Introducing Gender Diversity in Preschool Curriculum:

Storybooks and Toys

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A Thesis

In

The Department

Of

Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts (Child Studies) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

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Entitled: Introducing Gender Diversity in Preschool Curriculum: Storybooks and Toys

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Child Studies)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators in Quebec on the prospect of incorporating gender diverse topics into their preschool classrooms. The study addressed two broad research questions: 1. How do early childhood educators respond to gender diversity materials? and 2. What are the teachers' thoughts about including gender diversity in early childhood settings with young children? The researcher conducted two focus group sessions with a total of seven educators. During these focus group interviews, educators were encouraged to examine the materials provided, including children's books and toys, and participate in a discussion led by the researcher. Participants shared their perspectives, feelings and experiences towards incorporating gender diversity into their classrooms. Findings from the study revealed five emerging themes, related to: gender diversity as a topic in EC curriculum, materials presented in the focus groups, societal issues, school administration, and parental issues. The results of the study demonstrate that the educators supported incorporating gender diversity as an important means to create an understanding of individual differences, to bring awareness to the children, and to create inclusive classrooms. All the child care educators displayed a particular interest in using children's literature as a means to present the topic in their classrooms. They discussed the simplicity the books offered in introducing such complex topics, compared to using the toys presented in the focus groups. However, many of the participants displayed uneasiness in how to address and discuss the topic without clear curricular guidelines or administrative support, and disclosed their fear of receiving criticism from parents. These conversations revealed the teachers' wariness of the topic and their shared perspective that society may not be ready for such a shift in the early childhood classroom.

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A Canadian nationwide survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in schools found that 70% of all students have been exposed to homophobic comments (Taylor, Peter, McMinn, Elliott, Beldom, Ferry, Gross, Paquin, Schachter, & Peter, 2011). Gender categorization and stereotyping begin at an early age (Johnston, Bittinger, Smith, & Madole, 2001; Butler, 2006). Given this, my position is that gender diversity should be a topic discussed by preschool teachers and incorporated into play-based curriculums. Teachers educating children on gender identity and expression can assist in making classrooms more inclusive, which could contribute toward alleviating gender-based bullying later in a child's life (Brinkman, & Manning, 2016; Martino, & Cumming-Potvin, 2015; Gerouki, 2010). For instance, by creating a more diverse classroom, teachers can reduce gender-based biases and support students' physical and emotional health along with encouraging student engagement in the classroom (Meyer, 2010). However, teachers are reported to feel uncomfortable with and lack the proper knowledge on these topics (Gerouki, 2010; Ryan, Patraw, & Bednar, 2013), making it challenging for teachers to incorporate the subjects into their lesson plans. Students may also feel uncomfortable with such topics (Meyer, 2010). However, and in my opinion, this should not prevent teachers from implementing discussions about gender diversity in their curriculum and providing students with appropriate discussions and terminologies, to create a more positive and encouraging learning environment.

The purpose of this thesis is to consider different and innovative ways for teachers to discuss gendered topics in their daycare classrooms, and to question and explore teachers' thoughts on using various books and toys that address gender diversity as means to expand students' understanding of gender. Participating early childhood educators' responses were

collected through two focus group interviews, to obtain a greater understanding of their perspectives, including their discomforts and hopes, on the prospect of incorporating awareness of gender diversity into a preschool setting (Gerouki, 2010).

Review of Literature

Components of Gender and Sexual identity

The concepts of sex and gender are complex. The terms are often used interchangeably and misunderstood (Butler, 2004). The Oxford Dictionary website refers to 'gender' as "two sexes (male and female) … with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones," whereas 'sex' is referred to as two separate categories based on one's reproductive organs ("Gender", 2017; "Sex", 2017). The term *gender diversity* is defined as a person's gender identity and expression that is culturally different from the norm (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Butler (2006) sheds light on the four components that construct sexual and gender identity. These components are "biological sex, gender identity, gender-role expression, and sexual orientation" (p. 79). Similar to the definition provided by Oxford Dictionary, sex is defined by Butler (2006) as one's genetic makeup, that is, the sexual reproductive organs a person was born with. In addition, her article further distinguishes how a newborn baby can be assigned as a female, male or intersex. Essentially, this is determined by the presence or absence of a phallus. A person categorized as intersex describes a person possessing a combination of both genitals. Butler (2006) describes gender identity as an experience a person feels within him or herself. It is having an understanding of oneself, and a particular identity of being a woman/girl or man/boy. However, our social world has created female and male gender-typed identities, which can cause much stress on individuals. Butler (2006) argues that some

individuals may not necessarily feel as if they can identify with their own biological sex. For those feeling a discrepancy between one's gender identity and assigned sex, may consider themselves as being transgender. Butler (2006) defines gender-role expression as someone expressing themselves in either a masculine or feminine manner, through their own gender identity. For instance, a person may have been assigned the biological sex of male, identify as a woman, thus choose to express themselves as a woman through different articles of clothing and/or displaying certain behaviors. Lastly, Butler (2006) discusses sexual orientation as one's feelings of attraction or desire for another. This could either be with someone of the same and/or opposite sex, or neither. Overall, these four components surrounding sexual and gender identity can become blurred, however it is significant for these terms to be understood by teachers so that they can support all students in schools.

Gender-Based Bullying

Reports of bullying begin as early as three years of age, and is often displayed in daycares and preschool settings (Vlachou, Andreou, Botsoglou, & Didaskalou, 2011). Gender-based bullying is referred to as the victimization towards a person's "gender or gender expression … in which the content of the bullying emphasizes the child's gender" (Brinkman & Manning, 2016, p. 221). This issue is prevalent in schools at all age levels, and it is the responsibility of teachers to take the appropriate measures in promoting equality to ensure student safety. Taylor and Peter (2011) conducted a Canadian Nationwide survey exploring students' experiences as well as their thoughts on sexual and gender minorities, and it was reported that out of the 3607 participants, a notable 14% of them identified as LGBTQ. A UK study found that 65% of LGBTQ students experienced some form of gender-based bullying (Hunt & Jensen, 2007): many of these students reported being verbally, physically or sexually

harassed by their peers. The survey also highlights how teachers and school personnel are frequently observed intervening with students over negative comments about race, but rarely on homophobic and gender identity comments (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006). Considering this, teachers should be aware of the influence they have with their students and how impactful they can be in their classrooms in attempting to reduce gender bullying.

Taylor et al. (2011) stated how inappropriate comments based on gender can poison a school's environment. Ryan et al. (2013) call attention to how some students have a skewed perception of gender that can lead to the bullying of other children. Teachers creating and/or implementing a gender inclusive pedagogy can assist in adjusting students' attitudes towards LBGTQ students, as well as expose them to anti-homophobia education (Gerouki, 2010). However, those teachers who refuse to take on a proactive approach in developing a gender inclusive curriculum or refrain from holding discussions on gender diversity, are choosing to remain silent and in turn unintentionally hurting LGBTQ students (Ryan et al., 2013; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2015). Teachers need to consider that targeted children are not the only ones being affected by gender-based bullying. Bystanders often feel quite helpless. Donoghue, Almeida, Rosen, & Brandwein (2014) agree that this may be due to the strong influence from their classmates. Given this, school personnel need to consider that all students are affected, even those who are not targeted (Brinkman & Manning, 2016), again emphasizing that teachers should be taking action and educating their students on how to respond to gender-based bullying.

Although Brinkman and Manning (2016) explored elementary school students' perceptions through hypothetical gender-based bullying incidents, and found that students used appropriate responses to gender bullying, their study was not based on real life scenarios. The authors reference how their study revealed different outcomes as a result of this. They comment

that their data did not support findings by Craig and Pepler (1997), who explored real life gender bullying situations. Craig and Pepler (1997) found that in the bullying situations recorded on the playground, students only intervened 11% of the time. Brinkman and Manning (2016) argued that the difference in their findings may be due to the social desirability bias, and thus emphasized that teachers and professionals need to be aware of this. Considering the discrepancy between both studies and the high percentage of LGBTQ students being bullied, it is pertinent that teachers educate their students on how to appropriately respond to gender bullying situations, with an awareness of the discrepancies that exist between students' responses to hypothetical and actual situations.

Gender in Early Childhood Education

Including topics of gender and sexuality in the early childhood classroom are often ignored as parents and educators believe that children are "too innocent" (Robinson, 2013, p.19). Robinson (2005) disagrees with this notion and argues that young children are actively learning about heterosexuality in their daily lives. Robinson (2005, 2013) states that gender and sexualities should be discussed in the early childhood classroom, and that educators should engage children by questioning them through, for example, various forms of children's literature, which would support meaningful conversations and raise awareness. Robinson (2013) highlights how educators having these conversations with families can help shape children's understanding of gender, along with promoting positive and healthy relationships.

Lappalainen (2004) explored issues of race, gender, nationality and citizenship with preschool girls in Finland. She found that early childhood educators were willing to have these conversations, however acknowledged that it would be challenging to implement such complexity into their pedagogy. The interviewed teachers also agreed that gender equality was a

fundamental part of their preschool classroom. For instance, offering both boys and girls equal opportunities during gym and playing on the computer. However, it was agreed that the topic of gender equality was not a focus in the curriculum and therefore, not being discussed in the early childhood classrooms.

While Robinson promotes discussing gender and sexualities in the ECE classroom, Lappalainen's (2004) study appears to show that the complexity of notions of gender equality is challenging for early childhood educators. However, both Robinson (2008, 2013) and Lappalainen (2004) support ECE classrooms as environments that can encourage gender diverse topics.

Gender in Society

Research conducted on gender diversity in school curriculum has been mainly focused on later elementary or secondary schools. The topic of gender expression is rarely discussed with younger students, especially those of preschool age. One reason for the absence of this in early elementary and preschool levels is that many adults believe that children at this age are too young to learn about gender, particularly when sexuality is implied (Gerouki, 2010; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2015). However, gender categorization does, in fact, begin at an early age (Butler, 2006; Johnston et al., 2001). Butler (2006) references Kohlberg's (1966) statement that the moment a child begins to understand gender identities and develop their concept of gender – that is, the moment toddlers begin to comprehend gender differences – they have begun to create a base understanding which can be expanded on through teachings. Johnston et al. (2001) demonstrated how the development of gender categorizations begins at an early age, arguing that preschool-aged children have the mental capacity to understand the complexity of gender. Johnston et al. (2001) conducted three diverse experiments, and found that 18-month-old

children showed the ability to recognize and classify differences between genders. Strikingly, the authors revealed that gender stereotyping began at the age of two, indicating the potential benefits of educating children's views on gender early on. The authors highlight how "gender is increasing as a salient dimension" (p. 580), indicating that young children are developing how to classify their peers based on their own representations and understanding of gender. Therefore, it is important for preschool teachers to create an inclusive classroom environment to extend their students' understanding of gender identities.

Creating effective programs and interventions, can permit teachers in making classrooms more inclusive (Brinkman & Manning, 2016; Ryan et al., 2013). Martino and Cumming-Potvin (2015) recommended conducting lessons on anti-homophobia, as a tool in bringing awareness to bullying and allowing students to question LGBTQ issues. This approach highlights that effective measures can be put in place to help make classrooms more inclusive. Considering this, and that children have the ability to construct gender categories at an early age, holding classroom discussions on gender diversity in preschools would, it seem, be developmentally appropriate (Butler, 2006; Johnston et al., 2001; Reifel, 2009).

Gender in the Curriculum

As stated above, children at a young age understand gender roles, and as a result can begin to expand their understanding of these roles with proper instruction (Ryan et al., 2013). Ryan et al (2013) argue how there is an absence in the research pertaining to this particular area. Their study examined sexual minority discussions in a grade three classroom through the creation and implementation of a gender based curriculum divided into four segments over one year. They then observed the teacher's lessons, while analyzing the students' perceptions and understanding of the topics. The results demonstrated how the teachers prepared and taught

students with a queer-inclusive language curriculum, highlighting that a gender-based curriculum is not too complex for young students in Grade 3.

Ryan et al.'s (2013) research is similar to Martino and Cumming-Potvin (2015) in that both studies examined an elementary school teacher's literacy curriculum on teaching gender expression through various LGBTQ themed texts. Martino and Cumming-Potvin (2015) studied a pedagogical approach on gender diversity and sexual minorities that helped students to think critically as well as offer them the opportunity to link such topics to real life experiences. Interestingly, another element found in this specific study was that the teacher, being a lesbian, was able to discuss her own sexuality and add her own experiences into her lessons. The authors agreed that the educator's reflections, along with her own strategic literacy plan in weaving in such themes, was a suitable approach for her class. While both this study and Martino and Cumming-Potvin's work (2015) target elementary school children, they validate that young children have the capability to learn and acquire knowledge on gender diversity. Collectively, these studies reveal that teachers of young children can take a proactive approach in implementing discussions on gender diversity in their curriculum.

Although these studies reveal positive outcomes on the implementation of a gender-based curriculum, there were some issues that were raised that need to be addressed. Students, along with teachers, face several challenges from parental and societal pressures (Anschutz, & Engels, 2010; Reifel, 2009; Ryan et al., 2013; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2015). One particular aspect mentioned by Martino and Cumming-Potvin (2015) was the difficulty teachers had in trying to get parents on board with a gender-diverse curriculum, stating that several parents' opinions stemmed from their own culture, religion, media, as well as societal norms. Interestingly, parental influence was reflected through students' comments in the classroom as well. Several

Grade 2 students (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2015) informed their teacher that their parents were opposed to same-sex relationships, and disapproved of the distinct pedagogical direction taking place in the classroom. This created a challenging task for the teacher, as children were influenced by their parents' perspectives and would decide to not participate, to withdraw, and/or make inappropriate comments. Moreover, Ryan et al. (2013) emphasized that several teachers were unwilling to incorporate gendered topics into their classroom. Yet, Ryan et al. maintain that it is essential for educators to do so as a way to support a more unified classroom. Willing teachers can create a more inclusive classroom, thus alleviating negative social stigma in the forms of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in schools (Taylor et al., 2011). Teachers bringing awareness to gender diversity participate in reducing the number of gender-based victimizations occurring in schools (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2015).

Further, teachers have an essential role in educating children on the topic of gender, however some teachers feel they lack the knowledge and/or feel uncomfortable raising topics around LGBTQ issues to their students (Gerouki, 2010). Without the involvement of teachers and school personnel, bullying will continue to take place. The above studies reveal that more students are coming out and identifying themselves as LGBTQ and that countless of them are continuously being bullied. Gerouki (2010) investigated teachers in Greece on their reflections and perspectives in discussing sexual minority topics in the classroom. The author highlighted how, in certain European countries, homosexuality is still seen as a fairly taboo type of lifestyle. With that in mind, the author's goal was to shed light on the importance of teaching these themes to the teachers in Greece, to in turn create gender-inclusive spaces for their students. Gerouki (2010) found that the majority of these teachers were quite uncomfortable. They were so unaware of what gender diversity was that several of them refused to discuss the topic further.

The author also revealed that teachers lacked confidence in their abilities to provide effective information on gender diversity. From this, he argued that there should be teacher training programs to help inform teachers on these topics. This presents an additional challenge to consider as several teachers may refuse to discuss these topics for fear of being deemed uninformed or lacking knowledge.

An added factor to consider is the influence of social groups on educational programming, including corporations and faith and advocacy groups. Reifel (2009) investigated a controversial case study on a private Catholic school holding an American Doll Fashion show. Due to several organizations that were opposed to the fashion show, the school decided to cancel it. The article highlighted how pressure from certain establishments can persuade principals, school personnel and parents on what is deemed appropriate for students. This is an important issue to consider, as several groups and organizations can have an impact on whether gender diversity should be incorporated into classrooms, especially for younger students. Another example of this was presented in the Martin and Cumming's (2017) study, where faith groups were resistant to allowing the elementary school teacher to introduce LGBTQ themes in her classroom. Taking this into account, micro-politics may have an impact on school boards along with educators' responses to implementing discussions of gender with a preschool classroom.

In all, there are certainly challenges in creating a gender-based pedagogy however, teachers taking a proactive approach can encourage students, as well as parents, in becoming more open to these ideas, and as a result create a more inclusive space for all students (Gerouki, 2010). Gerouki (2010) highlighted the importance in properly training teachers in that they need to be effective in teaching their students about gender diversity. Knowledgeable teachers can help their students receive adequate information in this area, and as a result assist their students

in building on their perceptions of gender. In the context of early childhood education in Quebec, where this current study was conducted, the Quebec Education Preschool Program (2017) delineates six competencies in building preschool children's social, cognitive, and motor development through actively encouraging them in play. The competencies focus on encouraging children to communicate, interact cooperatively, build self-confidence, develop their gross and fine-motor skills, stimulate critical thinking of the social world and lastly, complete age appropriate projects. The implementation of various gender diverse toys and books in a play-based curriculum touches closely on two of the above listed competencies: "to affirm his/her personality" and "to construct his/her understanding of the world" (Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, 2017, p. 63).

Various approaches will be discussed in the next section as means for teachers to introduce and educate preschool children on gender diversity, with a focus on popular culture texts including books based on gender diversity along with various toys that can stimulate discussions on gender within the classroom. These tools can be utilized as ways to encourage, facilitate, and ease preschool educators into teaching such topics of gender diversity to their students in an age-appropriate manner. Teachers educating their students through this approach can help their students to question and reflect on gender diversity, help students to resist bullying, and create a more accepting environment (Orr & Baum, 2015).

Popular Culture

Media and Play. The influence of media is prevalent in children's gendered play. Wohlwend (2012) conducted an ethnographic study while observing two kindergarten boys' play behaviors, focusing on their construction of gender identities. From an analysis of the boys' conversations and behaviors, it was found that much of the decisions made during their play

were based on the stereotypical portrayals of gender from the media, however through their play the boys were also able to question these stereotypes. For instance, one context was observed in which the boys merged Disney princesses with Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, creating a "blur" between the stereotypical gender roles (p. 607). The boys considered stereotypical gender characteristics of both sets of characters (princesses and superheroes) during their play, which allowed them to question and thus reframe both feminine and masculine behaviors. Through play, the boys were able to develop pretend episodes that surpassed stereotypical gender play manners. This finding validates the importance of children's play and media portrayals, as through play, children can restructure their understanding of gendered behaviors.

Equally, Boldt (1996) argues that individuals learn the meaning of gender differences through society and highlights how many individuals feel that gender is imposed on them rather than acquired. The author sheds light on her perspective of how media and fictional characters aid in shaping children's gender identities. Through her observations of two young kindergarten boys' play behaviors, she identified how these boys understood gender identities through their diverse drawings and non-gendered play behaviors. She witnessed the boys being able to consider both 'female' and 'male' behaviors. She also observed that several students in the class commented on their play being rather strange. Even though the two young boys did not alter their play behaviors based on their classmates' reactions, other children may feel different and feel forced to change their behavior in fear of not being accepted. Boldt's (1996) study revealed that society's perspectives, partly influenced by the media, has an impact on shaping children's perceptions of gender. Considering this study, along with Johnston et al., (2001), it is important that early years teachers are aware of the early emergence of gender development as influenced by society and culture and how to educate their students earlier.

Boldt's (1996) and Wohlwend's (2012) studies revealed how young children created and constructed what they deemed to be appropriate gender play behaviors in the classroom. Both findings are similar, in that both boys displayed 'male' and 'female' characteristics during their observed play. For instance, the boys displayed more feminine characteristics while playing with Disney Princesses, so much so that other classmates commented on their play behavior. Although this was the case, the boys' play behaviors were unaffected. Strikingly, the participants in both studies disregarded their peers' reactions towards their play behaviors. This finding may suggest that the media is more impactful on children than the voices and opinions of their peers.

Children's Literature. The use of children's literature that narrates young children transitioning can be an influential tool to expand students' perspectives on gender. Monoyiou and Symenidou (2016) described how children's books can assist young students in forming their own identity, along with deepening their understanding of diversity. The authors also demonstrated that children's books can provide students with opportunities to think more deeply about differences within themselves and others. It was stated that teachers should aim to use children's books in the classroom as a way to expand their students' knowledge on acceptance of differences in the class.

A study analyzing primary schoolteachers' experiences of and reflections on incorporating LGBTQ themes in their classroom via children's books revealed that teachers can assist young children in discussing these complicated topics, as well as help encourage teachers to shape their own curriculum (DePalma, 2016). The project was known as *No Outsiders,* which involved teachers reading 27 children's books exploring and addressing sexual equality in elementary level classrooms. The author notes that the project was not intended to provide answers on how teachers should educate their students, but rather to display ways to explore

gender diversity in the classroom with primary aged students. University researchers worked with 26 teachers in helping to support the implementation of this project into their classrooms. From the accounts of the teachers, DePalma (2016) concludes that the project allowed teachers to reflect on how to organize their curriculum with a focus on using the texts provided from the project to allow them to incorporate such challenging discussions into their classrooms. Equally, the author concludes that children's literature texts are a useful tool in helping young students understand diversity.

Collectively, DePalma (2016) along with Monoyiou and Symenidou (2016) demonstrated that using children's books as a means of introducing diversity in the classroom is advantageous. However, Monoyiou and Symenidou (2016) note that teachers should be cautious of certain texts they use in the classroom, as some literature may convey dubious messages on diversity, and lack in their quality. Teachers also need to consider their own concerns and what they feel comfortable with teaching. The *No Outsiders* project was advantageous in that it allowed teachers the opportunity to create and reconstruct their curriculums with books they felt comfortable teaching.

Toys. As noted, through play, children are constantly creating connections with their worlds, enabling them to critically learn (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002). The use of a toy doll offers a child a placeholder onto which to reveal their emotions and feelings about identity through play (Grzinic, 2010). Play provides children with the ability to grow and develop, along with helping them create a better understanding of themselves (Grzinic, 2010; Reifel, 2009). A study done by Robinson (1946) examined 50 children's emotions and experiences associated with doll play in a setting which replicated the child's family home life. The author observed that approximately 74% of the child participants displayed some form of identification to the doll. In

other words, the child represented him/herself within the doll while playing. This finding highlights the above statement, in that children often project their own feelings and identities through doll play.

Comparably, Grzinic (2010) argued how, through play, children are able to display "their real self, discover [their] difficulties and at the same time overcome them…" (p. 47). The author sheds light on how play promotes children's critical thinking on their experiences, as well as supports them in dealing with their difficulties. Equally, Martin, Eisenbud, and Rose (1995) demonstrated through their investigations of children's reasoning in play with specific toys, that through play, children explore various domains and consequently expand their learning. Considering this, teachers can use playtime, specifically with access to dolls, as a means of encouraging children to express themselves, discover themselves, and develop a better understanding of their social worlds (Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, 2017).

As with the introduction of children's books with themes of gender diversity, early childhood educators can also consider the use of children's toys and dolls that represent gender diversity. It is important to consider how introducing such a doll into a play-based curriculum may have some complications. One consideration to acknowledge is the visual appearance of the doll. Anschutz and Engels (2010) addressed the influence of dolls' body sizes and its effect on young girls. The authors' findings revealed that girls' eating habits may be affected by the different body sized dolls they chose to play with, such that girls who chose to play with dolls that were larger in size ate more, compared to thinner girls who chose dolls that were thin in appearance. The study demonstrated that girls recognize a doll's shape and size, and often choose a doll similar to themselves.

Additionally, Martin et al. (1995) observed preschool children's reasoning on their toy preferences, based on the children's understanding of "boys" and "girls" play behaviors. The children referred to their own gender while predicting other children's inclination to play with a familiar or unfamiliar toy. That is, if boys agreed on choosing a specific toy to play with, they tended to believe that girls would not like to play with that same toy. This was especially seen when children were shown an unfamiliar toy. In sum, Martin et al. (1995) found that children would consider their own gender before playing with an unfamiliar toy, to reason whether it would be suitable for them to play with.

Boys and girls may have various toy preferences. Cherney, Kelly-Vance, Glover, Ruane, and Ryalls, (2003) investigated these differences by conducting a study with 30 preschool-aged children (15 boys, 15 girls). They investigated how gender-stereotyped toys affected play behaviors, along with the complexity of the children's play. The children were individually observed in a playroom for 40 minutes and were instructed to play with any toy of their choice. The analysis revealed that the girls often chose to play with gender-neutral toys over own-sexed toys, compared to the boys who preferred boy-stereotyped toys. For instance, the young girls were observed playing with toys such as bears, crayons, a lion puzzle, and a cash register, whereas the boys spent more time playing with tow trucks, cars, a farm set, and a doctor's kit. Clearly, there are gender preferences in children's toys and that it is apparent in the preschool age (Cherney et al, 2003).

An equally important matter to consider are the parents and their outlook on toys being integrated into a preschool classroom. Often parents gender-type their children's toys, indirectly manipulating the types of toys their children are playing with (Calder & Sciaraffa, 1998). Parents may be resistant to allowing their children, especially their sons, to play with dolls in the

classroom or at home. Calder and Sciaraffa (1998) examined parents' interactions with their children and observed whether they provided boys and girls with similar play opportunities. They found that parents seemed to push their daughters to play more with dolls compared to the sons. This finding sheds light on how many parents associate doll play with girls. Nonetheless, their research found that parents promoted nurturing characteristics during play for both boys and girls. It appears that parents are more open to the idea of their children displaying nurturing characteristics than allowing them to play with toys from the opposite sex.

Lastly, Rilke (1953) depicts a notable and psychoanalytic outlook on playing with dolls. He examined the meaning behind playing with a plastic human-like toy. He argued that people normalize the idea of a plastic object providing us with a sense of comfort and affection, and that people projecting their emotions through doll play is, to him, unnatural. His outlook is an additional factor to consider, as parents and teachers may have similar views, especially when incorporating unfamiliar dolls in a preschool setting.

Overall, introducing toys and books as means to support preschool children to reflect on gender diversity can be beneficial, however challenges may arise with students, parents, and teachers. Applying these tools in preschool curriculums can encourage students and teachers to hold gender-based discussions. The use of toys and books as educational tools provides an opening for children to express their attitudes and behaviors, thus assisting students to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them (Grzinic, 2010; Robinson, 1946).

The Current Study

This study explores the perspectives of early childhood educators in the Montreal, Quebec area on the prospect of incorporating gender diverse topics into their preschool classrooms.

Research Questions

The broad research questions being addressed in the study are:

1. How do ECE teachers respond to gender diversity materials (books, toys)?

2. What are the teachers' thoughts about including gender diversity in early childhood settings with young children?

Method

Research Design

The study's design was qualitative and exploratory. The researcher conducted focus group interviews with two sets of childcare educators. The first focus group consisted of four educator participants, and the second consisted of three. Through several open-ended questions, the participants shared their thoughts on introducing the topic of gender diversity in a preschool setting. The goal of this study was to explore the participants' perspectives on the idea of gender diversity, for instance, whether they believed in the value of educating young children on these topics. The researcher used picture books and toys that addressed gender diversity to evoke the participants' thoughts on the subject. Conducting focus group interviews provided the opportunity for participants to share and compare their attitudes and beliefs towards the subject matter in a naturalistic, supportive group setting.

Participants

Each of the two focus groups consisted of three to four early childhood educators selected through a purposive sampling technique. A recruitment email was sent to the directors of several daycare centers. Directors were asked to share the recruitment email with educators at the center. The participants were required to sign a consent form before participating. The interviews were

conducted in a conference room at Concordia University. Both focus groups were held at a time that was convenient for the participants. The participants were Caucasian, female, English-speaking educators who were currently working with preschool-aged children in daycare and childcare settings in the Montreal area. While the participants were not asked to share their gender and sexual identity as demographic information, three participants identified themselves as lesbians during the focus group meetings. Additionally, four of the participants were in their late thirties and have taught at several daycares in the Montreal area for over eight years. Three of the participants were in their early twenties and have worked in daycares in the Montreal area, specifically in the West-Island.. They also worked in other various children's settings such as day camps, after school programs, and/or coaching organized sports. Four of the participants have a bachelor's degree in education, two in psychology and one in sociology.

Materials

In each focus group session, picture books and images of toys were used as prompts to encourage and facilitate conversations amongst the participants. The materials helped the participants consider their perspectives of their social worlds, specifically in relation to their thoughts on teaching gender diversity in a preschool classroom (Adriaensens & Struyf, 2016; Hughes, Gabel, Irani, &Schlagheck, 2010).

Books. The researcher presented the participants with several picture books that addressed gender diversity. Based on library and bookstore searches, and availability, the following books were used in the study: *I Am Jazz* (2014) by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings; *10,000 Dresses* (2008) by Marcus Ewert; *Red* (2015) by Micheal Hall; *Jacobs New Dress* (2014) by Sarah Hoffman and Ian Hoffman; and *My Princesses Boy* (2009) by Cherly Kilodavis.

Toys. Images of toys were also presented to the focus group participants. Note that the

development of gender-diverse toys is such a recent phenomenon that these toys were not readily available. As such, photos were provided (see Figure 1 for images of toys). Two images of toys were presented. First, the Russian doll Sam, created by Gender Creative Kids Canada was presented (see Figure 1). The toy Sam depicts a transgender boy who was created as a nested Russian doll with each layer reflecting a different aspect of his self-discovery (Dupere, 2007). The second toy was a transgender doll named Jazz (see Figure 2), based on Jazz Jennings, a YouTube personality and transgender woman who struggled with her gender identity at an early age (Fortin, 2017).

Procedure

The researcher booked a conference room at Concordia University, once the participants agreed on a suitable day and time. The room was set up with coffee and refreshments, which participants were welcomed to before and after the interview. This procedure was followed for each focus group session.

The researcher began by thanking everyone for participating, explained the purpose of the study, and outlined how the focus group would proceed. The researcher proceeded by presenting the five books: *I Am Jazz* (2014) by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings; *10,000 Dresses* (2008) by Marcus Ewert; *Red* (2015) by Micheal Hall; *Jacobs New Dress* (2014) by Sarah Hoffman and Ian Hoffman; and *My Princesses Boy* (2009) by Cherly Kilodavis. Each book was presented one at a time, followed by the images of the Jazz Doll and the Gender Creative Kids Canada's nested doll, Sam (See Figure 1 and 2).

After offering the participants the opportunity to read and examine the materials, they were encouraged to share their responses. The researcher also prompted their perspectives through the questions listed below.

Sample Focus Group Questions

1. What are your initial responses to seeing these books/toys?

2. What is your opinion about students in your preschool reading such books or playing with such toys in the classroom? At home?

3. How would you offer your students such books/toys?

4. Would it matter if the student was a boy or girl, when it comes to reading/playing with these materials?

5. How do you think your children's parents would react?

6. What questions or thoughts do you believe these books and toys might raise in your classroom?

7. Would you suggest any other storylines for future books, or any other toys?

In order to encourage participants to think about the final question above, the researcher shared a transgender doll that she herself created, with the following description: "This is a transgender doll that I created as an assignment in one my classes. Can you imagine a doll or toy that would support children's understanding of gender diversity in the preschool classroom?"

Focus group sessions lasted approximately 90-120 minutes. The researcher used a laptop to record the discussions taking place. Additional notes were also taken. All audio-recorded discussions were later transcribed for further analysis.

Data Analysis. The data collected from the two focus group interviews were analyzed using a phenomenographical approach. This method is described by Sandberg and Pramling-Samuelsson (2005) as a technique that interprets individuals' experiences and thoughts on various aspects of society. For the purposes of this investigation, the analysis focused on making sense of the preschool teachers' perceptions of introducing gender diversity themes to young

children through gender diverse books and toys.

The data, including the transcribed audio recordings and the researcher's notes, was organized for coding and analysis. The data was analyzed based on the two research questions: 1) How do ECE teachers respond to gender diversity materials (books, toys) presented? 2) What are the teachers' thoughts about including gender diversity in early childhood settings with young children? Coding was based on Sandberg and Pramling-Samuelsson's (2003) approach from their study on teachers' perceptions of play in preschools. The characterization of codes developed into emerging themes to analyse the teachers' responses on addressing gender diversity along with their views on gender diversity books and toys. In order to reflect on the implications of these findings, consideration was given to how these analyses might be incorporated into two of the six competencies from the Quebec Education Program (Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, 2017) for preschools: "affirming his/her personality" and "constructing his/her understanding of the world" (p. 63).

Findings

Coding and analysis of the two focus group transcripts revealed five main areas of discussion: gender diversity as a topic in early childhood curriculum, the educators' responses to the materials presented, societal issues, issues related to school administration and support, and parental issues. Data coding notes are included in Appendix D.

Teacher perspectives

Gender diversity as a topic in early childhood curriculum

Overall, the participants agreed that gender diversity should be implemented into the early childhood curriculum, as they mentioned the importance of having these topics discussed at an early age. They talked about how exposure to these topics could help shape children's

understanding of gender and gender diversity in the real world. This led educator participants into sharing their thoughts on the importance of bringing such awareness into their classrooms. There were 22 responses that addressed this issue. Please see Table 1 below for illustrations of the teachers' responses. Full interview transcripts and field notes are included in Appendices A,B and C.

Table 1

Samples of Teacher Responses on Including Gender Diversity in ECE Curriculum (22)

"So at this point, the schoolboard should implement it in the curriculum."

"But I think it's important to have a curriculum to do it because then all the teachers will know they have to follow something so their biases won't get in the way."

"You need to have a game plan. Definitely, you need to, you can't just- I don't think you can just put it all out there."

"The school would send an email to the parents saying, '_Dear parents, this year our curriculum is going to include, you know, LBTQ whatever'_"

"So at this point, the schoolboard should implement it in the curriculum."

"I agree to make the awareness. Because today, there's no awareness. If you were to just put the toy in the classroom, they don't really know what, because they don't have the awareness behind it. But if there was a curriculum, then I would say, sure add it in."

"Yeah, you know you're not going to sit them down and do a lecture about what it means to be transgender. But just letting them know through these small ways that it's okay, like, if they are."

"There's racism. Handicap, you know what I mean. And now we're trying to implement something-"

Materials presented in focus groups

The participants shared general impressions towards the books and toys that were presented to them during the interviews, through 26 responses. The teachers expressed interest in particular ideas that they could see themselves implementing, as well as the toys and books they

themselves would choose to present in their own classrooms. Please see Table 2 below for illustrations.

Table 2

Samples of Teacher Responses to the Materials Presented in Focus Groups (26)

"If he [unclear who "he" is that teachers is referring to] were to see these books, I feel like he would feel great about them. I haven't seen books like this ever and I think they are pretty cool. I do think it would be difficult to implement."

"Yeah. Or if there's a kid [who is transgender] in my class I'd be like, wow, this [RED book] is really useful."

"Yeah, you are a second support. And like you said, the books can be so simplified."

"The books probably help the parents too because I'm sure the parents don't know how to deal with their child and approach it."

"Yeah that's why I like the crayon [book] because it's super neutral. They aren't using the terms girl or boy."

".. book that's just gender neutral.."

"I wouldn't buy this doll unless-"

"The idea of the Russian doll really, like, I liked the idea. But It's almost too bad that it did have a gender. Like. why can't it just be, [pause]. Like a made-up thing. Like um, [pause] I don't think The Hueys, in ugh, Oliver Jeffery's book The Hueys. like he has this character, and just I guess it looks like an alien."

Societal issues

Participants voiced their opinions on how society has been becoming more open to the LGBTQ community. The educators discussed how media has contributed to this development. However, it was also discussed that there are generational differences amongst educators and parents. The participants continued by saying how this can lead to different views between parents and educators and, as a result, have an influence in the classroom setting. Please see Table 3 below for examples of the teachers' responses.

Table 3

Samples of Teacher Responses on How Society's Position May Influence Classroom Teaching
(27)

"So older teachers won't see eye to eye-"

"Like my generation would not say half of what she says"

"I've corrected a teacher before saying, like, a boy saying he wants to be a princess, and the teacher said, no you're a king, and I said, no you can be a princess. You don't have to say that to a child. But also, maybe because of the generation, they don't know how important these could be for certain kids."

"Yeah, I just feel like the parents of preschoolers were raised in such, like, a different world than the preschools right now. Like the world preschoolers live now, yeah, like it is very –

But it's like breaking the ice. Basically 50 years ago same thing, with white and black people couldn't be in the same classrooms, right? So it's just-"

"It's a topic that we're all discussing and back when, you know, those- their parents, the students' parents were growing up that was not a topic that was being discussed. So it is a completely different world –"

"You know people argue who are against this stuff, that- that they feel that you're going to create [pause] LGBT children by exposure. And we both know that-"

School administration

 Guidelines. Educators voiced that they were concerned that without a concrete plan in place to address gender diversity issues with their students, they wouldn't know how deep they should go into the content. They also shared that they were fearful of sharing too much and of being unable to discuss the proper terminologies. Participants shared how, without guidelines in place, they wouldn't know which direction they should take (see Table 4 below for illustrations).

 Curricular support. The participants also shared that they believed it was important to have support from their directors about having these discussions in their classrooms. Educators suggested sending emails or newsletters informing parents beforehand that this material would

be discussed. Participants discussed their fear in not having the support from their daycare, and

as a result would not feel comfortable, at this point, holding these discussions in their classrooms

(see Table 4 for illustrations).

Table 4

Samples of Teacher Responses on How Their School Administration May or May Not Support
Them in Addressing Gender Diversity

Guidelines (19)	*"Or maybe your perspective on it as well may not be exactly what somebody who identifies as, well I'm not sure everyone who's trans has the same idea what it is but I get what you're saying. You might not have the same sort of, like, understanding and how deep"*
	"I'm not even too sure how far I could go, what my guidelines are, what do I have to stick to."
	"What your boundaries are and what their boundaries are"
Curricular Support (9)	"Yup, just cover myself. I would be like listen, I would like, I have these books. And I would like to, I'm just letting you- I fear that there might be some backlash. So, I'm going to, I would like to put them into circulation. Do you have any suggestions on how I should do that, or blah blah blah, -"
	"I'm looking for your support."
	"Send an email to the parents saying, Dear parents, this year our curriculum is going to include you know, LBTQ whatever. We have like content that's like going to help kids that's maybe trans or have trans thoughts, or other trans students whatever."
	"But we can't, but we don't have the authority, the agency to do that. Because the people, the parents are going to criticize your curriculum chosen."
	"well the school told me to do it sorry."
	"Because then, then the teachers aren't afraid to do it because they aren't going to get s*** from anyone"

Parental issues

Fear of backlash. All the educators expressed a deep concern of upsetting parents if they were to discuss gender diversity in their classroom. Although it was agreed that teachers want to have their own voices in their classrooms, overall, the fear of backlash from parents prevented them from feeling able to explore the topic.

Sense of parents as conservative. Teachers shared their fears in working with parents who they consider more reserved and conservative than them. They voiced that these parents may be more protective and value discussing LGBTQ themes in their own home first. However, participants also shared their concern that these conversations would not happen in the home, and therefore should be a responsibility shared by the teacher.

Parents' understanding of topic. The participants also expressed how some parents may not fully understand LGBTQ issues, and thus have a misconception of how children may be feeling. Please see Table 5 below for samples of teacher responses regarding parental reactions to the possibility of gender diversity being introduced in their children's classrooms.

Table 5

Samples of Teacher Responses on Parental Issues

Fear of backlash (19)	"I'm picturing like some crazy a** parents at the daycare, literally butchering me for showing them a book like this/"
	"But, to answer your question, [parents]. They're our biggest concern"
	"Why is it in your school? Why are you, why are you promoting this?"
	"But I can see other parents being like, no my son is so young it doesn't matter or he's so young he doesn't really know what he's saying"

"The negative to it according to, what I think, parents is they don't want them to be exposed. "

"parents are going to freak and write letters."

"Nobody, nobody wants to be like the teacher known for that stuff."

Parents as conservative (22)	"Conservative parents will probably have a problem with it, but if you don't start doing it now in schools, when is a good time?"
	"Just teaching them about it because if their parents at home aren't teaching them how are they really going to know? So I think it's important to discuss things like that."
	"Parents are so protective. The kids for sure can understand."
	"I think in this day and age, it depends on the parents' religion, depends on their background, their upbringing. We're very multicultural."
Parents' understanding (12)	"Because they are afraid "
	"Yeah. You're trying to make the kids gay. That's the argument."
	"But, the family is also going through a divorce, so the father believes that the reason why the child is trans is because the mother is creating this, you know people argue who are against this stuff, that- that they feel that you're going to create [pause] LGBT children by exposure. And we both know that-"
	"But I'll have parents that are, like, you know, I don't want your counselor who's transgender or who's transitioning or whatever to be the counselor or guiding my children because they don't want to be exposed to it"

Discussion

There is a significant paucity in the literature on implementing gender diversity in

schools (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2018; Ryan et al., 2013), especially in preschool settings.

Much of the research in this area is focused on elementary and high school (Martino &

Cumming-Potvin, 2015; Ryan et al., 2013). The current study contributes to this field, as it investigated early childhood educators' perspectives on incorporating gender diversity topics into their preschool classrooms. Educators were prompted by various picture books and images of toys, as well as a series of discussion questions. The purpose of this study was to explore educators' views on implementing gender diversity in their early childhood classrooms.

Gender diversity as a topic in EC curriculum

The current study found that the participants agreed that gender diversity should be implemented into the early childhood curriculum, as they discussed the importance of bringing awareness and exposure at an early age. For instance one participant stated "*I agree to make the awareness. Because today there's no awareness. If you were to just put the toy in the classroom, they don't really know what because they don't have the awareness behind it.*" The participants further shared that having these conversations with young children would help shape children's understanding of gender and gender diversity in society. For example, two educators were discussing the importance of exposure and one participant compared discussing gender diversity to discussing individuals with special needs, as she stated "*…I think when you start really young, by introducing to them at a young age it, its normal for them when they grow up. It's like meeting a handicapped person for the first time. Either a child is afraid and runs a way or-*". This was followed by another educator agreeing as she mentioned "*The earlier you're exposed to things the more normalized [gender diversity] is. And should be more normalized…*" These findings are similar to Brinkman and Manning's (2016) and Ryan et al.'s (2013) findings, in that educators can make classrooms more inclusive for young children as well as begin to bring awareness to them about human differences. Although these studies cited focused on school-aged children, their findings shed light on what the participants in the current study believe are

important for preschool age children. As mentioned earlier, children as young as 18 months show an understanding of gender categorizations and differences within one another (Johnston, 2001), highlighting how preschool aged children have a foundation to support such critical thinking.

Similarly, the Quebec Education Program states that educators must stimulate children's critical thinking of the social world, along with encouraging them to construct their understanding of the world (Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, 2017). The curriculum program delineates the importance of the child's developing awareness of their body and building of their self-esteem. Furthermore, the childcare program Meeting Early Childhood Needs (Ministère De La Famille et des Ainés, 2007) states that one of the responsibilities of the educator is to integrate children harmoniously into society. The program also states that by doing so, educators should encourage the fundamental principles that Quebec society values, such as "equality between sexes and individuals, [along with] acceptance of differences" (p. 6). Furthermore, it mentions that educators should foster the "development of the child's personal and gender identity" (p. 25), again stating that these are the values embraced by Quebec's society.

The educators interviewed in the current study seemed to have educational perspectives that were in line with Quebec's two early childhood curriculums, as they shared their beliefs on the benefits of introducing gender diversity to young children, and the value in encouraging children to expand their knowledge on gender diversity.

Materials presented in focus groups

Another significant line of discussion was the strong preference the participants expressed towards the use of books in their classroom, rather than the toys (see Figures 1 and 2).

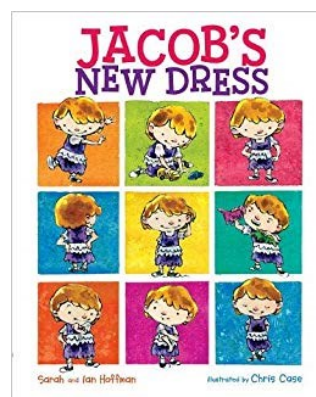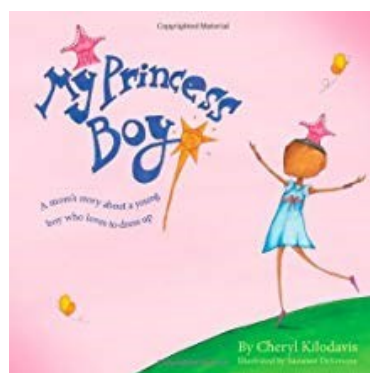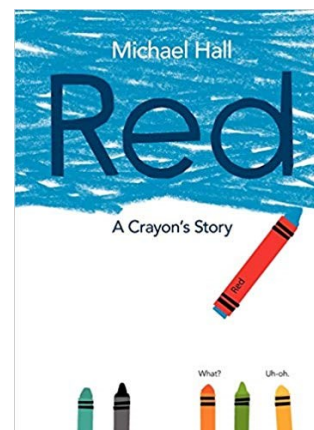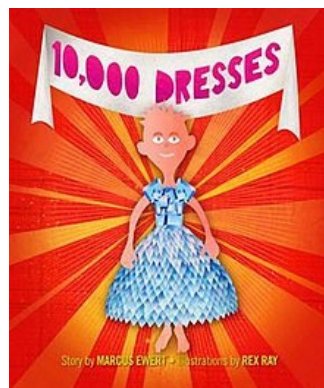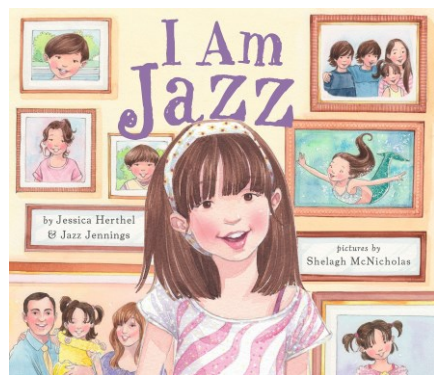*Figure 1 . Books presented to participant*

Figure 2. Images of Toys

Several of the participants expressed that the use of toys to introduce gender diversity

would be complicated to implement. It was mentioned that presenting children with simply a toy

would not offer enough explanation on *what* gender diversity is. The participants agreed that additional explanation would have to be added with the presentation of the toys, and it appeared that the educators were rather uncomfortable with being the ones to provide this information on their own. One educator mentioned "*If you were to just put the toy in the classroom, they don't really know what because they don't have the awareness behind it. But if there was a curriculum, then I would say sure add it in.*" Here the participant reveals how using a toy would not offer a child enough information, however if there were clear guidelines in the preschool curriculum to discuss these topics, she would feel more comfortable in offering further explanations.

The childcare educators all agreed that incorporating gender diverse literature during circle time would require less explanation on their part, and was considered more straightforward in conveying the topic to the children. Therefore, the educators agreed that using children's literature as a means to introduce and discuss gender diversity along with discussing gender neutral characters, was more effective and easier to implement. For instance, one educator voiced how the children's books shown in the focus group can *"be so simplified"* to use in her class. The participants' responses reflect closely Monoyio and Symenidou's (2016) and DePalma's (2016) research, who also found that children's books can assist children in understanding complicated topics, including diversity, along with helping to create an inclusive classroom. These findings correspond to the current study's participant reflections in acknowledging the use of children's books to introduce gender diversity. However, given that the participants in the present study are working with younger children, the childcare educators displayed a stronger sense of unease in providing further explanations on gender diversity, especially without explicit guidelines in place.

Interestingly, the participants acknowledged that they favored the text *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall. They shared that they enjoyed that the characters were depicted through different colors, which would be an easier and more suitable approach for younger children to understand rather than direct reference to gender differences. Several of the educators expressed that they appreciated how the book's characters were inferred to be gender-neutral. One participant shared "*Yeah that's why I like the crayon [book], because it's super neutral*". Gooden & Gooden's (2001) findings resemble the current participants' responses towards *Red: A Crayon's Story*, as their research highlights how illustrations of gender stereotypes can be highly influential on young children who are beginning to shape, understand and question gender roles. In the current study, participants agreed on the importance of having gender neutral images and written texts, as a way to allow children to reflect on gender diversity. Two participants from different focus groups made compelling statement about gender neutral characters in teaching gender diversity to young children. One participant stated that having more texts with "*no sort of identification of whether [a] book is supposed to be for a little girl or a little boy. It's just like very general and that would be a really cool idea. Like, you know there's not just trucks and firemen in one book and in another books all princesses and flowers, it's just stuff*." Similarly, the participant in the second focus group shared another children's book that she liked which had characters with no gender: "*Oliver Jeffery's book The Hueys. Like he has this character, and just I guess it looks like an alien. Like it looks like a bean, and these people are called the Hueys. And they, I don't feel like they have a gender. They're just different people.*" Both these participants shared how they understand that there is much value in introducing this topic to children through non-gendered characters in children's books. Interestingly, two participants

shared that they themselves have been writing and illustrating a children's book with the sole mission of elimination gender roles.

School administration

Guidelines. As noted, the data suggests that the educators were apprehensive of introducing the topic of gender diversity as a result of not having suitable guidelines. The participants voiced their opinion of being unaware of what to explore and how in-depth they would be allowed to discuss the topic. For instance, one participant stated "*I'm not even too sure how far I could go, what my guidelines are, what do I have to stick to.*" Gerouki (2010) discovered a similar result in his study with elementary school teachers with primary-aged students from Greece. His findings suggest that teachers felt uncomfortable and appeared to lack the proper knowledge in introducing gender diversity as a topic. A similar study, investigating 11 high school teachers in South Africa, found that teachers ignored the topic and, in fact, promoted heterosexuality (Francis, 2011). Both studies reveal how teachers were uncomfortable about the topic, and possibly unaware of the subject entirely which caused a sense of fear. Although in the current study, none of the participants voiced that they felt uncomfortable about the topic per se, they acknowledged that they were uneasy about the absence of clear guidelines in introducing gender diversity in an early childhood classroom. It was evident that the fear of not knowing enough on the topic, and how much detail educators can explore with children caused an additional concern and an unwillingness to present this topic.

Curriculum

As discussed, the Quebec Education Program for Preschool (Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, 2017) reveals six competencies in helping children aged 4 to 5, learn through play. The various competencies focus on increasing motor development, building

self-esteem, social development, language and cognitive development, along with working in a team. The program states that educators should create a welcoming environment, along with proving all children and families with equal opportunities. The implementation of various gender diverse toys and books in a play-based curriculum touches closely on two of the competencies: "to affirm his/her personality" and "to construct his/her understanding of the world" (p. 63). Many of the participants in the current study mentioned the importance of educating children at a young age to prepare them for the real world. One participant voiced *"It could also help them be aware. At that young age, they are naïve and innocent, they don't know what's good or bad. And I think when you start really young, by introducing to them at a young age it, its normal for them when they grow up."* Her statement demonstrates her belief in the importance of early awareness, along with a link to the Preschool competency.

In addition, the Ministère De La Famille et des Ainés (2007) states that the responsibility of the childcare provider is to create activities that foster development in all domains, along with preparing children to understand the values of society in Quebec. As mentioned, the curriculum places a strong emphasis on educating children on accepting differences, along with helping them understand their "personal and gender identity" (p. 25), as these are core values in Quebec. The curriculum programs of Meeting Early Childhood Needs (2007) and The Quebec Education Program for Preschool (2017) could be interpreted as suggesting that introducing these gender diverse topics would be acceptable and encouraged, as this would educate children on individual differences, bring awareness, help them learn their own gender identity, as well as prepare children on the values and norms of Quebec society. However, the programs provide broad and ambiguous directives with little concrete information on how to address gender specifically. Participants in this study agreed that without guidelines to follow, addressing this topic can be

stressful and disorganized. An educator shared how she would not know how comfortable she or other educators would feel in the topic, along with *"what the [Quebec Education Program] boundaries are."* These findings suggest that there should be more guidelines in the early childhood curriculum programs provided by the Ministère De La Famille et des Ainés and the Ministère De La Famille et des Ainés in how to address and bring awareness to gender diverse topics.

How Society's Position May Influence Classroom Teaching

The educator participants voiced how society has slowly been opening up to the LGBTQ community. They discussed that the media has had a large influence in slowly shaping society's understanding of gender diversity through television, radio, and movies, through programs such as *Queer Eye, Black Lightning, RuPaul's Drag Race.* It was discussed that the media is slowly bringing the LGBTG community to light, one participant mentioned that *"Netflix has a gay section",* demonstrating that through media, society is including more of the LGBTQ community, and in turn bringing awareness about the community. This is similar to Boldt's (1996) research, in that she highlights that individuals learn the meaning of gender differences through society, and that media helps shape children's gender identity. Boldt's (1996) data supports the participants' views on the impact media has on shaping society. Differently, two participants that identified as being lesbians agreed that there are still not enough representations of different types of love in the media. One of them mentioned that "*our society is so heteronormative. It's crazy. I don't wanna go watch a movie because I don't wanna watch a boy and a girl fall in love."* Given the influence media has on bringing awareness and shaping children's gender identity, educators should be aware of the influence of TV shows, movies, and books.

The participants further discussed that media can convey incorrect information. They recognised that the media has brought awareness to the topic, however has also delivered negative representations of the LGBTQ community. One participant recounted a segment she heard on the radio about a young transgendered child and the misconception the public was sharing on the process of receiving surgery. The participants followed her statement with discussing that there is a lot of misinformation in the media concerning this topic. Agreeing that this may be the case, and knowing how impactful the media is, perhaps having proper guidelines for educators to introduce gender diversity in an early childhood classroom could offer proper knowledge to the children, to eliminate the misconceptions and fears individuals may have.

Finally, one participant shared how society has been integrating LGBTQ themes more in schools, compared to a few years ago. She stated "*It's a topic that we're all discussing and back when, you know, those- their parents, the students' parents were growing up that was not a topic that was being discussed. So it is a completely different world.*"

Parental issues

Many of the current participants feared that parents of the children in their classrooms would be overly conservative and protective. One participant in particular shared that she feared that "*parents are going to freak and write letters.*" Another educator voiced how she worried about parental backlash: "*My concerns would be answering all the kids' questions and having the kid going home and telling the parent what they learnt, and then the parent coming up to [me] saying, you cannot tell my kid that.*" These responses are similar to findings from Martino and Cumming-Potvin's (2015) study, in which the authors researched implementing gender diverse texts in an elementary school classrooms in Ontario with eight teachers and in Australia with three teachers. Their results displayed that many of the elementary school parents

disapproved of the topics being taught, and requested that their children be opted out. Religious groups had persuaded school boards to write policies permitting students to be "exempt from curriculum delivery dealing with LGBTQ representations" (p. 814). Martino and Cumming-Potvin's (2015) research clearly illustrates the socio-political battle in incorporating gender diversity into the curriculum. The participants in the current study reflect similar feelings through their responses. One finding that was frequently discussed was the child's background, in terms of religion. Even more, it was mentioned that they would not want to be known as "being that teacher" who introduces gender diversity. This highlights Ryan et al.'s (2013) finding that teachers are reluctant to incorporate gender diversity into their classrooms. Nonetheless, the current study demonstrates that the participants agreed that introducing gender diversity *should* be incorporated into the preschool curriculum, as it can create awareness and educate children on individuals differences. However, they require and demand support from administration, as without it, the educators were hesitant to implement these topics, largely as a result of the criticism they may receive from parents.

As noted above, much of the research in this area is focused on early elementary and high school (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2015; Ryan et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the participants in this study agreed that familiarising children to gender diversity can have positive effects. They agreed that introducing these topics can create awareness and educate young children on having respect for individuals differences. Their perspective strongly relates to a considerable amount of research that address the impact of creating inclusive classrooms can have on building positive attitudes towards others, alleviating bullying, and forming a more accepting community (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2015; Orr, & Baum, 2015; Taylor et al., 2011).

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has a number of limitations, four of which will be noted. The first limitation is the sample size. The study had a total of seven participants which cannot provide a representation of educators' perspectives on the topic in Montreal. Therefore, further research should be done on a larger scale to provide a stronger representation of the Montreal population. Second, there was a lack of diversity in the actual participant pool, in that all the participants were Caucasian, English-speaking women, who live in the Montreal area. In addition, several of the participants identified as being lesbian. Given the nature of the study, their opinions and views may have been biased towards gender diversity issues. Future research should examine a more diverse cohort, as it would provide noteworthy data on how other cultures, ethnicities, and diverse sexual orientations view gender diversity in the preschool classroom. Third, seeing that Montreal is rather liberal, it would be significant to explore this topic in other provinces that are perhaps more conservative on the topic of gender diversity. Finally, a few of the focus groups conversations were influenced by my own views. Throughout some of the dialogues between the participants, my opinion was fairly noticeable. In my future work as a researcher, it will be imperative to monitor my role and opinions to ensure authentic and less biased data.

Due to the lack of research in this area, it would be important that this current study be extended and replicated in the preschool classroom. It would be helpful to examine children's understanding and knowledge on gender diversity, along with their parents' perspectives on the curriculum. In addition, given the continual development of books, toys and materials, we could further establish which materials work best and offer the most engaging conversations.

Conclusion

This study explored educators' perspectives on introducing gender diversity in preschools while considering different approaches in the classroom to encourage these discussions. This was

investigated by examining early childhood educators' responses to specific books and toys that could promote gender diversity discussions in the classroom, and their thoughts and beliefs about incorporating these materials in order to contribute to a child's understanding of gender diversity. Analyzing teachers' perspectives on these approaches helped provide insight into whether early childhood educators would be comfortable implementing gender diversity into their classrooms.

The data suggests that the participants are rather uncomfortable in promoting these discussions in their classroom, however value and understand the importance of having them at an early age. The teachers' perspectives highlighted that much would have to change in order for them to feel more confident and comfortable, including clearer and concrete curriculum guidelines, support from directors, and having parental support. The participants voiced how materials used would have to be easy and simple to explain, that parents would need to be informed ahead of time, and that directors would have to support teachers in having these discussions. The concerns expresses in this current study may parallel concerns of teachers in response to introducing other sensitive topics in the curriculum, such as sexuality education or religious perspectives. Still, it came across strongly through various discussions that participants in both focus groups expressed that encouraging early awareness of gender diversity is essential. In summary, these conversations suggest that, from the educators' perspectives, society may not be ready for such a shift in the early childhood classroom, and as a result teachers are wary of the topic, but wish to move in that direction.

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Appendix A

- Families would be hard to deal with having these discussions in the classrooms at such an early age
- Parents writing letters – being upset. Not understanding why or the importance.
- Hard to break the ice. Need to start somewhere.
- Trying to make people gay. By having these discussions parents may feel educators are trying to influence their children. Bringing these topics to light – putting these ideas in their heads.
- Heteronomy
- Depends on parents. How parents will feel. Hard to implement this without everyone's support or being on board.
- Bias – Religion.
- A lot of misinformation out there
- Taboo Subject
- Bringing awareness at an early age – Daycare agreed it is a good idea
- Worried about costs of supplies
- Quebec Program – Society
- Quebec Values- Society and understanding differences
- MFA – Values and society
- Worries about terminologies and understanding.
- Agreed that there should be guidelines in place – Curriculum
- Educators are uncomfortable, afraid, feel like they don't have a voice - fear of parents/ fear of topic
- Race also discussed – Perhaps because of the Red book. Crayons and colors.
- Parents not fully understanding their children capabilities or understanding.
- Parent being too conservative and/or protective
- Preschool guidelines
- Some may feel that parents should be the ones have these conservations
- Need support from school
- There is a generational grab between parents, teachers and children, which can cause some misinformation
- Labelling and language. Not sure of what to say and/or how to address the topic
- Genders – worried about it
- Backlash from parents
- Again, Quebec society – Part of the competencies. Prepare children for Quebec Society. Educate them on understanding values and principles.
- Red book was very well liked
- Using a series of books may be easier to implement
- Having toys with no gender, perhaps easier to discuss gender
- Media – Positive and negative. Provides information. Correct or not. Movies not depicting enough out there.
- Society shaping children

- Having their own realities. Being about to watch something and fit in. Understand that character's perspective
- Having a sense of belonging.
- Fear overall, not ready yet
- Agree on the idea – Larger preference for books
- Red book – Again. Taking a lot of the conversations
- Gender neutral
- Own story lines – Creating their own books

Appendix B

Data Coding

1. Preferences for books over toys

Passage	Line	Interview
A: Yeah, I think that things like the books and the dolls are subtle ways of just introducing the topic –	391	1
A: I feel like when they are that young, its a good time to start with these kinds of books/	244	1
SA: / I think I would do it if I felt like a kid needed it. / -- books	367	1
SA: It's really sad [Looking over the book]	48	1
ST: I just read the beginning of the I am Jazz book, and it said I would always say I am girl I would always say I am a girl. Then I think the toys are great, I wouldn't necessarily just buy it to buy it. I wouldn't buy this doll unless-	136	1
SA: Yeah. Or if there's a kid in my class I'd be like wow this is really useful. But I feel like if I'm in a class where no child is saying this things and I'm bringing these toys to them , they wouldn't really notice. They'd be like oh look I'm stacking. They would be like I have a guy and a girl. They wouldn't see it as a boy becoming a girl or a girl becoming a guy	145	1
SA: Yeah, you are a second support. And like you said, the books can be so simplified. Like it can be so simple like you're a boy but you don't have to be a boy. It can be something super easy, but for them it can be a lightbulb going off.	172	1
A: Yeah that's why I like the crayon because its super neutral. They aren't using the terms girl or boy.	174	1
T: Yeah, I would like the concept, like she was saying a book that's just gender neutral. Cause I love, even now, like I love reading books, it's like where you know I'll read the whole book and there's no idea of whether this character is supposed to be -	429	1

A: The jazz doll is nice because she is a role model to kids that feel that they might be transgender. It's like someone they can look up to and idolize. And the Sam doll could help them feel normal	95	1
T: I mean I like the concept. I don't know. I didn't see that when I was growing up. Like it was really like the boys go to the toys and the girls go to the baby dolls. It's cool to see the concept and being different.	78	1
SA: The books probably help the parents too because I'm sure the parents don't know how to deal with their child and approach it. Its new and I'm sure not everyone parent would know how to react to it. So I think these books and these dolls are a good transition.	101	1
SA: I think it'd be cool if they did like a storybook that the teachers themselves talk about and then there's a toy or toys, attached to it and then like you kind of put the toys in a certain area so then like the child, so we do this with mini pally. Mini pally is kind of like a mouse that comes to the classroom like once every month [laughs] and yeah -	437	1
KK: it's the safest because, it's because it doesn't pertain ugh, it doesn't show – LA: /a person, yeah/		2
KK: Is a bit difficult so even talking about transgender could be difficult. But these books would differently give some … -		2
KK Their great! I would take them in my class. It would be scary through.		2
LA: Actually are friends whose child is trans. Was very influenced by that book. To the point /that/	16 & 20	2
LA: Yeah! And they called themselves Jazz. As a result of that /book/ LA: /as their name now. And now call the child Jazz/	24 &26	2
SK: /could be an eye opener/	57	2
KK: Yeah, or gives just gives some options. Like oh yeah! It's like in that book!	59	2
	176	2

SK: But you know what, rainbow colors kids [?]. They would take it! It's colorful!		
KK: it's the safest because, it's because it doesn't pertain ugh, it doesn't show – KK: A boy "turning into" a girl or it's really about the inside. It's really about the feeling of I guess, what it would like to be transgender.	361 & 365	2
LA: Yeah, like if you read that book (pointing to Red) and not reference it with anything and not do it on gay day, I think you'd be fine. [?] gay. -	478	2
KK: Well, like I love um. [pause] The idea of the Russian doll really like, I liked the idea. But It's almost too bad that it did have a gender. Like Why can't it just be, [pause]. Like a made up thing. Like um, [pause] I don't think The Hueys, in ugh, Oliver Jeffery's book The Hueys. Like he has this character, and just I guess it looks like an alien. Like it looks like a bean, and these people are called the Hueys. And they, I don't feel like they have a gender. They're just different people. But maybe that non-gender is actually male.	529	2
LA: Yeah, like if you read that book (pointing to Red) and not reference it with anything and not do it on gay day, I think you'd be fine. [?] gay. -	478	2

2. Including Gender Diversity

SA: / Some kids ask some pretty complex questions. (laughing) Yeah, like you'd be afraid how to answer the question because at the end of the day, the kids are going to take from it. But is it what the parents believe, like are you are allowed to. To like, of course they are, like you may believe it, but like are you able to go over against the parents beliefs at the end of the day like? Should the curriculum let you do that anyway? Like this is what the curriculum teaches us and allows us. I think the curriculum should teach it. -	322	1
A: Yeah, you know you're not going to sit them down and do a lecture about what it means to be transgender. But just letting them know through these small ways that its okay like if they are –	393	1
T: But there is more exposure to stuff like that which makes it less weird right? I don't know but I think the more	222	1

you expose yourself to it and the more you have it which makes it less weird. I would never feel uncomfortable /-		
ST: So at this point, the schoolboard should implement it in the curriculum. Unless you see with a child struggle with gender or their sexuality. You wouldn't–	151	1
SA: But I think it's important to have a curriculum to do it because then all the teachers will know they have to follow something so their biases won't get in the way. For me, its kind of hard. They think a certain way, and when I first got to the daycare, I'm not going to go into her class room and be like NO tell the kids what to be when its not my classroom here. I was a floater and I was kind of in every classroom. I spent a day in each classroom. So I was with all ages , 18 months-5 years old. So its not my job to tell the teacher how to run their class.	176	1
SA: But if there was a curriculum, then I would say sure add it in	162	1
T: Well you know what, the younger the better. At 4-5 they are still learning what a boy and girl is. They are still not aware that I'm a girl, you're a boy.	84	1
SA: I think when you start really young, by introducing to them at a young age It, its normal for them when they grow up. It's like meeting a handicap person for the first time. Either a child is afraid and runs a way or—	97	1
T: /Yeah just like exposure is important. The earlier you're exposed to things the more normalized it is. And it should be more normalized.	99	1
A: I feel like when they are that young, its a good time to start with these kinds of books/	244	1
ST: / you're thinking only about if the child is struggling. What about everyone else and creating awareness/	161	1
A: I think it's an important part, like S**** was saying, putting it in the curriculum. So teaching kids that there is such a thing as being transgender, that it's okay. Just teaching them about it because if their parents at home aren't teaching them how are they really going to know? So I think its important to discuss things like that	170	1
T: But there is more exposure to stuff like that which makes it less weird right? I don't know but I think the more you	222	1

expose yourself to it and the more you have it which makes it less weird. I would never feel uncomfortable /-		
SA: / When your friend came out, you're so okay with it. If your friend talks to you about it, you'd be like oh, I learnt about it, it's okay.	536	1
SA: … I agree to make the awareness. Because today there's no awareness if you were to just put the toy in the classroom, they don't really know what because they don't have the awareness behind it. But if there was a curriculum , then I would say sure add it in	162	1

LA: Hmm! Somebody's gotta do it ! Especially, in your in the private sector its different. Because your less pre- you a bit more vulnerable, so like you can feel more vulnerable. –	96	2
LA: Old enough to totally know. And the kids looked totally dumbfounded, and the mom totally said that they know that, but the reality of it does not compute. Like it's still you know, so much heteronormativity. That it's still a challenge for the child to put together. You know the mom has said in theory a million times, that she could look at me and ---- and imagine us as partners. Life partners. It's weird. And she's a guiding-. She's a really nice mom who has been working her entire kids life to be figuring it out.	132	2
KK: Yup, just cover myself. I would be like listen, I would like, I have these books. And I would to, I'm just letting you I fear that there might be some backlash. So, I'm going to, I would like to put them into circulation. Do you have any suggestions on how I should do that, or blah blah blah, -	235	2
SK: you need to have a game plan. Definitely , you need to, you can't just. I don't think you can just put it all out there.	321	2
LA: But young is better. I mean, I think it's like, like as a parent, I think you, like like. Like we always talk about it, but the kid whose trans. The kids not even kindergartner yet, the kids like three. And they totally in the wrong body. –	387	2
SK: You need to get parents prepared for it. Before you implement things like this. "Oh is it okay? Ah no it's not!" [laughing] But like, you fight for it. That's what it is right? Especially your kids. [pause] maybe?	383	2

3.   Societal and generational

ST: /-So older teachers won't see eye to eye-	128	1
ST: /- I've corrected a teacher before saying, like a boy saying he wants to be a princess, and the teacher said no you're a king, and I said no you can be a princess. You don't have to say that to a child. But also maybe because of the generation, they don't know how important these could be for certain kids.	129	1
T: Yeah, yeah. I think I mean that by enforcing a more like a concrete curriculum plan it make them. You know people with more outdated perspectives. So they follow it and do it whether they are against it.	182	1
A: / Yeah, i just feel like the parents of preschoolers were raised in such like a different world than the preschools right now. Like the world preschoolers live now, yeah, like it is very -	203	1
A: yeah, progressive like we're talking about transgender people, we're having tv show about it, we have toys about it books about it. It's a topic that we're all discussing and back when you know, those their parents, the students parents were growing up that was not a topic that was being discussed. So it is a completely different world -	207	1
Like my generation would not say half of what she says	234	1
SA:/ I mean I don't think the new generation is that great, but at least we're very open.	236	1
SA: /Like I can picture some parents not having a problem with it , but you can tell they are the younger parents and they are pretty hip. But I can see other parents being like no my son is so young it doesn't matter or he's so young he doesn't really know what he's saying/	264	1
SA: Who would ask to. No! She was in my cabin last year. Her name was skyla but The first day, what is all your names. She said "my name is skyla, but call my tyler". and Everyone in the cabin, we're like okay hey Tyler what's up, not even a second guess. When we were campers it would be like "why would she want us to call her Tyler".	277	1
ST: /Our parents never exposed to it/	279	1

T: /Yeah for sure I get that. Like, like you were saying, our generation is more-	282	1

SK: But it's like breaking the ice. Basically 50 years ago same thing, with white and black people couldn't be in the same classrooms, right? So it's just	94	2
KK: But no like, it's interesting to see the kids speaking and talking and using their role play. Well no, I can marry a boy or a girl it doesn't matter. You know ? –	114	2
KK: But I feel um, it's not one of the questions you just asked [gesturing to AS] but um, like in the media when people talk about transgender and kids deciding at such a quote young age that they are transgender –	186	2
KK: Yeah exactly! I feel like um, the way it's portrayed in the media and the way people call in to like CJAD and things like that. It's a lot of, they're imagining right away that it goes to surgery. Like how can you do that to your kid. And it's like their just five years old how do they know. And it's like no no, that's not where were jumping too. That's a whole separate thing. Their –	190	2
LA: Well, as long as boys don't play with dolls that's fine with me! Everyone laughing SK: But girls will love to play with trucks right ?	287-291	2
KK: Hmm-mm. In my class, there's like there this, they heard me say it so many times. Like if a quote a boy was using pink, they would be like what, it's a color. [Child voice] [laughing] It's just a color. There's no such thing as boy colors or girl colors. And like I would hear them say it to each other. Like if, -	301	2
KK: Oh yeah! Like are you kidding me! And oh yeah also skin tone. Skin tone and here's like the array of skin tone colors. [laughing]	309	2
KK: It's not just pink! You have brown you have dark brown, light brown, tan. Like which color is most similar to yours. Like I'm a tan or oh I'm a dark brown.	313	2
LA: I feel it's so weird how much we label people more now, then I feel like even when I was, when I was a teenager. And like people weren't doing this whole pink and blue thing. It was not cool. Everyone was like androgyny is the way to go. Like think of all the artists from the 80's. Like, David Bowe, Annie Lennox. Like all these super androgynous men and woman, nobody was obsessed with being a boy or a girl. And now I feel like our culture is so	402	2

obsessed with categorizing people more than ever. Which of course the parents are influenced by. And putting their kids in pink and blue. Gender reveal parties ! Were never happening 20 years ago! Like now everyone is having these stupid gender reveal party. Like you know –		
SK: That's because we label KK: /Exactly/ SK: That's what scares parents. And ourselves and people.	396-400	2
SK: Like my brother when he had a, when his wife was pregnant. They didn't want to know the sex till the baby was born. But guess what? People had no idea what to buy. Weird? But it's the way we think. It's like it's predisposed. What do we buy? We can't buy pink if it's a boy. –	420	2
KK: Take a look at kids T-shirts! The messages on kids T-shirts. The boys versus girls T-shirts. Is very different. –	430	2
SK: Next time, next baby. I'm just going to buy whatever. I went, no joke, I went neutral color. Because I didn't know. It's crazy. -	441	2
LA: And then that's going to be like the role model for the children. We need there to be a major role model, like something not just stupid Minnie and Mickey mouse. You know, not just, like just be a person. –	548	2
LA: But just like a snapshot into the he reality of what it's like to be like to be queer, at the back of those snapshot still. People are like what's the big deal, so what if your gay, nobody cares. And nobody cares. But they do care, when its two seconds in the Finding Dori thing. But everyone still cares.	594	2
KK: We need to, our society is so heteronormative. It's crazy. I don't wanna go watch a movie because I don't wanna watch a boy and a girl fall in love .	596	2

4. Administration support

SA: But I also agree, like you should do it incase the parents are upset, like are support system. like we had a kid whose mom got mad at us tieing elastics in his hair. Because his dad sister is a transgender, and he's not comfortable with it. And he is afraid that his 3 year old son -	184	1
T I'm following the curriculum./ -	338	1
SA: /well the school told me to do it sorry./	340	1
SA: Yeah. Take it up with the board. Go to, go to whatever. Because then, then the teachers aren't afraid to do it because they aren't going to shit from anyone. And it's part of the, or you can just answer them, it is 2018.	344	1
SA: If a parent says, listen I heard that you told my child that it's okay if he's doing this, this this and this and if you're like listen this may be your personal belief but like in the government we're trying to [?] let kids feel more open and let kids feel more okay with themselves when we've incorporated this like it's something that we're saying to every class at all these ages so like you know if you have something to say you take it up with the board it's much easier than being like, oh well	359	1
KK: Yup, just cover myself. I would be like listen, I would like, I have these books. And I would to, I'm just letting you I fear that there might be some backlash. So, I'm going to, I would like to put them into circulation. Do you have any suggestions on how I should do that, or blah blah blah, -	235	2
KK: I'm looking for your support.	239	2
LA: The school would send an email to the parents saying. Dear parents, this year are curriculum is going to include you know, LBTQ whatever. We have like content that's like going to help kids that's maybe trans or have trans thoughts, or other trans students whatever. – LA: But we can't, but we don't have the authority, the agency to do that. Because the people, the parents are going to criticize your curriculum chose.	241 & 245	2

5. Guidelines and understanding of material

SA: / Some kids ask some pretty complex questions. (laughing) Yeah, like you'd be afraid how to answer the question because at the end of the day, the kids are going to take from it. But is it what the parents believe, like are you are allowed to. To like, of course they are, like you may believe it, but like are you able to go over against the parents beliefs at the end of the day like? Should the curriculum let you do that anyway? Like this is what the curriculum teaches us and allows us. I think the curriculum should teach it. -	322	1
SA: I'm not even too sure how far I could go, what my guidelines are, what do I have to stick to.	382	1
T : /Like not understanding? Yeah, that's a good point too. They don't even understand what they are going through. I don't know if I'm generalizing, but it's like I don't know but there's more medical terms I guess if somebody is dealing with a certain thing, and when you're so young you don't know what you're dealing with and your parents even don't know what you're dealing with. Whereas when it's something else it can be more textbook definition can explain it, if that makes sense. Like when you're handicapped, you have this, you have to deal with it his way, you can't play soccer or you have to play soccer a certain way, you're going to be in this type of classroom, you have to go to this type of camp.	226	1
/They don't even know. The kid doesn't even know. But I get what S***'s saying. It has a lot to do with/	234	1
A: At first when I looked at them, with the I AM jazz book I was sort off thinking like wow they really oversimplified but then I was reminding myself its children's book so of course they have to oversimplify [laughs]. At first you know Jazz was explaining it like I feel like I have a boy body but a girl brain, and I was like well I don't know if that's the most accurate way of describing it but that's how a child would probably understand it best. So it was kind of interesting that it's not the way adults would talk about kids being transgender.	74	1
ST: / What your boundaries are and what their boundaries are /	383	1

ST: / Because we're not even too sure about it/	381	1
SA: if what I'm saying is like SA: okay in the end. Not that because what I think that I'm saying, because I don't want to say it -	380	1
SA: What if I go too far but they're like okay maybe like you know you shouldn't have done this	385	1
T: / Or maybe your perspective on it as well may not be exactly what somebody who identifies as, well I'm not sure everyone who's trans has the same idea what it is but I get what you're saying. You might not have the same sort of like understanding and how deep /	386	1
SA: Yeah, how deep can it go. If there was a curriculum to follow, which I know [?]. That's the only thing that's stopping me from being like, oh here you go cause also like -	387	1
LA: There's so much misinformation around transgender	200	2
KK: Yup, and I think that that misinformation is what also guides, like, like you know. If that book gets sent home. Then all that, that's all that their thinking. How can this book come to my child.	202	1

6. Curriculum backlash

SA:/ My concerns would be answering all the kids questions and having the kid going home and telling the parent what they learnt, and then parent coming up to you saying, you cannot tell my kid that./ -	314	1
T: Yeah, I mean I think that like, yeah, i would definitely like have some fears and concerns in that regard, and it	328	1

sucks that we have those fears and concerns. But i really think that like it's -		
SA: /Like I can picture some parents not having a problem with it , but you can tell they are the younger parents and they are pretty hip. But I can see other parents being like no my son is so young it doesn't matter or he's so young he doesn't really know what he's saying/	264	1
T: The negative to it according to, what I think, parents is they don't want them to be exposed. -	296	1
T:/ Parents are always biggest problems. (laughing) That's because they are/	320	1
ST: But, to answer your question, [parents]. They're our biggest concern	396	1
SA: / I'm picturing like some crazy ass parents at the daycare, literally butchering me for showing them a book like this/	326	1
KK: Their great! I would take them in my class. It would be scary through.	51	~~2~~
KK: I work in a very sometimes narrow minded uh, cliental base. So even just being gay is like, and talking about my wife. Is a bit difficult so even talking about transgender could be difficult. But these books would differently give some … -	55	2
LA: /parents are going to freak and write letters./	88	2
KK: That's another level. Whole another level. Yeah	90	2
LA: Nobody, nobody wants to be like the teacher known for that stuff.	92	2
LA: So we have to. As a gay person, you have to be. As in ally, I think it would be easier. Because you're a bit more neutral. We obviously are not. We aren't neutral, in this position. [?] I feel like pushing the gay agenda is a bit of a problem. Because they think that you want everyone to be gay. which is –	108	2
KK: In my, in my reading program we have kids select books and then they bring them home and then the parent read to the kids. Whichever book the kid picks out of the bin. It's usually	153 & 155	2

LA: /That's a lawsuit right there/		
LA: If you still put that book in your library, I'm sure it would be a problem. But maybe were being paranoid.	196	2
KK: Yup, just cover myself. I would be like listen, I would like, I have these books. And I would to, I'm just letting you I fear that there might be some backlash. So, I'm going to, I would like to put them into circulation. Do you have any suggestions on how I should do that, or blah blah blah, -	235	2
LA: But we can't, but we don't have the authority, the agency to do that. Because the people, the parents are going to criticize your curriculum chose.	245	2
KK: I don't know. Honestly, probably not. I probably would be scared. –	373	2
KK: I probably would be really scared.	377	2

7. Conservative Parents

T: Which is pretty cool because the kids can develop their own feelings even if its contradictory to their conservative parents' perspective, right?	110	1
A: I think it's an important part, like S**** was saying, putting it in the curriculum. So teaching kids that there is such a thing as being transgender, that it's okay. Just teaching them about it because if their parents at home aren't teaching them how are they really going to know? So I think its important to discuss things like that	170	1
SA: But I also agree, like you should do it in case the parents are like are support system. like we had a kid whose mom got mad at us tying elastics in his hair. Because his dad sister is a transgender, and he's not comfortable with it. And he is afraid that his 3 year old son -	184	1
A: /Conservative parents will probably have a problem with it, but if you don't start doing it now in schools, when is a good time?/	292	1
SA: actually know. I think it's really underestimated. Even parents these days, I find they do everything for their kids and I'm like your kid can fully do that. Parents -	528	1
SA: are so protective. The kids for sure can understand. Okay, up until, I think as of three more for girls because girls they talk faster and they kind of do everything quicker [laughs], potty-trained faster. I think girls would be more aware quicker than boys. I definitely think that	532	1

they would correlate it like from 4 to 5. If you already have kids in the daycare telling you like oh, why do I have a penis? Or why can't I be queen?		
ST: I think in this day and age, it depends on the parent's religion, depends on their background, their upbringing. We're very multicultural/	262	1
T: I know this isn't all the same but when I was a counsellor at camp I would have parents be upset if they knew their counsellor was gay. And I would have parents specifically speak to me and say I don't want the counsellor to be a lesbian or transgender. And it's like we don't want that person guiding our children. And the main reason is because they don't want their kid to be like "this is a possibility"./	262	1

LA: But, the family is also going through a divorce, so the father believes that the reason why the child is trans is because the mother is creating this, you know people argue who are against this stuff, that that they feel that you're going to create [pause] LGBT children by exposure . /And we both know that/ LA:/ but that's what the father's arguing. And that the mother's trying to make the kid [?]/	32 & 36	2
LA: So like right away, of course I think about, how like essentially families would, how'd they'd be concerned. Um, I have a personal bias, obviously. I think that it's like, I'm totally in favor of like of like supporting this stuff, but I know it's not as easy as that. I think that you'd have a lot of push back and that's scary.	82	2
LA: /parents are going to freak and write letters./	88	2
LA: /Yeah. Your trying to Make the kids gay. That's the argument/	104	2
SK: like G** she has an open mind. Like she'll teach her kids. Like open their eyes to the reality of it but if, like were biased right now, right? . Like if it's your neighbor who's you know, straight, catholic, do you think they would bring those kinds of books to the house? KK: Or if those books were sent home-	141 & 143	2

KK: In my, in my reading program we have kids select books and then they bring them home and then the parent read to the kids. Whichever book the kid picks out of the bin. It's usually LA: /That's a lawsuit right there/	153 & 155	2
KK: and it's usually, like oh what's the cover? Right? I'm looking at the cover, and then I see a picture I like. Then that kid takes the book home, so it can be read to them at night. So imagine they take home one of these books and it goes to a family, like you were saying [gestures to SK], that's very conservative. I'm for sure going to hear [?] –	159	2
LA: If you still put that book in your library, I'm sure it would be a problem. But maybe were being paranoid.	169	2
SK: Why is it in your school? Why are you, why are you promoting this ?	184	2
SK: That's because we label KK: /Exactly/ SK: That's what scares parents. And ourselves and people.	396-400	2
A: Like at home, I think like it's a lot easier. The parents of the luxury of being able to like, it's a like a taboo subject outside the home I guess. Really it should be the parents who talk about like sexuality, religion or anything that's taboo they should be, parents are the one that's supposed to be giving their kids the front lines of that conversation. But they probably don't know how. –	220	2
SK: You need to get parents prepared for it. Before you implement things like this. "Oh is it okay? Ah no it's not!" [laughing] But like, you fight for it. That's what it is right? Especially your kids. [pause] maybe?	383	2

8. Parents lack of Understanding

ST: Because his dad sister is a transgender, and he's not comfortable with it. And he is afraid that his 3 year old son -	184	1
T: /is going to influenced/	185	1
SA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Like he said, "I'm not comfortable with my sister" like I don't want you putting elastics in my son's hair. And he doesn't really know much about himself yet, so I don't want him to think he's a girl if he has elastics in his hair. So were like specifically said that we're not allowed to put elastics in his hair.	191	1
T: / Or maybe your perspective on it as well may not be exactly what somebody who identifies as, well I'm not sure everyone who's trans has the same idea what it is but I get what you're saying. You might not have the same sort of like understanding and how deep /	386	1
T: I know this isn't at all the same but when I was a counsellor at camp I would have parents be upset if they knew their counsellor was gay. And I would have parents specifically speak to me and say I don't want the counsellor to be a lesbian or transgender. And it's like we don't want that person guiding our children. And the main reason is because they don't want their kid to be like "this is a possibility"./	266	1
T: But I'll have parents that are like you know, I don't want your counselor who's transgender or whose transitioning or whatever to be the counsellor or guiding my children because they don't want to be exposed to it. Like if they know that I'm lesbian, and I don't tell the kids, like they ask whos your bf and I'll say like im single right now. I'll lie, and so will so many people that are gay on staff. And nobody told me otherwise, nobody told me otherwise, T**** by the way don't to tell the kids you're lesbian. I feel shame in exposing the children, because I'm like this isn't right, it's because I'm conditioned this way and its shitty.	286	1
T: They'll blame themselves. Like I know when I came out to my mom, she said is this because I put you in Karate classes and because you played with Tonka trucks? And I was like what!? Do you know what I mean, like if a kid comes out at says I'm a boy but I want to be a girl, I'm transgender, the dad would be like it's my fault, I put you in dance classes but i should've put you in football Or i put you with these books or these toys. Like my mom is pretty open-minded compare to some mothers but she still, i'm sure,	302	

thinks it's because I was put into karate that's why I turned out to be gay.		
LA: But, the family is also going through a divorce, so the father believes that the reason why the child is trans is because the mother is creating this, you know people argue who are against this stuff, that that they feel that you're going to create [pause] LGBT children by exposure . /And we both know that/	32	2
LA:/ but that's what the father's arguing. And that the mother's trying to make the kid [?]/	36	2
LA: /Yeah. Your trying to Make the kids gay. That's the argument/	104	2
KK: Yeah, how could you do that to your child. How could they medical decide that for them. That they are this gender not the other	198	2
LA: There's so much misinformation around transgender .	200	

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Introducing Gender Diversity in Preschool Curriculum: Storybooks and Toys
Researcher: Ashley Sodano
Researcher's Contact Information: ashley.sodano@gmail.com
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl
Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: sandra.chang-kredl@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: None

You are being invited to participate in the research study, "introducing Gender Diversity in Preschool Curriculum: Storybooks and Toys". This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A.   PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to explore aspects of introducing gender diversity in preschools, by investigating early childhood educators' thoughts and beliefs of introducing gender diverse books and toys in the classroom. The aim of the study is to discover whether early childhood educators would be comfortable implementing gender diversity into their classrooms, and what tools and support they would need.

B.   PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to contribute in a focus group interview with other early childhood educators. You will be prompted with various materials and questions to elicit your thoughts and perspectives on incorporating gender diversity material in a preschool setting.
In total, participating in this study will take approximately 90-120 minutes.

C.   RISKS AND BENEFITS
The risks in participating in this study are minimal. **If, in the unlikely situation, a participant reports serious discomfort, the participant will be referred to a list of counselling resources provided by the CLSC (Centres Locales de Services Communautaire) health clinic in their local community.** The benefits of participation include contributing to understandings of how teachers might address issues of gender diversity in early childhood classrooms.

 E. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research: Your thoughts and perspectives on incorporating gender diversity in a preschool setting.

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The information gathered will be confidential. That means that the researcher will know, but will not disclose your identity. The information gathered will be coded. That means that the information will be identified by a code. The researcher will have a list that links the code to your name.

We intend to publish the results of the research. However, it will not be possible to identify you in the published results.

We will ensure that the **data are** secured on the researcher's computer and we will destroy the information five years after the end of the study.

F.   CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher before September 1st, 2018.

The focus groups will be audio recorded so it is expected that the participants will be identifiable for purposes of withdrawing information; however, there may be a limitation to withdrawal of data should, in certain conversations, the focus group data be pooled.

If the withdrawal occurs prior to submission of my thesis, I will remove the data from my set. Once my thesis is completed, I will be unable to withdraw your information, however all identities will be anonymous.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print)   _____

SIGNATURE   _____

DATE   _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

E-MAIL INVITATION TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Dear Teachers,

I would like to invite you to participate in the research study entitled " INTRODUCING GENDER DIVERSITY IN PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM: STORYBOOKS AND TOYS". This study is being conducted by Ashley Sodano, under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl, in the Department of Education at Concordia University.

In this project, I will ask you questions in a focus group setting with the purpose of asking you to share your perspective on the idea of introducing gender diversity in the preschool classroom. The discussion will focus around various books and toys that present aspects of gender diversity.

If you are interested in participating, I would be grateful for your collaboration. I have attached a consent form and ask that you sign the form and submit it to me. This may be done through e-mail (ashley.sodano@gmail.com) or by mailing a hard copy.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions as you read over this material. I'd be happy to review any of this with you.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ashley

Ashley Sodano
M.A Child Studies
Concordia University
ashley.sodano@gmail.com
514-708-0204

SUMMARY PROTOCOL FORM (SPF)

Office of Research – Research Ethics Unit – GM 900 – 514-848-2424 ext. 7481 – mailto:oor.ethics@concordia.ca – www.concordia.ca/offices/oor.html

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL RESEARCHERS
Please take note of the following before completing this form:
You must not conduct research involving human participants until you have received your Certification of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Human Subjects (Certificate).
In order to obtain your Certificate, your study must receive approval from the appropriate committee:
Faculty research, and student research involving greater than minimal risk is reviewed by the University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC).
Minimal risk student research is reviewed by the College of Ethics Reviewers (CER; formerly the "Disciplinary College"), except as stated below.
Minimal risk student research conducted exclusively for pedagogical purposes is reviewed at the departmental level. **Do not use this form for such research.** Please use the Abbreviated Summary Protocol Form, available on the Office of Research (OOR) website referenced above, and consult with your academic department for review procedures.
Research funding will not be released until your Certificate has been issued, and any other required certification (e.g. biohazard, radiation safety) has been obtained. For information about your research funding, please consult:
Faculty and staff: OOR
Graduate students: School of Graduate Studies
Undergraduate students: Financial Aid and Awards Office or the Faculty or Department
Faculty members are encouraged to submit studies for ethics by uploading this form, as well as all supporting documentation, to ConRAD, which can be found in the MyConcordia portal.
If necessary, faculty members may complete this form and submit it by e-mail to oor.ethics@concordia.ca along with all supporting documentation. Student researchers are asked to submit this form and all supporting documentation by e-mail, except for departmental review.
Please note:
Handwritten forms will not be accepted.
Incomplete or omitted responses may result in delays.
This form expands to accommodate your responses.
Please allow the appropriate amount of time for your study to be reviewed:
UHREC reviews greater than minimal risk research when it meets on the second Thursday of each month. You must submit your study 10 days before the meeting where it is to be reviewed. You will normally receive a response within one week of the meeting. Please confirm the deadline and date of the meeting with the staff of the Research Ethics Unit.
CER reviews, and delegated reviews conducted by UHREC generequire 2 to 4 weeks.
Research must comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines, including:
The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*
The policies and guidelines of the funding/award agency

The *Official Policies of Concordia University*, including the *Policy for the Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participants, VPRGS-3*.

The Certificate is valid for one year. In order to maintain your approval and renew your Certificate, please submit an Annual Report Form one month before the expiry date that appears on the Certificate. You must not conduct research under an expired Certificate.

Please contact the Manager, Research Ethics at 514-848-2424 ext. 7481 if you need more information on the ethics review process or the ethical requirements that apply to your study.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENT RESEARCHERS

If your research is part of your faculty supervisor's research, as approved, please have him or her inform the Research Ethics Unit via e-mail that you will be working on the study.

If your research is an addition to your faculty supervisor's study, please have him or her submit an amendment request, and any revised documents via e-mail. You must not begin your research until the amendment has been approved.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM

Please make sure that you are using the most recent version of the SPF by checking the OOR website.

Please answer each question on the form; if you believe the question is not applicable, enter not applicable.

Do not alter the questions on this form or delete any material. Where questions are followed by a checklist, please answer by checking the applicable boxes.

The form can be signed and submitted as follows:

Faculty research submitted on ConRAD will be considered as signed as per section 16.

SPFs for faculty research submitted via the faculty member's official Concordia e-mail address will also be considered as signed as per section 16.

Both faculty and student researchers may submit a scanned pdf of the signature page by e-mail. In this case, the full SPF should also be submitted by e-mail in Word or pdf format (not scanned).

If you do not have access to a scanner, the signature page may be submitted on paper to the OOR.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Please submit any additional documents as separate files in Word or PDF format.

1. BASIC INFORMATION

Study Title: Introducing Gender Diversity in Preschool Curriculum: Storybooks and Toys
Principal Investigator: Ashley Sodano

Principal Investigator's Status:
☐ Concordia faculty or staff
☐ Visiting scholar
☐ Affiliate researcher
☐ Postdoctoral fellow
☐ PhD Student
☒ Master's student
☐ Undergraduate student
☐ Other (please specify):

Type of submission:
☒ New study
☐ Modification or an update of an approved study.
Approved study number (e.g. 30001234):

Where will the research be conducted?
☒ Canada
☐ Another jurisdiction:

2. STUDY TEAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION*

Role	Name	Institution[†] / Department / Address[‡]	Phone #	e-mail address
Principal Investigator	Ashley Sodano	Concordia Universtiy/ Education/ FG 6.139	514-708-0204	ashley.sodano@gmail.com
Faculty supervisor[§]	Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl	Concordia Universtiy/ Education/ FG 6.139	514-848-2424 ext. 8632	sandra.chang-kredl@concordia.ca
Committee member[|]	Dr. Holly Recchia	Concordia Universtiy/ Education/ FG 6.139	514-848-2424 ext. 8632	holly.recchia@concordia.ca
Committee member[|]	Dr. Diane Pesco	Concordia Universtiy/ Education/ FG 6.139	514-848-2424 ext. 8632	diane.pesco@concordia.ca

Additional Team Members°				

Notes:

* If additional space is required, please submit a list of team members as a separate document.

†For team members who are external to Concordia only.

‡For individuals based at Concordia, please provide only the building and room number, e.g. GM-910.03.

§For student research only.

ǀFor research conducted by PhD and Master's students only.

°Please include all co-investigators and research assistants.

3. PROJECT AND FUNDING SOURCES

Please list all sources of funds that will be used for the research. Please note that fellowships or scholarships are not considered research funding for the purposes of this section.

Funding Source	Project Title*	Grant Number†	Award Period	
			Start	End

Notes:

* Please provide the project title as it appears on the Notice of Award or equivalent documentation.

† If you have applied for funding, and the decision is still pending, please enter "applied".

4. OTHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Does the research involve any of the following (check all that apply):

☐ Controlled goods or technology

☐ Hazardous materials or explosives

☐ Biohazardous materials

☐ Human biological specimens

☐ Radioisotopes, lasers, x-ray equipment or magnetic fields

☐ Protected acts (requiring professional certification)

☐ A medical intervention, healthcare intervention or invasive procedures

Please submit any certification or authorization documents that may be relevant to ethics review for research involving human participants.

5. LAY SUMMARY

Please provide a brief description of the research in everyday language. The summary should make sense to a person with no discipline-specific training, and it should not use overly technical terms. Please do not submit your thesis proposal or grant application.

The research proposes to explore aspects of introducing gender diversity in preschools, by investigating early childhood educators' thoughts and beliefs around introducing gender diverse books and toys in the classroom. The qualitative study will explore teachers' perspectives on these approaches. The aim of the study is to discover whether early childhood educators would be comfortable implementing gender diversity into their classrooms, and what tools and support they would need.

Teachers educating children on gender identity and expression can assist in making classrooms more inclusive, which could contribute toward alleviating gender-based bullying (Brinkman, & Manning, 2016; Martino, & Cumming-Potvin, 2015; Gerouki, 2010). For instance, by creating a more diverse classroom, teachers can reduce gender-based biases and support students' physical and emotional health along with encouraging student engagement in the classroom (Meyer, 2010). It is the responsibility of a teacher to create a safe and inclusive environment for all his/her students, along with attempting to alleviate bullying (Brinkman, & Manning, 2016; Martino, & Cumming-Potvin, 2015; Gerouki, 2010). Teachers taking action in doing so, have been reported to reduce the amount of verbal victimization in schools (Taylor et al., 2011). While these studies have addressed students in upper elementary and secondary schools, the issue has received little attention at the early childhood education level. Through the use of picture books and toys, teachers can encourage their preschool-aged students to better understand gender, for themselves and within society.

6. RISK LEVEL AND SCHOLARLY REVIEW

As part of the research, will participants be exposed to risk that is greater than minimal?

Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of the risks are greater than those to which participants would be exposed in those aspects of their daily lives that are pertinent to the research.

☐ Yes

☒ No X

Has this research received favorable review for scholarly merit?

Scholarly review is not required for minimal risk research.

For faculty research, funding from a granting agency such as CIHR, FQRSC, or CINQ is considered evidence of such review. Please provide the name of the agency.

For student research, a successful defense of a thesis or dissertation proposal is considered evidence of such review. Please provide the date of your proposal defense.

		Date of thesis
☒	Yes X	proposal defense: March 20, 2018
☐	No	
☐	Not required	

If you answered no, please submit a Scholarly Review Form, available on the OOR website. For studies to be conducted at the PERFORM Centre, please submit the Scientific Review Evaluator Worksheet.

7. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Will any of the participants be part of the following categories?

- ☐ Minors (individuals under 18 years old)
- ☐ Individuals with diminished mental capacity
- ☐ Individuals with diminished physical capacity
- ☐ Members of Canada's First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples
- ☐ Vulnerable individuals or groups (vulnerability may be caused by limited capacity, or limited access to social goods, such as rights, opportunities and power, and includes individuals or groups whose situation or circumstances make them vulnerable in the context of the research project, or those who live with relatively high levels of risk on a daily basis)

Please describe potential participants, including any inclusion or exclusion criteria.

The participants involved will be 6 to 10 early childhood educators, with a minimum of two years experience teaching in the field. All participants are adults, and therefore considred to be minimal risk.

Please describe in detail how potential participants will be identified, and invited to participate. Please submit any recruitment materials to be used, for example, advertisements or letters to participants.

I will be contacting early childhood teachers in CPEs (les "center de la petite enfance", or early childhood settings in Quebec), by emailing the directors of several local daycares. **The recruitment email attached, will be sent to the directors of daycares where I've previously worked. I will ask them to share the recruitment email with the educators at the centre. Those who wish to participate, will contact me directly via cell phone or email.**

Please describe in detail what participants will be asked to do as part of the research, and any procedures they will be asked to undergo. Please submit any instruments to be used to gather data, for example questionnaires or interview guides.

In this qualitative study, I will conduct focus group interviews with two sets of teachers. Each focus group will consist of three to five participants. Once the participants agree on a suitable day, I will book a conference room **at Concordia University,** and confirm the time with the participants. The room will be set up with coffee and refreshments, which participants will be welcomed to before and after the focus group. Before beginning the study, all pariticlants will be asked to fill out the consent form. This procedure will be done for each focus groups.

During each focus group, I will present five books on gender diversity, along with images of gender diverse toys. **Gender diversity is defined in many ways. In this project I apply the term used by the American Psychological Association (2015) in which it signifies a person's gender identity and expression that is culturally different from the norm. The books that will be presented to the participants depict children who are different and/or struggle with their gender identity and/or expression. The stories generally present that being different is okay. The images of the toys presented include: Sam, a stacking doll, and Jazz, a doll based on a young reality TV star who identifies as a boy." The purpose of the presentation of these books and toys will be to gauge the participants' responses on approaches to discussing gender diversity in the classroom.**

After offering the participants the opportunity to look through the books and examine the images, I will gauge the participants' thoughts on incorporating gender diversity in a preschool setting, through a list of questions (below). The proposed study will concentrate on exploring the participants' perspectives on the idea of gender diversity, for instance, whether they believe in the value of educating young children on these topics. I will focus the discussion around the books and toys that present aspects gender diversity.

Focus Group Questions
What are your initial responses to seeing these books/toys?
What is your opinion about students reading such books/playing with such toys in the classroom? At home?
How would you react to your students reading such books/playing with such toys?
How comfortable would you feel implementing these tools into your own classroom?
Would it matter if the student was a boy or girl?
How do you think your children's parents would react?
What questions, thoughts, do these raise?
Would you suggest any other storylines for future books, or any other toys?
Focus group sessions will last approximately 90-120 minutes. The researcher will use a laptop to record the discussions taking place. All discussions will be audio recorded, which will later be transcribed for further analysis. Additional hand-written notes will be taken during the focus group sessions.

Do any of the research procedures require special training, such as medical procedures or conducting interviews on sensitive topics or with vulnerable populations? If so, please indicate who will conduct the procedures and what their qualifications are.
Not applicable

8. INFORMED CONSENT

Please explain how you will solicit informed consent from potential participants. Please submit your written consent form. In certain circumstances, oral consent may be appropriate. If you intend to use an oral consent procedure, please submit a consent script containing the same elements as the template, and describe how consent will be documented.

Please note: written consent forms and oral consent scripts should follow the consent form template available on the OOR website. Please include all of the information shown in the sample, adapting it as necessary for your research.

Written consent will be obtained from all research participants prior to any data collection. A copy of the consent form is attached to the protocol.

Does your research involve individuals belonging to cultural traditions in which individualized consent may not be appropriate, or in which additional consent, such as group consent or consent from community leaders, may be required? If so, please describe the appropriate format of consent, and how you will solicit it.

Not applicable

9. DECEPTION

Does your research involve any form of deception of participants? If so, please describe the deception, explain why the deception is necessary, and explain how participants will be de-briefed at the end of their participation. If applicable, please submit a debriefing script.

Please note that deception includes giving participants false information, withholding relevant information, and providing information designed to mislead.

This research does not involve any form of deception.

10. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

a) Please explain how participants will be informed that they are free to discontinue at any time, and describe any limitations on this freedom that may result from the nature of the research.

The participants will be informed in the consent form that they are free to discontinue their participation at any time, by contacting myself to withdraw from the study. The focus groups

will be audio recorded so it is expected that the participants will be identifiable for purposes of withdrawing information; however, there may be a limitation to withdrawal of data should, in certain conversations, the focus group data be pooled.

b)   Please explain what will happen to the information obtained from a participant if he or she withdraws. For example, will their information be destroyed or excluded from analysis if the participant requests it? Please describe any limits on withdrawing a participant's data, such as a deadline related to publishing data.

If the withdrawal occurs prior to submission of my thesis, I will remove the data from my set. Once my thesis is completed, they will be unable to withdraw their information, however all identities will be anonymous. These limitations are included in the consent form.

11. RISKS AND BENEFITS

a)   Please identify any foreseeable benefits to participants.

The benefits to the participants are indirect in nature. The early childhood educators will likely consider whether they would introduce gender diversity through children's literature or with various toys. The teachers will also likely benefit from the shared discussions. Several early childhood teachers may be unaware of such topics, as well as unknowledge on how to introduce them, I believe that taking the time to listen and share different ideas will have a positive impact on improving and expanding their curriculums.

b)   Please identify any foreseeable risks to participants, including any physical or psychological discomfort, and risks to their relationships with others, or to their financial well-being.

The risks to the participants are minimal. The teachers could potentially experience some minor discomfort from the topic itself and participating in a focus group. **Participants will be fully informed of the topic before agreeing to participate. If, however, a participant responds to a question with an expression of strong feelingsthat appears to disturb others in the focus group (for instance, for or against a depiction of gender diversity in one book), I will move the discussion to another question or topic. If necessary, I will suggest a short break to diffuse the situation and speak with the person who is upset. If, in the unlikely situation, a participant reports serious discomfort, the participant will be referred to a list of counselling resources provided by the CLSC (Centres Locales de Services Communautaire) health clinic in their local community.**

c)   Please describe how the risks identified above will be minimized. For example, if individuals who are particularly susceptible to these risks will be excluded from participating, please describe how they will be identified. Furthermore, if there is a chance that researchers will discontinue participants' involvement for their own well-being, please state the criteria that will be used.

The focus group will be facilitated by the researcher who will encourage all participants to be open-minded and respectful should the need arise in the discussion. The participants will be reminded at the start of the focus group that they are free to discontinue their participation at anytime.

d)   Please describe how you will manage the situation if the risks described above are realized. For example, if referrals to appropriate resources are available, please provide a list. If there is a chance that participants will need first aid or medical attention, please describe what arrangements have been made.

If, in the unlikely situation, a participant reports serious discomfort, the participant will be referred to a list of counselling resources provided by the CLSC (Centres Locales de Services Communautaire) health clinic in their local community.

12. REPORTABLE SITUATIONS AND INCIDENTAL FINDINGS

Is there a chance that the research might reveal a situation that would have to be reported to appropriate authorities, such as child abuse or an imminent threat of serious harm to specific individuals? If so, please describe the situation, and how it would be handled.

Please note that legal requirements apply in such situations. It is the researcher's responsibility to be familiar with the laws in force in the jurisdiction where the research is being conducted.

In the unlikely event of discovering abuse or harm, as stated above, the participant involved will be referred to a list of counselling resources provided by the CLSC (Centres Locales de Services Communautaire) health clinic in their local community. Under exceptional and compelling circumstances, the researcher may be obliged to report information to authorities in order to protect the health and safety of the participant or a third party.

Is there a chance that the research might reveal a material incidental finding? If so, please describe how it would be handled.
Please note that a material incidental finding is an unanticipated discovery made in the course of research but that is outside the scope of the research, such as a previously undiagnosed medical or psychiatric condition that has significant welfare implications for the participant or others.

Not applicable

13. CONFIDENTIALITY, ACCESS, AND STORAGE

Please describe the path of your data from collection to storage to its eventual archiving or disposal, including details on short and long-term storage (format, duration, and location), measures taken to prevent unauthorized access, who will have access, and final destination (including archiving, or destruction).

The hard copies of the data (notes from focus group sessions, and analysis of data) will all be transcribed on my laptop. Once this is done, the hard copies of data will be destroyed. Soft copies of the data will also be stored in my laptop. The laptop is locked with a password, and only I have access to the passowrd. The faculty supervisor will also oversee the data. The audio recordings will be kept for approximately one year and securely stored on my laptop. After the data is collected and transcriptions are made, the audio recordings will be destroyed.
The nature of focus groups are that other participants will be privy to information, so I will ask them at the start to maintain confidentiality.
b)   Please identify the access that the research team will have to participants' identity:

☐	Anonymous	The information provided never had identifiers associated with it, and the risk of identification of individuals is low, or very low.
☐	Anonymous results, but identify who participated	The information provided never had identifiers associated with it. The research team knows participants' identity, but it would be impossible to link the information provided to link the participant's identity.
☐	Pseudonym	Information provided will be linked to an individual, but that individual will only provide a fictitious name. The research team will not know the real identity of the participant.
☐	Coded	Direct identifiers will be removed and replaced with a code on the information provided. Only specific individuals have access to the code, meaning that they can re-identify the participant if necessary.
☐	Indirectly identified	The information provided is not associated with direct indentifiers (such as the participant's name), but it is associated with information that can reasonably be expected to identify an individual through a combination of indirect identifiers (such as place of residence, or unique personal characteristics).
☒	Confidential	The research team will know the participants' real identity, but it will not be disclosed.
☐	Disclosed	The research team will know the participants' real identity, and it will be revealed in accordance with their consent.
☐	Participant Choice	Participants will be able to choose which level of disclosure they wish for their real identity.
☐	Other (please describe)	

Please describe what access research participants will have to study results, and any debriefing information that will be provided to participants post-participation.

The participants will have access to the results as a brief account of the findings will be sent to the participants. The identities of other participants will not be shared during any communications.

d)   Would the revelation of participants' identity be particularly sensitive, for example, because they belong to a stigmatized group? If so, please describe any special measures that you will take to respect the wishes of your participants regarding the disclosure of their identity.

Not applicable

e)   In some research traditions, such as action research, and research of a socio-political nature, there can be concerns about giving participant groups a "voice". This is especially the case with groups that have been oppressed or whose views have been suppressed in their cultural location. If these concerns are relevant for your participant group, please describe how you will address them in your project.

Not applicable

14. MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL RESEARCH

Does your research involve researchers affiliated with an institution other than Concordia? If so, please complete the following table, including the Concordia researcher's role and activities to be conducted at Concordia. If researchers have multiple institutional affiliations, please include a line for each institution.

Researcher's Name	Institutional Affiliation	Role in the research (e.g. principal investigator, co-investigator, collaborator)	What research activities will be conducted at each institution?

15. ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Bearing in mind the ethical guidelines of your academic or professional association, please comment on any other ethical concerns which may arise in the conduct of this research. For example, are there responsibilities to participants beyond the purposes of this study?

Not applicable

16. DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

Study Title: Introducing Gender-Diversity in Preschool Curriculum: Storybooks and Toys

I hereby declare that this Summary Protocol Form accurately describes the research project or scholarly activity that I plan to conduct. I will submit a detailed modification request if I wish to make modifications to this research.

I agree to conduct all activities conducted in relation to the research described in this form in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines, including:
The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*
The policies and guidelines of the funding/award agency
The *Official Policies of Concordia University*, including the *Policy for the Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participants, VPRGS-3*.

Principal Investigator Signature: _____

Date: _____

FACULTY SUPERVISOR STATEMENT (REQUIRED FOR STUDENT PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS):

I have read and approved this project. I affirm that it has received the appropriate academic approval, and that the student investigator is aware of the applicable policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of human participant research at Concordia University. I agree to provide all necessary supervision to the student. I allow release of my nominative information as required by these policies and procedures in relation to this project.

Faculty Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____