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Cisgenderism and Certitude: Parents of Transgender Children Negotiating Educational Contexts

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Abstract
In accounting for their experiences of having a transgender child, cisgender parents often make recourse to a trope of loss to account for their journeys. A focus on loss is also evident in guides for parents and academic writing. In this article we seek to produce an alternate account of loss, one that shifts the focus away from transgender children themselves, and onto the broader context in which parents and their transgender children live, with a particular focus on schools. Specifically, we consider how cisgenderism produces a loss of certitude for parents, in that parents lose the invisible privileges that accrue to those who occupy an unmarked place within the cisgender norm. To do this we draw on survey data from 60 Australian cisgender parents of transgender children, exploring specifically how they spoke about experiences with schools, both negative and positive.

Keywords
transgender children; parents; schools; education; cisgenderism; loss of certitude

Introduction
As the literature – both popular and academic – on parents of transgender children grows, an emphasis on loss as a founding trope of parent experiences is becoming increasingly noticeable. For example, Brill and Pepper (2008)[1] tell parent readers that:

> Initially most parents feel that their world is falling apart. There is a profound sense of devastation, loss, shock, confusion, anger, fear, shame, and grief. This personal, internal crisis, for some, can take years to resolve. Not all the responses described [here] pertain to every parent, but we imagine that you will find yourself reflected here (p. 39).

In this type of statement, the authors go beyond acknowledging the possible types of responses that parents may experience (all of which are negative), and instead produce something of an injunction to have these types of responses, thus turning a possibility into an expectation. Brill and Pepper (2008) then go on to state that:

The grief that parents raising gender-variant and transgender children experience falls into two distinct categories. The first is the grief over lost dreams for your child. The second is the grief that parents of transgender children feel for the child who goes away in order for the new one to emerge ... Perhaps the most painful part of the process of accepting your child is letting go of the fantasies you held for your child—and also the fantasies of what you were going to share together in the future (Brill and Pepper 2008: 45).

Again, in this quote grief is treated as a taken for granted fact, rather than one possible response from a whole spectrum. Furthermore, the idea that a transgender child causes 'lost dreams' and the need to let go of fantasies reinforces the idea that all parents will have particular (gendered) dreams for their children (Riggs and Peel 2016). Such dreams are gender normative, and hence are dashed when a child's gender differs from that which is normatively expected of their assigned sex. While it may well be the case that many parents do have dreams about what they think a child will be like, it seems somewhat overdetermined to presume that all parents will share this viewpoint, and therefore that all parents will experience a transgender child as a loss. Indeed, to speak of a transgender child as a loss, when so many actual losses are routinely dismissed (such as the cultural silence over pregnancy loss, or the lack of social recognition accorded to the loss of an animal companion, or more widely the lack of attention that occurs on a daily basis to the loss of life experienced by people in war torn and/or developing nations), is to exalt gender to an exceptional category, one that is treated as a pre-given fact, rather than a cultural construct.

The normalization of narratives of loss with regard to transgender children also appears in the academic work of both Norwood (2013) and Wahlig (2014). In conceptualizing what is referred to as ambiguous loss, Norwood (2013) suggests that although transgender children do not neatly fit within the ambiguous loss framework (in which a person is either physically present but psychologically absent, such as in the case of a dementia, or physically absent in ways that are unresolved, such as when a child is abducted), the framework is nonetheless applicable to the experiences of parents of transgender children:

The ambiguous loss that surrounds a transition of sex/gender seems different than other noted types; that is, the trans person is not exactly absent in mind or body (barring estrangement) and yet something is lost. ... Parents of persons who are trans-identified often claim to feel the loss of a son or a daughter [as the loss of a] sex/gender identity that is grieved (Norwood 2013: 26).

Wahlig (2014) further claims that the ambiguous loss framework is directly applicable to parents of transgender children:

Parents of transgender children struggle with *both* types of ambiguous loss—a kind of *dual ambiguous loss*; their child is physically present but psychologically absent, and they are also physically absent but psychologically present. That is, a parent's child is still physically present – they still have a child, but that child's psychological existence *as a certain gender* is significantly changed and may be perceived as no longer there. At the same time, the child's physical presence *as a certain gender* is absent, yet many aspects of their personality, the sense of who they are (psychological presence), is still available to the family (Wahlig 2014: 316, original emphases).

We suggest this type of statement is highly problematic in that it reinforces the idea that the veracity (and indeed tenacity) of gender is determined by assigned sex, and hence that a child who is assigned either male or female can be psychologically or physically absent if their gender does not accord with expectations normatively associated with their assigned sex. This is a problem, we would argue, not simply for parents of transgender children. It is also a problem for all transgender people who are positioned as challenges to be lived with, rather than people to be celebrated. Further, it is a problem for cisgender people more broadly beyond parents of transgender children, given the language of loss reinforces the idea that the problem lies with transgender people, rather than gender norms and expectations.

Importantly, our claim here is not to deny that for some parents a challenge to their world views about sex and gender may result in an emotional response. Most parents cannot realistically be expected to exclude themselves from the normative expectations that surround sex assignation, expectations that may be confounded when a child is transgender. Nonetheless, our concern is with the ways in which authors such as Norwood (2013) and Wahlig (2014) normalize, and indeed naturalize, a narrative of loss, and justify it through the idea of absence, which is itself marginalizing of transgender children. Furthermore, we are concerned with the ways in which narratives of loss attribute the cause of loss to transgender children themselves, rather than to cisgenderism. Here we follow the work of Ansara (e.g. Ansara and Hagarty 2013) in understanding cisgenderism as the ideology that marginalizes people's own understandings of their genders and bodies. In other words, as an ideological apparatus, cisgenderism reinforces the idea that there are only two genders, that gender is determined on the basis of assigned sex (primarily on the basis of visual inspection of the genitals), and that the mistreatment of people on the basis of their gender is thus legitimate and understandable (i.e., such mistreatment is seen as caused by what is viewed as transgender people's non-conformity, rather than to social norms and forces).

In this article we seek to produce an alternate account of 'loss', one that shifts the focus away from transgender children themselves, and onto the broader context in which parents and their transgender children live. Specifically focusing on schools, our interest in this article is to suggest that rather than focusing on how transgender children allegedly produce a loss for their parents, parents of transgender children who experience any form of loss do so because they fall from a place of certitude within an assumed gender norm, a norm within which they had expected that their lives would largely fly under the radar. Different to the accounts provided by those summarized above, our interest in exploring this loss of certitude does not attribute the cause of this loss to transgender children, but rather to cisgenderism. Framed in this way, the loss that some parents of transgender children narrate may more accurately be seen as the loss of the invisible privileges that accord to having a child who is cisgender, and which reflect the ways in which cisgenderism works in many facets of society, including in educational settings. Thus, the certitude with which parents with cisgender children engage in the school system, where their child's gender is not called into question, is lost to parents of transgender children.

In what follows in this article we first summarize previous literature that has explored the experiences of cisgender parents of transgender children in the context of schools. This literature, we suggest, highlights multiple avenues by which cisgender parents fall from certitude, landing squarely in a space where their privileged position within school environments is placed in question. Having examined this literature, we then turn to consider the experiences of Australian cisgender parents of transgender children as reported to us in a survey. These data specifically focus on experiences with schools, and again highlight how

cisgenderism appears to produce a falling from certitude for many cisgender parents of transgender children.

Previous Literature
Searches of scholarly databases identified eight pieces of academic work that focused on the educational experiences of parents of transgender children (Baldwin 2015; Barron and Capous-Desyllas 2017; Johnson et al. 2014; Kuvalanka, Weiner, and Mahan 2014; Pullen Sansfaçon, Robichaud, and Dumais-Michaud 2015; Pyne 2016; Riley et al. 2011; Slesaransky-Poe et al. 2013). Of these, one in particular provides a useful framework through which to summarize all eight pieces of work. Drawing on interviews with 22 cisgender parents or caregivers of transgender children in the US, Baldwin (2015) suggests three distinct patterns of experiences. These three patterns were: 1.) schools that were inclusive, 2.) schools that tried to be inclusive, even if they didn't always succeed (or needed extensive parent support in order to succeed), and 3.) schools that were restrictive with regard to supporting transgender children and their parents. We consider the work we identified in our search, including Baldwin's, under these three groupings.

Schools that are Inclusive
As elaborated by Baldwin (2015), a key feature of inclusive schools is that they are proactive in having policies and protocols that are inclusive of transgender students, in advance of any student enrolling in the school. Of the studies we reviewed for this article, only Baldwin reported on experiences of what could be construed as inclusive schools. For the small number of Baldwin's participants whose children attended an inclusive school, one of the most positive aspects was not simply that the school had a strong anti-bullying policy, but that the school enforced it. As Baldwin's participants noted, schools were inclusive when it did not fall to parents to identify bullying and report it. Rather, the school identified bullying, and did so very quickly, and responded to it comprehensively, without the parents having to advocate for intervention, though parents were kept informed of incidents that occurred at the school. It is also important to note that the significance of inclusive schools is that anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies are gender inclusive, and therefore directly address the reasons for bullying, rather than viewing bullying as isolated incidents (see also Payne and Smith, 2012).

Schools that Try to be Inclusive
Of the studies, more than half included examples of experiences with schools that could be considered attempts by the school at being inclusive. In Baldwin's (2015) research, attempts at inclusion occurred when parents requested that schools revisit their policies on bullying or their (often non-existent) procedures when it came to transgender students (such as with regard to the use of toilets, wearing uniforms, or joining sports team), and this was met with a positive response. Different to inclusive schools, then, schools that tried to be inclusive did not typically have inclusive policies at the time that a transgender child was enrolled (or an already enrolled student transitioned gender), but were willing to make changes to policy and procedures in order to be inclusive, although these were sometimes limited. An example of how this action was limited is clear from Pyne's (2016) US research, which found that when cisgender children expressed discomfort sharing a washroom with gender non-conforming children, a gender-neutral washroom was created for the gender non-conforming children to use.

Importantly, in schools that tried to be inclusive parents had to be strong advocates for their children. In some studies parents spoke about providing free information sessions to schools

so that the educators and administrators knew how to respond to the family (e.g. Slesaransky-Poe et al. 2013). While parents often viewed this as a positive reception provided by the school, and saw this as an important opportunity to affect change for their child, we would note the considerable burden this places on parents to educate their child's educators in order to ensure their inclusion. We would also note that parents will likely hold divergent views on, for example, appropriate language, or appropriate procedures. Relying on individual parents to educate the school may result in information provision to educators that may be out of step with state policies and legislation, and may also be out of step with current research evidence or best practice recommendations.

Another limitation associated with schools that attempted to be inclusive was that the time-pressured nature of moving towards inclusion meant that some educators experienced burn out. Johnson and colleagues (2014), for example, note that while one of their participants had an initially positive reception from the school when she advocated for the inclusion of her child, over time she was told that school staff were burnt out by the level of support needed to be inclusive, particularly in relation to bullying.

Schools that are Restrictive
Of the studies reviewed, the majority reported on schools that were (often highly) restrictive. Such findings mirror the largely negative experiences that transgender students report with regard to schools, as documented in previous research (e.g. Greytak et al. 2009; Jones et al. 2016; McGuire et al. 2010). In terms of negative experiences reported by parents, there are three key areas that predominate. The first area pertains to how schools conceptualize transgender students. Pullen Sansfaçon and colleagues (2015), for example, suggest that parents often find schools restrictive when schools view transgender-related topics as taboo, or where they conflate gender and sexuality diversity. The lack of a clear and accurate conceptualization of transgender people's lives can lead to schools adopting a restrictive or regressive approach to engaging with transgender students and their families.

The second area where parents had negative experiences was with regard to other parents. Kuvalanka and colleagues (2014), for example, report on the experiences of a parent who attempted to enroll her child in a school, only to be met with a wave of resistance from parents already at the school. Unfortunately, rather than challenging the views of these parents, the school administrators did not take action. For some parents this type of response can lead to the decision to home school their child, while other parents cast a wide net to find schools that are inclusive, which can necessitate moving home so as to be nearer to inclusive schools (Baldwin 2015; Johnson et al. 2014; Pyne 2016; Riley et al. 2011).

Finally, a number of studies report that school community responses to transgender children can be so negative that parents are threatened to be reported to social services (and sometimes are actually reported) under the presumption that supporting a transgender child constitutes abuse. Barron and Capous-Desvllas (2017), for example, document the experiences of one family who were subject to an allegation on the basis that they were seen as forcing their child to wear clothes that were viewed as inappropriate for their assigned sex. While this allegation was made by another parent at the school, in research by Johnson and colleagues (2014) the threat of an abuse allegation was made by a school psychologist.

Cisgenderism in Schools as a Loss of Certitude
The analysis of parents' experiences we present below draws on a survey we undertook with 60 Australian cisgender parents of transgender children in 2013. The parents who participated

self-identified as raising at least one transgender child, and were sourced via existing networks and snowball sampling (including email lists and social media sites). The majority (90.5%) of participants identified as female, with the rest identifying as male. All participants identified as heterosexual. The majority of participants were in heterosexual relationships (90.5%), with the remainder stating that they were not currently in a relationship (9.5%). Participants resided across five different states in Australia. The average number of children within each family was 2.5 ($SD = 1.05$). Each participant had one transgender child, and the age range of the transgender children was 6-16 years. Parents were asked about a wide range of their experiences of parenting a transgender child, some of which has been reported elsewhere (Riggs & Bartholomaeus 2015; Riggs and Due 2015). For the purposes of this article, we focus specifically on two open-ended questions that asked about experiences with schools: "If your child attends school, please provide some more information about support from your child's school" and "please provide some more information about support from other families at your child's school".

In terms of the analysis, having extracted all instances where parents spoke about schools, we then read the data set as a whole, focusing on identifying common themes. Although we initially considered the data set through the lens of Baldwin's (2015) typology of schools (i.e., inclusive, tries to be inclusive, restrictive) so as to map our data onto Baldwin's findings, it was quickly apparent that a more detailed thematic analysis was the best way to represent the data. We also considered whether accounts of experiences were differentiated by the age or gender of the child, but this was not the case, hence we analyzed the extracts as one data corpus.

In our analysis below, we begin with a section on the overarching theme of positive school experiences, because it highlights what it looks like when cisgenderism does not produce a loss for parents in the context of schools. This is important, we suggest, for the ways in which it demonstrates the capacity of schools not to instigate or perpetuate the type of loss-based logic that Brill and Pepper (2008) treat as axiomatic to parenting a transgender child. The second theme then explores what it looks like when cisgenderism-related losses are produced by schools and school communities. Importantly, while quotes included in the first theme were relatively homogenous, there was considerable heterogeneity in the overarching theme of negative experiences, hence within this theme we present a number of sub-themes that further unpack the specifics of negative experiences with schools in terms of cisgenderism. We would also note that the extracts included are not exhaustive of all of the extracts included in our analysis, but rather are indicative of each of the themes or subthemes.

Positive Experiences with Schools
Echoing the findings of Baldwin (2015), in our survey positive experiences with schools were primarily constituted by schools and educators proactively developing and implementing inclusive policies and procedures. The following quotes provide examples where schools were proactively inclusive:

> The school allowed transition without any fuss, told him to get a boys uniform, use staff toilets until unisex are complete. Also they got in LGBT support volunteers to discuss his situation with all staff and then explain to the entire school in a morning assembly. At the same time the school was anxious not to exoticise him (mother of 14 year old transgender son).

> There is a policy here in [our state] for transgender and intersex students. They follow those guidelines. They communicate well with me. I haven't really had to do a thing as they had it all in place by following the guidelines (mother of 6 year old transgender daughter).

In these quotes, schools are depicted as taking the lead in ensuring the inclusion of transgender children. This included providing information to staff and following already existing guidelines.

Of the other quotes that we have classified as positive, it is arguably the case that the schools referred to did not have the same level of existing inclusive practices as described in the quotes above, though nonetheless did try to provide inclusive responses to transgender children, as per Baldwin's (2015) research. For example:

> We discussed it with the teacher on the first day of school this year, and she was very understanding, and said she would use male pronouns in class. The other students in my child's class now all know as well, and are very supportive (mother of 7 year old transgender son).

> School has gender neutral uniform but child is allowed to wear nail polish and sometimes jewellery. Child has self portrait (as female) displayed in class with other children's portraits. Teachers have always asked how they can best support my child, including keeping an eye out for teasing. Child allowed to participate in female only cultural activities (mother of 7 year old transgender daughter).

In these quotes, the parents were asked about how teachers 'can best support my child', and parents used this opportunity to proactively discuss issues with their child's teacher. As we noted earlier in this article, this type of injunction to proactively advocate for a child is potentially a considerable demand placed upon parents. However in the instances described above it would appear to have had positive outcomes, including a willingness for support and action by teachers. In addition to such accounts of inclusion arising from advocacy, the quotes above also indicate that what constitutes a positive experience may, for many parents, be that their child is simply 'accepted' as they are. Given the importance of supporting and affirming transgender children, such as in terms of mental health outcomes (Olson et al., 2016), it is understandable that parents would view 'acceptance' as constituting a positive experience with schools.

Negative Experiences with Schools
Importantly, and similar to the previous research summarized above, while a reasonable number of participants in our survey data reported positive experiences with schools, it is nonetheless the case that still more survey participants reported negative experiences. As we noted above, negative experiences were heterogeneous in terms of the forms they took. Specifically, there were three forms that negative experiences took: always having to be vigilant, feeling shut out, and needing to educate the educator.

Always Having to be Vigilant
In the positive accounts discussed above, we highlighted how parents who proactively advocated for the inclusion of their children experienced positive responses from schools. However, parent advocacy does not necessarily mean schools are supportive. Parent

advocacy could also be unsuccessful in changing school practices, resulting in negative experiences for both parents and children, as can be seen in the following quotes:

> She has been asked to remove earrings and necklace, despite other female students being allowed to wear such items. The teachers have never stepped in during times of bullying, despite me asking them to and feeling that there was an agreement from the school that they would monitor this, so it falls to me to do that (mother of 6 year old transgender daughter).

> There were some children and parents who didn't understand my child and why she would identify as female. So I organised through the school to distribute educational material on gender variance. Now most families and children accept her, though I am there in the school fairly often volunteering so that I can keep an eye on things, because still now sometimes people aren't accepting of her (mother of 11 year old transgender daughter).

For these parents, despite their advocacy and what some had thought was an agreement with the school that they would be inclusive and monitor bullying, it continued to be the case that parents had to closely monitor the school so as to identify instances of bullying or discrimination and ask the school to respond. In many ways these accounts mirror the account provided by Johnson and colleagues (2014) with regard to burn out. In other words, while schools may claim to be well intentioned, the perceived demand that a transgender student produces may at times result in poor responses from teaching staff and administrators. Importantly, our suggestion here is not that transgender children are inherently demanding, but rather that any student who is perceived by educators as outside the norm, and hence requiring additional support in order to ensure their inclusion, may be perceived as a demand.

This point about being outside the norm producing a demand for support illustrates our focus in this section on the effects of cisgenderism for parents. As a general principle, parents expect that their child will have a positive school experience, and will be supported and included in the school environment. Given the discrimination and marginalization that can arise from cisgenderism in schools, parents of transgender children often cannot have these same expectations. Rather, they must be constantly vigilant in order to protect and support their children. Schools for parents, then, become yet another context where they must oversee the care of their children on a daily basis to keep them safe. Like the demand perceived by teachers, cisgenderism, at least for some parents, produces a similar demand to provide additional support, a demand that might be very familiar to parents raising children living with disabilities (e.g. Janus et al. 2008), but a demand that may arise more unexpectedly for parents of transgender children.

Feeling Shut Out
A logical follow on from having to be vigilant is that parents can feel shut out. This can mean feelings of being shut out from schools entirely, or shut out from supportive school communities, as is evident in the following quotes:

> I felt most of the families would have embraced my son but his school did not see it that way, so we didn't share any info with other families at the school. In some ways this has been isolating as we feel like we are hiding something, and the school seems to endorse that approach. On the one hand it is good that he is just accepted as a boy,

> but on the other hand I worry about what lies ahead if someone finds out (mother of 7 year old transgender son).

> The school itself was okay. Some of the parents weren't, and a few wrote letters and tried to cause trouble. They didn't allow her to use the female toilets, though, only the sickbay toilet. We have since decided to homeschool to escape all gender expectations (mother of 8 year old transgender daughter).

In the first of these extracts, the parents were precluded from feeling a part of the school community by the suggestion from the school that they should not disclose to anyone that their child is transgender. By contrast, in the second quote disclosure meant that the family was met with resistance from some of the other parents in the school. These two quotes thus highlight the dilemma of disclosure faced by many transgender people: to either not disclose and thus potentially feel anxiety that others will learn from other sources they are transgender, or to disclose and face discrimination (Galupo et al. 2014).

Importantly, our point here is not that families should avoid disclosure. Decisions about disclosure are individual, personal, and should entirely be the right of families, particularly the transgender children themselves. Rather, our point pertains to the potential costs of disclosure for some families, and the costs that cisgenderism can bring to parents in terms of producing a feeling that they are shut out from school communities, which for many could otherwise be an important resource.

Educating the Educator
This final sub-theme takes up a point we made earlier in this article, namely that in order to ensure the inclusion of their children, some parents experienced an injunction to educate the educator. As we have suggested in our previous work on lesbian and gay foster carers (Riggs 2007), having to educate the educator in order to ensure one's inclusion constitutes a very limited form of inclusion. Thus as Kitzinger suggests, "that 'we' teach 'them' about our oppression may constitute one form of that oppression" (1990: 130).

An example of parents having to 'educating the educator' appears in the following extract:

> They have allowed him to wear the boys uniform. The Deputy read the 'Transgender Child' book I lent her and suggested the class teacher read it too. The class teacher tries not to say things like "good girl" but forgets sometimes (mother of 7 year old transgender son).

While earlier in this paper we raised concerns about the book referred to in this extract, it is nonetheless the case that the book has sold widely, is stocked in many libraries, and is written for professionals. That the Deputy had not already read the book and directed their staff to do so, but instead learnt about it from the parent, indicates the injunction placed upon parents of transgender children to educate the educator in order to facilitate the inclusion of their child (and in the example above even this was tenuous with regard to misgendering).

In the final quote included below, a parent shares an experience where educating the educator required providing 'proof' to the school that inclusion is warranted:

> My child starts school next year and at this stage they are being open-minded about it and have asked me to get a psychologist/psychiatrist report as well as get genetic

testing done in order for them to make a decision on whether they will allow her to attend school as a girl (mother of 5 year old transgender daughter).

This type of request made to parents is a particularly insidious form of having to educate the educator, namely by providing evidence that their child is transgender. Certainly the parent could have questioned this demand, or attempted to educate the school about why a diagnosis or genetic testing should not be required in order to warrant inclusion. But this again places the demand upon the parent, rather than the school itself becoming educated about inclusive responses to transgender children and their families.

This final subtheme of having to educate the educator again highlights how cisgenderism produces something of a loss for parents, in that educators need help from the parents themselves, rather than parents having the certitude that educators will already know how to work with their child. It is not unreasonable for parents to expect that schools will educate children, i.e. that trained and paid professional educators will know how to teach students. That some parents have to teach educators so that they can effectively teach children places parents in a position which is both difficult and unusual where they must submit to requests to educate the educator, or else potentially risk the exclusion of their child and themselves.

Discussion

In this article we have suggested that the broader context of cisgenderism, and specifically with regard to how it plays out in schools, can produce a loss for cisgender parents of transgender children. Importantly, we have been clear that this loss is not a product of the children themselves. Rather, and differently to authors such as Brill and Pepper (2008), Norwood (2013), and Wahlig (2014), our discussion of loss, specifically in terms of a loss of certitude about what parents can expect from schools, is a product of a failure on the part of schools to address cisgenderism and ensure inclusive policies and protocols are in place and followed.

As we noted in the opening to this article, while our focus has been on cisgender parents of transgender children, our findings have relevance beyond this group. Cisgender parents in general have a significant role to play in ensuring the inclusion of transgender children in schools. As some of the examples included in our analysis above would suggest, parents of the peers of transgender children may often be a source of problems or discrimination. Seeking to prevent transgender children attending schools, for example, constitutes a significant form of cisgenderism that both transgender children and their parents face. Further, cisgender peers of transgender children were reported in our data as bullying or discriminating. While discriminatory attitudes can be the product of many factors, one potential contributing factor is the attitudes of parents. Again, then, cisgender parents in schools in general can serve as significant gatekeepers to the inclusion of transgender children.

Implications for Educational Policy and Practice

The role that parents within school communities can play in terms of facilitating or acting as barriers to inclusion suggests that while at times there may be a clear rationale for not disclosing information about an individual transgender child – and as we noted, disclosure is a personal and individual decision that families must make – this should not prevent schools providing information sessions to all families about the inclusion of transgender people in schools. In other words, there is no need for such information to be connected to an individual transgender student, and indeed there is no need for a transgender student to be

enrolled to warrant the provision of such information. Rather, a proactive school that seeks to promote inclusion within the community in general would be well served by including information about transgender people's lives as a matter of course. This may help to facilitate inclusive attitudes amongst the school community, but may also be helpful if, down the track, a child discloses that they are transgender, so that both the school and the parents are informed and prepared to be supportive.

Given the growing numbers of transgender children who are disclosing information about their gender at a young age, schools have much to gain by increasing, revising, or implementing policies and procedures that facilitate inclusion. This should be seen as a gain for all, rather than focusing on a 'minority agenda'. A school that is inclusive of all people is likely to produce graduates who are suitably equipped to move in the world in ways that are inclusive of all people, and which open them up to a range of experiences in their adult lives. In addition, for those children who grow up and have children themselves, they may have children who are transgender, or who attend in schools with fellow students who are transgender. Therefore, learning from a young age to approach gender diversity in inclusive ways sets up the next generation of transgender children to experience supportive relationships with their parents, as well as to create inclusive school communities.

The importance of schools being supported by education departments and broader policy structures must also be noted. While policies may be developed at the individual school level (such as in relation to bullying and use of gender-segregated school facilities), it is important that broader supports are in place to assist schools in this work. As one of the parents from our survey noted, a state-wide policy for transgender students was followed by her child's school, resulting n a positive schooling experience. Education departments may also provide professional development and training for teachers to support transgender students and make their schools more inclusive. However, such actions need to be supported by school administrators to allow the time and funds for teachers to attend this training.

Conclusion

In conclusion, and to return to our point about a loss of certitude, we do not wish to simply dismiss the emotions that parents may experience when a child discloses that they are transgender. Certainly, some of the emotions documented by Brill and Pepper (2008), Norwood (2013), and Wahlig (2014) may be felt by some parents. Importantly, however, our suggestion has been first that not all parents will experience these emotions, and second that such emotions are the product of living in a context of cisgenderism. As we have suggested in our analysis above, schools have an important role to play in mitigating cisgenderism by proactively working to ensure the inclusion of transgender children and their parents. As we have suggested, this role is important as it has the potential to avoid compounding any losses that parents may feel (i.e., with regard to dreams and expectations they may have had for their child which are associated with assumptions or stereotypes about a particular gender). Instead, schools which are inclusive of transgender children may actually facilitate the journeys of parents who feel that raising a transgender child is a challenge they are faced with.

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Notes

[1] We note that similar themes are discussed in Brill's more recent book *The Transgender Teen* (Brill & Kenney 2016), highlighting the continued use of a loss framing.