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. And if you're not trans, you're invisible" (Boots). It was through this accumulative impact that promotive factors to wellbeing were framed in references to *making up for* the corrosive factors. E. pondered whether some erasure was partly due to the expansive list of nonbinary identities "there's a lot of seats at the table and everyone can have a seat at the table because that's important – it's just sometimes we don't realize who's at the table" (E.). When given the platform to speak about their personal experiences of erasure in the community and the importance of visibility, Boots describe it as "a very powerful day – it meant everything." According to E., visibility is one part of the remedy to unintentional erasure of nonbinary individuals, whereas, nonbinary exclusion seemed to require a more complicated solution that addresses intentional discrimination, bias, and accountability.

Lack of Diverse Representation. Many PRs spoke about the importance of inclusive and nuanced representation in a variety of ways such as assigned sex at birth (ASAB), race, age (55+), body types, and SNCGE (not just androgynous). Not only was

this important to PRs individually to see themselves represented, but also to accurately

portray the diversity among those who are nonbinary. Catkin shared they had not met

another nonbinary person over 55 years old. "I know they exist because I've heard about

them, but at least here locally, I've not met many, but it's Indiana…People are probably

more guarded about sharing" (Catkin). Further, Timothy considered a lack of AMAB

representation to be part of what complicated their gender journey – "so struggling to

figure out where I fit in, do I fit in?... it felt harder to pin down my gender… because the

AMAB nonbinary representation is harder to find – you've gotta seek it out more"

(Timothy). This was doubly challenging for Timothy as someone who typically

visualizes their end goal. Likewise, E. asked themselves "What does it mean to be a plus-

size non-genderconforming person?" When exploring their gender, they Googled

genderfluid and similar terms and found:

> You get a very specific type of person and that's very frustrating…and I
> feel that really hard because I think they're handsome and pretty and I
> would love to look like that! Have that ability to be a chameleon. And…I
> really like the way I'm put together in my shape…but I don't fit into that
> cookie cutter look. (E.)

Collectively, PRs agreed a need for diversified nonbinary visibility existed across media

formats, particularly BIPOC nonbinary people and characters. If the media representation

of nonbinary does not reflect many who identify as nonbinary, it is another layer of

exclusion. "We. are. normal. We need to be represented" (Boots). PRs earnestly wanted

to see nonbinary people like themselves represented in the real world, TV, and movies.

Empowering Representation. One of the ways in which broadening awareness

can be accomplished is through positive, accurate, and nuanced representation. In

response to the identified exclusion and erasure, PRs called for specific representation of

nonbinary people who are un(der)represented and that is not disparaging, othering, or

tokenizing. More than anywhere else, PRs reported finding empowering representation of

nonbinary identities and SNCGE as fictional characters in fantasy books. However,

according to Cory:

> I feel like they could do a better job of making human nonbinary people
> rather than them just being the android or the alien – I feel like that's
> gotten to be a stereotype in a way. I'm torn because I think those
> characters and being like a robot or an alien would be really cool, but also
> damn, we're human, too.

Beyond fiction, PRs called for positive representation in life and media – "being able to

see people like us in the real world" (Sky). Others considered some famous individuals to

be role models valued for their "performative androgyny" (Kai; i.e., David Bowie and

Prince) and SNCGE (HG; i.e., Billy Porter). Important distinction in media

representation, particularly film and television, was about "adding more nonbinary people

of all colors, shapes, sizes, pronouns, to media and <u>having them be voiced or acted by

actual nonbinary people</u>" (Sky) (emphasis added).

For many PRs, they decided to fill the gap of empowering representation that they

wanted to see, which they accomplished through self-representation. For E., this was

"continuing to be out at work to be visible for others…be visible on social media to be a

guiding light for others" (E.). Online platforms (e.g., Instagram, Switch, Tumblr,

YouTube) were mentioned as a comfortable place to represent and be a role model. "We

didn't really have role models. I had maybe a couple of people, but they were the same

age as me, they weren't an older generation…getting to be that for other people is really

inspiring." (Kai). Likewise, following other people like them online was helpful – "well,

they look really awesome and they have the same exact body shape as you, so you know

what? You probably look just as awesome as they do. So stop being so hard on yourself"

(Sky). Kai also framed engaging in this PhotoVoice study as a form of creating

empowering representation that could be seen by nonbinary youth or questioning

individuals. Empowering representation was well summarized by HG as "the power of

being seen, seeing myself reflected in the outer world, knowing I am not alone, knowing

there are other people struggling, finding joy, and celebrating." When representation is

positive, accurate, and nuanced it can contribute to wellbeing through exploring gender

identity and expression, helping folx feel comfortable about themselves, and creating joy

(for an example, see Photo 33).

Photo 33
Title: "Lightning Strikes" (Kristy)
Context: Here's a picture of me, out in nature, with my arms out, a fresh hair shave, and wearing my favorite shirt. The sound of the waterfall behind me is soothing and I am calm. I feel fully in my body. There is nothing out here to misrepresent who I am. I am what I am and I'm not hiding anything.

(Professional photo used with permission from PR)
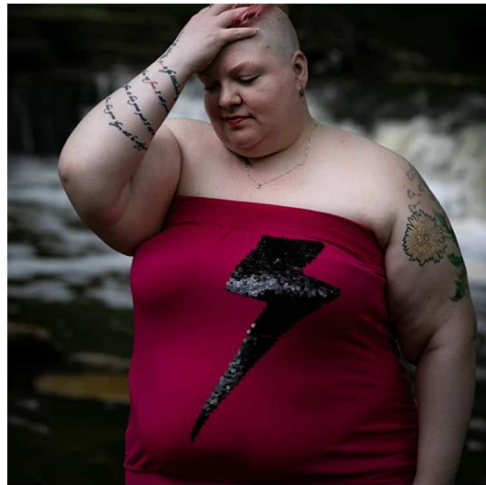
Representation = Hope. Increased representation translated to hope for the future

among PRs. Hope for the cultural awareness ushered by positive, accurate, and nuanced

representation. Hope for generation Z to have an easier life. Hope was attributed to more

representation and support through social media (e.g., Instagram, Tiktok, Tumblr,

Twitter). When discussing factors for personal and community wellbeing, multiple PRs

discussed optimism and hope for the future generations and visibility for nonbinary youth

(see Photo 34). When visiting the conservative town where they were raised, Sky noted

seeing younger generations who are being more free and accepted. "I have a lot of hope

for the generation Z…they're on top of it…I really have a lot of hope for them

because…I think they're finding more support" (Timothy). Thriving among younger

generations also inspired some PRs – "I'm seeing all these younger people and it's like

well, good for them, I should stand up, too" (Sky). Similarly, Timothy commented,

"'whoo!' This is what having representation does" in observation of students at their

college who have a firm understanding of their identity.

Photo 34
Title: No title (HG)
Context: This was Pride when I went last year with the eldest of my sister-in-law's kids…this person was standing in front of us and I'm like please, can I take a photo of the back of your vest…partially because the theme last year was youth and so all of the speakers – like they had the superintendent of schools for one of the local areas who's a lesbian who was very vocally out and advocating for kids…and the folks standing in front of us were high school seniors – they were going into their senior year of high school and this was being out in community and seeing other people and having that group affirmation of the possibilities and really daring to hope.
[*This PR identified photos by words.* What was the word associated with this?]
…this one was hope – things that gave me hope…it made me laugh out loud when she turned around and standing that – oh, that's so good!

Along with hope and joy for younger generations, some PRs expressed regret for

not receiving that support when younger, "it seems like the younger folks since they're

able to do this, they are starting out so much healthier, you know, because they get a

choice – we didn't get a choice." (Catkin). Yet, when representation was of visibly

supportive parents, PRs had emotional responses:

> There's a screen shot from [the panel discussion] when he's talking about
> supporting his [trans] daughter that all of the people on the panel are just
> like – We're all looking like we're about to sob just because we don't have
> that! We don't have that! But it's hope like that, right? He exists and he's
> about as run of the mill white as you get and, you know, we're in this
> community in Indiana – if he can do it, I know others can and he's
> working on it and he's trying to get the people who don't understand –
> he's using his privilege to do it and my partner's using his privilege to do

it and Momma's using her privilege to do it, so it's like it's gonna happen.
(Jynx)

While PRs still recognized the existing challenges to empowering representation,

particularly for un(der)represented groups, they were hopeful that would not be the case

much longer. Even when some PRs felt less optimistic, they were no less deterred from

the work - "I'm so incredibly sardonic about everything about myself, but if I knew for a

fact that everyone after me would be okay, it'd make everything I've gone through and

more worth it" (Jynx). Similar to PRs creating their own representation by showing up,

they also played an active part in fostering support and hope for future generations (see

Photo 35).

Photo 35
Title: "This picture isn't about me but instead the group of people
on the other side" (Nat)
Context: Photo of a polaroid of Nat throwing a peace sign. The
photo is held up in front of a gate that says Purdue University.
This photo is a self-portrait of me in my own space. While many
LGBTQ+ people wouldn't consider Purdue University a queer
sanctuary, Purdue is the safest home I've ever known. I have
found many communities that accept me and respect me. This
photo was taken when my Materials Engineering friend group
and I did graduation photos. Like most trans people, I worried
about losing friends when I came out. I consider myself lucky
that most of my friends took the time to learn and grow. In
addition to adding new queer communities, I made most of my
communities safer for other queer people to join.

Socially Nonconcorming Gender Expression (SNCGE)

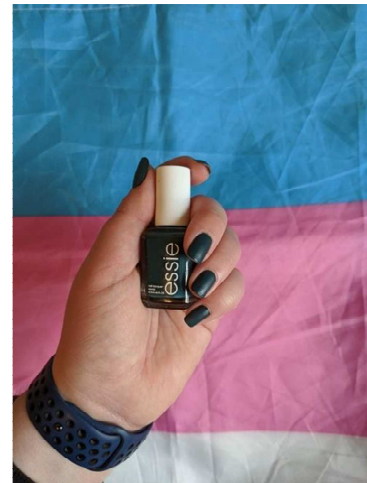A SNCGE was described as both a promotive factor in helping people feel most

like themselves but also a corrosive factor because it can signal difference and target a

person for violence and discrimination. In unsupportive environments, PRs with a

SNCGE received strong social pressure and pushback for not conforming to social

norms. "The pressure is real and having a gender expression that not stereotypically

nonbinary and not stereotypically… binary…is really jarring for people and I have a tendency to stick out in a lot of places" (Kristy). Even when not gender-related, PRs experienced repercussions for SNCGE – Jynx shaved their head in solidarity with friends who were fighting cancer and received pushback from family, including being called a skinhead.

Photo 36
Title: "Essie Ad" (Nat)
Context: I follow like a lot of nail people on Instagram and so this is like a very stereotypical posed photo for showing off nail color, so we'll pose these photos to show off their nail colors and so I wanted it to be like this pose – ad-like photo, but also show that this person's not – like the trans vibe can probably be the person didn't know who was posting this would be like 'ok, this is a trans woman who is posting her nails' but it's not, so…I thought that was – it's that contradictoriness and that chaotic-ness of my gender and also I love nails and so like I told you earlier that I did not spend money on my nails – one I had really thin nails and going on testosterone has thickened my nails a lot and so it holds nail polish a lot better which is ironic – so I can actually paint my nails and hold nail polish for long periods of time now while I'm on testosterone, but I started professionally getting my nails done, like acrylics as a way to bond with my female friends because I lived at the time in that sorority and although my female friends would look at me and be like, "yeah, you're like a dude in a lot of ways and I don't understand you and there's this like this little bit of divide because you're kind-of a guy now." But I would go to nail salons and sit with all of my female friends and chit chat with the Cambodian nail technician in front of me and they were like, "oh, this is a really nice gay dude" and I'm like "yeah, sure."
I really worried about that connection with my female friends that I had before and coming out as a lesbian – all my friends from Indiana were like "this is hard for us, but we can't treat you any differently." But then when I came out as trans, it was like, "ok, we're gonna treat you differently now" and I'm like, "no, that's not necessarily true – I'm still in a lot of ways the same person, we can still go get our nails done and talk about makeup"…so I think from a thriving standpoint, that these are things (nails and makeup) I really enjoy that are not related to my gender and I enjoy them because I do them with a community and transitioning was scary because it was an opportunity to lose that community, but I was able to be like, "no, I'm still here, I still enjoy these things" – even though I'm on HRT, even though I'm masculine doesn't mean I don't enjoy these, so – and my nails are beautiful – I love how they look – they look really nice to me so I'm not gonna stop doing that for the sake of gender.

For PRs with a SNCGE (or expressing oneself without restraint), it was integral to the wellbeing dimensions of being holistically present in their lives and feeling comfortable with oneself, which benefited them as personal growth and improved connection with others. PR #1 described emotional development and critical thinking

from critiquing social norms as a nonbinary person. "I think that there is definitely a critical thinking element…an emotional development element, too…it's just I think that being nonbinary sort-of forces that to happen[19]" (PR #1). When in supportive environments, they reported having a better relationship with their nonbinary partner because neither placed value on gender norms and expectations but rather pursued their own comfort with their bodies (minimize dysphoria, maximize euphoria), which allowed them to be more vulnerable with each other – "I think it just adds an extra layer to our connection" (PR #1). SNCGE was also a way of retaining connection with friends. Nat's routine of getting their nails professionally done was an opportunity to continue connecting with their cisgender women friends (see Photo 36). Importantly, when environments where supportive and folx has spaces to explore their gender and feel affirmed, they described experiences of gender euphoria (see Photo 37).

Photo 37
Title: "Gender Euphoria" (Gabi)
Context: This is a photo that I took late at night, along with a ton of other photos. I was feeling particularly "at home" in my body, and wanted to capture that. As a nonbinary person, I generally feel my best when I feel comfortable in my skin. It is when my gender dysphoria is to a level that I can appreciate it without being overwhelmed by it, as well as doing things like wearing a binder to feel even more comfortable mentally. This photo highlights me at my most comfortable, late at night in my room with literally nothing else to worry about.

I also like the appearance of my body hair in this picture - it's something that I feel affirms my gender identity even beyond wearing a binder. My goal in taking this was to capture the feeling of comfort in my skin. It's actually a rarity for me, even though I feel like most people are so used to the feeling that they only notice when it's lacking. For me, it's the opposite. I notice when I AM comfortable in my skin, given that I'm just feeling pretty bad gender dysphoria most of the time.
This photo depicts where I almost felt no dysphoria, because I felt affirmed in my gender identity. It's how cis people must feel all the time - like their brain matches their body. I just try to appreciate the rare cases in which it happens, and consider those times to be when I'm thriving in terms of my gender identity and wellbeing.

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[19] PR #1 included the caveat that they did not mean to imply that this is only true for nonbinary people or a product of being nonbinary.

Materials

Materials were often central to PRs gender expression, and thus linked to wellbeing. For example, materials were used as a way to visually signal to others one's identity as nonbinary, and thereby invite validation and authentic engagement, which enhanced wellbeing. Visual signaling as materiality included symbols of pride (e.g., pronoun buttons, pride pins or patches) and signals of gender (i.e., shaved heads and dyed hair, septum piercing) (see Photos 38, 39, & 40). As Kai described this "beacon" as "almost like that unspoken language of 'oh, we can be ourselves with each other.'"

Photo 38
Title: "Showing My Pride" (Kai)
Context: This is how I show how proud I am to be me. I am nonbinary, I am genderfluid, I am queer. I break the rules. I will shout loud and proud that I am me and I am happy to be me. It took a long road to get here, and I deserve to be proud and happy.
~
Even the fact that we have the freedom now to represent this stuff – and yeah, we might get funny looks sometimes or people might be like "oh, it's one of those weird made-up genders or whatever" – the nice thing about these things is that they're almost like a beacon for people who are in your community – like it's oh, you're wearing a gender fluid hat – you know what this is. "Oh, you're a they/them? I'm a they/them, too!" It's almost like that unspoken language of "oh, we can be ourselves with each other"…even like I realize since starting this study, I've realized like "wow, I don't actually have that many nonbinary friends" – even in my house, I was like oh yeah, I'm the only nonbinary person in this house – that's weird. I don't know why I never realized that before…but even so, I have been able to surround myself with people who accept that and part of that is being open about it like this and being like no, you either take me as I am or get the fuck out…and that's kind-of what these things mean to me – it's like I get to wear – to use a turn of phrase, I get to wear my heart on my sleeve and, you know, show this is who I am – if you don't like it, go away because I'm not gonna not be me.

However, the use of materials in an attempt to enhance wellbeing was not without risk. Along with validation, visibility via materials also heightened risk for transphobic attacks and microaggressions which were corrosive on PRs' wellbeing. Take the following quote from Dylan as an example: "I think [SNCGE] can help people feel most like themselves, but then obviously corrosive is that it can signal difference and make you a target of

violence." Like many factors, the validation versus risk of violence depended on external factors.

Photo 39
Title: "Representation" (Rowan)
Context: I call that Pride vest…so this vest is – I've been working on it for a couple of years now and it's a representation of me – like if I were to take all of me and put it into one thing, it would be my vest…so I have quotes from my favorite movies in there, I have little foxes – I love foxes, they're my favorite animal and then I have a ton of Pride pins on there…I have my equality – trans equality one up at the top…I have a nonbinary one, I have rainbow ones…so those are all – it's a representation of myself and also all the things that I love…
…It's the representation of not just my gender identity and my queerness, but also just me as a whole because I've had people where I've worn it on college campuses and people will notice something on my jacket that they relate to, right? So they'll see *normal people scare me* and they'll be like, "American Horror Story!" And then they're like, "oh, that flag right there – what's that mean?" And usually it's a conversation starter, and so it's actually how I've made several friendships, too…so I have just so many different conversation pieces and it's usually a way for me to connect to people who I wouldn't normally connect with.

Environmental symbols were used to surround themselves with affirmation and included pride flags, photos, books, posters, art – anything that felt affirming and empowering of their gender. Several PRs hung pride flags in their home. "I always feel happy when I look at [the trans flag in their home]" (Sky). Dylan hung activist artwork next to the trans flag in their home, simultaneously affirming multiple identities. However, Sky described mixed feelings about exploitation of their desire for pride paraphernalia - "I know its rainbow capitalism and everything, but it still looked really nice…next to that is my pillowcase which is rainbow because why not? You know? Be gay everywhere!" (Kai). For PR #1, they decorated their home with a painting they made that represented their gender and sexuality because "we're not always represented and so I think just having something felt powerful to me…I'm showing it off in my apartment just felt connected to wellness to me" (see Photo 41). The use of materials to transform environments was found to be an impactful way of bolstering PRs sense of wellbeing.

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According to Kai, symbols of affirmation were also a way to vet toxic people out of their

lives, help mitigate depression and suicidality for them.

Photo 40
Title: "Ughly Hats" (E.)
Context: Hats. Hats are my thing. I never wore hats that much until I chopped all my hair off and needed something to keep my bangs out of my eyes, or when I hadn't washed and styled my hair and needed to run errands.
My first ugly hat was this horrific teal and salmon pink Aztec print, it unfortunately met its demise via being shredded by my dog, to the relief of my husband. He *hated* that hat (but in a teasing way), so it became an ongoing inside joke. Whenever I'd be traveling or shopping and saw an ugly hat, I couldn't help but add it to my collection. My husband even brought me back the blue Mickey Mouse one on the left from his trip to Las Vegas, showing his support yet again that enables me to feel freedom to express myself. He even stops the car from leaving the driveway if I suddenly realize I don't have a hat because he knows it means a lot to me.
Even though it started as a joke, hats have become a staple in my gender expression; sometimes overtly (see the gray nonbinary pride hat in the middle?) sometimes covertly.
Growing up as a preteen on the farm, I'd stuff my long ponytail up into a hat just to see if anyone would mistake me for a boy - little did I know then what the future would bring. Hats have always given me the sense of being masculine, even as a child, which I now know was the gateway to becoming my true genderfluid self.

Some PRs used pride symbols as digital materials to hold others accountable

because if it is visible there is no excuse for ignorance. "My pronouns are in my bio, so

you know my pronouns…you know what name I want to be called because it's also in

my email" (Nat). These materials of pride and accountability included pronouns on work

badges and communication, pronoun pins and buttons on clothing, and even pronouns on

the side of Boots' glasses (see Photo 30). Materials and visibility connected to safety and

anticipatory threats which can erode wellbeing. Choices between enhanced wellbeing

through desired gender expression weighed against risk of physical and psychological

harm. Materials were also items that gave PRs joy, such as an item that reminded them of

happy moments during traumatic periods. For example, Noel described a childhood pink

hoodie with feathers; "it returns me to that part of my childhood – that year of my

childhood that was beautiful and was happy and was safe." Materials of gender expression served to affirm through reflecting pride and affirmation that perhaps to offset it missing in their direct environments.

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Photo 41
Title: "Fluidity" (PR #1)
Context: This is a painting that I did myself as just a fun way of celebrating pride month at home, and is hanging in my bedroom. I took the gender-fluid symbol (the entangled "male"/"female" symbols) and stylized it with additional swirls. I also chose to use both the colors of the trans flag, as well as the colors of the bi flag. The idea behind this was, I wanted to express how both gender and sexuality are intertwined and "fluid" for me- the colors within the gender symbols mix and blend in certain places, which is then set against the colors of bisexuality, with varying shades used throughout the painting as well. I think it's also just a good expression of how I see life in general- colorful, ever-changing, intertwined.
I chose to use this as a photo because I think part of my wellbeing as a nonbinary person is finding ways to express myself creatively. But also, the fact that this is a painting that I made myself, AND I'm using in my own home as decor, represents the sort of "DIY" approach to life I think a lot of us have to take to thrive in the world as non-binary. Because the world is not made for us, we often have to make our own art, our own space, our own representations- while that can be exhausting at times, I think there is also some joy to be had in that creativity.

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Nonbinary-Inclusive Resources

Several nonbinary-inclusive resources were identified and their benefit to wellbeing, such as experiencing mental and physical health and feeling comfortable with oneself. Resources that would benefit from becoming nonbinary-inclusive were also noted. Primary resources included aesthetic options (e.g., clothing, prosthetics) and different fields of health care. PRs felt strongly about aesthetic options for SNCGE. For example, Kai reported finding a variety of clothing, underwear, binders, and even packers advertised in unexpected places like social media (e.g., Facebook) and boutique stores (e.g., Etsy). "The fact that this is becoming so normalized is great and the fact that I get to have all of these tools is really incredible, too" (Kai). Kai described the benefit of access to these options as, "more people are able to get things they need to be more

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themselves…I can only imagine how much happier people because of that – I know I am" (see Photo 42).

Photo 42
Title: "Tools of the Trade" (Kai)
Context: These are some of the tools I use to feel like me. Pictured are a binder, a packer, makeup, a shaving razor, testosterone injections, and my pill case, all over a shirt I love that says "Gender is a galaxy". Something as simple as a binder or the right meds can make a huge difference towards my wellbeing. These things all affirm my gender fluidity in their own way, whether through fluid appearance or adaptability of mind. For me, gender is truly a galaxy, and I'm ready to explore it to the fullest extent.

In contrast, some PRs found increased accessibility and numerous options but this was not true for everyone across sizes. Tristan highlighted the very important problem of a lack of clothing for nonbinary people of all size to express their gender. Kristy added their disappointment that the awesome gender pride shirts (e.g., "Gender Outlaw") worn by other PRs are not available in a 3x or 4x but was hopeful for change in the future. In addition to access and option barriers, cost was a barrier that prevented options, such as tailored suits. The exceptions for finding clothing were specialty stores, such as Torrid and Kohl's big and tall men's department. However, "they don't make very many clothes for fat people that aren't also for people who are in their 60s…or they're just absolutely garish…or that are super feminine with floral prints." As a result, energy is expended and compromises are made – "The calculations that I'm making every day when I get dressed about how can I present myself today in the way that I want to be presenting and sometimes there's a tradeoff between professional presentation and gender presentation." A lack of activism in fat politics, including in queer and trans spaces, was identified as a problem by Tristan. "I really need queer and trans people to just listen to me say that it sucks being limited because of my fatness without telling me that being skinny is hard,

too." In order to create change so that all nonbinary people can feel the same fulfillment Kai described, then "I need people to get on board with fat liberation[20]" (Tristan). In addition to racial and disability justice, fat liberation was another primary intersectional priority discussed by PRs.

Nonbinary-inclusive health care was a resounding resource with reported mixed access and experiences. The criteria for affirming healthcare was summarized as "access to comprehensive, affordable, and inclusive healthcare options" (Timothy). Specifically, PRs wanted "community-focused, LGBTQ+ run health clinic" (Timothy), knowledgeable providers about a range of transition options (e.g., options for AMAB nonbinary folx), compassionate annual care with intentionality to reduce dysphoria (e.g., gynecology that did not shame polyamory or multiple sexual partners of more than one gender; see Photo 43), and reduced gatekeeping. Significant barriers for PRs were a lack of knowledgeable providers and systems that excluded nonbinary individuals. "I can't be out, the medical system doesn't have a way to be nonbinary in the medical system right now" (Jynx).

Hormone therapy options specific for nonbinary individuals was repeatedly brought up as a point of absence for some PRs and celebration for others. "Because I wanted to be more androgynous, so my doctor set me up with a low dose of testosterone…which has been great and honestly I've never been happier since I've been on it" (Kai). As far as PRs were informed, no options for microdosing estrogen exist at this time. As a result of not having affirming healthcare options and lack of trust, PRs

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[20] An important point as we work towards liberation for everyone: *"I've been really moving away from body positivity narratives in spaces recently and more towards fat liberation politics because I think that body positivity feels nice and inclusive, it never actually does anything for me…I just feel more shitty about myself because I can't make myself love my body…but I think that a fat liberation politic channels anger better…the way that fat phobia and transphobia combine in medical settings has caused real serious problems for me that aren't always even just about transition care, but that are just about trying to get regular health care from a doctor as a fat trans person is not possible."* (Tristan)

reported postponing care, skipping annual care (e.g., pap smears), and no-showing – even

for serious medical concerns.

> It is frustrating, but it's also definitely invalidating because you have to sit
> through a very uncomfortable situation anyway because nobody really
> wants to be at the doctor and misgendered, it's like I'm already not feeling
> well, you have to kick me while I'm down, too? (Cory)

When available, PRs transferred care to the trans clinic. It is "just an absolute game

changer" (HG) when healthcare providers were compassionate and dedicated to

proactively educating themselves to be affirming.

Photo 43
Title: "Health Care – it's Complicated" (HG)
Context: So this one can be kind-of triggery…I've had really bad experiences particularly with gynecological health…my hormones are not standard…I tend to run low on estrogen, high on testosterone, somewhere in the polycystic messiness and so they try hormone therapies and they try this and they try that and "oh, we don't understand why that's painful and like" – or "that's just how it is for some women, you should, you know" – yeah, not having answers. Contrasted with my current situation where I have a very affirming gynecological practice that I have to or that I have that I can go to…and a doctor I trust and they make every effort every time I go in to make me as comfortable and as affirming as possible. They're willing to talk to me about the fact that I have female partners, they're willing to talk to me about the fact that I'm poly. They're willing to talk to me about consent-based STD and STI testing and they've never shamed me for it – like having affirming medical care and compassionate medical care…When I started seeing her in 2012…there was some education. There was like discussing and then she asked questions and she listened, and so when she asked for resources, she's like oh, do you have anybody you would recommend reading? And I gave her a couple of books. Six months later when I went in for another checkup, she had read them and she'd looked at them and remembered and now when I go in, like it's in my file and people in the practice know and continue to affirm and at one point, they asked, they're like – on their intake forms – they changed their intake forms and they're like you're one of the patients that prompted us to look at this. Will you look at our new intake forms and see if you would add anything and they added a line for, you know, your legal name and then they added what would you like us to call you in the office as a line – they added multiple genders…other, please specify and were like welcoming people to define for themselves…on relationships, they do ask single, married, and there's a line for other…so they don't make assumptions and it just – it having a health care provider who got that into what we were doing was huge.
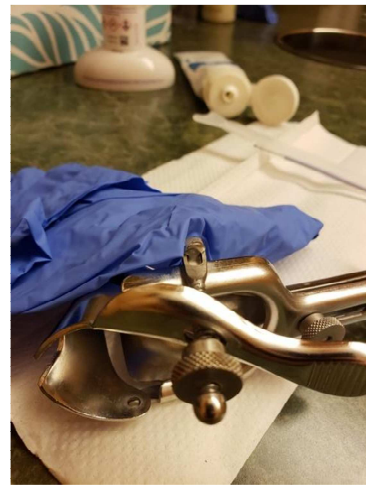
Family of Origin

Family of origin[21] was a factor that was promotive or corrosive depending on whether their family of origin was restrictive or supportive. Restrictive family environments inhibited, suppressed, and punished SNCGE and (if they came out) nonbinary gender identity. Strict gender roles were described as inhibiting exploration of gender while living at home. Another reported questioning themselves since being brought up with strict, conservative, gender roles. Those from staunch religious family upbringings reported their families did not *get* them being nonbinary, responding with "aggressively misgendering" and gaslighting PRs. At least one PR was submitted to conversion therapy, which they referred to as "lockup." Some reported parents enforcing binary gender norms in response to SNCGE. In one extreme case, a PR's dad broke and threw away their glasses and all their clothes, purchasing new ones of his approval. The harm of these relationships have lasting affect – "I still struggle really hard with the idea that people might like the hyper-feminine, stereotypically 'pretty,' heterosexual, less complicated version of myself that I was in high school better than the person I am now, regardless of my internal happiness." Even when continuing strained connections with restrictive family of origin gaining some geographic distance helped – "I'm grateful for my buffer state, but sometimes it makes things a little difficult." For many PRs the greatest fear was of being kicked out of their parent's house or being ostracized, which was a reality lived through by multiple PRs. One PR stated, "well, that's already a thing that's happened and so it feels like one of the doomsday scenarios that lingers in a lot of people's minds as they're coming out – isn't really there for me." When discussing

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[21] To avoid instigating conflict between PRs and families of origins, no names were used when discussing family of origin.

restrictive family of origin, PRs expressed feelings of resignation, hurt, anger, and defiance and those who had developed a support system and chosen family appeared to have come to a resolution to heal and move beyond this past.

Family of origin could not be placed in a binary of restrictive or supportive as some families were on their own journey of understanding and acceptance. For various reasons, some PRs had not come out about being nonbinary to their family of origin. One reason was additional strain on relationships – "I don't want to ruin the relationship with my father. We just got over gay, right?" They continued to speak of how transitioning and starting testosterone had unexpectedly brought them closer to their father in their mind, even if he may never understand. "I'm hoping we can get past the trans, but if I do lose my father to transitioning, that relationship will be a memory I still have and, through transitioning, that memory has become stronger and more a part of me." Other PRs reported feeling in a purgatory or holding pattern with family who were trying but still misgendering them, even years after coming out. For one PR whose parents had both passed, it was a relief not to have that awkward conversation.

In contrast, supportive families were a source of security, affirmation, and support that boosted their confidence (see Photo 44). PRs considered themselves fortunate and thankful to have family who supported them, with one PR confidently stating, "I think regardless of my presentation and my expression and who I am and what I am – I don't think anyone in my family will ever love me any less" without fear of rejection. Some family members were said to respond affirmingly, "I just want to make sure that you're happy." One PR's grandma was said to be the first person to accept them and a

significant supporter in their life. Optimistically, PRs expressed hope that supportive

families will become the norm in the future.

Photo 44
Title: "Everything in Moderation" (Gabi)
Context: For me, this photo is from the last bit of Pride Month and is part of a few photos that I had my family take with both my identity and wellbeing in mind. This was the first time since 2016 that I had made these cookies with my dad, and therefore the first time we made these cookies while I was "out." Yes, we made these cookies under the belief that none of us were even gay - they've been a family recipe/tradition that goes back to my dad's mother. But basically, I have experienced disordered eating for most of my life, and have had issues with desserts especially. Therefore, the act of making and eating these cookies was an act of defiance of the disordered eating for me, as well as a celebration of my identity.
Regarding my identity as nonbinary and this photo, taking this and sharing it on social media after felt liberating. I am out to basically everyone I know, and knowing that people searching me on social media would see this definitely felt freeing. I am at a point in my "out-ness" that if someone is not accepting of my identity, they are not going to be a part of my life in the future. Overall, this felt affirming and it made me happy that my family was part of the process of making these too. It was a pleasant reminder that they are supportive.

Awareness both Within and Outside of LGBTQ Groups

Whether a space was gender-affirming or not, partly depended on if there was an

awareness of nonbinary gender identities and expressions. When folx were aware and

affirming, the impact on wellbeing was significant. However, scenarios when assumed

trust led to confusion and pain were recounted. PRs actively sought out specifically

LGBTQ communities, yet cautioned that LGBTQ spaces should not be assumed to be

nonbinary-inclusive and agreed that increasing awareness was needed widely. When

asked if they thought there was more allyship with queer people, one PR answered:

> Not necessarily. The experience around here is that a lot of people are so
> used to being told you need to fit in the hyper-feminine or hyper-masc
> skill and box that they're criticizing me for being the rebel and why can't I
> just fall in line, that I'm making their life harder. (Boots)

Even within the binary trans community, the need for increased awareness, conflict

resolution, and unity exists. "I've seen more challenge than not…just that tension with

the trans community, a feeling like I'm ruining their definition" (Boots). Broadly, PRs advocated for intersectional awareness with racial justice, disability justice, and fat liberation. Boots pointed out the ableism of having pride events (i.e., outdoor parades and festivals). Most, but not all, PRs shared they had volunteered themselves in positions to increase awareness. For some PRs, this role was part of their own gender identity development.

> Once I found out that I could exist as myself and there's a name for myself, I started advocating really loud about the fact that we exist…hopefully help some people realize like I did that we won't fit anywhere, but that they have a place. (Boots)

Many PRs felt the responsibility to raise awareness fell upon them as one of the only nonbinary persons in their communities.

Recommendations to Bolster Nonbinary Wellbeing

The analysis identified three themes of recommendations and a set of corresponding strategies to bolster wellbeing among nonbinary individuals and communities (Table 6). PRs had numerous recommendations when asked how they would like to see the findings applied to practice and policy. I describe recommendations for meaningful engagement in personal, interpersonal, and social work practice and policy domains in the following sections. Although recommendations encompassed other professions such as medicine, law, and education, the presented recommendations focus on social work mental health and policy practice. All recommendations will be thoroughly discussed in a future publication.

These recommendations were made with urgency and, at times, with anger and frustration. It is with respect and authenticity that I have undertaken the responsibility to accurately convey PRs recommendations. A point of significant frustration emerged

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regarding who is being given platforms to advise and inform others about trans and

nonbinary communities. Few of the PRs felt their voice was listened to when heard, much

less invited to the table.

> The very rich White trans people get listened to and accepted as the norm
> (rather than average people)…I can think of a few celebrity trans people
> who are actively trans medicalist[22] or super racist…they're using their
> platform to punch down and make money for themselves rather than
> benefiting the whole community. (Cory)

Because PRs had experienced this exclusion and invisibility, they eagerly shared their

experiences, both of support and challenges, that informed their recommendations.

These recommendations were considered by PRs to be straightforward and

feasible if a willingness to change exists. Most PRs recommendations align with

fundamental expectations for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Across PRs, the most

frequent and pervasive request was for normalization of offering, asking, and correctly

using pronouns and chosen names.

> If we could, as a society, normalize things – like asking for personal
> pronouns – just making that a part of it so we're not making assumptions
> based on external presentation…even something that small can have an
> absolutely reality-shifting result for someone…both positive or negative.
> (HG)

Gabi recommended "pronoun usage as a common courtesy for everyone." According to

PRs, cultural shifts can be accomplished with small changes. "In practice with nonbinary

communities, simple acts of identity affirmation and representation are small acts that

have the ability to create large waves of change" (Noel). PRs reiterated that many of

these recommendations have been shared for years *ad nauseam* without change, which

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[22] Trans medicalists ascribe to transmedicalism or the essentialist belief that being transgender is contingent upon experiencing gender dysphoria and receiving hormonal and surgical transitional interventions (Vincent, 2020; Zhang, 2019). Also referred to as *truscum* (true transgender scum) and identified as gatekeepers by opponents on Tumblr (Ballard, 2019)

was a source of indignation. In addition to reinforcing the need for previously identified changes, some recommendations are specific to nonbinary experiences. It was with hope that PRs shared their recommendations for making this world more inclusive and affirming for nonbinary individuals.

Personal Recommendations

This domain could be concisely summarized as *do the self-work*. Self-reflection on gender and gendered practices was a frequent recommendation. "I'm not sure how it could educate others than to have people self-reflect on the way that they take care of themselves and if they run into any weird gender feels" (Kristy). Along with assessing feelings, checking one's biases and assumptions about gender diversity was recommended – in particular, what a nonbinary person looks like to avoid invalidating someone who does not conform to one's expectations. Nat reported having their gender invalidated by others, which they contributed to their SNCGE. "Just because I'm very feminine in my trans masculine nonbinary existence doesn't mean that that's the case for everyone. Just because I'm nonbinary transmasc doesn't make me any less theoretically masculine than a binary trans person" (Nat). As part of a marginalized population, PRs spoke of the dynamics of privilege and oppression that they possessed. Further, they stated that they, "see where it could be better and the things I can fight for myself and for other people…it'd be really cool if other people could see that, too" (Rowan). PRs recommended that folx recognize their cisprivilege and reflect on their role in perpetuation or disruption of transphobia and marginalization so that they can assess ways to improve.

It was recommended that part of the self-work process be educating oneself through a variety of sources, including simply being around trans and nonbinary individuals. "I think there's a lot of people who don't understand or don't know anybody personally who's nonbinary or trans to either educate them or make them want to educate themselves and so they just assume people's gender" (Cory). The emotional labor of educating others has been established as a point of significant exhaustion for nonbinary individuals, especially when an abundance of information is available online. Or as one PR stated, "Don't just Google!" and further expanded:

> I think that a lot of times when someone says "ok, I need to learn about how to be better to queer people" – they just Google it and are just like "what is queer?" Ok, "what is they/them?" So we have this very sanitized way of learning…but I think it's so much important to listen to individual people – their voices and their experiences and to find that shared humanity because I think when you find that shared humanity – that puts you in a place where you really do feel in your heart that you want to help ensure that our wellbeing is good. (Noel)

Noel drew a parallel with how individuals may take action to read a book on anti-racism, but more work is needed to create tangible change within ourselves and in our environments. For those who want to learn, some PRs reported being willing to assist – "If you want to understand it, cool. We'll find you all the resources" (Jynx). Though due to the emotional labor of educating others, willingness to assist should not be assumed by everyone nor, even among those willing, all the time.

PRs wanted it known that even though they shared a surprising (to them) amount of similarities in their gender expressions (i.e., dyed hair, septum piercing, pride pins and patches), their experiences were unique to themselves and should not be assumed to be representative of nonbinary individuals. The analogy of a blank slate was given for how they would like people to engage with them:

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> I want to just navigate the world as me and be seen for me and no
> automatic assumptions based on my voice or my breasts or my body shape
> or anything like that – it really is just a blank slate in some way of just
> being able to then show the world who I am. (Dylan)

When given a chance in an unassuming environment, PRs reported being more likely to share their gender identity and expression (i.e., chosen name and pronouns). Arguably, these environments are also less difficult for nonbinary individuals to advocate for themselves.

The final personal recommendation was to commit to doing better and "stop being a jerk" (Catkin). Repeatedly, PRs told of cisgender coworkers, educators, friends, family, and even previous partners who had struggled with pronouns, name changes, and other transition-related changes. The sentiment of *ENOUGH* was palpable. "I understand their pain [other's struggle with pronouns] and I respect it, but fuck you. This isn't about you" (Boots). Similarly, Catkin shared disappointment for mistreatment of nonbinary individuals and the lack of humanity:

> For the people who maybe are not on board yet…stop and listen to people
> and try to understand them instead of being a jerk – I don't know how else
> to phrase it…the harder we're pushing, the harder they're pushing back
> against us and it's like why is this happening? Where's their humanity,
> you know? (Catkin)

In addition to self-reflection and education, recommendations for personal work were intended to prepare folx who want to align with trans and nonbinary individuals to put themselves in the way of those who wish to harm gender diverse individuals.

Interpersonal Recommendations

Relationships – both personal and professional – have been shown to be pivotal in the lives of the PRs. Many factors contribute to whether these relationships hinder or help their wellbeing. Frequently, PRs reported facing people's disbelief who then wanted them

Table 6

Participant Researcher Recommendations

Themes	Strategies	Example Quotes
Personal Recommendations	- Self-reflect on gender and gendered practices - Educate yourself, be around trans and nonbinary folx - Check your biases and assumptions about gender diversity - Reflect and recognize your cis-privilege - Commit to doing better – Stop being a jerk!	*"I think that they need to understand that they have to get rid of their pre-conceived notions…the nonbinary experience is very unique to every person."* (Nat) *"When someone says 'ok, I need to learn about how to be better to queer people,' they just Google – 'What is queer?' 'What is they/them?' So we have this very sanitized way of learning…but I think it's so much more important to listen to individual people. Their voices and their experiences and to find that shared humanity – that puts you in a place where you really do feel in your heart that you want to help ensure that our wellbeing is good."* (Noel)
Interpersonal Recommendations	- Share, ask, use chosen names and pronouns - Believe us! Believe that our gender is real. - Do your part to normalize gender diversity/expansiveness. - Don't tokenize us! - Find non-gendered language for day-to-day interactions. - Create space for us not to be misgendered - Stop making/relying on assumptions. - Get your shit together and stop misgendering folx because we are tired of it. - Show Up! (and welcome!)	*"Not being that token trans friend or that token nonbinary friend – it's just you're my friend and that doesn't come up – it's just normal, and I feel like that's how it should be with everybody. Obviously, we're a long way off from that, but we're trying for that. I feel like, as a community – we're just people – that's all you need to know."* (Kai) *"My former workplace had gender-neutral bathrooms and also a requirement to put our pronouns in our email signatures, which I found really helpful, and it got people starting to talk about pronouns too."* (Kristy)

Social Work Mental Health and Policy Practice Recommendations	● Update organizational environment and paperwork ● Defend inclusive policies (formal, informal) ● Advocate for pro-trans legislation ● Understand your role and overcome your fears to act.	*"You would hope that more people would know about [nonbinary]..because they're working with the general population…there's gonna be more clients who are on that [gender] spectrum"* (Catkin) *"Policy changes would include changes to the requirements for gender-affirming surgeries"* (Dylan)

to prove their gender, regardless of medical or social transitioning. "Sometimes you have to accept people at face value rather than being rude and asking all sorts of reaching invasive questions – like respect the mask rather than try and rip it off if somebody doesn't want to share" (Cory) (see Photo 45). Those who are interacting with nonbinary individuals were thought to play an essential role in improving the environment for nonbinary individuals across settings. Building trust within these relationships was described as starting with simply believing them.

Photo 45
Title: "This is my face" (Cory)
Context: In one of the Star Wars comics, one of the Boba Fett, they're like you need to take off your helmet to confirm it's you and he just straight up says, 'this is my face,' and I always have thought that was kind-of cool…so I'm working on making my own Mandal helmet – Mandal armor and sometimes I just really geek out and wear it around the house and…wearing a helmet or a mask feels like a safe - like "you can't see me, but I can see you", though. Allows me to just be goofy or serious depending on how I feel rather than feeling like people are going to judge me because of how I look.

Emphasis was placed on normalizing gender expansiveness among youth, parents, and those working with youth. "There's ways to reinforce individualism and not having to feel like you're put into one box. I mean, providing a variety of toys – variety of clothing, you know?" (E.). For parents, it was recommended to speak with their children about gender diversity so that children felt unconditional acceptance.

> I think just expressing and talking about…who your kid will become in a sense is really both important and also helpful…so that they actually feel like they could come out and be accepted and understood…just emphasizing that queer people exist and that you could be one if you wanted to, if that's who you are kind-of thing. (Gabi)

Globally, PRs recommend normalizing gender expansiveness through visibility and acceptance. Jynx conceptualized acceptance as "the requirement for us all to look at your bias (implicit or not) and counter the harmful barriers we're putting on ourselves and others."

To increase acceptance and reduce harm, PRs recommended intentionally engaging with them in meaningful ways, including not tokenizing nonbinary individuals. Some ways to avoid tokenizing included seeing them as a friend and not a nonbinary friend, listening and believing them as experts of their experience, and involving nonbinary individuals and not just during pride week or LGBTQ-specific events. According to Furman (2017), nonbinary individuals feel tokenized when they are expected to educate others and their time, energy, and emotional labor are not compensated. In addition to using pronouns and chosen names, PRs found non-gendered language (e.g., buddy, friend, homie) to be helpful for common interactions with new people like greetings and compliments. "Sometimes you have to be 'you look really good in that outfit today,' rather than 'oh, you're cute,' 'you're handsome,' that type of thing because you don't want to obviously crush a person's day" (Cory). PRs also spoke of the importance of others creating space for them not to be misgendered. For example, a PR was asked to be a bride's maid and in this role was required to wear a very feminine flowery pastel dress. Based on this experience, their recommended takeaway was to create spaces for nonbinary folx not to be misgendered and uncomfortable. "If she'd been ok with me wearing the same shirt and vest that the guys had worn – I would have been so much more myself" (HG). Such interactions were speculated to be improved if only for a quick, transparent conversation.

Frustration was expressed towards accumulating microaggressions and inactive, apathetic responses by those in their lives. PRs' collective responses could be summarized as *get your shit together and stop misgendering us because we are tired of it.* Profuse apologies were a point of particular contention:

> Apologize in a genuine way and be like "oh, I'm sorry" instead of "OH, I'm SORRY, THIS IS SO HARD" or "I'm NEW, I'M GETTING USED TO THIS" – or "I SAID THIS BEFORE TO A DIFFERENT PERSON AND THEY SAID IT WAS FINE" – don't make excuses – just apologize and move on. (Cory)

PRs fully accepted that people make mistakes, but these blunders varied by how others responded and whether an effort was perceived. "I just want to see that you're trying to respect who I am…and you're willing to learn from the mistakes and that you're willing to educate yourself" (Noel).

These critiques were offered because PRs desired folx who are committed to change to show up in their lives in affirming ways. "I feel like people don't realize just showing up is a huge deal for most… I feel like I can just relax and that's such a big deal" (Kai). PRs welcomed those who wanted to align themselves with and support nonbinary individuals in their fight for justice, equity, and liberation. Wanted support included "advocating, educating others, and most importantly, taking the time to listen to us. Truly listen to us" (Noel). Further, important advocacy was described as "knowing how to correct yourself or someone else for misgendering someone without causing discomfort to the nonbinary person" (Noel) and "mak[ing] sure people are aware instead of just letting them rely on their assumptions" (Kristy). According to PRs, these simple acts of consideration might seem small to cisgender individuals, but they were adamant about the beneficial impact on their lives.

Photo 46
Title: "Hi my name is [E.] and my pronouns are they/them"
(E.)
Context: This picture is of my work badge. The rainbow
badge clip is directly from my employer (thus the blurred
name). The little pin I got from a booth at the 5th Annual
Mansfield Pride Festival.
My work badge is super important: it's a magnetic key that
allows me access to my workspace; it's a way for someone to
see my name and job title; but lastly it's a small way to show
coworkers and patients my LGBTQ+ identity as well as my
pronouns.
Being able to wear this combination of Pride paraphernalia at
work without fear of repercussions lays a firm foundation of
safety and security that my gender and gender expression will
have no impact on my livelihood, my career, or my health
insurance. At this point of history in our political climate, this
is the ultimate sense of safety and security. Knowing myself
and my family are safe directly corresponds to my overall mental, emotional, and physical health, which
encompasses my wellbeing as a whole person. Knowing all this, means I can continue to be myself and
grow in my journey with the support of colleagues and superiors.
Thank you for letting me share a piece of myself through my photos and words. This assignment was
both surprisingly difficult but in the end, so fulfilling and cathartic.

Social Work Mental Health and Policy Practice Recommendations

The recommendations relevant to social work professionals focused on creating

affirming spaces for nonbinary individuals to access services and advocating for policy

changes. Creating affirming spaces in professional settings was recommended through

visual cues, facilities, and documentation. "I can confirm firsthand from a patient side

that seeing those rainbow clips [on lanyards] always does make me feel safer" (PR #1).

Converting facilities to all-gender bathrooms was repeatedly brought up by PRs as a way

of alleviating anxiety and stress, and so nonbinary folxs do not "feel like an imposter"

(Noel) in the bathroom. They suggested pronoun usage be normalized throughout

correspondence, websites, name badges, and sharing/asking during introductions (see

Photo 46). "We need str8 [and cisgender] ppl to put their pronouns on their business

cards and email signatures to help us normalize personal identity relevance" (Boots).
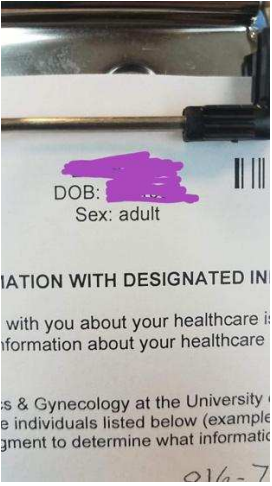
Finally, it was recommended to provide room for chosen names and pronouns on in-take

forms and other paperwork (see Photo 47).

Photo 47 **Title:** "Healthcare Euphoria" (Cory) **Context:** this is the first time I was at [hospital] transgender medical clinic – they're not trans medicalists[23] – you know what I'm trying to say – and I got the forms and I was looking at them and I was, 'I'm an adult! I'm not male or female! I'm an adult!' and it just made me feel really, really seen and I thought it was also kind-of hilarious that they put adult on there rather than anything else. …I switched my ob/gyn to the trans clinic because – well, the one that I had was very…you know, you're a girl and you want to have kids and stuff and I'm like I'm just here to check off the box and be done – I'm feeling really dysphoric and uncomfortable with you rather than recognized for my gender and that type of thing…it is frustrating, but it's also definitely invalidating because you have to sit through a very uncomfortable situation anyway because nobody really wants to be at the doctor and misgendered, it's like I'm already not feeling well, you have to kick me while I'm down, too?

Gender-affirming therapists and mental health providers were highly valued

among PRs whereas non-affirming providers who were identified as sources of trauma

and delays in identity development. PRs noted the "importance of having a

knowledgeable and affirming therapist…and yet how hard it is to find" (Gabi). For those

who had an affirming therapist with whom they could discuss gender, the benefit was

described as:

> The difference in the internal reality and how then I interact differently
> with the world because I can interact from a place of sovereignty and
> power and self-assurance – I like who I am and I like how I interact with
> people better…much more comfortable with boundaries and like "these
> are for my wellbeing, please don't cross them." (HG)

Improvements in overall wellbeing were also attributed to therapy. Catkin described

having an awkward first session with a therapist but "was really impressed this last time

because she looked up nonbinary and was reading about it and I thought this is a good

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[23] See footnote 20

sign because my first meeting went…all awkward and weird, but the second one went really well." In order to obtain the benefits of therapy, many PRs recommended ongoing gender-affirming education for the professionals they encounter in their everyday lives. "There are very few places in my life where acceptance and affirmation just happened, those places where the professionals involved were already informed have been bastions of safety and support, particularly in medical and psychological care settings" (HG). PRs noted these changes were intentional decisions by individuals without enforcement.

In addition to gender-affirming therapy, social workers practicing within mental health and healthcare agencies were recommended to advocate for trans-affirming organizational policies. For example, organizational policies to "ensur[e] that organizations have specific policies that work to affirm and protect nonbinary people within the organization" (Noel). This is especially true of advocacy for "reduced barriers to empowering surgeries" (E.). PRs felt strongly about the need to remove insurance requirements for gender dysphoria diagnosis to access gender-affirming healthcare. Even among PRs who experience gender dysphoria, they agreed:

> I don't believe you have to have dysphoria to be trans and I will fight
> anybody who says otherwise…I don't think we should be
> forcing…diagnosis…we shouldn't be forcing mental health problems on
> people because they happen to have their own sort of gender dysphoria or
> like gender journey. (Jynx)

Even when access to transition-related care was available, PRs experienced "costs and other barriers to affirming processes such as name changes and surgeries" (Gabi). Considering the documented risk to mental health, social workers advocating for policy change could reduce barriers to trans-affirming care and significantly improve the wellbeing of nonbinary individuals.

A standard recommendation for legislation change was non-discrimination laws for employment, housing, sports, and health care. Rights around legal documentation (i.e., gender marker, legal name) were also consequential in several PRs' experiences. For example, "South Dakota does not recognize gender variance on driver's licenses or legal paperwork, so I still have to stay registered as female" (Boots). Though legislative policy was not discussed as frequently as organizational policies, PRs felt the impact. Some communities have taken these experiences and mobilized:

> In my home state, we are so tired of the constant attacks against our trans kids by our legislators that we have gotten better organized. This has cost us lives. Because of this cost we will do anything to keep fighting rather than become apathetic. This has led to a jump in nonbinary visibility and support across the state. (Boots)

Fewer protections and less privacy for trans and nonbinary individuals directly impact their wellbeing and survival, of which PRs were acutely aware.

The final recommendation was for folx to understand their role and overcome their fear to act. Noel referenced the quote, "Guilt should not immobilize you, it should politicize you[24]" as a fixated reminder as they have engaged in activism. Some PRs enlisted calling-out and calling-in folx about macro and microaggressions for their own safety, comfort, and empowerment. However, many were too exhausted to engage most of the time – thus, highlighting the importance of allies, comrades, and accomplices. Collectively, these recommendations are intended to inspire you to act and join a movement for mutual liberation.

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[24] Identified by Noel as a Michael Kimmel quote, but I was unable to find the source to confirm.

Conclusion

In chapter four, I summarized the findings about exploring wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. The sample demographics were described and assessed for diversity of identities and found to be a diverse sample in regards to many variables (nonbinary gender identity label, age, disability, neurodiversity, geography) and less diverse in others (ASAB, education, and race). Findings were organized by the three research aims.

The first aim was to explore wellbeing conceptualization by the PRs in relation to their gender. Analysis identified seven themes about their wellbeing as marginalized and resilient individuals. PRs described reciprocal relationships between the environment and their internal wellbeing. In addition to fundamental needs of safety and security, PRs were most well when their social networks, family, immediate environments, and services were affirming of their gender. When these needs were met, PRs were able to be fully present and engaged.

The second aim was to identify promotive and corrosive factors, which provided a detailed description of PRs wellbeing. Despite PRs being comfortable with themselves and in their close knit chosen networks, the impact of the environment was corrosive on their mental and physical health. It was through resilience, support, and affirming resources that PRs discussed their healing, growth, and becoming stronger and more confident versions of their nonbinary themselves.

Finally, the third aim was to facilitate PRs' recommendations, which were reported according to the domains of personal, interpersonal, and social work mental health and policy practice. Many recommendations were for cisgender individuals to

reflection on their positionally and opportunities for improvement. Organizational and profession recommendations were give nonbinary-affirming practices, with focus on social work and mental health professionals. These recommendations were created with earnest and hope by PRs that readers will take action with this information.

In chapter five, the findings will be critically analyzed and compared to the extant literature along with limitations of the study, implications for social work practice, and future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

"I think [wellbeing is] multi-faceted just like nonbinary identity is…and I guess I would say that I think wellness as a nonbinary person even in this world that marginalizes us is – it's not only possible, but I think there is something defiant in it that – actually, I think the common thread between my photos would be that we have to create wellness for ourselves as nonbinary people because the world isn't necessarily gonna give it to us. And by doing that, I think we are doing something kind-of revolutionary – not just for ourselves but for all of us." (PR #1)[25]

Building on previous literature, this study filled a gap in community-involved research with gender diverse populations (Withey-Rila et al., 2021). The purpose of this study was to conceptualize wellbeing through nonbinary individual's perspectives, acknowledge the corrosive factors that negatively impact wellbeing while simultaneously elucidating the promotive factors in nonbinary folx lives, and to identify recommendations to learn how to bolster their wellbeing. The findings provide concrete understanding of the gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals and their relationship to wellbeing, which can be used to inform ways to serve the community appropriately and effectively. The findings contribute to both trans literature and wellbeing literature with a new perspective and approach of study.

This final chapter will conclude the narrative developed in the previous chapters. In Chapter 1, I introduced the topic of nonbinary gendered experiences and wellbeing and establish the importance of the study. Chapter 2 was a theoretical and empirical review of the literature designed to explore wellbeing as it is understood in the gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals. The two prevailing theories of wellbeing, Subjective Wellbeing and Psychological Wellbeing, were reviewed and critiqued. Additionally, the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995, 2003, 2015) and an ecological

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[25] Notably, this was also the last code of the last interview I analyzed - what a way to end!

approach to resilience (Masten, 2014; Shaw et al., 2016; Ungar, 2018) were reviewed to theorize a holistic wellbeing among nonbinary individuals, a marginalized population. The extant literature was summarized, compared and contrasted, and assessed for limitations and gaps and research questions were proposed. The methodology was presented in Chapter 3, including a description and rationale for PhotoVoice. In Chapter 4, I summarized the study findings. Data presented were sample demographics and themes organized by the three research aims. In this final chapter, the findings are discussed collectively and compared to the extant literature along with discussions on implications for social work practice, limitations of the study, and future research. Moving forward, an improved understanding of wellbeing and pertinent promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing for nonbinary individuals can help increase awareness and improve gender-affirming practices to bolster nonbinary wellbeing.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study contribute a foundational understanding of wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. The discussion is organized by the study aims and findings are compared and contrasted with the extant literature to strengthen previous findings, identify areas of divergence, and highlight new contributions.

Aim 1: Core Dimensions of Wellbeing

The first aim was to explore core dimensions of wellbeing as defined by nonbinary individuals. The findings showed that nonbinary individuals considered themselves to have positive experiences of wellbeing despite corrosive environmental factors (e.g., minority stressors, transphobic interpersonal relationships, social control) through the dimensions of wellbeing, which were further supported by the promotive and

corrosive factors of wellbeing. This multidimensional conceptualization of wellbeing reflects more contemporary literature (Mansfield et al., 2020). Wellbeing definitions and themes presented an overarching understanding of how nonbinary individuals experience wellbeing throughout their lives that includes the complex mutual concessions between daily microaggressions and discrimination with visibility and affirmation. These findings support Coan's (1977) and Ryff and Keyes's (1995) critique of existing wellbeing theories for minimal consideration of unique experiences, in this case nonbinary identities in a binary world that marginalizes them. As Ryan and Deci (2001) recommended, this study was designed to explore wellbeing among nonbinary individuals as a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon, which ultimately reflected both SWB and PWB.

Three core concepts of SWB were subjectivity, negative and positive affects, and life satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Kammann, 1983; Vázquez et al., 2009). Unlike SWB subjectivity, wellbeing among nonbinary individuals was not only internal (i.e., feeling comfortable with oneself) and external (e.g., being connected to community), but also in relation to each other (i.e., feeling safe and secure, experiencing harmony or balance across aspects of one's life). A prime example was safety and security, which has been discussed extensively in the literature among nonbinary individuals (Budge, Katz-Wise, Harrison et al., 2012; Kosciw et al., 2016; Tebble, Schneider, & Rodriquez, 2013; Smith, 2016; Toomey et al., 2010) but less in relation to their wellbeing. This dissertation found for nonbinary individuals, safety and security were the freedom to be themselves without fear of being hurt, which speaks to the influence of the environment to this core dimension of wellbeing. Similarly, increasing promotive factors and reducing corrosive factors of wellbeing corresponds with SWB's second core concept of maximum pleasure

and minimum pain (Diener, 1984; Gallagher et al., 2009; Kahneman et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Despite referring to affect (e.g., feeling or emotion) rather than impacts, the understanding that the absence of one was not the same as the presence of another (Diener, 1984; Vázquez et al., 2009), still rings true among factors of wellbeing, with each having distinct impacts on wellbeing. However, this dissertation differs from SWB in the measure of life satisfaction across life domains, as the barriers to wellbeing were predominantly exterior to the individuals. Instead, nonbinary individual's wellbeing was evidenced by the inclusion and affirmation in their environments that amplified their promotive factors of wellbeing. For example, PRs who were out and affirmed at work and felt secure in their employment opportunities or PRs who had partner(s) that fully supported their gender identity and expression and felt unconditionally loved.

Moving beyond subjectivity, PWB theorized multiple dimensions of wellbeing in a person's life (Ryff, 1989). The importance of the environment to wellbeing among nonbinary individuals was the freedom to exist without marginalization, aligning with all PWB dimensions, but to a lesser degree for some (purpose in life, and a sense of personal growth). The strongest crossover between the findings was with the PWB dimensions of positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, that speaks to the importance of supportive affirming connections and locus of control over personal choices and the environment. PWB focuses on self-actualization as reaching their richest human potential through living life fully (Ryan et al., 2008; Ryff, 1989), which was present in some nonbinary individuals' conceptualization of wellbeing but not in others, perhaps due the focus of overcoming marginalization, which may not allow for some to achieve the ideal to fully engage in their lives. Considering the deteriorating impact of corrosive factors, it

was important for nonbinary individuals' wellbeing to have multiple and stronger promotive factors and as few as possible corrosive factors in their lives.

Lastly, the PWB concept *daimon*, or one's "true self" (Norton, 1976, p. 5) or full potential (Waterman, 1993), led to an interesting observation about nonbinary identities. The framing of *daimon,* sparked thoughts about transitioning and coming into oneself as part of nonbinary gender exploration and transitioning. Similarly, the concept of *daimon* connects strongly with several core dimensions of wellbeing found in this dissertation, including exploring gender identity and expression, feeling comfortable with oneself, being holistically present, and experiencing harmony or balance across aspects of one's life. For without these dimensions, one cannot truly be oneself and fulfill their potential. According to Ryff (2014), as a result of bringing this self into reality (e.g., transitioning), one bestows unique contributions to the world (e.g., uniquely complex perspective, luck and fortune, holiness). This brings to mind the central cultural role of Hijra, Muxe, māhū, two-spirited people, and other respected gender diverse folx throughout history. Accordingly, wellbeing that comes from living fully and being present in one's life is not surprisingly found among trans and nonbinary individuals who exist in spaces that allow them to grow and transform into their full potential. Conversely, when spaces do not foster this growth, nonbinary individuals have shown that these environments have the potential to inhibited their wellbeing or, in some cases, spark defiance and catalyze their exploration. More often than not, nonbinary individuals changed their environment to ones with more promotive factors where they could thrive and be themselves – or their *daimon*.

Aim 2: Promotive and Corrosive Factors of Wellbeing

The second aim of this dissertation was to identify promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing. Numerous promotive and corrosive factors were identified and it quickly became apparent that the environment played a pivotal role in factors of wellbeing. In response, a third category was created for environmentally-contingent factors. Further, the environment was found to be the primary source of external corrosive factors and contributed to reduced mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression, suicidality) and insecurities (e.g., internalized transphobia, social gaslighting[26]). Though several of the wellbeing factors were reflected in previous literature, there was not a nonbinary perspective to the findings. This section will connect the strongest themes to the literature and discuss the distinctly additive factors from this dissertation.

Corrosive Factors of Wellbeing

All identified corrosive factors to wellbeing were external to the individuals, and the three most prevalent were minority stressors (e.g., daily microaggressions), exhaustion from emotional labor, and nonbinary stereotypes. All nonbinary individuals in this study reported frequent exhaustion from emotional labor from sharing, defending, and educating others about their gender identity and expression, reiterating the corrosive impact of the environment. Part of this was due to a lack of understanding of and respect for nonbinary identities and SNCGE. Similarly, the pain and harm from nonbinary stereotypes were present across participants and topics. Despite nonbinary individuals being comfortable within themselves and among their close-knit chosen networks, the corrosive factors in the environment impacted their confidence, endurance, and life

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[26] Social gaslighting is the language I created to reference when nonbinary individuals experienced second guessing and internalized invalidation from binary social norms, transphobia, and nonbinary erasure.

outlook. At worst, they eroded nonbinary individuals' mental and physical health and tested their coping skills. At best, unsupportive and toxic settings were reframed by nonbinary individuals as catalysts for them to explore and identify their gender. It was through resilience, support, and affirming resources that nonbinary individuals discussed their healing, growth, and becoming stronger and more confident versions of their nonbinary themselves.

Promotive Factors of Wellbeing

The promotive factors of wellbeing identified in this study confirmed many factors that previously existed among marginalized populations (e.g., support networks, self-care, advocacy, chosen family, resilience), less common promotive factors (e.g., community care, mastery of wellbeing) and unique nonbinary perspectives to promotive factors (e.g., spaces where gender is de-centered, responsive gender maneuvering). The key promotive factors discussed below are support networks, care practices, resilience, and mastery in wellbeing.

Support Networks. Interpersonal support was largely supported by the literature as an essential factor to resilience and wellbeing. The findings align with the literature on social support and community belonging as a promotive factor (Furman, 2017; Perrin et al., 2019; Snapp et al., 2015) and necessity for physical and emotional wellbeing (Barr et al., 2016). Cosgrove (2020) found interpersonal social supports with nonbinary peers contributed to a sense of belonging, which was especially significant among those who expressed feeling invisible and isolated. Affirming families were identified by nonbinary individuals in this dissertation as an important source of support and promotive factor. Further, nonbinary individuals who had challenging or severed relationships with their

family of origin presented a history of higher anxiety, depression, and suicidality compared to those with affirming parents, which supports research by Ryan, Huebner, et al. (2010) and Ryan, Russell et al. (2010) that found family acceptance to be a protective factor against such mental health concerns.

Consistent with previous research, affirming spaces designed by and for marginalized populations were vital for the nonbinary individual's wellbeing as a way of accessing others with similar lived experiences. Counterpublics have historically been space-making practice within queer and trans communities (Jackson et al., 2018; Jenzen, 2017; Schudson & van Anders, 2019), particularly among POC in ballroom culture (Chin, 2018). Drawing upon a two year ethnography with queer and trans POC, Chin (2018) described the construction of trans counterpublics by and for marginalized folx, creating greater access for community building and embodying the importance of "the interconnected nature of community belonging and the politics of inclusion" (p. 9). More recently, counterpublics among trans and nonbinary indivdiuals has expanded and moved towards the virtual spaces on the internet (Furman, 2017; Jackson et al., 2018; Jenzen, 2017), which was reported by nonbinary individuals in this study who lived in geographically or socially remote areas (e.g., rural, conservative communities) and found community online (e.g., social media, gamer feeds). Justice movements have used counterpublics as a mechanism for outreach and inclusive engagement (Chin, 2018) and for awareness raising and resistance of status quo (Daum, 2017), which was consistent with nonbinary individuals' intentional intersectional awareness and inclusion of racial justice, disability justice, and fat liberation.

Care Practices. Self and community care practices are not unique to this study; however, understanding how nonbinary individuals practiced and benefited from self and community care contributes to the literature. Distinctly, the self-care practice of replenishing in spaces where gender is de-centered is unique to nonbinary individuals, which is logical given the pervasive binary enforcement in most spaces. Respite from the bombardment of gender norms allowed nonbinary individuals to center and affirm their gender without social gaslighting, which has not been previously reflected in the literature. The type of care practices identified by nonbinary individuals also supports the consideration of minority stress and resilience within their wellbeing.

More recently, the importance of community-care that was found in this study has emerged in other recent literature (Burghardt, 2021; Chatzidakis et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2020). In this dissertation, community-care was mutual sharing of resources and support (i.e., emotional, financial). Mutual aid or sharing of resources and support has been found in other studies with queer and trans populations (Levin et al., 2020; Nicolazzo et al., 2017). In the care manifesto, Chatzidakis et al. (2020) described universal care as a commitment to awareness of systematic carelessness and engagement in community care. Similarly, Chayne (2021) posited that community wellbeing was a part of individual wellbeing and argued for a move away from individualism towards mutual aid efforts that build resilience, recognizing this importance to people who are marginalized by the system. Evidence suggests that nonbinary individuals' self-care and community-care were part of a collective care practices that provided nurturance. Compared to self-care, far less research exists on community-care and poses an opportunity for future research.

Resilience. Resilience through marginalization was an important promotive factor to wellbeing among nonbinary individuals that fulfills the call by Meyer (2015) and Perrin et al. (2019) for more comprehensive study of minority stress and resilience among LGBTQ individuals. Similar to how Hill & Gunderson (2015) described resilience as a process, transitioning (a integral part of resilience and wellbeing) was considered processes by nonbinary individuals, which posed challenges when a *goal* was not imagined due to a limited visible predecessors representing nonbinary genders and expression as well as the uniqueness of each person's experience. Unlike Salzburg and Davis' (2010) finding that gender is more an internal sensation than external expression, gender was described as equally an internal understanding as an interaction with one's environment. Otherwise, wellbeing would have been expected to be better despite restrictive, unsupportive, and even toxic environments experienced by nonbinary individuals. Instead, binary social norms combined with enforcement could summarize the collective corrosive factors to nonbinary individuals' wellbeing as nonbinary individuals. Further, it is the perseverance to endure which was not perceived to be in their power (e.g., social norms) and to change the manageable environment (e.g., social groups, employment) to support their gender. This resilience is consistent with Ungar's (2018) description, "Plenty of science exists to demonstrate that changing the world, rather than ourselves, is the best way to make us resilient" (p. 7).

Agency in the Painful

While acknowledging that marginalization of nonbinary individuals will continue, some PR discussed agency in painful experiences that were promotive to their wellbeing. Mental health was central to possessing agency in the painful. "I'm at the point where I

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can deal with the trauma and stuff by choice where to me, that's an indication that I'm doing a lot better…I'm able to actually work through the pain rather than being forced to" (Rowan). As an example, Noel engaged in *crying parties*, where a close collective of queer people gathered to share their traumas and cry. Another form of agency in the painful was distinguishing low-stakes and high-stakes of gender expression to meet their expression needs while making decisions to protect their mental health. For example, low-stakes included make-up, painted nails, dyed hair – "I didn't need permission…I didn't need to be a life-altering major decision, I could just dye my hair one night" (Tristan). Whereas high-stakes included pain and recovery, financial investment, and permanent physical changes (e.g., surgery).

Lastly, PRs shared stories of being in painful situations (i.e., visiting conservative family) and finding growth in the experience. For example, on a visit to family in the south, one PR[27] assessed that they "stayed way too long" and the visit was adversely impacting their mental health. They reported the situation "force[d] them to significantly reflect on their gender." In reaction, they dyed their hair as a subtle but non-traditional hair color. Their agency in the painful was in their reflection on internal feelings and ways to feel more comfortable expressing their gender. "As tough as that trip was, I feel like it was also a kick in the rear to start exploring things more…and it's been really helpful as a whole." Agency in the painful evidences the resilience demonstrated by participants in their cognitive processes, such as reframing, resistance, and perseverance. Collectively, possessing agency in the painful were ways in which PRs created and strengthened their resilience within marginalization, which in some cases led to exploring

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[27] Name excluded to share information while not inciting familiar conflict.

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gender identity and expression and making choices to improve their mental and physical health. In the face of adversity, nonbinary individuals have shown their ability to be resilient as a path to their wellbeing.

Mastery in Wellbeing. Mastery in wellbeing was found to be expressed in several ways but especially in challenging gender norms and creating nonbinary-inclusive spaces. Nonbinary individuals challenged gender norms in empowering defiance as well as reconciling rejection of previously forced upon norms (e.g., pink; thought they had to reject like gendered colors, clothing, and activities in order to be *nonbinary enough*) (see Photo 4). Among transgender youth, these gender differences were embraced through finding peers with whom they could share experiences and commiserate (Saltzburg & Davis, 2010). Greene & Britton (2013) found the concept of forgiveness of self, situation, and others to be significantly negatively correlated with proneness to shame among LGBTQ individuals, which supports an argument for integration of forgiveness with LGBTQ clients. Based on this study's findings, forgiveness regarding suppressing gender exploration and complying to binary gender norms, rejecting parts of self due to binary gender norms, and internalizing assumptions about their gender and gender journey. Similarly, Farmer and Byrd (2015) also found acceptance of gender fluidity was necessary for resilience and safety. The findings make visible distinct barriers to gender identity development and expression due to social control and social gaslighting. Thus, challenging gender norms through a SNCGE was found to be integral to their initial exploration and identification as nonbinary as well as overcoming residual social expectations that inhibiting their wellbeing in their gender due to social control and social gaslighting.

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Mastery in wellbeing was characterized by overcoming social control to create their self-authored identities. Due to the lack of representation and fitting within social norms, nonbinary identities were in struggle with the binary environment and, therefore, control over environment was important to promote wellbeing. Evidence suggests that self-conceptualization and defining gender is a critical resilience practice accomplished through one finding the language and expression that affirms their gender (Singh et al., 2011; Singh et al., 2014). This process was suppressed or delayed for some nonbinary individuals, which aligns with literature on the importance of language and awareness of transitioning options to disrupt the force to assimilate to binary social norms (Schultz, 2015). Altogether, mastery in wellbeing is a prime example of Ungar's (2018) concept of a resilient person as well-resourced, represented as a motivated nonbinary person with access to comprehensive gender information and an affirming nonbinary community. These findings contribute barriers and proponents to gender identity development and expression.

Environmentally-Contingent Factors of Wellbeing

The process and findings of this category of factors of wellbeing was an unexpected outcome of the study that deepened understanding about some factors. Of the environmentally-contingent factors of wellbeing, the two that warrant further discussion are representation and locus of control.

Positive, Accurate, and Nuanced Representation. Representation was a central theme in this study; nonbinary individuals were vocal about the need for representation that is positive, accurate, and nuanced, given the evidence that biased attitudes can be strengthened by harmful representation (Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018). First, greater

representation is needed, which has been consistently reported in the literature (Cosgrove, 2020; Matsuno & Budge, 2017; Wenhold & Harrison, 2021). With greater representation comes more opportunities for diversity. Second, that representation needs to not create further harm due to stereotypes and a lack of diversity. Cosgrove (2020) astutely observed this positive and accurate representation of nonbinary identities to be "both timely and long overdue" (p. 17).

Withstanding niche works of art and literature, nonbinary individuals did not report seeing themselves represented in media and had an adverse relationship with the type of representation that was present. Mainstream media was the primary source of representation discussed in the literature, which has been described as a tool for both perpetuating the cisnormative status quo (Higley, 2019; Wenhold & Harrison, 2021) and challenging norms with greater diversity (Cooper, 2002, Lovelock, 2017; Romriell, 2019; Wenhold & Harrison, 2021). The pervasive nonbinary stereotype in media was critiqued by nonbinary individuals as harmful and a source of challenges in their own identity development, contributing to feeling not nonbinary enough if they did not fit this stereotype. Similar to LoveLock's (2017) findings, nonbinary individuals found these stereotypes to over-represent and idealize white, able-bodied, skinny, tall, and androgynous individuals over those who were not represented. Nonbinary individuals experienced invisibility and erasure from this nonbinary stereotype. It is probably that this invisibility and lack of diversity of nonbinary individuals could be mitigated by both greater nonbinary representation and representation by nonbinary-identified individuals.

The benefits of positive, accurate, and nuanced representation are two-fold – personal development and social awareness. This representation was found to be essential

to promoting identity affirmation. Conversely, the absence of affirming representation can result in an "inability to fully articulate one's sense of self" (Cosgrove, 2020, p. 42). Those who did not see themselves represented reported feeling isolated, which was also reflected in the literature (Cosgrove, 2020). Notably, this representation was discussed as creating safer environments through awareness about their gender that did not require their emotional labor. Spaces without positive, accurate, and nuanced representation contributed to nonbinary folx being misgendered as a binary gender (Cosgrove, 2020). Normalization of nonbinary identities through representation also signals the importance of their existence (Perrin et al., 2019), a bare minimum standard. Nonbinary individuals and previous literature (Wilchins, 2002c) have acknowledged that the benefit of gender diversity and liberation from rigid gender norms are beneficial for all, trans and cisgender a like.

Though representation in research was not discussed by nonbinary individuals, researchers must acknowledge our role in perpetuating nonbinary stereotypes. Social science research has been critiqued for limited nonbinary representation from recruitment to binary demographic questions (both cisgender and transgender) (Cosgrove, 2020). Futher, nonbinary individuals likely participate in research but are not represented in the findings due to a lack of opportunities to communicate their identity (e.g., binary gender options) (Richards et al., 2016). Additionally, Matsuno and Budge (2017) have critiqued trans research lacking nonbinary representation and advocate for centering nonbinary voices in future research. These critiques pose a strong argument for greater inclusivity in study demographics that leans more towards the blank slate approach that Dylan described in this study. When our research recruits and records a specific subset of

nonbinary individuals (i.e., stereotypical), we are a cog in the system that erases diversity among nonbinary individuals.

Locus of control. Control was a concept weaved throughout several findings from social control to safety and security to mastery of wellbeing. Whether nonbinary individuals sensed they had control or not (perceived locus of control), influenced their wellbeing. Similarly, Ungar's (2018) identified that a sense of control was one of the most frequent resources for resilience. Social control was conceptualized as both the overarching control over socially established gender norms as well as their interpersonal and systemic enforcement of these norms, assumptions, and expectations. It is the latter enforcement that was particularly corrosive for nonbinary individuals, even among those who delighted in challenging the gender binary through their SNCGE, the pressure from social control could be overwhelming at times.

Despite understanding systematic marginalization and macro-level change, nonbinary individuals mostly discuss their wellbeing in ways that were within their control and immediate environment. A perceived lack of control outside of themselves and their immediate environment was partly due to the current climate of the country and pessimism towards meaningful change occurring outside of themselves. The political and cultural climate were considerations in nonbinary individual's wellbeing but not perceived within their locus of control. The current speed of change at the micro (i.e., individuals) and mezzo level (i.e., communities and organizations) were considered to be quickly changing to support their wellbeing. In contrast, change at the macro level (i.e., society, legislation and politics) was considered to be slower or even going backwards.

Nonbinary individuals who felt greater locus of control within their environment had a stronger sense of possibility to reduce corrosive factors and increase promotive factors in their lives. Responsive gender maneuvering and community support networks were promotive factors that helped nonbinary individuals in these binary environments. Hence, the importance of finding supportive spaces as reprieve from social control. Dignity work by Nussbaum (2011) includes control over one's political and material environment, which connects with the multiple findings of advocacy and the interesting use of materials among nonbinary individuals for wellbeing. It is through enacting control over what is possible, that nonbinary individuals found ways to thrive even amidst an environment with abundant social control.

Aim 3: Recommendations to Bolster Nonbinary Wellbeing

The third aim was to provide recommendations to bolster nonbinary wellbeing. A strength of this study was the concrete strategies offered by nonbinary individuals to execute the recommendations. As frustratingly expressed in Chapter 4, many of the recommendations have been echoed for years, especially creating trans-inclusive care spaces (Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2018; Gridley et al., 2016; Kattari et al., 2019; Kcomt, 2019; Kinney et al., 2020; Lacombe-Duncan et al., 2020; Rider et al., 2019) and reducing gatekeeping (Budge, 2015; Collazo et al., 2013; Vincent, 2020). The Gender Affirmative Model (GAM) was introduced in 2013 and recognized gender diversity as not disordered and present across cultures, and considered the environmental context and its impact on gender (Hidalgo et al., 2013; Keo-Meier & Ehrensaft, 2018), yet gender-affirming care continues to be a problem. Recently, Rider et al. (2019) published the gender affirmative lifespan approach (GALA), which is a psychotherapeutic framework for competent

tailored clinical care specifically with nonbinary individuals. The findings of this study

closely connect with the GALA model's five core components to affirm nonbinary

clients: (1) building resiliency; (2) developing gender literacy; (3) moving beyond the

binary; 4) promoting positive sexuality; and (5) facilitating empowering connections to

medical interventions (if desired) (Rider et al. (2019). Personal recommendations were

additive to the previous knowledge, focusing on cisgender individuals' reflection on their

positionally and opportunities for improvement. If enacted, the recommendations have

the potential to improve wellbeing among nonbinary individuals through increasing

feelings of safety and security, affirming support, and mental and physical health.

Advocacy was discussed among nonbinary individuals as both self-advocacy and

ally advocacy, advocating for the nonbinary community. It is possible that advocacy is a

form of resilience as folx are empowered to improve their environment and that of others

like them. According to Ungar (2018), social justice is a cornerstone for resilience, which

can be achieved through a combination of individual and environmental advocacy for

safety and security. Consistent with previous stigma research, nonbinary individuals were

concerned with the lack of protective policies that were inclusive of their gender identity

and expression, especially when used to delegitimize their gender and claim to basic

human rights. According to Perrin et al. (2019), a lack of protective policies can

contribute to internalized stigma (e.g., inferiority) and increase discrimination, while

inclusive protective policies are likely to promote equity and invoke community

belonging. One of the most powerful experiences recounted was of others advocating to

affirm nonbinary individuals' gender in subtle and normalized ways – not a self-

congratulatory spectacle. According to Asta and Vacha-Haase (2013), advocacy was

considered an essential characteristic to being an ally. GrZanka et al. (2015) distinguished between LGBTQ allyship as passive advocacy (e.g., acceptance, verbal claim of support only) versus active advocacy (e.g., respect and empathy, active engagement in social and political change), of which the latter reflected the productive activism identified by nonbinary individuals and their allies and the former some families of origin. Based on the findings, I can confidently state that the recommendations call for active advocacy sustained by people who consider advocacy as part of their identity.

A comprehensive study of marginalization and wellbeing together has not been widely discussed in the literature (Meyer, 2015; Perrin et al., 2019). This dissertation addresses the identified gaps in wellbeing and trans literature with findings exemplify the combination of PWB, SWB, the Minority Stress Model, and an ecological approach to resilience to explain wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. As a whole, the findings present a resilient group of individuals who demonstrated a realistic awareness and thoughtful reflection on their experiences in their environments. Further, nonbinary individuals' ability to advocate for changes in the environment to improve their lives and the lives of other nonbinary individuals indicates a high level of resilience and perseverance that was possible through community care. For those who want to engage in improving outcomes for nonbinary individuals they can learn from the concrete examples of promotive and corrosive factors and recommendations to understand how to engage moving forward. Finally, this dissertation presents a new approach to wellbeing that could also be directly applicable to social work practice for improving wellbeing among marginalized populations at the micro, mezzo, and macro level.

Limitations

While these findings make a meaningful contribution to the literature, the dissertation study is not without limitations. The following outlines a set of concerns, and actions taken to mitigate the identified challenges.

Extraneous Variables of 2020

Participants have been stirred to action through PhotoVoice participation in previous studies (Yoshihama & Yunomae, 2018); however, the action elements of this PhotoVoice study were made difficult due to the climate during the summer of 2020. The year 2020 held unanticipated and unprecedented confounding factors to the study, namely a pandemic and a social movement that incited social unrest[28]. Together, these challenges limited the study recruitment and retention as well as impeded a traditional action outcome as is expected with PhotoVoice research. The PAR end goal of a public exhibit has been criticized for not producing the intended public impact that has been described as inconclusive and, in some ways, disregards the more pressing needs of the individuals (Silva et al., 2018). For example, in Cosgrove's (2020) photovoice dissertation, some participants reported the exhibit to be affirming while others felt it was artificial and forced. Alternatively to a photo exhibit, nonbinary individuals identified a goal of meeting in-person after the pandemic to connect socially and, long-term, to potentially create a nonbinary summer gathering open to all nonbinary individuals, which in itself is social activism. After finding the powerful impact of building a strong support network, I question the necessity of a traditional tangible intervention (such as a photo exhibit) – Is

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[28] For clarification, the culmination of social unrest after an increasingly widespread documentation of Black people being murdered by police, was an anticipated response, just not an anticipated factor for this study.

the action of creating community any less important or political?

Methods

Recruitment and Lack of Diversity

During recruitment, sampling may have been biased towards self-selecting individuals with greater community connections, individual wellbeing, and representation to affirm they qualified for the study. While this study actively sought a diverse sample, several factors likely limited recruitment of the intended sample, namely a white researcher whose race may not have instilled trust among racial minorities and the co-occurring social unrest around the ongoing murder of Black people, which would understandably be a priority over the study and reduce time and emotional labor of interested participants. The lack of recruiting a racially diverse sampling was likely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which LGBTQ POC were twice as likely as their white counterparts to test positive and were furloughed and laid off at a disproportionately higher rate causing additional financial stressors during the crisis (Sears et al., 2021).

The limited diversity in the sample poses an ethical dilemma of perpetuating the very nonbinary stereotype (young, white, assigned female at birth) that was found to be hamful in this study due to underrepresentation, erasure, and marginalization of POC, AMAB, and older adults in nonbinary research. The use of convenience and snowball sampling were selected to minimize this risk, but a possibility still existed for under-representation of some populations due to social and cultural stigma and differences in cultural language to describe gender diversity. The limited diversity within the sample leaves gaps in understanding wellbeing among nonbinary individuals with other

intersectional identities and pose an opportunity for needed future research with targeted populations.

Ethical Concerns

Other areas of ethical concerns with this study were the protection and wellbeing of participants with public exposure, facilitation, and decision making with respect to power dynamics, and beneficence for participants (PhotoVoice.org, 2019b; Wang & Burris, 1997). When using visual methods, ethical considerations are especially important as images are more revealing and intrusive than other methods (Harper, 1998). Publishing of consented photos can be a point of conflict, which may be mitigated through collaboratively deciding on details of the photographs (Engel & Schutt, 2013). Other ethical issues concerning social workers conducting PhotoVoice and PAR within communities are informed consent, privacy, and the potential for unintended harm, which can be complicated by dual relationships (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006). However, Charmaz (2002) argues not to let the potential for dual relationships prevent the meaningful relationships that are essential for feminist research. According to Jarldorn (2019), reflexive practices are one of the best ways to grow and overcome ethical dilemmas.

Informed Consent. In addition to the information provided during the recruitment process, session one thoroughly discussed and answered questions regarding expectations and options to participate in the study. Informed consent was discussed and consented at the end of session one. Verbal consent was obtained for both online discussions and audio recording individual interviews; consent for audio recording was required for participation in the study. Participants were given the option for how they

prefer to be referenced, including name/identifier and pronouns (e.g., participant 3, chosen name), which can be different between the local exhibit and publications and presentations.

A photography use form was used to document nonbinary individuals' preferences for public use of photographs in the local exhibit, publications, and presentations (Appendix K). With consideration for the exposure of identities with photographs, participants were given multiple options to allow for different levels of comfort. For example, participants could consent to publicly display their photographs at the local exhibit, in publications and representations, both, or neither; these options were given for each collection of photographs. Additionally, the photography consent form explicitly identified that photos would be selected by the participant and that participants had the right to modify their images (e.g., crop, blur, black bar). An example of a PhotoVoice study and a mocked-up wellbeing snapshot was provided for participants to see an example. Further, training was provided to equip participants with the basic skills for completing journalistic photography.

Harm to Participants. Audio recording interviews were required of participants in the study and measures were taken to minimize potential harm to participants. First, all audio recordings were transcribed and de-identified. Participants were given the option for how they prefer to be referred [e.g., number, pseudonym, chosen first name, anonymous]). If participants exhibited stress or other adverse reactions to participation during discussions or interviews, they were given the option to stop or pause participation. A list of local trans-affirmative therapists were available for additional support.

Regarding visual data, participants were given the choice of modifying their images for public display (e.g., blurring, cropping, black bar, etc.). Still, the public exhibit did pose an unknown risk of negative comments and behaviors. Participants decided on all the details of the exhibit, and these risks were discussed, so that an informed decision was made. Considerations were raised for the exhibit location, time, typical audience, and priority (e.g., to celebrate within the community, to raise awareness outside of the community). However, due to quarantine and related stress of 2020, the exhibit did not come to fruition.

Exploitation of Community. The burden to participants is a concern for ongoing studies with multiple required discussions or sessions. In the original plan of an in-person PhotoVoice study, coordinating schedules for sessions were assessed for the likely required compromise and sacrifice by the participants. For these reasons, a four-session structure was originally selected for the study rather than the traditional 8-sessions. Also, food and childcare was going to be provided during sessions to help offset the burden to participants. Some of these concerns were mitigated by the necessary online adaptation of the study that allowed for asynchronous engagement in online discussion posts with the interviews and optional open hours as the only time constraints.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The implications for social work are intertwined with the undeniable change felt by all in the year 2020. "What is the role of social work in this changing environment?" According to Burghardt (2021), a cultural shift that is currently underway, "there has been a resurgence of 19th century community support and 20th century mutual aid" (p. 110). In this modern day mutual aid, communities are looking within for meaning,

purpose, and connection. It is through a transformational social work profession that social workers can fix the diluted standards of neoliberalism and answer the call for just practice that includes systemic social and political activism (Burghardt, 2021). This shift towards community care is reflected in Chin's (2018) suggestion that rather than accessibility to service organizations, social workers prioritize facilitation of accessibility between community members and enhancing the capacity for self-determination.

With this approach in mind, study implications for the social work profession is a call to engage in mutual aid with nonbinary communities. This study offers a new approach to wellbeing that informs social work practice for improving wellbeing among marginalized populations at the micro, mezzo, and macro level. This work must also include self-reflection, such as the strategies described within the personal recommendations theme. "As researchers, what do we need to ask ourselves to change the assumptions and decisions that have made non-binary lives invisible?" (Frohard-Dourlent et al. 2017, p. 2).

Social Work Practice

The social work profession has a responsibility to participate in trans liberation from higher education to micro, mezzo, and macro practice. Concerning clinical providers, cultural competence in gender-affirming care is critical. Barriers to health and human services among nonbinary individuals include pathologizing attitudes, identity bifurcation (selectively sharing and withholding identity-related information based on necessity and comfort), and gender-based assumptions (Cosgrove et al., 2020). In addition to addressing ignorance and biases, McCann & Sharek (2016) found cultural competence to encourage resilience and empowerment. The PRs personal and

interpersonal recommendations provide concrete steps for self-work and how to engage with others in an affirming manner (Table 6). Other recommendations for social work micro practice that were not directly reflected in the PRs recommendations (Table 6) were aiding nonbinary individuals in cultivating the coping skills of agency (e.g., reframing and responsive gender maneuvering) and mastery (e.g., empowerment, overcoming social control, creating new norms).

In light of the importance placed on the environment in nonbinary individual's wellbeing, social workers and other helping professionals are accountable to respond to the recommendations to improve environmental factors, including social norms, structural processes, and policy (both organizational and legislative). Recommendations for tangible change at the mezzo level of practice for prioritizing nonbinary inclusive and affirmation include updated documentation, representation in spaces, and inclusive policies. Though the majority of recommendations related to personal growth and immediate interactions and environments, PRs recognized the importance of macro change in the form of policy advocacy and community organizing (Table 6). The PRs focus on immediate relationships and environments was also reflected in their locus of control. Importantly, social workers can also assist the expansion of nonbinary individual's locus of control to include macro change through empowerment and community organizing.

Social Work Education

Awareness raising is a critical role of social work education to prepare social workers to empower and affirm their nonbinary clients as well as process any biases they have towards trans people. Schools of social work and faculty can ask, "are we teaching

social work students the competencies and confidence to work with and enhance the wellbeing of gender diverse individuals?". In the process of answering those initial questions, asking ourselves "Am I knowledgeable and competent to facilitate this learning, including challenging discussions?". Active advocacy should be the response to ensure these needs are met. One diversity class with a dedicated week to LGBTQ identities was never sufficient and is no longer acceptable.

Social Work Research

The literature has consistently called for prioritizing comprehensive and inclusive research with gender diversity that includes nonbinary identities (Bauer et al., 2009; Budge et al., 2014; Domm, 2017; Matsuno & Budge, 2017; Nicolazzo, 2016; Richards et al., 2016 ; Whitman & Nadal 2015). Responding to this is two-fold, conducting research that does not contribute to nonbinary erasure and creating new research to fill the identified gaps. I provide a response to the identified problem and recommendation for future social work research informed by this study.

Social work research can reduce erasure of nonbinary individuals by providing more options for gender identity, including fill-in options, and precisely report gender. For example, if the study is among cisgender women, that is the appropriate language, regardless if the sample included any transgender or nonbinary participants. Parallel to pronoun usage among cisgender individuals, practicing precise gender language normalizes the existence and inclusion of transgender and nonbinary individuals. Nonbinary folx have also been erased from quantitative analyses due to a small sample size (e.g., Domm, 2017; Whitman & Nadal, 2015). I propose asking one additional question with a statement, such as "Sometimes data must be collapsed into fewer groups

for analysis. If we needed to narrow the categories for gender, which one of these options is most appropriate for you?" followed by collapsed terminology (e.g., cisgender, transgender, neither). For some nonbinary individuals identify as transgender (including 86% of nonbinary individuals) and would appropriately be included in analysis as part of the transgender group. This simple question empowers participants in the decision process of how their contributions will be used or excluded in the study and increases the accuracy of the results.

When prioritizing this identified need for comprehensive and inclusive research with nonbinary individuals, I posit that PhotoVoice is a methodology with parallel values to social work and should be leveraged more frequently in social work research, especially with trans and nonbinary participants. A primary strength of this PAR method is the co-constructing of meaning with participants that is empowering and honoring their lived-experiences and autonomy. Regarding work with trans and nonbinry populations, PhotoVoice is a fitting method for exploring abstract concepts like gender (Collier, 1967). For example, photography in this dissertation captured the importance of materials as a dimension of wellbeing. Yoshihama & Yunomae (2018) described PhotoVoice's shared life experiences and collective analysis as able to identify environmental factors that influence participant's lives and inform mezzo and macro action to improve these conditions, which is particularly fitting considering the repeatedly stressed importance of the environment in this study. Additional suggestions for expanding research with nonbinary individuals have been proposed in future research.

Reflecting on the methods of this study, I offer four recommendations for future qualitative research to build trust, strengthen validity, and triangulate and apply data in a

meaningful way. First, I recommend leveraging both theoretical underpinnings along with community conceptualization, not relying on theory alone, for a rich and grounded understanding of a phenomenon. Second, research could be strengthened by critically conceiving and offering multiple options for participation. For example, the photography use form (see Appendix K) that created numerous opportunities to engage in the study while respecting nonbinary individuals' safety and comfort. Also, empowering participants with three options when answering demographic information – categorical answer, description response, or to skip. Though I did not explore skips thoroughly in this study, asking a follow-up question to skips could be valuable for understanding when this choice is selected. Third, I recommend normalizing the practice of asking participants for their insight into application of findings. This is not an ambitious task, especially in comparison to the benefits of empowering participants, amplifying trust between participants and researchers, and strengthening and reinforcing the validity of the recommendations. Lastly, I proposed social work research incorporates wellbeing across topics and populations. When research does not also consider wellbeing, we send a message to marginalized participants about how we view them and which parts of their lived experience are important.

The social work research recommendations I have outlined align with Frohard-Dourlent and colleagues' (2017) concern for responsibility and accountability to study participants. Further, I am in agreement with Cosgrove (2020) that "there must be critical examination of ethical issues regarding who and what we study, as well as how we study" (p. 33). Just as in social work practice, social work research is distinct for incorporating

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social justice (and liberation). I challenge all of us to consider how we (can/will) do this in our research.

Who we are and How we Move Forward

Social work is more than a profession of behaviors, it is a profession of values – service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2017). It is worth repeating, social justice and (hopefully) mutual liberation. A licensed social worker recently tweeted "Why does the SW profession push for social justice and not liberation?" (@ashlizarraga, 2021). I posit that when findings that include concrete recommendations for change are provided to social workers, they have a professional obligation to address the identified corrosive factors experienced by nonbinary individuals and communities. As Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2005) stated, "community change, not just personal change; political change, not just psychological change; and justice, not just caring, are urgently needed" (p. 101).

<div align="center">

Future Research

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Future research that builds upon these findings are recommended in four areas to explore: (1) nuanced experiences of nonbinary individuals, (2) intersectional identities with nonbinary genders, (3) political constraints on wellbeing, and (4) quantitative examination of wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. This study has elucidated some gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals. Yet, very little about nonbinary individuals and their experiences are documented in the literature. As I have argued, nonbinary individuals have unique experiences as they navigate a binary world, which are opportunity for future areas of inquiry. One example is the chosen name process as it

relates to gender identity development (Kinney & Muzzey, 2021) and support networks (Muzzey et al., 2021). Intersectional experiences between nonbinary genders and race, age, ASAB were identified but did not deeply examine in this study. These and other intersectional identities are areas for further investigation to raise awareness and representation, especially in racial and cultural communities where individuals may face additional stigma and where others have honored roles. As a white researcher, I hope to partner with folx in these communities and offer my expertise to support those who wish to share their experiences.

From the study findings, I plan to develop a survey of wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. Informed by the study, promotive and corrosive factors to wellbeing and desired change based on recommendations could be measured. Additionally, description statistics of demographics are another opportunity for representation and geospatial data could be mapped and analyzed. A large survey will also allow for within-group and between-group comparisons that have been critiqued for missing from the literature (Bockting et al., 2013; Cruz, 2014; Kosciw et al., 2010). Thinking big, the proposed survey could be repeated and serve as a historical point to assess wellbeing concepts and promotive and corrosive factors, from which comparisons can be made over time.

Combining the importance of the environment to nonbinary individual's wellbeing and Barber et al. (2012) study of chronic political constraints on wellbeing, future research could explore the impact of the proposed anti-trans policies on the wellbeing of trans and nonbinary individuals. These harmful policies have only increased and appeared all across the US in 2021, which HRC deeming 2021 the record year for anti-transgender legislation with 82 proposed policies as of March 13, 2021 (Ronan,

2021). The groundwork for studying LGBTQ-related policies as SDH across 50 states and DC is underway by Heather Walter-McCabe at Wayne State University and myself. I intend to focus on the policy that specifically impacts trans and nonbinary individuals. This is a large and ongoing project that will produce a comprehensive database of longitudinal data.

Future Literature from this Study

A wealth of data was collected in this study and will support several manuscripts, in addition to what has been presented. Post-dissertation, the findings will be disseminated as three articles in the topics: core concepts of wellbeing, promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing, and recommendations across professions. As this study was adapted to online methods, I will be writing a methodological paper on virtual PhotoVoice adaptation, which has only been reported in one previous article (see Craig et al., 2020). Other article topics include: (1) nonbinary gender identity and expression and attached meaning, (2) gender dysphoria and euphoria, (3) sexuality and relationships, and (4) nonbinary individual perspectives on engaging in the study. For future articles, I offered nonbinary individuals who were interested in authorship two options – active authorship (e.g., review and writing of new manuscript) or passive authorship, in which nonbinary individuals were automatically added for their collaboration in the original data collection. Of the fifteen nonbinary individuals who responded, eleven were interested in active contribution and four passive authorship due to time commitments.

<div align="center">

Final Thoughts

</div>

Reflecting on this study, I offer this takeaway. Nonbinary folx are resilient and experience wellbeing, which could be bolstered through professional, social, and policy

advocacy. The results indicate that creating more inclusive and affirming environments would have a significant impact on nonbinary individuals – rather than focusing primarily on individual identity development and coping, for which individuals were proficient. As such, advocacy would do well to prioritize systemic change. I earnestly hope this study inspires others researchers, scholars, and educators to adopt a holistic approach that includes wellbeing, minority stress, and resilience when conducting research with and teaching about marginalized populations. I am also realistic and do not expect these findings to transform the profession nor create a more gender-affirming society overnight. It does, however, provide the start of a path towards this goal. I hope nonbinary individuals' quotes linger in your thoughts and the findings resonate in your work. Too often, well-meaning folx want to be an ally to trans and nonbinary individuals but are unsure about how to create change within themselves, with their interpersonal interaction, and in advocacy for change to the oppressive systems in which we exist. Thus, recommendations are a meaningful contribution of this study – to empower both participants and allies. Or as Ungar (2018) concisely stated, "provide the right resources, from the right people, in the right way" (p. 11).

Conclusion

Research that includes nonbinary populations has disproportionately studied deficits and struggles without acknowledging and exploring resilience and wellbeing. To address this gap, this dissertation explored the complex concept of wellbeing among nonbinary individuals with findings that can be applied to increase awareness and improve gender-affirming practice with this population. A review of the underpinning theories of PWB and SWB found both to be independently insufficient and best when

studied together. Additionally, the Minority Stress Model and ecological approach to resilience were integrated to account for individual's persistence and endurance to daily marginalization. A participant conceptualization of wellbeing was presented for consideration in comparison to traditional models of wellbeing, during which the consequence of the environment quickly emerged. The promotive and corrosive factors to wellbeing added complexity to the wellbeing conceptualization and illuminate the factors to how nonbinary individuals cope, adapt, and overcome the challenges of a binary world. Additionally, environmentally-contingent factors were necessary to organize the key factors of wellbeing. Last, the recommendations reflected a need for advocacy and systemic change versus focusing on individual social and mental health support, which along with increasing access to health care has been by far the central focus of recommendations within this community.

Altogether, this dissertation has provided a glimpse into the gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals and demonstrated that marginalized populations can thrive with clear descriptions of how others can engage in advocacy to bolster their wellbeing. The methods and findings contribute to a new way to approach marginalized populations – from a community-centered data collection and application with thriving as an achievable goal. It is with inspiration from participant researchers and my personal hope for change that I share this dissertation. I wholeheartedly welcome you to join us in creating a more gender-affirming society that can bolster nonbinary wellbeing and contribute to our mutual liberation.

Appendix A
PhotoVoice Canvas Modules

I. Module One
   a. *Note. Instructions for navigating modules will be provided before Module 1.*
   b. Goal: To introduce the research and the PhotoVoice project, to introduce each other, and to establish group norms and ways to create a supportive space.
   c. Promise to Protect Privacy Pledge
   d. Introductions
      i. Introduction meeting (Zoom)
      ii. Introduction discussion (for those unable to attend the synchronous meeting)
   e. M1.1 Discussion: Group Norms
   f. M1.2 Discussion: Creating a Supportive Space
   g. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]
   Note. Once created with participants, the group norms and expectations will be posted on the top of the modules page.

II. Module Two
   a. Goal: To learn about PhotoVoice and become familiar with the methods, intentions, and possibilities of this project.
   b. Information: PhotoVoice Background
      i. PowerPoint
      ii. Article of example study
      iii. Link to PhotoVoice.org
   c. M2 Discussion: Questions about PhotoVoice?
   d. Module 2 Chat
   e. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]

III. Module Three
   a. Goal: To learn about photography (techniques, photo-elicitation, and photo ethics) and to decide on photography options.
   b. Information: Photography Techniques and Ethics
      i. Photography 101
      ii. Using photography for eliciting desired feelings/messages
      iii. Photo-elicitation
      iv. Photo ethics
   c. M3.1 Discussion: Photo Ethics (scenarios and questions)
   d. M3.2 Discussion: Collaborative decision about photo formats
   e. Module 3 Chat
   f. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]

IV.

V.

VI. Module Four
    a. Goal: To describe discussion activity instructions and discuss being nonbinary, including gender identity and expression (Activity #1).
    b. Information: Instructions for Activity Discussions
    c. M4 Discussion: Being nonbinary (Activity #1)
    d. Module 4 Chat
    e. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]

VII. Module Five
    a. Goal: To explore wellbeing as a concept, to discuss wellbeing as it relates to gender (2-3 photos each and individual definitions) (Activity #2), and to share wellbeing self-portraits (Activity #3).
    b. Information: Wellbeing background information
    c. M5.1 Discussion: What is wellbeing? (Activity #2)
    d. M5.2 Discussion: Wellbeing self-portrait (Activity #3)
    e. Module 5 Chat
    f. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]

VIII. Module Six*
    a. Goal: To learn about photo-elicitation and complete individual photo-elicitation interviews about promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing (6-8 photos) (Activity #4).
    b. Information: What to expect: Photo-elicitation interview
    c. Photo Elicitation Interviews (60-90 minute Zoom) (Activity #4)
    d. Module 6 Chat
    e. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]

IX. Module Seven
    a. Goal: To discuss details of the virtual exhibit, including exhibit options, wellbeing snapshots, and attendee survey questions.
    b. Information: Example of a wellbeing snapshot
    c. M7.1 Discussion: Virtual exhibit options
    d. M7.2 Discussion: Wellbeing snapshot options
    e. M7.3 Discussion: Optional exhibit attendee survey questions
    f. Module 7 Chat
    g. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]

X. Module Eight
    a. Goal: To discuss the promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing that we identified in the interviews (Activity #5).
    b. Information: Identified promotive and corrosive factors
    c. M8 Discussion: Promotive and Corrosive Factor of Wellbeing (Activity #5)
    d. Module 8 Chat
    e. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]

XI.   Module Nine
   a. Goal: To discuss policy and practice recommendations (Activity #6).
   b. Information: Policy and practice implications
   c. M9 Discussion: Policy and practice recommendations (Activity #6)
   d. Module 9 Chat
   e. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]

XII.   Module Ten
   a. Goal: To complete participation process interviews about their participation in the PhotoVoice project (Activity #7).
   b. Participation Process Interviews (30-45 minute Zoom) (Activity #7)
   c. Module 10 Chat
   d. [Reflexive memoing by the researcher]

Each module was completed over one week except for Module 6, which was completed over two weeks.

Note. Activities correspond to participant incentives. Data collected for dissertation findings only include Activities #2, #3, #4, and #5.

Appendix B
Canvas Discussion: Being Nonbinary
(Module 4)
*Data will be collected for future publications

This discussion is intended to provide a discussion about gender as we consider what wellbeing is to you as a nonbinary person in this current sociopolitical environment.
I will create a post that includes:
- A self-portrait that represents you as a nonbinary person who is thriving.
- An answer to each of the following questions (please copy and paste the number and questions and add your response below):
1. Please identify and describe your gender?
2. How do you express your gender?
3. What do you want to get out of your gender identity?
4. What are the goals of identity development, gender expression, and the creation and maintenance of an identity-based community?
5. How can I thrive if I am part of this hyper-marginalized community?

Activity Discussions Format:
Please complete the above instruction for your original post, which should be posted by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
Then, you will comment on 3-4 other people's original posts by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
I look forward to reading your posts!

Data Collection:
Canvas Discussion (text)

Appendix C
Canvas Discussion: What is Wellbeing?
(Module 5)
(Data collected for this dissertation)

For this activity, you will create an individual definition of wellbeing as a nonbinary person and take 2-3 photos that represent wellbeing as related to your gender. These photos are intended to 1) help you in developing your definition of wellbeing and 2) supplement your definition when shared with others.

1. Please share your individual definition of wellbeing.
2. How does your definition of wellbeing relate to being nonbinary (e.g., gender nonconforming gender expression)?
3. Please share your photos and how they relate to wellbeing for you.
    1. What does each photo tell us about wellbeing?
    2. How does this relate to being nonbinary (e.g., gender nonconforming gender expression)?
4. After each participant has shared, what themes of wellbeing do you see emerging?
5. Is there anything else we missed that you thought of during this discussion?
6. With regards to being nonbinary in a binary world, how are gendered experiences and marginalization captured in wellbeing?

Discussions Format:
Please complete the above instruction for your original post, which should be posted by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
Then, you will comment on 3-4 other people's original posts by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
I look forward to reading your posts!

Data Collection:
Canvas Discussion (text)

Appendix D
Canvas Discussion: Wellbeing Self-Portrait
(Module 5)
(Data collected for this dissertation)

For this activity, I want you to take a self-portrait of yourself that shows you thriving.
Based on the details discussed previously, this portrait should be:
- [Specifics to be added after collaboratively decided upon with participants during the Module 3 Discussion: Collaborative Decisions About Photo Formats]

Modification. After you have taken your photos, you can modify it in the way you most prefer. You can also keep the original photos in this discussion and use a modified (more private) version for the virtual exhibit.
1. Share your self-portrait
2. Include a brief paragraph of how this photo relates to your wellbeing as a nonbinary person.

Activity Discussions Format:
Please complete the above instruction for your original post, which should be posted by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
Then, you will comment on 3-4 other people's original posts by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
I look forward to reading your posts!

Data Collection:
Canvas Discussion (text)

Appendix E
Canvas Discussion: Promotive and Corrosive Factors of Wellbeing
(Module 8)
(Data collected for this dissertation)

Based on the identified promotive and corrosive factors to wellbeing. Please respond to the following four questions. I have created a comment for each question, under which please post your response.

1. <u>Without</u> thinking about feasibility (e.g., money, resources) and other barriers, what factors do you think are the top five most important to bolster wellbeing in <u>your life</u>?.
2. <u>Without</u> thinking about feasibility (e.g., money, resources) and other barriers, what factors do you think are the top five most important to bolster wellbeing for the <u>nonbinary community</u>?
3. Now <u>considering</u> feasibility (e.g., money, resources), support, and power in the current sociopolitical climate, which factors do you think are the top five most likely to change to bolster wellbeing in <u>your life</u>?
4. Again <u>considering</u> feasibility (e.g., money, resources), support, and power in the current sociopolitical climate, which factors do you think are the top five that are most likely to change to bolster wellbeing for the <u>nonbinary community</u>?

Please provide a brief paragraph for your answer to each question.
Activity Discussions Format:
Please complete the above instruction for your original post, which should be posted by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
Then, you will comment on 3-4 other people's original posts by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
I look forward to reading your posts!

Data Collection:
Canvas Discussion (text)

Appendix F
Canvas Discussion: Policy and Practice Recommendations
(Module 9)
*Data will be collected for future publications

Please <u>create one response</u> with your answer to the following questions (for clarity, please copy and paste questions and write your answer below each question).
1. What emerging themes do you hear as we have discussed these priorities for change to promote wellbeing in our lives and the lives of our communities?
2. How would you recommend the information about wellbeing (e.g., promotive and corrosive factors) applied to practice with nonbinary communities to bolster wellbeing?
3. How would you recommend the information about wellbeing (e.g., promotive and corrosive factors) applied to policy with nonbinary communities to bolster wellbeing?

Activity Discussions Format:
Please complete the above instruction for your original post, which should be posted by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
Then, you will comment on 3-4 other people's original posts by X/XX/2020 at Midnight.
I look forward to reading your posts!

Data Collection:
Canvas Discussion (text)

Appendix G
Photo-Elicitation Interview Guide
Approximately 60-90 minutes Zoom
(Module 6)
(audio-recorded and transcribed)

Photo-Elicitation Interview Guide:
- Gender identity and expression
    o Can you start by describing your gender identity?
    o How did you come to this understanding of yourself?
    o What does it mean to you to identify with this gender?
    o How do you express your gender?

- General questions about the process:
    o Can you walk me through your process of deciding which photos to take?
    o Did you run into any challenges or surprises when taking these photos?
        ▪ If yes, how did you overcome/react?
    o Tell me about the photos you chose?

- Question about each photo: (adapted from the SHOWeD method from Wang, 1999)
    o What do we <u>s</u>ee here?
    o What is <u>h</u>appening here?
    o How does this relate to y<u>o</u>ur wellbeing? (promotive and corrosive factors)
    o How could this image <u>e</u>ducate others?
    o How <u>d</u>o you feel about this image?

Overall reflection (after each photo has been discussed individually)
    o For those with nonconforming gender expressions, how does that connect to promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing?
    o With regards to being nonbinary in a binary world, how is this marginalized experience captured in your photos as it relates to wellbeing?
    o After discussing your images, are there any other thoughts you have about wellbeing as a nonbinary person that we have not already discussed?
    o After reflecting on everything we have discussed in the sessions so far in this interview, how would you describe your current overall wellbeing?
    o What is the relationship between internal and external factors and context and your wellbeing related to your gender?
    o What general message do you want others to know about the photo you took (as they relate to wellbeing and being nonbinary)?

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o Do you notice any themes emerging among the photos you took (and our discussion about the photos)? Any other thoughts about your photos?

- Image selection
    o Of your images, which would you most want to share in the exhibit?
    o Why did you select these images?
    o Do you want to modify any of these images? Would you like to share your reasons for each modification?

Data Collection:
Zoom audio-recorded and transcribed

Appendix H
Participation Process Interview Guide
Approximately 30-45 minutes
(Module 10)
*Data will be collected for future publications

<u>Final Discussion Questions</u>

Overall Experience
"I value your perspective in this process, and your advice would be helpful for improving the methods for future PhotoVoice projects."

1. Starting from the beginning, please describe your motivation for joining this study, and did that change over time?
2. How did it feel to participate in this PhotoVoice project?
3. What was most meaningful about your experience in this study?
4. Did anything surprise you?
5. How would you describe your experience in one or two words?
6. How do you think the Coronavirus pandemic influenced your experience of the project (e.g., availability)?
7. This was adapted to be online, how do you think that might have changed your experience?
8. If we were to do this again, what would you have done differently?
   o What would be the ideal compensation for a study like this?
9. Ideally, what would you like to see come out of this project?
10. Has this experience influenced your opinion of research? If so, how?
11. How, if at all, did knowing that the researcher was queer and nonbinary influence your decision to participate in the study? (more likely? How did knowing this information feel?)
12. Are there any additional final comments you would like to share?

Authorship
After completing the dissertation, I intend to write a manuscript about using PhotoVoice with nonbinary participants (e.g., strengths, challenges, recommendations). Would you like to be included in this manuscript?
   o Option 1: Authorship* for your participation in this study as well as contribute to analyzing data and writing the manuscript.
   o Option 2: Authorship* for your participation (nothing else required)
   o Option 3: No authorship
   *Authorship under participant's choice of name (chosen, pseudonym, etc.)

Appendix I
Optional Exit Survey Questions
(Given those participants who leave early)
*Data will be collected for future publications

As you have decided to leave this PhotoVoice study, you are entitled to $10 per activity (identified discussions and interviews) completed. Where would you like this gift certificate to be sent (e.g., email, physical address)?

So that we can better understand how to retain participants, please answer the following optional questions:

What was your primary reason for leaving the PhotoVoice study?

What could have been done differently to have kept you engaged in the study?

Did the Coronavirus have any impact on your decision to leave early?

Any other feedback you would like to share?

If you want to share anything else about your experience, please contact M. Killian Kinney (they/them), MSW, LSW, PhD Candidate at markkinn@iu.edu.

Data Collection:
Qualtrics survey

INDIANA UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT FOR RESEARCH
Learning to Thrive in a Binary World: Understanding the Gendered
Experiences of Nonbinary Individuals and Ways to Bolster Wellbeing

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH
You are being asked to participate in a research study. Scientists do research to answer important questions that might help change or improve the way we do things in the future.
This consent form will give you information about the study to help you decide whether you want to participate. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be in the study.

TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY IS VOLUNTARY
You may choose not to take part in the study or may choose to leave the study at any time. Deciding not to participate, or deciding to leave the study later, will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled and will not affect your relationship with Indiana University.
For those who leave early, an optional exit survey will be sent by email to help the researchers understand the limitations of the study.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?
The purpose of this study is to explore wellbeing among nonbinary individuals, including how wellbeing is conceptualized in relation to gender identity, what factors promote or corrode wellbeing, and recommendations for practice and policy to bolster wellbeing in their communities. This study will use photos, group discussions, and interviews to explore the abstract concepts of wellbeing and gender.

You were selected as a possible participant because you are:
1) Age 18 years and older,
2) Who identifies with a gender that is not exclusively a man or woman (including nonbinary, genderqueer, stem, genderfluid, trigender, etc.),
3) Who currently lives in the Midwest (North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio), and
4) Who has the required technology to participate (internet access and a computer or smartphone with a camera and audio).

The study is being conducted by M. Killian Kinney (they/them), MSW, LSW, Ph.D. Candidate and Indiana University School of Social Work.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL TAKE PART?
If you agree to participate, you will be one of up to 24 participants taking part in this study in up to two smaller groups.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE STUDY?
If you agree to be in the study, you will participate in the following activities over approximately 7 weeks, during which the total hours of participation are not expected to exceed 12 hours.

Group Discussion Activities (5)
- Being nonbinary
- Wellbeing as it relates to gender
- Wellbeing self-portrait
- Promotive and Corrosive factors of wellbeing
- Policy and Practice Recommendations

Individual Interviews (2)
- Photo-elicitation interview about promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing (60-90 minutes)
- Participation Process Interview (30-45 minutes)

Photographs
You will take three sets of photos during this project. First, you will take 2-3 photos of wellbeing in your life to add to the wellbeing discussion, in which photos will be shared with other group members. Then you will take a self-portrait that represents yourself thriving, for which you will write a brief paragraph of how this photo relates to your wellbeing as a nonbinary person. Finally, you will take 6-8 photos of factors that promote and corrode wellbeing in your life to be discussed in your photo-elicitation interview. The details for these photos (e.g., size, color versus black & white) will be discussed and collaboratively decided upon as a group. You have the option to modify any of your photos for privacy (e.g., cropped, blurred, etc.). You will create a collage with your photos, among other potential details from this project in a wellbeing snapshot. You will have the option to include your wellbeing snapshot in a virtual exhibit intended to raise awareness about nonbinary individuals and to celebrate our wellbeing.

Canvas is an online platform that will be used to organize the project into ten modules. In brief, the goals for each module are as follows:

Module One: To introduce the research and the PhotoVoice project, to introduce each other, and to establish group norms and ways to create a supportive space.

Module Two: To learn about PhotVoice and become familiar with the methods, intentions, and possibilities of this project.

Module Three: To learn about photography (techniques, photo-elicitation, and photo ethics) and to decide on photography options.

Module Four: To describe discussion activity instructions and discuss being nonbinary, including gender identity and expression.

Module Five: To explore wellbeing as a concept, to discuss wellbeing as it relates to gender (2-3 photos each and individual definitions), and to share wellbeing self-portraits.

Module Six: To learn about photo-elicitation and complete individual photo-elicitation interviews about promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing (6-8 photos).

Module Seven: To discuss details of the virtual exhibit, including exhibit options, wellbeing snapshots, and attendee survey questions.

Module Eight: To discuss the promotive and corrosive factors of wellbeing that we identified in the interviews.

Module Nine: To discuss policy and practice recommendations.

Module Ten: To complete participant process interviews about their participation in the PhotoVoice project.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?
While participating in the study, the risks, side effects, and/or discomforts include:

A psychological risk due to the stigma towards transgender and nonbinary persons. Topic of wellbeing but may include negative experiences regarding corrosive factors to wellbeing. Sharing photos in discussion and the virtual exhibit pose risks to protection of privacy, which could increase the risk for stigma, particularly for anyone who is not out about their gender identity.

This study involves potential psychological risks. First, research questions about wellbeing (the lack of wellbeing) and corrosive factors to wellbeing may be emotionally triggering for some participants. Second, participants will be sharing their experiences and photos and there is a risk of a breach of privacy that opens participants to an increased risk of stigma. For example, a virtual public display of photographs may pose a psychological risk if the online platform allows for comments (i.e., transphobic internet trolling) as well as the anonymous survey responses can be used as a tool for transphobic comments (which would be filtered by the researcher without sharing the hate speech with the participants).

Even though measures will be taken to protect privacy, there is always a risk of possible loss of confidentiality. Participants can use a chosen name, a pseudonym, or another identifier to help to protect privacy.

To protect against or mitigate the risk of stigma and with respect for privacy, participants will be given multiple options for participating.

- First, participants know in advance of participation that data will be collected from group discussions, chats, and interviews. This includes photos that are taken by the participant and shared in the online discussion and photo-elicitation interviews. Participants can make an informed decision about the content of their photos, knowing how the photos will be used.

- Second, participants have the option to modify their photos for increased privacy and comfort. Some options include blurring their photo or a portion of their photo, cropping the photo, black-barring across portions of the face, among other options.
- If a participant experiences psychological harm, they will be referred to a therapist, who has been vetted for providing trans-affirming care.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?
The potential benefits to participants in the study that are reasonable to expect are social support and community building from engaging in PhotoVoice, which is a method that has been found to be an empowering experience. A component of PhotoVoice is community action. The resulting public exhibit, publications, and presentation are intended to raise awareness and improve policy and practice for bolstering wellbeing among nonbinary individuals.

Potential benefits to science and society include raising awareness and informing improvements to policy and practice for bolstering wellbeing among nonbinary individuals. Additionally, this study will contribute a new approach to exploring wellbeing among a marginalized population.

HOW WILL MY INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?
Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. No information which could identify you will be shared in publications about this study.

The audio-recorded and transcribed data (group discussions and interviews) and photos will only be available to the researchers and saved on password-protected computers and servers (IU Box). Participants will be identified by their choice (chosen name, pseudonym, number, etc.) to protect confidentiality. A photography consent and release form will allow participants to choose if their photos will be visible in the public exhibit or in future dissemination (publications, presentations), or not at all. Participants can engage without releasing their photos.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATION?
Participants will be compensated $10 per discussion activity and interview. All participants that complete the study will receive $70. During the first session, participants will decide the gift card vendor, which will be distributed during the last session. Participants who withdraw before the end of the project will receive $10 per activity and interview. Upon notification of withdrawal, the participant will be given a gift card for the appropriate compensation. An optional exit survey will be given to participants who leave early.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO PARTICIPATE?
There is no cost to you for taking part in this study.

WHO SHOULD I CALL WITH QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS?

For questions about the study, contact the researcher, M. Killian Kinney (they/them), MSW, LSW, Ph.D. Candidate at markkinn@iu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information or to offer input, please contact the IU Human Subjects Office at 800-696-2949 or irb@iu.edu.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?
If you decide to participate in this study, you can change your mind and decide to leave the study at any time in the future. The study team will help you withdraw from the study safely. If you decide to withdraw, please notify the researcher by email.

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT
In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study. I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Printed Name:_____

Participant's
Signature::_____Date:_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent:_____

Signature of Person
Obtaining Consent::_____Date:_____

Appendix K
Photography Use Form

I, (print name)_____agree to have my photographs shared as part of the *Learning to Thrive in a Binary World: Understanding the Gendered Experiences of Nonbinary individuals and Ways to Bolster Wellbeing* study, which is a research study through Indiana University School of Social Work. The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of nonbinary individuals and their wellbeing.

       I understand that the photographs will not be used for any financial gain but that the researcher may share the photographs to raise awareness at presentations (e.g., class, conference), at exhibits (e.g., art gallery), and in journal articles and book chapters. I understand that my photographs will not be shared unless I provide my preferences in this photography use form, and I can choose to release some photos and not others (table below). I also have the right to edit my image (blur, crop, black bar, etc.) before public display. I can revoke my permission at any time.

If I have any concerns or questions about this study, I can contact M. Killian Kinney (they/them), MSW, LSW, PhD Candidate at markkinn@iu.edu.

Please provide your consent by initialing in all boxes that you agree:

	I prefer to show my photos in the <u>exhibit</u>	I prefer to have these photos shown in public <u>publications</u> and <u>presentations</u>	<u>I do not prefer</u> to have these photo shown publicly
Collected Photographs			
2-3 photos taken for the wellbeing discussion (Module 5, Activity #2)	(possible collage)		
Self-portrait (Module 5, Activity #3)			
All 6-8 photos taken for the interview (Module 6, Activity #4)			

I have been informed of my options and prefer the above photo(s) used for the identified public display(s).

Name (printed): _____   Date:_____

Signature: _____

Agender: An umbrella term for some gender identities that do not align with man, woman, or any other gender. Many agender people identify as transgender.

Ally: Someone who advocates and supports a community other than their own.

Androgynous: Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.

Asexual: The lack of sexual attraction or desire, or one identifying with this orientation. May be used as an umbrella term for other sexual orientations such as demisexual or greysexual.

Assigned sex at birth (ASAB): The *sex* given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy. No one, whether *cis* or *trans*, gets to choose what sex they are assigned at birth. AMAB is assigned male at birth, and AFAB is assigned female at birth.

Binary: The gender binary is a system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two gender identities (man and woman) and two sexes (male and female). Since the binary genders are the only ones recognized by general society as being legitimate, they are given an unearned privileged status.

Binding: Compressing one's chest (with a binder, sports bras, ace bandages, or other mechanisms) to appear more flat or masculine. Can cause some health issues if done incorrectly.

Cisgender (Cis) individuals: People whose gender identity matches social and cultural assumptions connected to their sex assigned at birth.

Cisgender privilege: The set of unearned advantages and/or immunities that people who are or who are perceived as gender conforming benefit from on a daily basis.

Cisnormativity: The individual, institutional, or social assumption that everyone is cisgender. Systemic prejudice in favor of cisgender people.

Coming out: The process in which an LGBTQ person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.

Dead name or birth name: How some transgender people refer to their given name at birth. To "*dead name*," someone is to refer to them by their birth name instead of their correct name.

Drag/drag king/drag queen: Exaggerated, theatrical, and/or performative gender presentation. Although most commonly used to refer to cross-dressing performers (drag queens and drag kings), anyone of any gender can do any form of drag. Performing drag does not necessarily have anything to do with one's sex assigned at birth, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Enby: See nonbinary.

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[29] Definitions in this glossary were informed by numerous sources: Adams (2017), Beemyn (n.d.), Human Rights Campaign (2020), The National LGBT Health Education Center (2010), Trans Student Educational Resources (2020), and Transgender Hub (2017), which can be found in the references. Additionally, some definitions were developed previously training along with Richard A. Brandon-Friedman, PhD, LCSW, LCAC.

Folx: A queer resuse of the word folks that has been used among queer and trans individuals, especially people of color, to denote shared radicalized, politicized identities – as in "*folx* like us" (Kapitan, 2016). Similar to the use of *Latinx* rather than Latina/Latino to be queer and trans-inclusive.

Gender binary: A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two opposite categories, termed *man* and *woman,* in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. This system is oppressive to anyone who does not fit neatly into one of the two standard categories.

Gender diverse: Broad terms referring to people whose gender does not align with or conform to the gender associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender dysphoria: Anxiety and/or discomfort regarding one's sex assigned at birth. Clinically defined as significant and durational distress.

Gender expression/presentation: A person's characteristics and behaviors that reflect that person's gender, such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions.

Gender euphoria: A sense of elation, fulfilment or joy that comes from living as the gender one understands oneself to be.

Gender fluid: A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender, and expresses a fluid or unfixed gender identity. One's expression may shift and change depending on context.

Gender identity: A person's internal concept of self (as man, woman, a blend of both, or additional genders outside of the gender binary) and how they interact with other people and their environment.

Gendered experiences: Experiences that are shaped both by cultural context (e.g., social norms around gender) and the subjective experience of navigating one's surroundings as a particular gender (e.g., deciding which bathroom to use).

Genderqueer/genderqueer individuals: A term for people who reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity - an umbrella term that pre-dates nonbinary.

Getting clocked/being read: When people are not perceived as the gender they are presenting (e.g., based on their dress and mannerisms match according to social norms).

Heteronormative/heteronormativity: These terms refer to the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm, which plays out in interpersonal interactions and society and furthers the marginalization of queer people.

Intersex: An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations of sex-related organs and/or chromosomes that do not develop in a way that could be classified as male or female. Although some intersex people identify as transgender or nonbinary, the term *intersex* is not interchangeable with or a synonym for *transgender.*

LGBTQ: An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning.

Misgender: Referring to or addressing someone using pronouns that do not correctly reflect the gender with which the person identifies.

Nonbinary (also enby): Umbrella term for all genders that fall outside of the binary system of woman/man.

Outing: The unauthorized disclosure by one person of another person's gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation without their permission.

Packing/Packer: Wearing a penile prosthesis/a penile prosthetic.

Pansexual: Describes someone who has the potential for sexual attraction to people of any gender regardless of their gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree. Sometimes the term *omnisexual* is used in the same manner; however, there are nuanced differences. While *pansexual* individuals are considered *gender blind, omnisexual* individuals are not.

Passing: Being perceived by others as a particular identity that one identifies as (e.g., passing as heterosexual, passing as a cisgender woman). This term has become controversial as it can be understood to imply that one is not genuinely what they are passing as.

Pronouns / Gender Pronouns – The gender pronouns a person uses to describe a person's gender which include she/her/her, he/him/his, they/them/theirs, and numerous others (ze/hir/hirs, xe/xem/xyrs, ey/em/eirs).

Queer: A term used by LGBTQ folx to refer to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation or may be an umbrella term inclusive of LGBT folx (e.g., the queer community, queer folx).

Questioning: A term used to describe individuals who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sex: The classification of a person as male or female (typically) at birth. Infants are assigned a sex usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. Some countries and US states allow a *gender X*, representing a *nonbinary* or third gender.

Social gaslighting: Refers to when a person experiences second guessing and internalized invalidation from binary social norms, transphobia, and nonbinary erasure.

Socially nonconforming gender expression (SNCGE) – a gender expression or behavior that does not conform to the social expectations and norms of women/femininity or men/masculinity

Stealth: When a transgender who has transitioned into a different sex or gender does not divulge the fact of transition in all or most social situations. The fear of being *outed* can be very distressing for some people who are living stealth. Some people who considered themselves *transgender* prior to *transition,* believe that after they *transition,* they are no longer *transgender,* and therefore have nothing to reveal. This term can be problematic, implying that TNB individuals have something to hide or are doing something illicit.

Surgery/Gender-affirming Surgery: Medical interventions that some transgender/nonbinary people seek to align their body with their gender identity. There are numerous surgical interventions that some transgender people seek, and as such, the term the surgery should be avoided as it is misleading and inaccurate.

T: Short for testosterone.

Top surgery: Term for gender-affirming surgery to the chest, most often used by trans masculine individuals to refer to the removal of chest tissue, relocation and resizing of nipple complexes, and chest reconstruction to a masculine chest structure, or trans feminine individuals to refer to the addition of breast tissue/filler, and chest reconstruction to a feminine chest structure.

Trans: Prefix or adjective used as an abbreviation for transgender.

Transgender/trans/transgender individuals: People whose gender identity differs from social and cultural assumptions connected the gender associated with their sex assigned at birth, inclusive of nonbinary individuals who identify under the trans umbrella.

Transition/transitioning: The process of a person aligning their presentation with their gender identity. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin presenting in different ways, using chosen names and pronouns (some altering legal documents). Others may undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions. Transitioning is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a period of time, and looks different for different people.

Transphobia: Systemic violence against *transgender/nonbinary* people, associated with attitudes such as fear, discomfort, distrust, or disdain.

Two Spirit/Two-Spirit: An umbrella term indicating various Indigenous gender and sexual identities among tribes in North America.

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Wilchins, R. A. (2002c). Gender rights are human rights. In J. Nestle, C. Howell, & R. Wilchins, *Genderqueer: Voices from beyond the sexual binary* (pp. 289-297). Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books.

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Wilson, B. D. M., & Kastanis, A. (2015). Sexual and gender minority disproportionality and disparities in child welfare: A population-based study. *Children and Youth Services Review, 58*, 11-17. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.08.016

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Yoshihama, M., & Yunomae, T. (2018). Participatory Investigation of the Great East Japan Disaster: PhotoVoice from women affected by the calamity. *Social Work, 63*(3), 234-243. doi:10.1093/sw/swy018

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Zhang, C. M. (2019, August 7). Biopolitical and necropolitical constructions of the incarcerated trans body. *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law. 37*(2), 259-299. doi:10.7916/cjgl.v37i2.2787

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Social Work (2021)
Indiana University
Dissertation title: *Learning to thrive in a binary world: Understand the gendered experiences of nonbinary individuals and ways to bolster wellbeing*

Master of Social Work (2015)
Indiana University

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology with Women's Studies minor (2003)
Purdue University – West Lafayette

Associate of Arts, Psychology (2000)
Sinclair Community College

PUBLICATIONS

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

Muzzey, F. K., **Kinney, M. K.**, McCauley, H. L., & Mass, M. K. (2021). Support networks of transmasculine and nonbinary young adults during chosen name transition. *Psychology and Sexuality*. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2021.1902379

Gartner, R. E., Sterzing, P. R., Fisher, C. M., Woodford, M. R., **Kinney, M. K.,** & Victor B. G. (2020). A scoping review of measures assessing gender microaggressions against women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 44*(3), 283-306. https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0361684320920834

Kattari, S. K., Bakko, M., Hecht, H., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2020). Intersecting experiences of healthcare denials among transgender and nonbinary patients. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 58*(4), 506-513. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2019.11.014

Brandon-Friedman, R. A., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2019). It gets better, but for whom? Exploring the messaging within "It Gets Better" videos using visual sociology. *Journal of LGBT Youth*. http://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2019.1691107

Kattari, S., Atteberry-Ash, B., **Kinney, M. K.**, Walls, N. E., & Kattari, L. (2019). One size does not fit all: Differential transgender health experiences by gender

identity and sexual orientation. *Social Work in Health Care, 58*(9), 899-917. https://doi.org/10.1080/00981389.2019.1677279

Wilkerson, D., Wolfe-Taylor, S., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2019). Adopting e-social work practice: Pedagogical strategies for student decision-making to address technology uncertainty. *Journal of Social Work Education.* https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1661920

Atteberry-Ash, B., Speer, S. R., Kattari, S. K., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2019). Does it get better? LGBTQ social work students and experiences with harmful discourse. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 31*(2), 223-241. http://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2019.1568337

Walls, N. E., Kattari, S. K., Speer, S. R., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2019). Transfeminine spectrum parenting: Evidence from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. *Social Work Research, 43*(3), 133-144. https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svz005

LAW REVIEW ARTICLES

Walter-McCabe, H. A., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2020). An argument for explicit public health rationale in LGBTQ antidiscrimination law as a tool for stigma reduction. *Saint Louis University Journal of Health Law & Policy 13*(2), 147-174. Retrieved from https://scholarship.law.slu.edu/jhlp/vol13/iss2/3/

McCabe, H. A., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2019). LGBTQ+ individuals, health inequalities, and policy implications. Creighton Law Review, 52(4), 427-450. Retrieved from https://dspace.creighton.edu/xmlui/handle/10504/34368

McCabe, H. A., **Kinney, M. K.**, Quiring, S. Q., & Jerolimov, D. (2017). Expanding the base: A case for increased interprofessional collaboration in public health law and policy. *Indiana Health Law Review, 14*(1), 97-111. https://doi.org/10.18060/3911.0030

BOOK CHAPTERS

Shelton, J., **Kinney, M. K.**, & Ritosa, A. (2021). Working with nonbinary youth. In G. Mallon & J. Shelton (Eds.), *Social work practice with transgender and gender expansive youth* (3rd edition). Routledge.

Kinney, M. K., & Muzzey, F. (2021). The chosen name process: Developing gender identity and bolstering support networks. In G. Mallon & J. Shelton (Eds.), *Social work practice with transgender and gender expansive youth* (3rd edition). Routledge.

Kinney, M. K. (2021). Learning to thrive in a binary world. In Erickson-Schroth, L. (Ed.), *Trans bodies, trans selves: A resource for the transgender community* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Walter-McCabe, H., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2021). Public health, LGBTQ populations, and the law. In M. M. Ransom & L. Magaña Valladares (Eds.), *Public health law: Concepts and case studies* (pp. 225-236). Springer Publishing Co.

Kinney, M. K. (2021). Gender diversity. In H. Armstrong (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of sex and sexuality: Understanding biology, psychology, and culture* (2nd ed.) (pp. 266-269). ABC-CLIO.

Kinney, M. K. (2021). Gender identity. In H. Armstrong (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of sex and sexuality: Understanding biology, psychology, and culture* (2nd ed.) (pp. 272-274). ABC-CLIO.

Kinney, M. K. (2021). Gender identity development. In H. Armstrong (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of sex and sexuality: Understanding biology, psychology, and culture* (2nd ed.) (pp. 274-276). ABC-CLIO.

Kinney, M. K. (2021). Nonbinary gender identities. In H. Armstrong (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of sex and sexuality: Understanding biology, psychology, and culture* (2nd ed.) (pp. 443-447). ABC-CLIO.

Kattari, S. K., **Kinney, M. K.**, Kattari, L., & Walls, N. E. (2020). Introduction: Intersectionality, empowerment, & resilience. In S K. Kattari, **M. K. Kinney**, Kattari, L. & N. E. Walls (Eds.), *Social work and health care practice with transgender and nonbinary individuals and communities: Voices for equity, inclusion, and resilience* (pp. 1-10). Taylor and Francis.

Kinney, M. K., Meininger, E., & Wiener, S. (2020). Transgender and nonbinary youth and access to medical care. In S K. Kattari, **M. K. Kinney**, Kattari, L. & N. E. Walls (Eds.), *Social work and health care practice with transgender and nonbinary individuals and communities: Voices for equity, inclusion, and resilience* (pp. 29-41). Taylor and Francis.

Kinney, M. K., & Muzzey, F. K. (2020). Supporting transgender and nonbinary youth in their coming out process. In S K. Kattari, **M. K. Kinney**, Kattari, L. & N. E. Walls (Eds.), *Social work and health care practice with transgender and nonbinary individuals and communities: Voices for equity, inclusion, and resilience* (pp. 164-178). Taylor and Francis.

Brandon-Friedman, R. A. & **Kinney, M. K.** (2020). Sexual and gender diverse youth in the child welfare system: Using an ecomap to manage disclosure of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. In J. S. Whitman & C. J. Boyd

(Eds.), *Homework assignments and handouts for LGBTQ+ clients: A mental health and counseling handbook* (2nd ed.). Routledge Press.

Kinney, M. K. & Brandon-Friedman, R. A. (2020). Exploring gender identity with a photo diary. In J. S. Whitman & C. J. Boyd (Eds.), *Homework assignments and handouts for LGBTQ+ clients: A mental health and counseling handbook* (2nd ed.). Routledge Press.

PUBLICATIONS UNDER REVIEW

Atteberry-Ash, B., **Kinney, M. K.,** Woodford, M. R., Jaffee, K. D., & Dressel, A. (under review). Social work students' support for transgender employment protections. *Journal of Social Work Education.*

Kattari, L., Kattari, S., **Kinney, M. K.,** Walls, N. E. (under review). Matchmaking methodology for humanizing transgender and gender diverse health and wellness research. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action.*

PUBLICATIONS IN PREPARATION

Kinney, M. K. (in preparation). *Carving your own path: Exploring nonbinary identities and expressions.*

Kinney, M. K. (in preparation). *Carving your own path: A nonbinary gender identity development model.*

Kinney, M. K., & Walter-McCabe, H. (in preparation). *Bathroom bills and beyond: A gender diversity model to policy analysis.*

Kinney, M. K., & Victor, B. G. (in preparation). PhotoVoice methods in social work research: A scoping review.

EDITED BOOKS

Kattari, S. K., **Kinney, M. K.**, Kattari, L., & Walls, N. E. (Eds.) (2020). *Social work and health care practice with transgender and nonbinary individuals and communities: Voices for equity, inclusion, and resilience*. Taylor and Francis.

AUTHORED BOOKS

Kinney, M. K. (in preparation). *Gender identity and expression: Your questions answered*. Q&A health guides. ABC-CLIO.

CURRENT PROJECTS

LGBTQ Legal Epidemiology Project – Co-PI with Heather Walter-McCabe at Wayne State University School of Social Work and Law School

The Gender Diverse Body Research Collaborative: Addressing Genital Health During Testosterone-Predominant Stimulation – Co-PI with J. Dennis Fortenberry at Indiana University School of Medicine

LGBTQ Affirming Providers Study – Co-PI with Darren Cosgrove and Allen Ratliff at Miami University Department of Family Science & Social Work

Multi-Site PhotoVoice Study on Community Connectedness and Wellbeing Among Transgender and Nonbinary Adults – Co-PI with Darren Cosgrove at Miami University Department of Family Science & Social Work

APPOINTMENTS

ACADEMIC

Sp2017 – Sp2021	*Associate Faculty*, Indiana University School of Social Work
Sp2021	*Practicum Field Supervisor*, IUSSW
Sp2015	*Case Management Field Mentor*, IUSSW
Su2014 & Su2015	*Teaching Assistant*, IUSSW

RESEARCH

4/5/2021 – present	*Clinical Research Coordinator* (PT) – IU School of Medicine
Sp2021 – present	*Data Collector and Analyst*, IU Adolescent Health
Fa2020 – present	*Lab Co-Founder/Member*, the Progressive Social Work Lab
Fa2019 – present	*Visiting Scholar* – Public Health Law Program Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta, GA
Su2019	*Researcher & Data Analyst*, Opioid Data to Action Conference
Fa2017 – present	*Lab Member*, Multi-university social work lab focused on LGBTQ disparities and inequities led by Eugene Walls (DU) and Shanna Kattari (UMich)
Fa2019 – Su2020	*Research Assistant*, Indiana University School of Social Work Heather McCabe, Associate Professor, LGBTQ Legal Mapping Project with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Sp2017 & Sp2019	*Research Assistant*, Indiana University School of Social Work Dr. David Wilkerson, Director of MSW Direct and Assistant Professor, Telebehavioral Health in Social Work Education
Sp2017 – Sp2018	*Research Assistant*, Indiana University School of Social Work Samantha Wolfe-Taylor, Visiting Lecturer, Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) in Social Work Education
Fa2015 – Sp2017	*Research Assistant*, Indiana University School of Social Work Heather McCabe, Assistant Professor, Interprofessional Education

POST-MSW PRACTICE

02/10 – 04/21/21	*Co-Facilitator of the Trans and Nonbinary Therapeutic Youth Group*, Riley Adolescent Gender Health Clinic and IU School of Adolescent Health
11/2020 – present	*Consultant*, Indiana Equity Institute
09/2020 – present	*Board of Directors*, The Never Alone Project
06/2020 – present	*Unhoused & Harm Reduction Outreach*, The Never Alone Project
10/2018 – 05/2021	*Social Work Clinic Supervisor*, Indiana University Student Outreach Clinic
02/2018 & 02/2019	*Conference Co-Coordinator*, Indiana NASW SOGI Conference
07/2017 – 07/2018	*Nonbinary Curriculum Developer/Therapeutic Group Facilitator*, GenderNexus
10/2016 – 03/2020	*Social Work Intake Specialist*, Riley Adolescent Gender Health Clinic

HONORS AND AWARDS

04/2018	*Excellence in Teaching* Indiana University School of Social Work
04/2016	***Dr. Charles R. Bantz Award for Excellence*** Awarded to the student with the highest ranking among all Elite 50 graduate student applicants IUPUI Graduate Professional Student Government Elite 50
04/2015	**William M. Plater Civic Engagement Medallion** Indiana University Purdue University Center for Service and Learning

TEACHING

Courses taught at Indiana University School of Social Work (global average 4.41/5.00)
- Introduction to Social Work (BSW, MSW)
- Diversity, Human Rights and Social Justice (MSW)
- Executive Leadership (MSW)
- Practice Evaluation: Introduction – Single Systems Design (MSW)
- Research I (MSW)

- Seminar in Public Health Law and Policy in an Interprofessional Setting (MSW)
- Social Policy and Services: Health Concentration (MSW)
- Social Work Practice II: Organizations, Communities, and Society (MSW)

GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

08/2017 – 08/2018   Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) Fellowship
                    Indiana University Adolescent Medicine
05/01/2015   Unrestricted Grant for Community Assessment
                    Trans Justice Funding Project
11/2014   Margaret A. McCormick Scholarship
                    Indiana University School of Social Work
05/12/2014   Macro Social Work Student Network Start-up Grant
                    Association for Community Organization & Social Administration

REFEREED PRESENTATIONS

INTERNATIONAL

Kinney, M. K, Muzzey, F. K., VanBoxel, J., & Huerta, P. (2020, July. Postponed due to COVID-19). *Predictors of subjective wellbeing among trans women, trans men, and nonbinary people of color: Between groups differences and similarities.* Presentation at Preaching to the Choir 2020: An International LGBTQ Psychology Conference, Prague, Czech Republik.

Muzzey, F. K., VanBoxel, J., Huerta, P., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2020, July. Postponed due to COVID-19). *Religious influence as a mediator of faith in childhood and adulthood among transgender and cisgender SOGI individuals.* Presentation at Preaching to the Choir 2020: An International LGBTQ Psychology Conference, Prague, Czech Republik.

Huerta, P., Muzzey, F. K., VanBoxel, J. & **Kinney, M. K.** (2020, July. Postponed due to COVID-19). *Discrepancies in the gender of desired and actual sexual partners amongst cisgender and transgender SOGI individuals.* Presentation at Preaching to the Choir 2020: An International LGBTQ Psychology Conference, Prague, Czech Republik.

Kinney, M. K. (2018, August). *Carving your own path: A non-binary gender identity development model.* Paper presentation at the 2018 Congrès sur le travil social et les sexualitiés / Social Work and Sexualities Conference, Montreal, Canada.

Kinney, M. K., & Brandon-Friedman, R. A. (2018, August). *Community involvement and well-being: Implications for LGBTQ+ people of color.* Poster presentation

at the 2018 Congrès sur le travial social et les sexualitiés / Social Work and Sexualities Conference, Montreal, Canada.

Henry, D., Hartzell, R., Blankenship, J., Ingraham, N., **Kinney, M.**, Yarber, W., & Crosby, R. (2009, November). *The potential for genital piercings to increase sexual pleasure, satisfaction, and body image: Voices from men and women with genital piercings.* Paper session presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality Conference, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

NATIONAL

Cosgrove, D., **Kinney, M. K.**, & Ratliff, A. (2021, November). Improving services for nonbinary clients: Exploring what it means to be "LGBTQ-affirming".
Paper presentation at the Council on Social Work Education 65th Annual Planning Meeting, Orlando, FL.

Cosgrove, D., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2021, June 3). *Photovoice as a tool for nonbinary identity exploration, community change, and wellbeing.* Panel session at the LGBTQ Research Symposium, Lexington, KY.

Kinney, M. K., & Muzzey, F. K. (2020, January). *The role of chosen names in identity development among transgender and nonbinary young adults.* Paper presentation at the 22nd Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), Washington, D.C.

Kinney, M. K., & Muzzey, F. K. (2019, March). *Expanding transgender health care: Multiple perspectives for affirming nonbinary identities in clinical practice.* Workshop at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, Washington, D.C.

Kinney, M. K., Muzzey, F. K., & McCauley, H. (2019, March). Identity development through chosen names among nonbinary young adults. Poster presentation at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, Washington, D.C. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 64,* S105-S106. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.10.224

Muzzey, F. K., **Kinney, M. K.**, & McCauley, H. (2019, March). Support networks of transmasculine and nonbinary young adults during chosen name transition. Poster presentation at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, Washington, D.C. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 64,* S107. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.10.227

Kinney, M. K., & Muzzey, F. K. (2019, January). *Transmen, Transwomen, and Nonbinary People of Color: Findings from the Social Justice Sexuality Project.* Paper presentation at 21st Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), San Francisco, CA.

Kattari, S. K., **Kinney, M. K.**, Walls, N. E., Atterberry-Ash, B., Bakko, M. M., & Kattari, L. (2019, January).One size does not fit all: Differential transgender health experiences by gender identity. Paper presentation at 21st Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), San Francisco, CA.

Luca Sugawara, C., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2019, January). *Short-term study abroad and emotional intelligence development.* Paper presentation at 21st Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), San Francisco, CA.

Brandon-Friedman, R., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2018, November). *Community involvement and intersectionality: Improving well-being for LGBTQ+ people of color.* Poster session at the Council on Social Work Education 64th Annual Planning Meeting, Orlando, FL.

Kinney, M. K. (2018, March). *"The first line of acceptance": Bolstering resilience among non-binary clients through affirming health care practice.* Poster presentation at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, Seattle, WA. Journal of Adolescent Health, 62, S48-S49. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.11.098

Kinney, M. K. (2018, January). *A resilience-based approach to exploring non-binary identities.* Poster session at the 22nd Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research, Washington, DC. doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.34467.35365

Kinney, M. K., & Walsh, J. (2018, January). *Peer mentoring in social work education: Strengths and challenges.* Poster session at the 22nd Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research, Washington, DC. doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.24401.02409

Pittman-Munke, P., Kattari, S. K., **Kinney, M. K.**, & Knockel, K. A. (2017, October). *Addressing transgender/nonbinary needs: Challenging health care and social service provision disparities.* Hot Topic panel discussion presented at the Council on Social Work Education 63rd Annual Planning Meeting, Dallas, TX.

Kinney, M. K., & Brandon-Friedman, R. A. (2017, May, accepted). *Non-binary identities and gender expression: A PhotoVoice pilot study.* Paper session at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Research Symposium: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on LGBTQ Research in the Social Sciences, Urbana-Champaign, IL.

Armstrong Richardson, E., Alhajri, W., Johnson, N., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2017, January). *Predictors of educational outcomes for foster youth who received independent*

living services in Indiana. Poster session at the 21st Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), New Orleans, LA.

Brandon-Friedman, R. A., **Kinney, M. K.**, Pierce, B. J., & Fortenberry, J. D. (2017, January). *Former foster youth's perceptions of their acquisition of sexual health information while in foster care.* Poster session at the 21st Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research, New Orleans, LA.

Brandon-Friedman, R., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2016, November). *Does it get better? Exploring "It Gets Better" videos using visual sociology.* Poster session at the Council on Social Work Education 62nd Annual Planning Meeting, Atlanta, GA. doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.23825.22886

Kinney, M. K. (2016, January). *The significance of social work practice for student-led free clinics.* Poster sessions at the Society for Student-Run Free Clinics Conference, Phoenix, AZ. doi:10.13140/RG.2.1.4777.7041

Hartzell, R., Henry, D., **Kinney, M.**, Yarber, W., & Crosby, R. (2011, February). *Sexual health issues among women with genital piercings.* Paper session presented at the International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health, Scottsdale, AZ.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

INTERNATIONAL

Kinney, M. K. (2017, June 2). *Unpacking gender: Emerging research on non-binary identities.* PRONI meetings of NGOs, Osijek, Croatia.

Kinney, M. K. (2017, May 23). *Non-binary gender identities: Emerging research.* University of Zagreb School of Social Work, Zagreb, Croatia.

NATIONAL

Kinney, M. K. (2020, March 3). *Expanding care in health care: Recommendations for inclusive and affirming practice for transgender and nonbinary wellbeing.* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Public Health Law Program, Law Science Advisory Group, Atlanta, GA.

Brandon-Friedman, R. A., & **Kinney, M. K.** (2016, August 17). *Working with LGBTQ clients across the lifespan workshop* (6 hrs). Indiana State University School of Social Work, Terra Haute, IN.