

Table of Contents

Lenne, Eline - #5346 - Drawing on Arts-Based Methods to Elicit Transgender and Gender Diverse Children's Experiences in Health Care	1
Abstract submission for Institutional Repository	1



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Drawing on Arts-Based Methodologies to Elicit Transgender and Gender Diverse (TGD) Children's Experiences in Health Care

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Keywords

Transgender Persons; Caregivers; Quality Improvement; Health Services Accessibility

Abstract

Research Objective:

Understand how prepubescent transgender and gender diverse (TGD) children navigate gender and experience pediatric care with a dual purpose of informing clinical practice and presenting alternative methods for research with children. Centering their perspectives is critical to improving care for this age group, ultimately improving TGD health.

Study Design:

A community-engaged participatory arts-based study involving drawing and narrative interviews with prepubescent TGD children (n=15) in the Pacific Northwest. Participants drew pictures about their gender and pediatric care experiences and guided the analysis and interpretation of their artwork, informing subsequent interviews. Interviews are coded and interpreted using mixed deductive- inductive thematic analysis at the semantic level, and verified by participants and near-peer community partners. The combination of multiple data sources that represent both stimuli and verifiers of perceptions provide methodological triangulation.

Population Studied:

School-aged prepubescent TGD children (ages 6 to 9) in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and their primary caregivers.

Principal Findings:

Early findings suggest that TGD children do not feel sufficiently supported in pediatric settings, which impacts their sense of safety and agency in the clinical context. Results will inform changes to clinical practice to improve gender affirmation for prepubescent children, positively impact child-caregiver relationships, and ultimately improve health care and wellbeing for TGD people. Observations related to the implementation of novel methodologies will inform future research practices intended to include younger children as active agents in the knowledge production process.

Conclusions:

There are missed opportunities to positively impact children's health and caregiver-child relationships when gender affirming care is overlooked in the pediatric context. This study provides first-hand multi-media perspectives to inform improvements in prepubescent gender affirming pediatric care. We expect to learn how children navigate their gender identity in relation to others, and what role pediatric providers play in supporting their conception of gender identity and their sense of gender affirmation. Findings will inform intervention strategies to improve care, support, and health outcomes for TGD children and their families.