Trans-forming Resilience Research: A Critical Interpretive Synthesis of Resilience Research with Transgender and Gender Diverse Populations

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TRANS-FORMING RESILIENCE RESEARCH:
A CRITICAL INTERPRETIVE SYNTHESIS OF RESILIENCE RESEARCH WITH TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE POPULATIONS

by

Morgan Brooks

THESIS
Submitted to the Lyle S. Hallman Faculty of Social Work
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work
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Master's Committee:
Advisor: Michael R. Woodford, PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work
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Abstract

Historically, much of the research pertaining to transgender and gender diverse (trans) health and wellbeing has been conducted in ways that are reductive, pathologizing and exploitative. Trans activists and scholars express concerns about how such research contributes to pervasive negative perceptions, stigma, and cisgenderism, reinforcing stereotypical, binary ideas of trans people as both damaged and dangerous, vulnerable and heroic. Ongoing negative media attention and harmful policy decisions rooted in these views demonstrate the importance of offering alternatives to these reductive, deficit-based narratives associated with trans people. In response, strengths-based research oriented around the construct of resilience is increasing; yet approached uncritically, this research risks perpetuating the problems it is intended to address. This critical interpretive synthesis (CIS) study used a constructivist lens, drawing on queer and intersectionality theories, to examine the study of resilience in qualitative research with trans populations. The study examined a purposive sample of peer reviewed, qualitative studies published between January 2010 and March 2021 that took up implicit or explicitly critical, social justice perspectives to resilience or strengths-focused research with trans populations, attempting to answer the question: how are researchers approaching the study of resilience with trans populations from a critical, social justice perspective? The findings offer a guide to researchers seeking to engage in resilience-oriented research with trans populations. Emerging from three central stances taken by researchers: 1) Attending to power; 2) inviting complexity; and 3) orienting toward change, the Web of Transformative Trans Resilience Research (WTTRR) model weaves together eight strands of action and orientation that researchers can use to ground their work with trans populations in a liberatory and transformative framework and generate new pathways toward empowerment, acceptance and change for trans people.
**Trans-forming Resilience Research: A Critical Interpretive Synthesis of Resilience Research with Transgender and Gender Diverse Populations**

While gender diversity has been historically documented as existing amongst many cultures (Vincent & Manzano, 2017), growing representation of trans people in the western media has resulted in more interest in issues related to gender diversity (Burns, 2019). Yet with increased visibility, comes increased scrutiny. While TIME magazine declared a ‘trans tipping point’ in May of 2014, trans realities continue to be policed, politicized, and treated as objects of public debate (Grant, 2011; Haug, 2020; Robertson, 2020). In early July 2020, well-known children’s author JK Rowling published a controversial essay outlining her concerns about the dangers of transgender activism in which she compares trans women with violent abusers and sex offenders and describes young transmasculine individuals as mentally unstable and seeking an escape from womanhood (De Hingh, 2020; Rowling, 2020). The article draws from ideas that have become increasingly prevalent, particularly in Britain and the United States, in part due to the popularization of the findings of a heavily contested research study proposing a theoretical phenomenon labelled Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria, or ROGD, that calls into question the legitimacy of a particular subset of transgender identities (Ashley, 2020; Restar, 2020). Trans people and communities have been particularly impacted by such trans-negative discourses, which stigmatize and pathologize their lived experiences and reinforce prevalent hetero- and cis-centric perceptions that trans lives are inherently and simultaneously both menacing and pitiable (Hughto et al., 2021).

The use of research to cast doubt on the validity of trans identities is nothing new, however. Historically, much of research pertaining to transgender and gender diverse (trans) health and wellbeing has been criticized as exploitative in nature, initiated from outside the community, and rooted in a pathologizing and paternalistic mentality aimed at defining boundaries of identity and limiting or “gate-keeping” access to trans affirmative care and
resources (Adams et al. 2017; Bauer et al.; 2019, Tagonist, 2009; Tebbe & Budge, 2016; Vincent, 2018). A substantial body of scholarship demonstrates that trans populations experience adversity and negative health and social outcomes at significantly higher rates than their cisgender counterparts (Bauer et al., 2007; Kattari & Begun, 2017; Grant et al., 2011). Yet while previously attributed to personal psychopathology (e.g.: Bradley & Zucker, 1990; Zucker & Bradley, 1995), these outcomes are increasingly viewed in the literature as the result of violence, discrimination, and social exclusion faced by trans individuals (e.g.: Austin, 2016; Shelton, 2015; Tan et al., 2020) due to hetero and cis-genderism, terms used to describe the hegemonic enforcement of the heterosexual and cisgender binary (Matsuno & Israel, 2019; Tan et al., 2020).

It’s no surprise then that interest in trans issues has grown steadily and research in the area proliferated (Bauer et al., 2019; Bockting et al., 2016). This has led some to express concern about ‘research fatigue’ in trans communities, potentially leading to trans people avoiding participation in research and resulting in further marginalization of trans voices in the literature (Bauer et al., 2019; Huckins, 2021). Yet the importance of hearing from trans voices about the things that matter to them persists. Research into the risks faced by trans people because of structural barriers, violence, and discrimination are important in establishing the case for changes to policies, practices, and attitudes that are harmful to trans people. Yet an overemphasis on narratives of deficit and risk creates a problem-focused narrative that may reinforce negative perceptions and stereotypes and contribute to a sense of hopelessness and disempowerment amongst members of the trans community (Bockting et al., 2020; Meyer, 2015; Westbrook, 2021). This can lead many trans people to construct a subjecthood based in fear and vulnerability; in turn, precious energy that might otherwise be directed toward positive social change is diverted toward “violence avoidance labour” and activism (Westbrook, 2021).

In response to these concerns, some scholars have turned to strengths-based explorations, often oriented around the construct of resilience (e.g.: Breslow, et al., 2015;
Mizock & Lewis, 2008; Singh, 2012; Singh & McKleroy, 2011). The construct of resilience has been used in trans related research examining risk and protective factors for a variety of outcomes deemed maladaptive, from homelessness (Greenfield et al., 2021, Shelton, et al., 2018) to HIV infection (Lacombe-Duncan et al., 2020), disordered eating (Watson et al., 2017) to suicidality (Cogan et al., 2020; Edwards et al., 2020). By foregrounding a resilience lens, scholars may hope to influence policy, practice, and public opinion and invite opportunities to strengthen the protective factors and processes supporting trans people to successfully navigate an often-hostile social environment (Matsuno & Israel, 2019; Singh, 2012; Singh et al., 2011; Testa et al., 2015).

Even with the goal of countering problem-focused narratives, however, researchers investigating resilience may unwittingly reinforce problematic notions of ‘successful adaptation’, rendering invisible contextual, emic knowledge and community-based processes of resilience that are key to understanding the phenomena within this population (Chown & Malcoe, 2017; Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2014). As (in)visibility is a central theme in trans related literature, this erasure is particularly troubling (Bauer, et al., 2019; Fine et al., 2018).

Given the potential for further marginalization of trans people by failing to attend to issues such as power, agency and inclusion, it is important to re-envision trans resilience research through an intersectional, social justice lens (Singh, 2016). This shifting of perspective and priorities may better align research objectives and approaches with the needs of trans people and communities. To support this shift, the current study synthesized qualitative studies that implicitly or explicitly utilized critical perspectives to resilience or strengths-focused research with trans populations to answer the question: how are researchers approaching the study of resilience with trans populations from a critical, social justice perspective?

In seeking to answer this question, this paper first discusses the construct of resilience and its application in research with queer and trans communities and orients the reader to my theoretical orientation, reflexive process, methodological approach and the limitations of the
study. I then offer an overview of the findings and present the resulting proposed framework for transformative trans resilience research, followed by an example illustrating the potential application of the model. I conclude by sharing my hopes for the use of the model to recognize and promote trans resilience both within and outside of the bounds of academia.

**Background**

**Speaking of Gender Diversity**

Using appropriate language is a central concern in research with trans populations (Adams, et al., 2017; Bauer et al., 2019; Vincent, 2018). While gender identity refers to an individual’s internal sense of where they fall either within or apart from the socially defined binary categories of male and female, individual gender identities are not of necessity rigid and fixed and likewise the language around gender diversity is young, fluid and evolving (Zimman, 2017). A critical constructivist lens invites us to consider language as “a site of meaning making and power”, open to interrogation and deconstruction (Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019). While terms such as trans* and transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) are common in the literature, they have been problematized for several reasons, including the possibility of perpetuating the idea that the transgender umbrella excludes people who do not conform to the binary of male/female, or conversely, that non-conformity is equal to transness (Adams et al., 2017; Trans Student Educational Resources, n.d.). Using terms focused on a western conceptualization of gender diversity may exclude people with culturally specific gender identities such as Indigenous Two Spirit or Samoan fa'afafine (Laing, 2018; Schmidt, 2017). Recognizing the impossibility of choosing language that addresses all such concerns, I have chosen to use ‘trans’ as a broad umbrella term encompassing the range of transgender and gender-variant identities, while acknowledging its contested nature and lack of cultural inclusivity. The terms cisgender or cis are used to specify people whose affirmed identities correspond to their sex assigned at birth, challenging the assumption that identities that align with binary sex categorization constitute the default or normative gender identity (Tebbe &
Budge, 2016). Note that the capitalized ‘CIS’ refers to the research methodology used, critical interpretive synthesis (CIS). Where fitting, the language used by the original authors of works cited has been included as written.

(Re)Conceptualizing Resilience

Concepts of risk and resilience are commonly evoked in the literature on gender and sexual minority health, mental health, and social functioning (Colpitts & Gahagan, 2016; Meyer, 2015; Mustanski et al., 2011; Singh, 2012; Singh & McKleroy, 2011). Colpitts and Gahagan’s (2017) scoping review on strengths-based LGBTQ research found that resilience was amongst the most evoked constructs across the studies, with most adopting a social psychological conceptualization of resilience, commonly defined as a “dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Luthar et al., 2000).

The social psychological model considers resilience to be both an outcome and a process, in that people can be considered to be ‘resilient’ as well as to demonstrate resilience in the face of particular risk factors (Hutcheon & Lachewicz, 2014; Ungar, 2004). Under this model, factors contributing to resilience can be individual traits and behaviours such as self-esteem, optimism or problem-solving skills as well as environmental factors such as the presence or absence of supportive relationships, and higher or lower socioeconomic status (Hutcheon & Lachewicz, 2014).

Despite its ubiquity in the literature, the social psychological model of resilience draws significant criticism for reasons related to its positivist epistemological foundations (Hutcheon & Lachewics, 2014; Ungar, 2004, 2008) and lack of consistency and clarity in definition and operationalization (Hutcheon & Lachewics, 2014; Luthar et al., 2000). Much of the research on resilience demonstrates a lack of critical analysis of the effects of systemic and structural forces acting on the populations of interest (Davis, 2016; Hart et al., 2016; Prowell, 2019; Ungar, 2018). The concept has also been problematized for failing to unpack the assumptions embedded in what is considered to constitute positive adjustment. These tend to be laden with
hegemonic, cis/hetero, ableist, white, western, neoliberal values and expectations comprised of notions such as individual self-actualization, success and 'survival of the fittest' that disregard or diminish non-dominant ways of being and engaging with the world (Garrett, 2015; Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2014; Ungar, 2008, 2011).

Responding to these concerns, post structural, postmodern and constructivist approaches give preference to narrative 'emic' understandings produced through qualitative methods designed to elucidate knowledge and meaning generated from within the population in question (Prowell, 2019). Ungar (2004, 2008, 2011) and Bottrell (2009) each argue for contextual awareness and consideration of cultural relevance, given that what may be considered to support resilience in one cultural or social context may act or be viewed very differently in another. Seen through this lens, resilience can include acts of agency, resistance, and survival that may well be viewed as maladaptive within the social psychological model (Ungar, 2008; Botrell, 2009). Hutcheon and Lashewicz (2014) call for a reframing of the construct incorporating constructivist definitions that view resilience “as constructed, shared and ordinary and as a form of connectivity” (p. 1393). According to Bottrel (2009), this reframing includes “reasserting advocacy for social justice [that] shifts the emphasis from individual to collective responsibility” (p. 323).

**Queering the Lens - Resilience and Research in Queer and Trans Populations**

Minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003, 2015) is commonly referenced in resilience research with gender and sexual minority populations. In his formulation, Meyer (2015) questions the emphasis in resilience scholarship on individual traits and processes, noting that an overreliance on an individualized conceptualization can result in a form of victim blaming in which people are shamed for their failure to “pull… themselves up by their bootstraps” (2015, p. 211). Meyer (2015) proposes an interconnected framing of resilience, emphasizing the role of the LGBTQ+ community in providing tangible and intangible resources that buffer community identified members from the effects of minority stressors (e.g., discrimination), while
acknowledging obstacles to connection due to the interaction between multiple marginalized identities, structural oppression, and social exclusions. Scholars have further identified the importance of adapting the model to address the lived experiences and needs of trans people. Testa et al.’s (2015) gender minority stress and resilience measure adapts minority stress theory to include trans specific stressors such as non-affirmation and risk of disclosure while retaining resilience factors such as ‘community connectedness’ and ‘pride’. Tan’s (2019) critical review of their model pushes for further consideration of intersectional and culturally specific factors and an acknowledgment of the role of cisnormativity.

Others have similarly argued for the importance of intersectional, feminist, and queer models of resilience that acknowledge historical and current systemic and structural factors and centre the voices of gender and sexual minorities (Chown & Malcoe, 2017; Colpitts & Gahagan, 2016) Colpitts and Gahagan (2016) for instance, suggest that LGBTQ+ models of resilience should consider the specific adversity, stigma and discrimination, and unique resilience factors experienced by gender and sexual minority people through a lens of intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) to ensure that complex intersections of marginalized identities, oppressions, risk, and protective factors are addressed.

Guidelines for ethical research with trans populations have been proposed aimed at researchers in the areas of general academics (Vincent, 2018), healthcare (Bauer et al., 2019; Adams et al., 2017) and counselling psychology (Tebbe & Budge, 2016), each aligning with trans activists in calling for an explicitly critical, collaborative and intersectional approach to research with trans communities. Tebbe and Budge’s (2016) framework for example, calls on researchers to consider key questions related to 1) collaboration and empowerment and 2) relevance and ownership, aiming to encourage researchers to critically reflect on the purpose and impact of their research with trans communities. However, there is a further need for guidance on how best to approach the study of trans resilience, given the proliferation of research in this area. The current study aims to fill this gap through applying a critical, queer,
intersectional lens to examine the approaches and assumptions of critically oriented researchers conducting qualitative studies on resilience in trans individuals and communities.

**Theoretical Framework and Reflexive Praxis**

To ground the study in the traditions of liberatory research, I leaned strongly on intersectionality, critical and queer theories and research traditions (Charmaz; 2017, Chown & Malcoe, 2017; Crenshaw, 1989). These attempt to make visible and directly challenge patriarchal, white, colonial, eurocentric, ableist, and cis/heteronormative hegemonic practices and invite a “research agenda that accounts for the intersections of race, class, and gender in the context of the lived social relations of transgender people” (Namaste, 1995, as cited in Compton et al., 2018, p. 14). Researchers in these traditions engage in critical self-reflexivity and attend to issues of power residing at the intersections of identity, including, among others, those of race, gender, and gender identity, sexuality and ability (Sudbury & Okazawa Rey, 2009). By engaging in a critical examination and highlighting social justice perspectives in the literature, I hoped to move toward an understanding of trans resilience research that is grounded in the ideals and goals of these traditions and to contribute to the validation of trans realities and to the liberation of trans people and communities. I drew extensively on Chown and Malcoe’s (2017) framework for resilience research, which incorporates intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), critical and queer theories informed by gay men’s health activism. Their model aims to replace dominant conceptualizations of resilience through the consideration of historical and structural contexts and acknowledgement of interlocking systems of domination; the recognition of agency and resistance; an intention to “centre in the margins” (p. 445); and an emphasis on self-reflexive praxis. While these ideas have been central to my process as an emerging researcher from problem identification to knowledge translation, they were particularly salient in influencing my methodological decision making, specifically in the intentional identification and selection of an explicitly critical approach to qualitative research synthesis and
in my engagement with a network of trans peer advisors and community members throughout the research process.

According to Greenhalgh and colleagues (2018), the “spurious hierarchy” of systematic reviews above other less structured methods is predicated on the positivist assumption that transparency and reproducibility equal ‘quality’ in qualitative research synthesis. Yet this idea directly conflicts with queer theory’s emphasis on multiple subjectivities and the disruption of normative, ‘neutral’ and decontextualized ways of seeing that render queer and trans identities misrecognized, unintelligible and problematic (Fine et al., 2018; Finlay, 2017). Queer theory suggests that making visible that which is overlooked and disregarded is rarely accomplished through strict adherence to structures designed to uphold the privileging of a particular ontological or epistemological position (O’Malley et al., 2018). Given the importance of situating the current study within the dominant discourses and counternarratives pertaining to both resilience and gender diversity, a CIS approach was a logical response to this challenge.

In addition to grounding my research in explicitly critical methods, I was conscious of the importance of ensuring that I was engaging in meaningful, reciprocal relationships with those directly impacted by my work. As suggested by Adams et al. (2017), I sought the guidance of trans-identified advisors with knowledge and experience as activists, community leaders, and academics working with trans communities. This informal network of advisors contributed at the design stage by helping to clarify purpose and define research goals and review and refine methods, concepts and rationale. I continued to seek guidance throughout the synthesis phase of the study to check my assumptions and understandings and engage in a reflexive dialogue about the process. Preliminary findings were presented to an online panel of trans peer advisors and a draft of this document was shared via email, with feedback subsequently incorporated into the final version of the thesis.

Beyond these methodological decisions, which were largely taken prior to commencing the study, I further drew on these theories and models as a figurative “north star” guiding me in
exploring the implications of my own identity and social locations on my practice as an emerging researcher throughout the study in an ongoing process of reflexivity. CIS, and in fact all qualitative research, is an exercise in subjectivity whose trustworthiness is predicated, not on replicable protocols and documentation, but on the researchers’ ongoing transparent, thoughtful and honest reflection on positionality and perspective in relation to the data (Charmaz, 2006; Greenhalgh et al., 2018). Yet engaging in reflexivity is neither simple nor comforting - it isn’t meant to ease your conscience so much as to dig up your unconscious, unearthing the messy tangle of roots and soil below. According to Jones (2010), “[s]elf-reflection might scratch the surface, but self-reflexivity cuts to the bone. It implicates you. Reflexivity is uncomfortable because it forces you to acknowledge that you are complicit in the perpetuation of oppression” (p. 124).

As a non-binary trans person strongly invested in equity, social justice, and structural change, I embarked on this journey passionate about engaging in research aimed at challenging harmful narratives and changing systems and structures that construct trans lives as ‘unlivable’ (Westbrook, 2021). Yet I soon found myself weighing the value of social research with its risks and costs, both subtle and apparent, for the marginalized communities it so often targets. Reflecting on the historical and current role that the research community, in concert with mental health professionals including social workers, has played and plays today in the ongoing exploitation, pathologizing, and gatekeeping of trans people (Seuss Schwend, 2020), drew my attention to the ways that I may enact power as a researcher, even as a member of the community I am researching.

This determination to align theory with practice is particularly reflected in my decision, part way through the analysis, to shift from considering both the researchers’ approach to the study of trans resilience as well as the findings of their studies. My initial objectives for the study were to answer the questions: (1) What does the existing qualitative literature say about the ways in which resilience has been conceptualized and studied in relation to trans populations?
And (2) How do trans individuals and communities enact processes of resilience in their daily lives? Yet as I began to immerse myself in the data, a tension appeared between my goal of synthesizing the findings of the studies and the guidance contained in the framework for trans resilience research that was emerging, which emphasized partnering with and centering the voices and knowledge of trans people and communities. Conducting qualitative research synthesis particularly invites the possibility of misunderstanding or misrepresenting the voices of the original research participants (Sandelowski et al., 1997) and I grew increasingly uncomfortable as I attempted to analyze research findings that were already removed from their original source and context. Choosing to narrow my analysis to consider only the approaches and orientation of the researchers rather than the results of the research resolved this tension and allowed me to feel more confident that the work I was doing was aligned with best practices for research with trans populations (Adams et al. 2017; Bauer et al., 2019; Tebbe & Budge, 2016; Vincent, 2018). This paper reports findings related to this narrowed area of inquiry, sharing what was learned about engaging in trans resilience research from the critically oriented qualitative literature and offering a potential framework for researchers interested in engaging in transformative trans resilience research.

**Method**

Given the need to better understand how the construct of resilience is taken up in the trans related literature (Colpitts & Gahagan, 2016), the current study employed a critical interpretive synthesis (CIS) (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006) approach to synthesize a purposive sample of the relevant published qualitative studies. Sandelowski et al. (1997) assert that “[e]fforts to synthesize existing qualitative research studies are seen as essential to reaching higher analytic goals” (p. 367). This imperative has led to a proliferation of methods and approaches to qualitative knowledge synthesis, divided roughly into two broad categories. Aggregative approaches tend to be grounded in realist paradigms and focus on describing and summarizing data across a range of studies; alternately, interpretive approaches emerge from a
constructivist paradigm and attempt to uncover deeper insights and understandings related to the specific phenomena in question (Drisko, 2019; Sandelowski et al., 1997).

Particularly as the goal of this study was to review critical, social justice oriented trans resilience research, a critically reflexive and interpretive approach was chosen to facilitate the emergence of meaningful insights from the literature (Dixon-Woods, et al., 2006). In contrast to the positivist, highly structured and linear approach applied to systematic and scoping reviews, researchers using CIS methodology employ an iterative, constant comparative method to question development, document search, selection, and analysis, aligning best with postmodern, critical, pragmatic, and constructivist paradigms (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Chun Tie et al., 2019; Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Drisko, 2019; McFerran et al., 2013). In particular, Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory is a natural fit with the methodology and thus my interpretation of the method drew heavily from her approach, including guidance on developing and refining questions for critical inquiry and using reflexivity and “methodological self-consciousness” to bring critical awareness to the ways aspects of self, such as worldview, values, beliefs, and positionality show up in relation to our research (Charmaz, 2017).

Research Design

Search and Selection

The first phase of the study included a bounded search of key databases and journals to establish an initial sampling frame. Focusing on recent literature, the search included peer reviewed journal articles published between January 2010 and March 2021. Articles were considered eligible for inclusion if they reported qualitative data referencing resilience or related concepts as noted in Table 2, drawn from trans people. Further inclusion/exclusion criteria are outlined in Table 1.
Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion Criteria</th>
<th>Exclusion Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific to transgender and gender diverse people, communities or populations</td>
<td>Results mixed with 2SLGBTQ+ populations unless reporting separately on trans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience or related concepts referenced in title, abstract or findings</td>
<td>participants or highlighting trans people as key participants or informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit or implied social justice and/or critical perspective</td>
<td>Excludes aggregative studies and reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original empirical qualitative or mixed methods studies including primary or</td>
<td>Excludes quantitative studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary qualitative data</td>
<td>Published prior to January 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer reviewed journal articles</td>
<td>Language other than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dated January 2010-March 2021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initial database searches were conducted using CINAHL, PsycINFO and Social Services Abstracts. Additional searches were carried out in key journals including *International Journal of Transgenderism* (alternately indexed as *International Journal of Transgender Health*), *Journal of Homosexuality* and other relevant sources. Combinations of keywords related to gender diversity and resilience were used, employing truncation and wildcards as shown in Table 2.
Table 2

Initial Search Strategy: Data Sources and Search Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Databases</strong></td>
<td>CINAHL; PsycINFO; Social Services Abstracts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain</strong></td>
<td>Keywords *truncation and wildcards employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender Identity</strong></td>
<td>Transgender or genderqueer or “gender non-conforming” or “gender diverse” or “gender variant” or “gender identity” or “gender creative” or two-spirit or “non-binary” or “trans masculine” or “trans male” or “trans guy” or “trans man” or “trans feminine” or “trans female” or “trans woman” or FTM or MTF or transsexual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resilience</strong></td>
<td>Resilience or resistance or agency or coping or “protective factor” or survival or response or capacity or wellbeing or asset or hardiness or empowerment or competence or adjustment or “positive development” or buffer or success or pride or connection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further relevant sources were located utilizing a combination of reference chaining and forward citation tracking of key papers. The adapted PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1 describes the search and selection process (Tong et al., 2012).
Critical interpretive synthesists are purposeful in their approach to selection and sampling of literature (Dixon-Woods, et al., 2006). Suri (2013) suggests that critically oriented research synthesists employ purposive sampling to select cases from the literature in order to address a particular area of critical inquiry. After removing items based on the exclusion criteria, a full-text scan was conducted to assess the remaining articles for inclusion in the sample. At this point, backward and forward citation tracking was used to identify six additional articles for potential inclusion. While identifying articles that met objective criteria was simple, assessing for
more subjective inclusion/exclusion criteria including resilience and related concepts, and
critical, social justice orientation proved more complex. Expanding beyond the common social
psychological conceptualizations of resilience, I drew on Chown and Malcoe’s (2017) framework
to search for articles that appeared to affirm the resistance and agency of trans people and
communities. I further consulted peer advisors who echoed Meyer (2015) in suggesting
screening for factors such as pride, community, connection and celebration. In order to assess
for a critical or social justice orientation, I looked for indicators of the researchers’ intent,
regardless of how well defined or executed, to name and challenge systems and structures of
oppression impacting the lives of trans people. Intentionally leaving this open to interpretation
allowed me to include articles with a range of theoretical orientations and methodological
approaches that could then be subject to critique as well as analysis (Dixon-Woods et al. 2006;
Farias & Rudman, 2016).

Synthesists using a CIS approach make use of theoretical sampling to answer changing
or emergent questions as the study progresses and stop when data saturation is reached or a
clear theoretical understanding in the form of a synthesizing argument emerges (Dixon-Woods,
et al., 2006). Of an initial 92 number of articles that met inclusion criteria, 25 articles were
selected that appeared suited to deepening an understanding of the study of trans resilience. As
my research aims narrowed in response to my reflexive process, I chose to further limit the
sample in order to focus more deeply on the methods and orientation of the researchers,
completing a detailed analysis of 18 articles. For example, I included only two of four articles
with the same lead author in the analysis, since the studies were very similar in methodology
and theoretical orientation (Singh et al., 2014; Singh & McKleroy, 2011).

In keeping with the CIS methodology, my approach to quality appraisal emphasized
situated knowledge and relevance to the understanding of the concept over strict adherence to
For the purpose of this research, all papers were found to meet the basic quality criteria for
inclusion in Table 3, as detailed by Dixon-Woods, et al. (2006, p. 4) Sampled articles are described in Table 4.

**Table 3**

*Appraisal Prompts for Informing Judgments about Quality of Papers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Theories</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the aims and objectives of the research clearly stated?</td>
<td>Is the research design clearly specified and appropriate for the aims and objectives of the research?</td>
<td>Do the researchers provide a clear account of the process by which their findings were produced?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4**

*Articles included in Critical Interpretive Synthesis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Date and Title</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Theories</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asakura, K., Lundy, J., Black, D., &amp; Tierney, C. (2020). Art as a transformative practice: A participatory action research project with trans* youth.</td>
<td>“Problematize and recast pop(ular) cultural representations about what it means to be trans” for young people”.</td>
<td>Queer theory/queer worldmaking</td>
<td>YPAR/Arts-based research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (cont.)
Articles included in Critical Interpretive Synthesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Date and Title</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Theories</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Etengoff, C (2019) Transvlogs: online communication tools for transformative agency and development.</td>
<td>“Explore how transgender individuals utilize their vlogs to resist the status quo and challenge power dynamics... and how transgender individuals use vlogs to mediate, enact, and direct transformative social change both online and offline”.</td>
<td>Expansive learning framework, Engeström’s (2011, p. 623–624) dimensions of transformative agency, transformative activist stance</td>
<td>Narrative content analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goffnett, J., Paceley, M.S. (2020) Challenges, pride, and connection: A qualitative exploration of advice transgender youth have for other transgender youth.</td>
<td>“Understand the factors transgender young people identified as necessary to share with other similarly identified transgender youth, communicate those findings to transgender youth, and make practice and research recommendations”.</td>
<td>Feminist empowerment therapy</td>
<td>CBPR, thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountz, S., Capous-Desyllas, M., &amp; Pourciau, E. (2018). “Because We’re Fighting to Be Ourselves:” Voices from Former Foster Youth who are Transgender and Gender Expansive.</td>
<td>Experiences of trans former foster youth - particularly resilience.</td>
<td>Intersectionality, queer theory, and feminist theories</td>
<td>CBPR/interviews</td>
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Table 4 (cont.)

*Articles included in Critical Interpretive Synthesis*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Date and Title</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Theories</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nicolazzo, Z. (2016). &quot;Just go in looking good&quot;: The resilience, resistance, and kinship-building of trans* college students.</td>
<td>&quot;Explore how trans* college students navigated their gendered educational context, paying particular attention to narratives of success and resilience&quot;.</td>
<td>Critical Trans Politics</td>
<td>Critical collaborative ethnography</td>
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<td>Pullen Sansfaçon, A., Hébert, W., Lee, E. O. J., Faddoul, M., Tourki, D., &amp; Bellot, C. (2018). Digging beneath the surface: Results from stage one of a qualitative analysis of factors influencing the well-being of trans youth in Quebec.</td>
<td>&quot;Identify factors that enhance trans youth's well-being as well as the factors of oppression that negatively affect it&quot;.</td>
<td>Recognition and intersectionality</td>
<td>CBPR/Grounded Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shelton, J., Wagaman, M. A., Small, L., &amp; Abramovich, A. (2018). I'm more driven now: Resilience and resistance among transgender and gender expansive youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.</td>
<td>&quot;Explore how transgender and gender expansive youth experiencing homelessness demonstrate resilience in the midst of structural constraints and oppressive narratives about who they are and who they can become&quot;.</td>
<td>Unstated</td>
<td>Qualitative exploratory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singh, A. A., &amp; McKleroy, V. S. (2011). “Just getting out of bed is a revolutionary act”: The resilience of transgender people of color who have survived traumatic life events.</td>
<td>&quot;Explore the resilience processes used by transgender people of color to cope with traumatic events&quot;.</td>
<td>Strengths based and feminist</td>
<td>Phenomenological interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singh, A. A., Meng, S. E., &amp; Hansen, A. W. (2014). &quot;I am my own gender&quot;: Resilience strategies of trans youth.</td>
<td>&quot;Explore the supports of and challenges to resilience that trans youth experience in their everyday lived experiences&quot;.</td>
<td>Liberation theology (Friere) and feminism</td>
<td>Phenomenological interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travers, A., Marchbank, J., Boulay, N., Jordan, S., &amp; Reed, K. (2020). Talking back: Trans youth and resilience in action.</td>
<td>“Explore the main challenges transgender youth experience... and how they respond to these challenges, identify how these challenges... are mediated by other vectors of vulnerability and security (race, gender, Indigeneity, class, citizenship, disability), identify practices and processes necessary to ensure that trans youth participate in social action research in an empowered way”.</td>
<td>Resilience, transformative gender justice</td>
<td>Social action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijlbrief, A., Saharso, S., &amp; Ghorashi, H. (2020). Transcending the gender binary: Gender non-binary young adults in Amsterdam.</td>
<td>“Explore how Amsterdam gender non-binary young adults experience their identity and insofar as they experience their identity as a stigmatized identity, how they cope with this stigma”.</td>
<td>Queer theory, queer politics, post structuralism, counter-narratives</td>
<td>Ethnography, participant observation, interviews</td>
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Table 4 (cont.)

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**Analysis**

A critical interpretive synthesis is an iterative, inductive process that aims at uncovering themes and generating or refining knowledge about a particular phenomenon (Dixon-Woods, et al., 2006). In this way, CIS is fundamentally a grounded theory approach that attempts to inductively generate new conceptual understandings arising from the literature (Dixon-Woods, et al., 2006). Using NVivo software and taking guidance from Charmaz’s constructivist grounded theory approach (2006), I reviewed each section of the text, asking questions of the data related to what the researchers were doing (action) and why they were doing it (intent) in order to deepen my understanding of how researchers were approaching the study of trans resilience from a critical, social justice perspective. Emergent codes were then further reviewed and refined through a process of focused coding into specific themes or *synthetic constructs*. 
While I was hopeful that theoretical integration in the form of a synthesizing argument, which "integrates evidence from across the studies in the review into a coherent theoretical framework comprising a network of constructs and the relationships between them" (Dixon-Woods, et al., 2006, p. 5) would become evident through this process, I was cautious to avoid trying to shape or manipulate its final form. I focused on allowing the data to paint its own picture of what was happening in the literature by engaging in line-by-line coding of the articles and then, through focused coding, refining and grouping codes into larger synthetic constructs or themes. In keeping with the CIS methodology, this was an iterative and recursive process rather than a linear one, with new articles inviting further questions which were then revisited in previous articles and coded into new or refined themes. In the case of this study, a synthesizing argument in the form of a framework for trans resilience research began to crystallize with the coding of the 11th article, which was further developed and tested through the analysis of the remaining articles, resulting in the final set of findings presented here.

**Limitations**

As in all research, this study is subject to limitations and constraints. One of the challenges of approaching research as a student researcher is limits on the availability of time and resources. Due to these factors, my sample was limited to qualitative peer reviewed journal articles accessible to Wilfrid Laurier University students and published between January 2010 and March 2021, primarily drawn from a small selection of databases and key journals. A more comprehensive search and broader inclusion criteria including quantitative studies, student research, and grey literature might yield greater insights and clarification. Further, while some criteria (e.g.: date of publication, language, qualitative or mixed methods) were simple to assess, others were open to interpretation (e.g.: resilience, critical, social justice). Given the subjective nature of the screening process, items excluded may similarly have had valuable knowledge that was missed. In a similar manner, selecting literature published in English only may have not only missed unique insights from research conducted in other languages but may
enact cultural imperialism by unintentionally preferencing perspectives drawn from those residing in the relatively privileged global north. The CIS method itself has also been critiqued as lacking in rigour, particularly in relation to transparency and systematicity (Depraetere, et al., 2020). Calls for reproducibility and systematicity, however, have equally been criticized as inappropriate when applied to qualitative research synthesis because such synthesis relies on the subjective engagement of the reviewer with the data in ways that are inherently impossible to reproduce (Thorne, 2017).

A final limitation has to do with analytic credibility (Tracy, 2010). Approaching synthesis as the sole researcher introduces a risk of biased or idiosyncratic interpretations (Greenhalgh et al., 2018). Just as in any qualitative research produced by a single researcher there is no definitive way to ensure that my interpretations and findings would reflect those produced by another researcher or research team. To address some of these concerns, throughout the process, I engaged in memo writing and reflexive journaling to illuminate and clarify ideas and thought processes and attend to issues of positionality and privilege (Charmaz, 2006). In addition, I engaged with trans peer advisors with knowledge of issues of resilience and/or research with trans populations throughout all stages of the research, including analysis.

Findings

The purpose of this critical interpretive synthesis was to explore the ways that resilience has been studied in critically oriented qualitative research with trans populations. Drawing from the literature, I identify three primary stances or threads: attend to power, invite complexity and orient toward change, taken by researchers in approaching the study of resilience in trans populations from a critical, social justice perspective. These three threads are interwoven from eight themes or strands describing researchers’ intentions and actions, which I outline below, each followed by a discussion of their strengths and challenges and the guidance they suggest.
Attend to Power: Naming injustice, leveling hierarchies and spotlighting the margins

The first thread of attending to power roots itself in a tradition of critical social research that recognizes that, as Carroll (2004) states, “in a socially unjust world, knowledge of the social that does not challenge injustice is likely to play a role in repeating it” (p. 3, emphasis in original). While diverse in assumption and approach, each of the studies included in this analysis demonstrated explicit or implicit critical assumptions about the impact of systems and structures of power on the lived experience of trans people. And while at times struggling to align action with intent, many further describe attempts to shift the balance of power between researchers (both cis and trans) and trans people and communities, and efforts to attend to accessibility, inclusion and representation of a diverse array of trans voices in their research.

Naming Injustice

The first strand of naming injustice involves an intention on the part of trans resilience researchers to challenge pathologizing and deficit-oriented messages about trans people and communities through a recognition and naming of the impact of interlocking structures and systems of oppression. Congruent with minority stress theory, researchers emphasized the impact of stigma and cisgenderism as significant barriers to trans resilience (e.g.: Cerezo, 2014; Goffnet & Pacely, 2020; Wagaman, et al., 2019). Nicolazzo (2016) for instance notes the “reality that genderism and transphobia… are omnipresent forms of violence that continually reify the gender binary through social discourses and practices” (p. 540). Vijlbrief and colleagues (2020) invoke queer theory to emphasize the socially constructed nature of these discourses, which nevertheless serve to delimit the range of acceptable expressions of gender and sexuality which trans people are then punished for transgressing.

Whether specifically invoking intersectionality theory or simply noting the differential impact of structural violence and stigma due to the intersections of potentially marginalized aspects of identity, researchers were careful to acknowledge the role of interlocking systems of oppression in the challenges faced by trans people (e.g.: Shelton et al., 2018; Singh et al.,
Exemplifying this stance, Travers et al., (2020) utilize a transformative gender justice framework that “emphasizes how the binary sex system intersects with other vectors of discrimination such as race, colonialism, class, ethnicity, and nationality in shaping the distribution of life chances” (p. 5), while White et al. (2020) anchor their study of Black transgender men in intersectionality and critical race theories in order to better understand the complex interplay of racism and cissexism in the lives of participants.

A clear indication of the critical orientation of selected articles, authors demonstrated a high level of commitment to naming injustice as the primary barrier to resilience amongst trans populations and implicating structural violence, stigma and cisgenderism in their ongoing marginalization. Taking up this strand, trans resilience researchers are encouraged to be explicit in shifting the focus from individual deficit and pathology to a systemic and structural analysis of the role of interlocking systems of oppression in limiting opportunities for the wellbeing and satisfaction of trans people.

**Leveling Hierarchies**

Emerging from the recognition of effects of inequity and injustice in the lives of trans people, the next strand, *leveling hierarchies*, describes attempts on the part of researchers to address imbalances of power within the research process. These attempts exist on a continuum: from engaging in personal reflexivity and naming and *bracketing* assumptions and biases to forming active partnerships with trans communities and inclusion of trans individuals on the research team as paid researchers. Emergent from this strand were notions of rooting in a shared sense of solidarity, acknowledging researcher positionality and providing opportunities for participant ownership of the research (e.g.: Bowling et al., 2020; Goffnett et al., 2020; Nicolazzo, 2016; White et al., 2020). Collaboration with participants was emphasized by many of the researchers (e.g.: Nicolazzo, 2016; Travers et al., 2020; Zeeman, et al., 2017). Hillier and colleagues’ (2020) project, for example, emerged from a collaboration between trans youth, adult service providers and the parent of a trans young person. Using participatory methods to
elicit data and building in accountability through the use of formal trans advisory boards were common strategies for researchers interested in sharing power (e.g.: Goffnet & Pacely, 2020; Travers et al. 2020). An example of this approach, Pullen Sansfaçon et al., (2018) describe their version of community-based participatory action research as, “knowledge co-construction... relying on extensive partnerships between communities and researchers (Resnik & Kennedy, 2010) and with trans youth themselves” (p. 186).

While nearly all researchers endorsed an intention of leveling the hierarchy between researcher and participant, actualization of this principle varied. Missing opportunities for shared meaning-making with participants, several of the studies relied on (often cisgender) researcher reflexivity and bracketing of assumptions to address issues of power (e.g.: Cerezo et al., 2014; Singh & McKleroy, 2011). This strand encourages trans resilience researchers to commit to substantive and meaningful efforts to level hierarchies, in order to best facilitate the process of generating collaborative knowledge about trans resilience in partnership with trans people and communities.

**Spotlighting the Margins**

Placing emphasis on representation, inclusion and accessibility, the third strand of spotlighting the margins involves the intention of centering the expert, situated knowledge and varied and complex lived experiences of trans people, particularly those with multiply marginalized identities. Disrupting the long tradition of researchers and academics speaking for and about trans people, researchers positioned their participants as experts in their own lives and experiences (e.g.: Shelton et al., 2018; Singh & McKleroy, 2011; Wagaman et al., 2019), in ways that “privilege counter-discursive, trans-situated language and knowledge” (Burdge, 2014, p. 360). Emphasizing the concept of representation, Asakura et al. (2019) for instance, invited trans youth to use art-based exploration to respond and recast normative images of trans people to better reflect the complexity of their lived realities.

Reflective of guidelines for ethical trans research, researchers attempted to address
issues of accessibility and eliminate barriers to participation through such efforts as conducting
interviews in the primary language of participants and in locations identified by participants as
safe/comfortable (e.g.: Cerezo, et al., 2014; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2018). Some researchers
sought waivers of parental consent from their research ethics board in order to include trans
youth not old enough to give informed consent based on standard protocols, an important
consideration, given that many trans youth are unable to be open about their identities within
their families of origin (e.g.: Goffnett & Paceley, 2020; Travers et al., 2020). Additionally, many
researchers partnered with community organizations serving trans populations, building trust
and facilitating connections with potential participants. Bowling et al.’s., (2020) study specifically
focused on community resilience in gender diverse individuals, partnering with a community
organization to assist with recruitment, provide interview space and inform interview questions.
Like other projects in the sample, they also trained and employed a member of the trans
community to conduct the interviews, further promoting comfort and accessibility for potential
participants. Focusing on the inclusion of diverse voices, several studies specifically explored
the experiences of multiply marginalized trans individuals and communities (e.g.: Cerezo et al.,
2014; A. Singh, 2012; White et al., 2020). Mountz and colleagues (2018), for example, highlight
the experiences of trans former foster youth of diverse racial and ethnic identities, while Singh
and McKleroy, (2011) explore the resilience of transgender people of colour with lived
experiences of trauma.

While most researchers recognized the importance of including diverse trans
participants in studies, some noted difficulties in actualizing their intentions to do so (e.g.: 
Asakura et al., 2020; Vijlbrief et al., 2020; Travers et al., 2020). Creating more opportunity for
the shared construction of meaning while further working to reduce barriers to inclusion and
participation may allow research to better reflect the varied and complex lived experiences of
trans people. This strand encourages trans resilience researchers to strive for balance between
centering and the voices of trans people and ensuring that research participation is voluntary,
consensual, meaningful, beneficial, and where appropriate, fairly compensated.

**Invite Complexity: Complicating Resilience Constructs and Validating Diverse Realities**

Furthering the intention to move away from reductive and stereotypical understandings of what it means to be trans, a second anchoring thread, *inviting complexity*, involves viewing trans people and communities as complex, varied and possessed of both individual and collective wisdom, strength and capacity. This stance encourages researchers to problematize and expand their conceptualization of resilience and to approach the research in ways that subvert simplistic binary understandings of strength and vulnerability, adversity and success, identity, gender and sexuality, while still orienting toward an understanding of factors that positively influence the lived experiences of trans people.

**Complicating resilience constructs**

Challenging social psychological views of resilience, researchers taking up the strand of *complicating resilience constructs* took positions that expanded and disrupted common perspectives in strengths-oriented scholarship with trans populations. Studies drew on a range of critical theories and approaches such as queer worldmaking (Asakura et al., 2020), critical trans politics (Nicolazzo, 2016) and transformative gender justice (Travers et al., 2020) to encompass a greater level of complexity and expansiveness of the construct suited to the aims of their research, rooting their understanding of resilience in the emic, localized perspective of trans people and communities. Vijlbrief et al.’s (2020) critical ethnography invokes the concept of queer counternarratives to explore how non-binary young adults challenge dominant gender discourse and demonstrate resistance to social stigma. Researchers pushed back against binaries of risk versus resilience, arguing for a more multilayered and nuanced understanding of the lived realities of trans people (e.g.: Asakura, 2020; Goffnett & Paceley, 2020), as in Hillier et al.’s (2020) study, which drew on the concept of *situated agency* to explain the complex interplay of contextual and intrapersonal factors that constrain the choices and opportunities of trans young people.
An emphasis on enacted strategies of resilience was evident in the studies (e.g.: Etengoff, 2019; Nicolazzo, 2016; Zeeman et al., 2017). Nicolazzo (2016) refers to this active process as “doing resilience” (p. 538), noting that trans individuals actively pushed back against the pervasive genderism and heteronormativity in their environments, regardless of whether they perceived themselves as resilient. Inclusive of concepts of resistance and personal agency, this notion of enacted resilience was invoked to highlight particular agentive acts of trans people that may otherwise be viewed as signs of pathology. Illustrating the point, Shelton, et al, (2018) discuss the ways that trans youth experiencing homelessness exercise choice and agency about their living situation in the face of transphobia, noting that “[t]hese choices made by [trans youth and young adults] YYA can be viewed as a strength, as YYA knowing what is right for them and actively pursuing that through intentional choices, rather than as non-compliance with housing placements” (p. 152).

Researchers also invoked notions of relational resilience, emphasizing the role of social support, belonging, community and connection (e.g.: Etengoff, 2019; Goffnett & Paceley, 2020; Wagaman et al., 2019) Singh argues that, “[f]or persons who have multiple historically marginalized identities, relational resilience becomes “an outcome of one’s ability and opportunities to connect, reconnect, and resist disconnection” (p. 40). Reflective of minority stress theory, Bowling et al.’s (2020) study specifically explored perceptions of community resilience amongst trans people, noting the importance of identity in creating a sense of belonging that facilitates access to trans specific social supports.

Even with a more nuanced understanding of resilience and a recognition of the diversity and complexity of trans lives and experiences however, many of the studies still focused more on evoking strategies of survival and coping in the face of adversity than on understanding the ways that trans people live active, fulfilling, and successful lives of meaning and purpose (Burdge, 2014). By taking up this strand, trans resilience researchers are guided to look beyond cis-centric, binary notions of risk and resilience toward a dialectical, empowered, situated and
relational understanding of resilience; effectively *queering* the construct of resilience to better reflect the complexity and nuance intrinsic to the lived realities of trans and gender diverse individuals and communities.

**Validating diverse realities**

Related to this complicated and queered understanding of resilience is the strand of *validating diverse realities*, which included themes related to disrupting dominant binary and stereotyped understandings of gender and identity, avoiding sensationalizing and generalization and disrupting myths of a monolithic trans community. Researchers emphasized *thick descriptions* and personal storytelling to highlight the diversity and unique perspectives of trans individuals at the micro level, while weaving these individual narratives into the broader tapestry of mezzo and macro contextual realities that influenced and constrained the choices and opportunities available to those who transgress the boundaries of static and normative gender binaries.

Queer theory orients researchers toward consideration of the messiness and complexity of identity and validation of the multiplicity of trans lives and experiences (e.g.: Asakura, 2019; Nicolazzo, 2016; Vijlbrief et al., 2020). Authors demonstrated a recognition of the divergent goals and ideals of trans people in relation to upholding or rejecting the requirement to conform to binary gendered and heteronormative behaviours, roles and presentation (e.g.: Etengoff, 2019; Nicolazzo, 2016; Vijlbrief et al., 2020). As Burdge (2014) notes, “[t]he transgender population is a diverse one, made of up of individuals whose identities bend, cross, violate, reject, resist, transgress, or otherwise transcend traditional gender categories” (p. 356).Researchers were attentive to the harmful impact of stereotypical portrayals of trans people centreing on notions of victimhood vs. deviance (e.g.: Burdge, 2014; Hillier et al., 2020). Asakura and colleagues (2019) study for instance, aims to counter such falsely dichotomous narratives by inviting trans youth to respond to sensationalized or stereotypical representations
from popular culture and media, such as the ‘brave or ‘inspirational’ trans person, intended for the curious consumption of a cisgender audience.

Researchers demonstrated a recognition of the impact of intersections of identity on perceptions of who trans people can be (e.g.: Singh & McKleroy, 2011; Travers, 2020). Pointing to the over-criminalization of trans youth of colour, Hillier et al. (2020) are pointed in their assertion that “[w]hether suggesting trans-youth-as-criminal or trans-youth-as-victim, any monolithic emphasis on who trans students are threatens to collapse the dynamism of trans students into a psychologically, socially, legally, and politically “at-risk population” (p. 385).

As noted by Etengoff (2019), “transnormative scripts are disrupted by narratives that recognize and applaud the diversity and intersectionality of the trans community” (p. 141). This strand encourages trans resilience researchers to avoid sensationalized and stereotypical portrayals of gender diversity, destabilizing prominent depictions of trans people as alternately deviant and damaged or pitiable and brave, and reorienting toward a more nuanced perspective that validates and honours the humanity of trans and gender diverse individuals and the multidimensionality of trans lives and experiences.

Orient toward Change: Emphasizing Empowerment, Aiming for Influence and Shifting the Narrative

Interwoven with attending to power and inviting complexity, the third anchoring thread, orienting toward change, encourages trans resilience researchers to take an activist stance, engaging in research practices aimed at supporting the empowerment and growth of participants and mobilizing knowledge toward transforming trans-oppressive policy, practice and discourse. Directly countering dominant, deficit-oriented depictions of trans lives is a key aspect of this orientation, aligning with trans activists and scholars who continue to call for a shift from one dimensional, pathologizing framing of the struggles faced by members of these communities.
Emphasizing empowerment

Strongly connected to goals of addressing hierarchies and ensuring representation, the strand of emphasizing empowerment was evident through elements such as facilitation of mentorship and connection (e.g.: Asakura et al., 2020), valuing of participant agency and authority (e.g.: Burdge, 2014; Etengoff, 2019), and support of creativity, learning, growth and activism (e.g.: Goffnet & Pacely; 2020; Nicolazzo, 2016). For some researchers, particularly in the earlier studies in the sample, simply orienting inquiry toward resilience and strengths was viewed as empowering for participants, who are so often the target of deficit-focused narratives and investigation (e.g.: Burdge, 2014; Singh & McKleroy, 2011, Singh et al., 2014). For others, a stronger commitment to active empowerment was evident in the use of participatory, community based, social action and arts-based research methods, including many of the most recent studies in the sample (e.g.: Asakura et al., 2020; Mountz et al, 2018). A particularly ambitious example of an empowering, participatory research project, Travers and colleagues (2020) study centres on collaboration with a trans advisory committee who exercised substantive control and decision-making regarding the direction and outcome of the project.

Researchers further emphasized empowerment through facilitating community connections and providing mentorship (e.g.: Hillier et al., 2020; Nicolazzo, 2016) and through creating opportunities for activism (e.g.: Goffnett & Pacely, 2020; Travers et al., 2020). Asakura and colleagues’ (2020) participatory action research study focused on shared processes of meaning making, providing trans youth with opportunities to explore complex issues of identity and representation and engage in processes of “queer world-making” in relationship with trans adult mentors. In the study, trans youth were invited to deconstruct and re-imagine popular representations of trans identity, deepening their self-knowledge and gaining a sense of solidarity and connection with a diverse array of current and historic trans and gender diverse peers, elders and activists. This allowed youth to engage in a form of “effective, everyday activism” through sharing their creative works and “challenging dominant and normative
ideologies” (p. 1072).

Like resilience, the construct of empowerment can easily be used to reinforce dominant values and ideals which fail to reflect the values and lived experiences of many trans people, particularly those with multiple marginalized identities. However, supported by critical, social justice perspectives and strands of naming injustice and leveling hierarchies, the strand of emphasizing empowerment encourages researchers to focus on generativity, building on participants’ and community members’ critical awareness and sense of agency and engaging in collaborative acts of queer world-making.

**Aiming for influence**

Picking up the strand of aiming for influence, many researchers took an activist stance in research and reporting, prioritizing change in the material circumstances and treatment of trans people. At the micro level, authors pushed direct service providers such as educators, counsellors and medical professionals to adopt and apply trans-affirming values and principles in practice and policy decision-making (e.g.: Cerezo et al., 2014; Hillier et al., 2020; Zeeman, et al., 2017). Suggestions were directed toward promoting practitioner self-awareness through reflective practices, encouraging professionals working with trans populations to acknowledge the effect of cisgenderism and stigma on their own biases and assumptions about gender diversity (e.g.: Singh & McKleroy, 2011; Travers et al., 2020). Discussing the need to provide affirming care to Black transgender men, White et al. (2020), for example, state that, “counselors must critically examine internal biases and seek consultation and supervision when working with complex intersectional experiences” (p. 262).

Recognizing the inadequacy of individual efforts in the face of structural and systemic marginalization, recommendations further target governments and institutions at the macro level to make changes to policy and law intended to reduce barriers and discrimination and increase access to needed supports and resources (e.g.: Goffnett & Paceley, 2020; Hillier et al., 2020; Mountz et al., 2018). Referencing Spade (2011), Nicolazzo (2016) proposes that educators
practice “trickle up activism” (p. 554), theorizing that inclusive policies for the most marginalized on campus will lead to a more generally equitable environment for all students. Further recommendations pressure those in positions of power to provide adequate training, support and resources to direct service providers to ensure effective implementation of trans-affirming policies and practices (e.g.: Hillier et al., 2020). For example, Mountz et al. (2018) advocate for trans affirming LGBTQ competency training and ongoing coaching and support for all child welfare professions.

Efforts at influence were also directed toward researchers, offering recommendations for both areas of study and approaches to research with trans communities. Suggesting directions for future research, authors noted gaps in the literature that might reveal or expand on knowledge of the barriers and pathways to resilience for the trans populations included in their studies (e.g.: Cerezo et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2014; Zeeman et al., 2017). Goffnet and Pacely (2020) for instance, suggest that future research should consider the role of pride in facilitating resilience in transgender youth. Authors also spoke to the importance of employing participatory and empowering research methods and engaging collaboratively with trans communities, in order to positively influence resilience at both the individual and structural level (e.g.: Goffnett & Pacely, 2020; Travers, 2020). Etengoff (2019) encourages practitioners to shift from interventionist to collaborative research models, noting the importance of “translate[ing] transformative developmental theory into transformative research designs” (p. 152).

Historically, much of the research pertaining to trans health and wellbeing has been critiqued as exploitative and pathologizing, contributing to research fatigue and pervasive negative perceptions of trans people. This strand encourages trans resilience researchers to take an activist stance, engaging in efforts at engagement, advocacy and contribution, that while challenging, can be particularly meaningful to trans participants who are so often asked to share intimate details of their lives, with little to no benefit to themselves or their communities.
Shifting the Narrative

Furthering this intention to influence change in the lives of trans people, researchers taking up the strand of shifting the narrative oriented toward generating and sharing trans-affirmative alternatives to normative discourses about gender diversity and trans lives. Researchers adopted an explicit strengths orientation in order to elicit the ways trans people successfully assert their identity while navigating oppressive social environments (e.g.: Goffnett & Pacely, 2020; Singh et al., 2014). Exemplifying this approach, Singh and McKleroy (2011) use a strengths-based approach to recognize and honour the resilience of transgender people of colour who have experienced trauma. A recognition of pride in identity was also apparent in the framing of the studies (e.g.: Mountz et al., 2018; Shelton et al., 2015). For instance, noting an intention to look beyond narratives of survival in the face of hostility, Burdge’s (2014) study focuses on participants’ exploration of the positive aspects of a gender diverse identity.

Some researchers placed emphasis on countering stereotypical representations of trans people as vulnerable, damaged and deviant, with narratives that demonstrate the depth and multiplicity of trans lives and experiences (e.g.: Burdge, 2014; Hillier et al., 2020) For example, Vijlbrief et al. (2020) emphasize the ways that gender non-binary young adults develop and assert personal and collective counternarratives to dominant, binary conceptualizations of gender, “to resist social stigma and as a source of resilience” (p. 103). Whether explicit or implied, the intention to counter dominant narratives regarding trans people encouraged researchers to design studies intended to reveal and disseminate counternarratives consisting of meaning generated in the margins through storytelling, discourse analysis and other expressive means (e.g.: Etengoff et al., 2019; Nicolazzo; 2016). For example, emphasizing the value of a participatory, arts-based approach in both deepening exploration and sharing knowledge, Asakura et al. (2020), note that “[u]nlike traditional research dissemination activities, such as journal publication, art facilitated an avenue where youths’ deeply personal stories and
understanding of trans* representation could be viscerally and emotionally experienced by the audience” (pp. 1073-1074).

With a few exceptions (e.g.: Asakura et al., 2020; Mountz et al., 2018; Traver et al., 2020), however, it appeared that researchers focused most knowledge translation efforts on those in positions of power in practice, policy, and academia, missing opportunities to share knowledge back to those most directly impacted by the dominant deficit-oriented narratives about who they are and what they can expect from their lives. In discussing these ideas with peer advisors, it was noted that a continued focus on narratives of danger and threat versus coping and survival risks painting (or reinforcing) a bleak picture of life for trans people that may be particularly harmful to trans youth and young adults who are already inundated with stereotypical and limiting stories of a future that is hostile, dangerous and depressing. (D. McFarlane, personal communication, October 22, 2021). This strand guides trans resilience researchers to design their research in ways that generate counternarratives that shift the discourse on gender diversity to better reflect the richness of trans lives and their agentive acts of resistance to cisgenderism and structural violence and to ensure that these new stories are shared back to trans people, particularly trans youth and their families, who most need to see them.

**Discussion**

Given that principles of social justice are foundational to the study and practice of social work, I was particularly interested in examining the questions, assumptions, objectives and strategies that are most salient to the application of a critical, social justice lens to resilience oriented research with trans populations. I hoped that through engagement with the existing literature, a framework for transformative trans resilience research could be synthesized, identifying key elements that promote the recognition, empowerment and liberation of both individual research participants and the communities to which they belong. In other words, I was not just interested in finding out how researchers observe and describe the phenomenon of
resilience amongst trans populations, but how the process of research itself could positively influence the individual and contextual factors that lead to resilience within the population.

Speaking to researchers and scholars interested in working with trans communities, Singh (2016) encourages us to “move further toward trans liberation” (p. 1050). This study, grounded firmly in an ethic of critical, liberatory research, is an attempt to take up that call. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that my work does not stand on its own; it rests on the shoulders of the researchers, scholars and activists, like those included in this synthesis, who have pushed the field toward more collaborative, affirming and liberatory approaches to research with trans people. The results of this study compliment and build on recent efforts emerging from trans communities and their allies to identify principles and practices that are congruent with ethical and socially just research with trans communities.

Based on the results of this CIS study, I propose the Web of Transformative Trans Resilience Research (WTTRR) model (Figure 2), which provides a structure on which to build collaborative resilience research with trans populations. The imagery of the web is intentional, invoking notions of interconnection, kinship and support. The model names relationships more than discrete elements - the strands are interwoven and mutually reinforcing. For example, in naming the impacts of stigma and structural violence, researchers are more likely to complicate social psychological conceptualizations of resilience as qualities and traits internal to the individual. In recognizing interlocking systems of oppression, they are likely to validate diverse realities and attend to inclusion and accessibility. Like a web, the model is strongest at the centre, where the strands are most tightly woven and active, and weakest at the periphery where threads are separate, and action gives way to good intentions.
Figure 2

Web of transformative trans resilience research (WTTRR).

Note. This model provides a framework for researchers interested in engaging in liberatory research with trans populations.

Weaving Together: The Gender Generations Project

In order to demonstrate the utility of the proposed WTTRR framework in guiding strengths and resilience oriented research with trans communities, I will use an illustrative example based on the research project outlined in the anthology, Trans Youth Stories: an Intergenerational Dialogue After the “Trans Tipping Point” (Herriot & Fry, 2021). Emerging from a series of writing retreats for trans youth, the “Trans Tipping Point” project began as a University of Victoria research study aimed at increasing representation of the messy, complex and multi-dimensional lives and experiences of trans youth. Renamed by participants the “Gender Generations Project” (GGP), the initial study has grown into an intergenerational arts collective that brings together trans youth and trans adult mentors to connect and exchange experiences, skills and knowledge and to create and share arts-based representations that
reflect the fullness and complexity of their lived experiences. Examined through the lens of the WTTRR framework, I suggest that the GGP presents an example of truly transformative research centering trans youth stories and generatively strengthening the resilience of participants, adult mentors and the broader community of trans people.

In full disclosure, my personal experience with the GGP, while limited primarily to offering housing, transportation, pancake flipping, dishwashing and providing an appreciative audience for karaoke performances and art gallery openings, was nevertheless one of the most impactful experiences in my recent memory, invoking profound shifts in my understanding of and relationship with self, others and the world. The sense of intergenerational connection, collaboration and community that emerged from these retreats is best reflected in Asakura et al.’s (2019) description of the concept of queer-worldmaking, in which “non-heteronormative social groups structure and cultivate their own spaces of existence” (p.1067) casting non-normative gender and sexual identities as not just acceptable but desirable.

**Attending to Power**

“You can’t be token trans if everyone’s trans”

Tash McAdam, GGP mentor (Herriot & Fry, 2021)

Taking up the WTTRR’s first strand of naming injustice, the GGP project was grounded from the outset in an intention to name and disrupt the impact of structures and systems of power in the lives of trans people. According to its initiators, the project emerged from a discussion about how they could use their structural privilege as white, queer, cisgender women to centre and amplify the voices of young trans people who, they noted, are so often viewed by cisgender adult researchers as objects of scrutiny rather than experts in their own lives and experiences (Herriot & Fry, 2021).

The strands of leveling hierarchies and spotlighting the margins are evident in the vision for the project as an intentionally non-ciscentric, collaborative and intergenerational participatory action research project. Aware of the tension between decentering cisgender perspectives and
asking for further, often unpaid, labour from an already taxed population, effort was taken to ensure the project’s primary beneficiaries were the trans youth participants themselves. This was achieved through outlining objectives such as ensuring “that each youth feels welcome, valued and that they share control and leadership of the project as a whole” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 196). Reflecting on the design of the retreats, the cisgender project initiators further emphasize this commitment to centering trans participants and mentors, noting that, “although we all shared meals and downtime together, the workshops themselves were strictly trans only spaces” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 199). Fundraising was undertaken to ensure mentors were compensated for their time and contributions.

The project attended to accessibility and inclusion by providing food, transportation and billeting and through the “quiet, unglamorous and behind the scenes work” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p.194) the project initiators did to build relationships with and between local queer and trans youth-serving organizations in order to reach potential participants. Consistent with my findings, the organizers note struggles to attract participants with less dominant identities, which they attribute in part to the identities of the project initiators, both cis, white, educated and able-bodied women, and the demographics of the communities they connected with, as well as factors such as transmisogyny and the requirement for parental consent to participate.

While important to the study, the goal of submitting a manuscript of the youth’s writing for publication was viewed as secondary to other objectives. Yet the focus on storytelling through writing and art effectively centred participants’ own thoughts and interpretations of their lives and experiences as the primary source of knowledge in the study. Intended as an intergenerational dialogue between trans youth participants and adult trans scholars, the leveling of hierarchies and centering of the voices of trans participants and adult mentors is most apparent in the organization of the book itself. Following a brief introduction by the project initiators, the chapters are structured in a way that literally places the youth’s writing and artwork at the centre, bookended at the front by a brief orientation to the topic and the end with a
scholarly response to the themes, images and ideas invoked by their work. Similarly, the chapter on methodology avoids a cis-dominant voice, being primarily written from the perspective of three of the adult mentors in reflection on their experiences with the project.

The success of efforts to attend to power are reflected in the sense of agency and ownership the youth participants have of the project. I was lucky enough to witness this myself on multiple occasions, most recently when I happened to catch two of the youth being interviewed on the local CBC station in the lead up to the launch party for their newly published books. Hearing them speak about their experiences with the project was a reminder of the importance of trusting the wisdom of trans youth. As mentor Kori says, “it’s also our responsibility to take a step back and recognize that we don’t have any grounds to be authorities in their lives… if anything we have a responsibility to be resources in their lives” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 197).

Inviting Complexity

“Either way, you’re right about one thing: I am not simple”

Christopher, GGP participant (Herriot & Fry, 2021)

An intention to invite complexity in representations of trans youth provided the initial motivation for the study, with project initiators lamenting what they saw as the predominance of one-dimensional, binary narratives of “tragedy or triumph” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 1).

Validating diverse realities took the form of an invitation to youth to tell their own stories and make meaning of their own experiences, not filtered through any predefined categories or questions but through the process of reflection and creative self-expression. The project initiators, recognizing the multi-storied realities inhabited by the youth, chose not to focus the study on either risks or resilience but on providing the opportunity to explore the both/and/neither complexities of being young, trans and human in a cis- and adult-centric society. Additionally, while less successful than hoped, mentors and participants were sought who would reflect a broad range of racial and cultural backgrounds, gender identities, abilities
and other aspects of identity, reflecting the goal of increasing the diversity of perspectives present in the project.

Taking up the strand of complicating resilience constructs involved a recognition that for some trans youth, merely existing can be seen as an act of resilience. Notions of enacted resilience are reflected by mentor Kori who notes that, “the idea that we’ll grow up, and we will exist, and we will thrive and we’ll create valuable cultural resources. That is resistance” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 201). Invoking relational resilience, mentor Serena reflects on the relationships and connections built through the GGP: “[w]e’re modelling, through our intergenerational relationships, families that don’t fit the nuclear mould, multi-family and multi-generational kinds of networks. Collective networks that reject the heteropatriarchy” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 201). Resilience is expressed by participants in ideas of legitimacy and belonging, to themselves, to family, to community and to the world. Responding to youth’s writings on the body, trans scholar Dr. Jake Pyne writes, “in essence, with their metaphors of natural phenomena, these writers locate themselves firmly in the natural world, with coming out or transition as part of a legitimate life course; not a departure from live, but life itself” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 68).

Finally, the GGP invites complexity and embodies resilience in the form of pride and celebration of the beauty and multiplicity of trans experience. It is a highly memorable experience walking into a room full of trans youth who are gathered together not to talk about problems, fight for recognition or ask for support, but to laugh, play, create and connect with caring trans adult mentors, allies, and especially each other. As mentor Kori states, “there’s this extra sparkle when they get to come and they get to be these creative powerhouses where also their transness isn’t the defining factor of who they are. It’s like a defining factor of how they belong. But like, they’re not “the trans kid.”” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 199).
Orienting Toward Change

“The world probably won’t stay dumb forever, and transphobia is ticking down slowly. So why watch it burn away slowly when you can torch it straight from the bottom with your own hands?”

Yakusinn DeBoer, GGP participant (Herriot & Fry, 2021)

The initiators of the GGP are explicit in the project’s orientation toward change through challenging dominant discourses regarding trans youth. Rather than set the stage by elaborating scary statistics and sobering facts to convince the reader of the importance of the study, the writers open with a declaration: “this book began as a conversation and we hope it will spark many more” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 1). They go on to share their aspirations to highlight diverse representations and provoke dialogue about the varied and multi-layered lives of trans youth.

Alignment with the WTTRR strand employing empowerment through valuing agency, learning and growth is evident in foundational goals of the project: that trans youth participants acquire new knowledge related to writing, trans history and culture, that they produce writing they are proud of, and that they be supported to take on leadership in relation to sharing the knowledge they produce. Explaining the process of collaborative planning undertaken with participants, the project initiators describe closing the retreats with Sunday morning meetings in which the youth are supported to engage in informed decision-making related to budgeting, future activities and mentor involvement. Several participants were mentored in co-writing funding applications, and some were later hired into paid leadership positions alongside trans adult mentors, as the project initiators stepped back into supportive, background roles.

Regarding workshops, mentors are described as ‘adapting on the fly’ in order to respond to the needs and interests of the youth, with “learning and programming… continually circular and collaborative rather than a hierarchy of adult “knowers” and youth “learners” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 200). This emphasis on empowerment feels particularly meaningful when one
considers the lack of agency typically afforded to trans youth in so many areas of their lives - a theme threaded throughout the stories, poems and images shared by the participants.

The strand *aiming for influence* is most evident in the dissemination activities and resources emerging from the project. In addition to the more adult-oriented, scholarly book reviewed here, a second book entitled “Growing up Trans: In our Own Words” is aimed at young readers, with a stated goal of “offering a toolkit for all young people about what acceptance and support for the trans community looks like” (Herriot & Fry, 2021). Each of the two books centres narrative, poetry and visual art produced by participants, while including age-appropriate suggestions, reflective of the relative power and influence of the presumed audience, for increasing safety, acceptance and inclusion and responding to and disrupting damaging, trans-negative discourse, policies, practices and behaviours. In addition to these publications, subsequent years of the project saw youth present artwork and writing in a professionally curated public gallery show, while a planned cabaret featuring trans youth performances was unfortunately cancelled due to Covid restrictions. Of particular note, rather than academic papers and conference presentations, the focus of dissemination activities is on reaching those with immediate influence and importance in the lives of these youth - parents and family members, peers, community members, educators, mental health and health care professionals and most importantly, other trans youth and adults.

Picking up the final strand of the WTTRR, *shifting the narrative*, the GGP invites participants to use art and storytelling to broaden the lens through which trans youth are seen and understood. As noted by the project initiators, the stories, poems, essays and images these youth have so generously shared effectively counteract the simplistic, binary narratives about trans young people (Herriot & Fry, 2021). The stories here are anything but one-dimensional: while many are heartbreaking, featuring painful descriptions of dysphoria, mental illness, bullying and family rejection, others are celebratory and uplifting, optimistic, introspective, insightful, playful and lighthearted, defiant, irreverent or wise - many a bit of each at once. They
reflect the full range of experience in ways that anyone, trans or cis, young or old, can easily connect to and understand. The importance of this cannot be overstated - it may very well be lifesaving for youth who are struggling to fight their way out of the sea of despair, transphobia and cisgenderism to the fresh clean air of possibility. The gift these youth give to other trans people, young and old, through their involvement with the GGP, is the opportunity to see ourselves reflected, in all our messy humanness - shifting the lens to take in the whole picture rather than just the thumbnail. For those of us who had the opportunity to see the project in action, the shift was all the more evident and meaningful. Mentor Serena explains it best when she shares the sense of possibility that emerged from her experience with the project: “I realized I wanted to be a parent because of the [GGP], and that I could be a parent. It’s not something I had thought I was capable of before” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 201).

**Conclusion**

The stories we tell shape the way we see and understand the world and the stories most often told about trans people tend to paint a bleak and disheartening picture. As transgender scholar Dr. Lee Airton writes in *Trans Youth Stories*, “[a]sk any transgender kid with Internet access about research on people like them and they will bring up rates of things like violence, suicide and self-harm” (Herriot & Fry, 2021, p. 99). Echoing this sentiment, research participant Christopher (Herriot & Fry, 2021) references the often-cited statistic about trans youth suicide: “The word is 40 per cent. It is our magic number, our dancing death toll, ever changing but never resolved” (p. 173). As Airton notes, stories like this remind us that researchers working with trans populations should consider carefully the “unintended consequences” of the stories we tell about trans people, even those oriented around the construct of resilience (Herriot & Fry, 2021).

The studies included here and the threads identified in my CIS analysis offer the outline of an alternative story, grounded in researchers’ efforts to engage in critical, strengths-oriented research aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of trans people and communities. This is the intent
of the WTTRR framework, to further support researchers' efforts to use research as a tool for liberation and generativity in partnership with trans people. My hope is that the framework will support the design and implementation of more studies with trans populations that generate the sense of recognition, connection and possibility that the GGP offers to participants, mentors and observers. Rather than a rigid set of guidelines, it is intended as a structure on which to build studies, that, like the GGP, are responsive to the specific interests, concerns, needs and capacities of the trans people and communities who are at the heart of the research. While firmly rooted in an anti-oppressive social work perspective, it is my hope that the WTTRR framework will be used by scholars across and between the wide range of academic disciplines with the potential to influence the well-being of the trans community.

Beyond its application in research, I forward the argument that the model is a useful framework in which to ground any practice, project or intervention intended to foster the wellbeing of trans people and communities. I encourage health and mental health care practitioners, educators and policymakers to consider how the eight strands of the WTTRR might influence their practice to become more affirming, empowering and effective in supporting and enhancing the resilience of trans people. To this end, I suggest that further explorations should be undertaken to test and refine the framework for use in a range of settings, both within and outside of research and academia.
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