

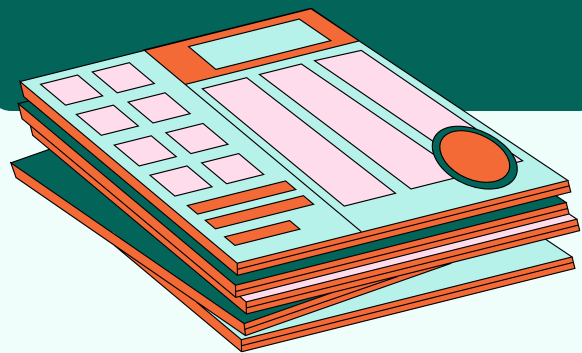
(Mis)Representation: Discourses Around Gender Affirming Care in Canadian Media

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Overview

Intro

- Intro to GAC
- Background and context



Method

- Content analysis
- Articles included



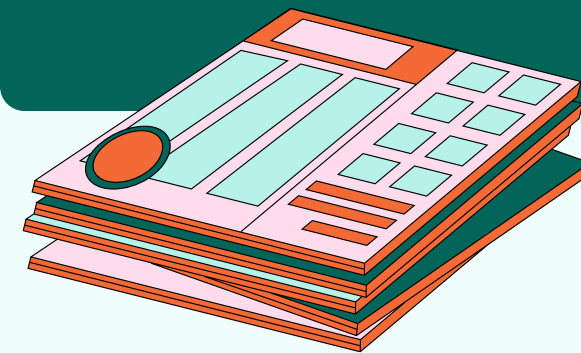
Findings

- Overview of themes



Implications

- Why does this matter?
- Recommendations for media and policy



Conclusion

- Concluding thoughts
- Questions
- References

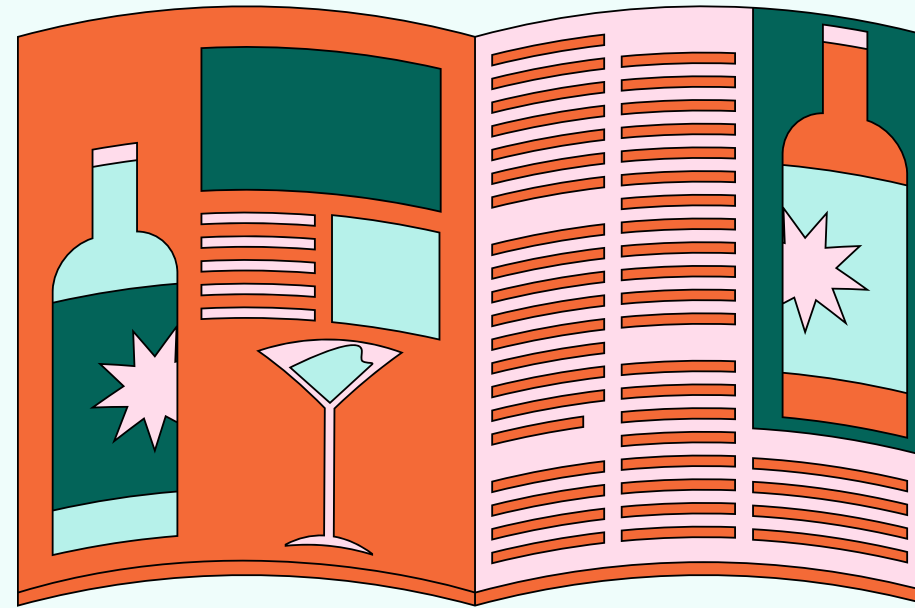


Gender Affirming Care (GAC)

Any form of support or intervention that supports transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people in experiencing comfort and joy in their bodies and gender identity.

Physical

- Clothing, hair, makeup
- Tucking, binding, padding
- Vocal characteristics



Behavioural

- Mannerisms, actions

Social

- Being correctly gendered
- Pronouns, name

Medical

- Hormone therapy (e.g., puberty blockers)
- Surgery
- Hair removal

Mental/Emotional

- Support in navigating relationships, systemic factors, etc.

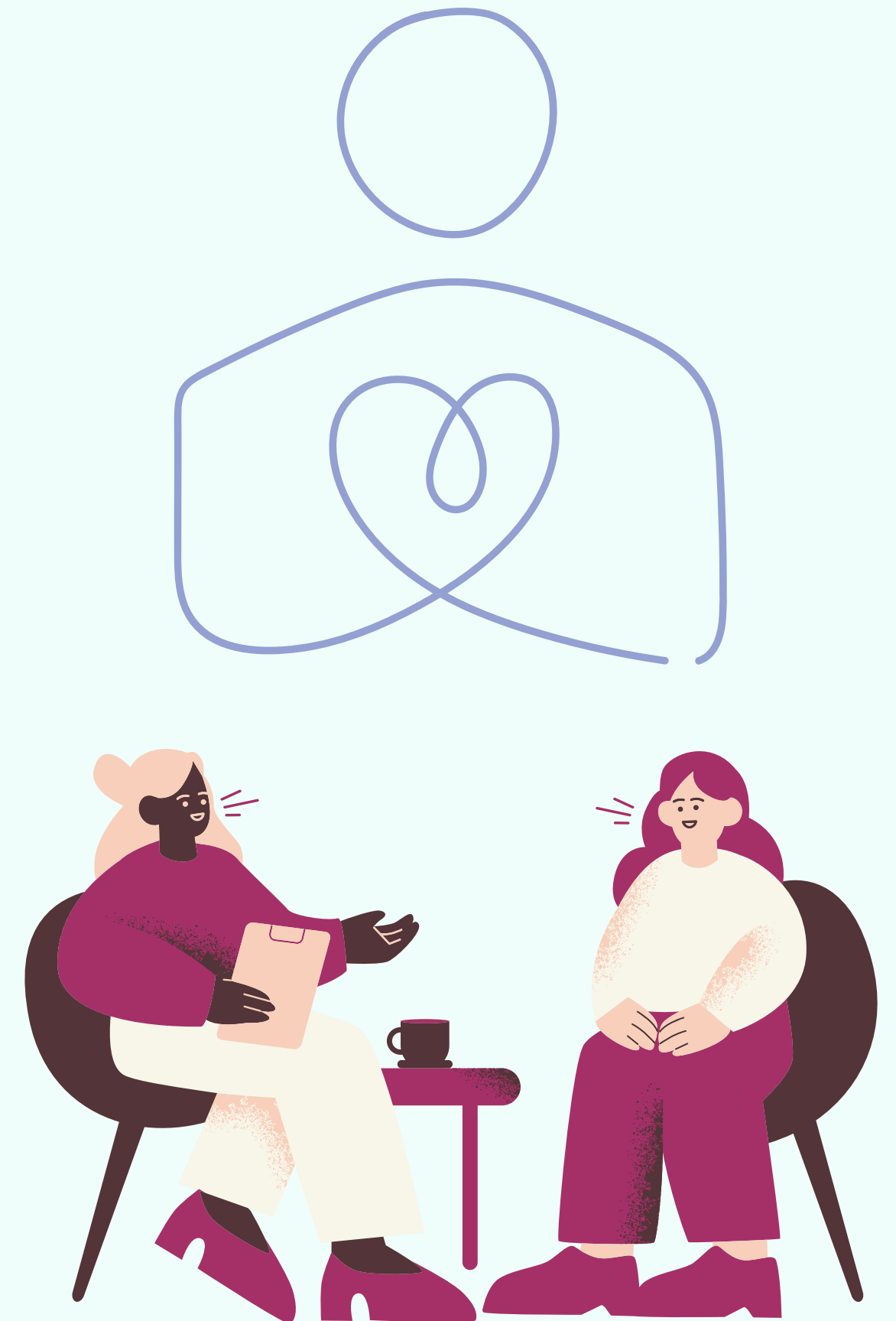
Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC; n.d.); Skipping Stone (n.d.)

Why GAC is Important

The research has continuously demonstrated numerous benefits of GAC:

- Decreases in **gender dysphoria** (e.g., Skewis et al., 2021)
- Improvements in **emotional well-being** (e.g., Skewis et al., 2021)
- Improvements in **social functioning** (e.g., Skewis et al., 2021)
- Lower rates of **suicidal ideation** and **depression** (e.g., Tordoff et al., 2022; Turban et al., 2023)

Research also shows that receiving GAC early (e.g., in adolescence) has long-term benefits (e.g., Turban et al., 2023)



So... what are people saying about GAC?

In recent years, GAC – and the existence of TGD people in general – has been highly politicized and debated.

Many opponents often spread messages including: GAC as doing irreversible harm, de-transitioning stories, framing GAC as child abuse, etc.

BUT, there are many proponents who are fighting for people to be able to access GAC.

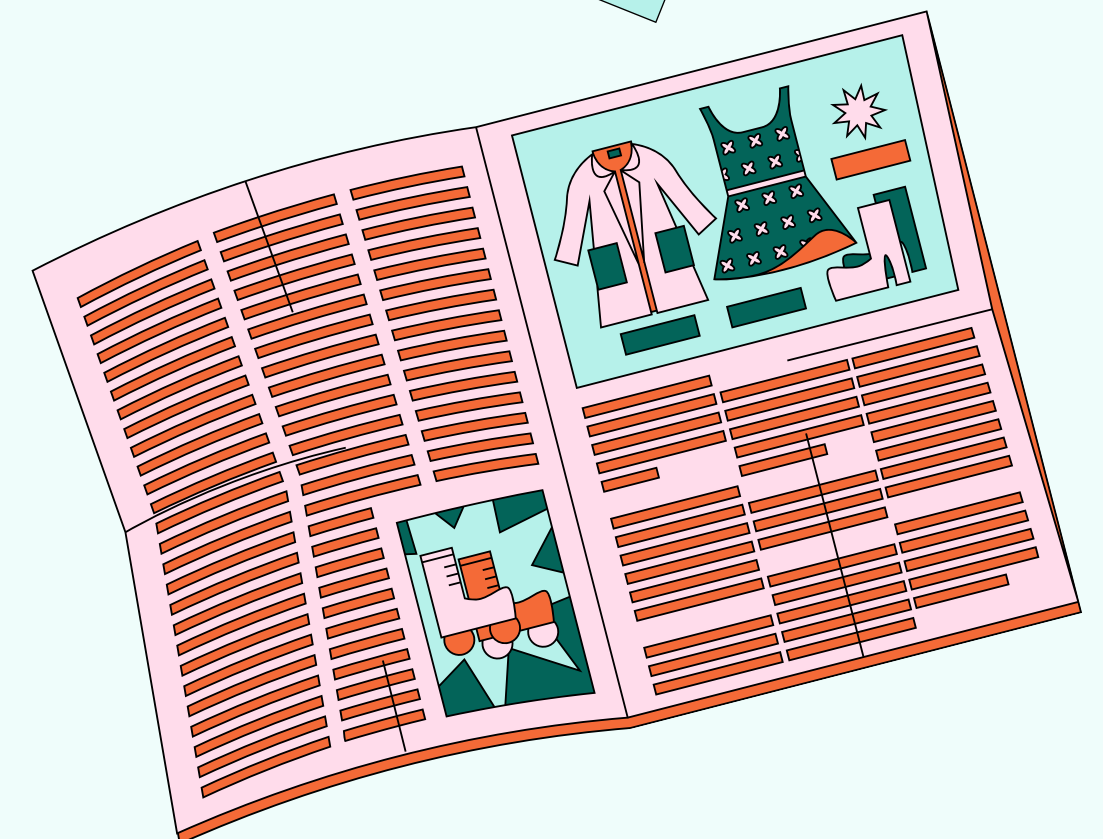


Why does it matter what the media says?

Media influences our thoughts, attitudes, ideals, norms, and beliefs both consciously and unconsciously (Happer & Philo, 2013)

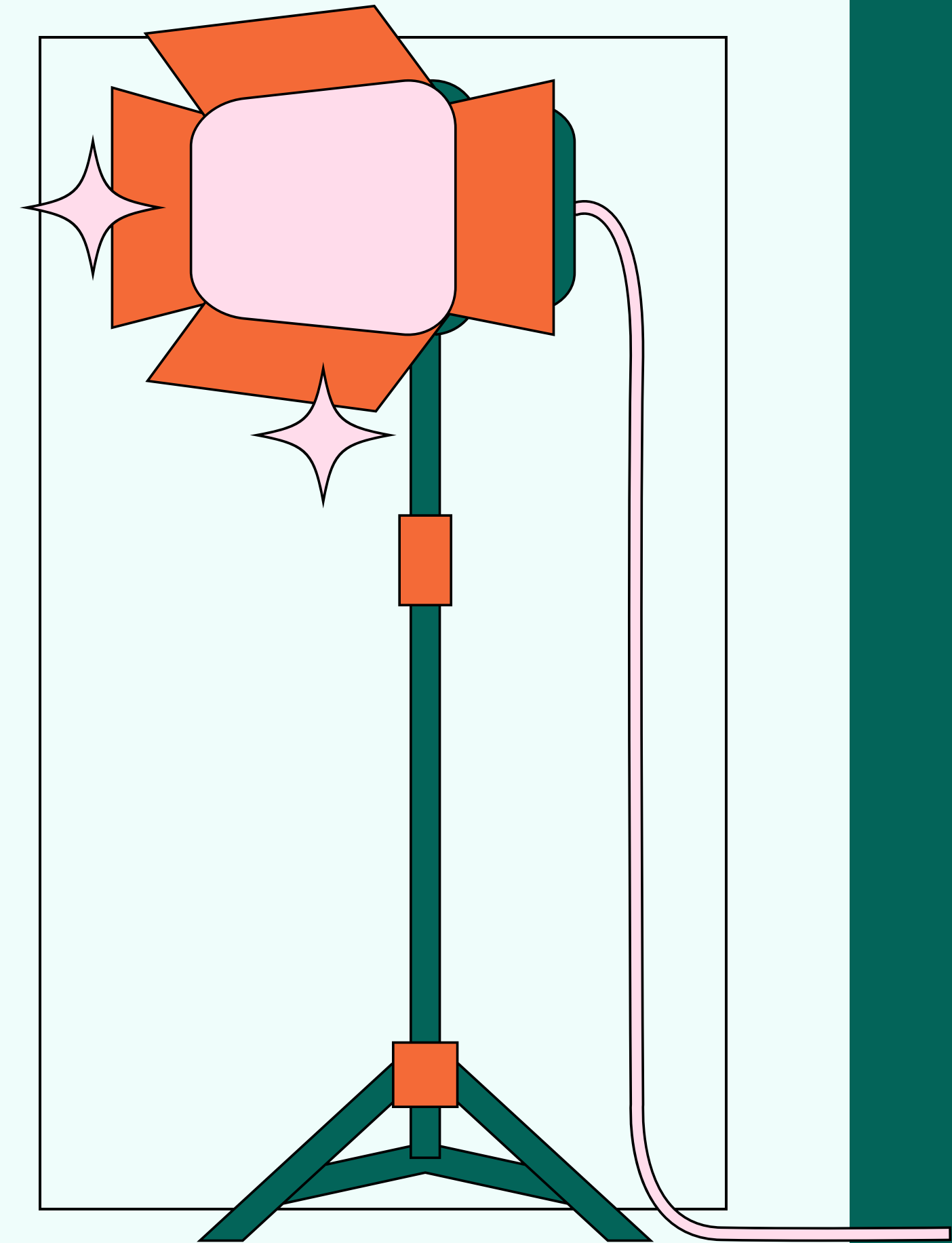
This can have positive, negative, or neutral effects

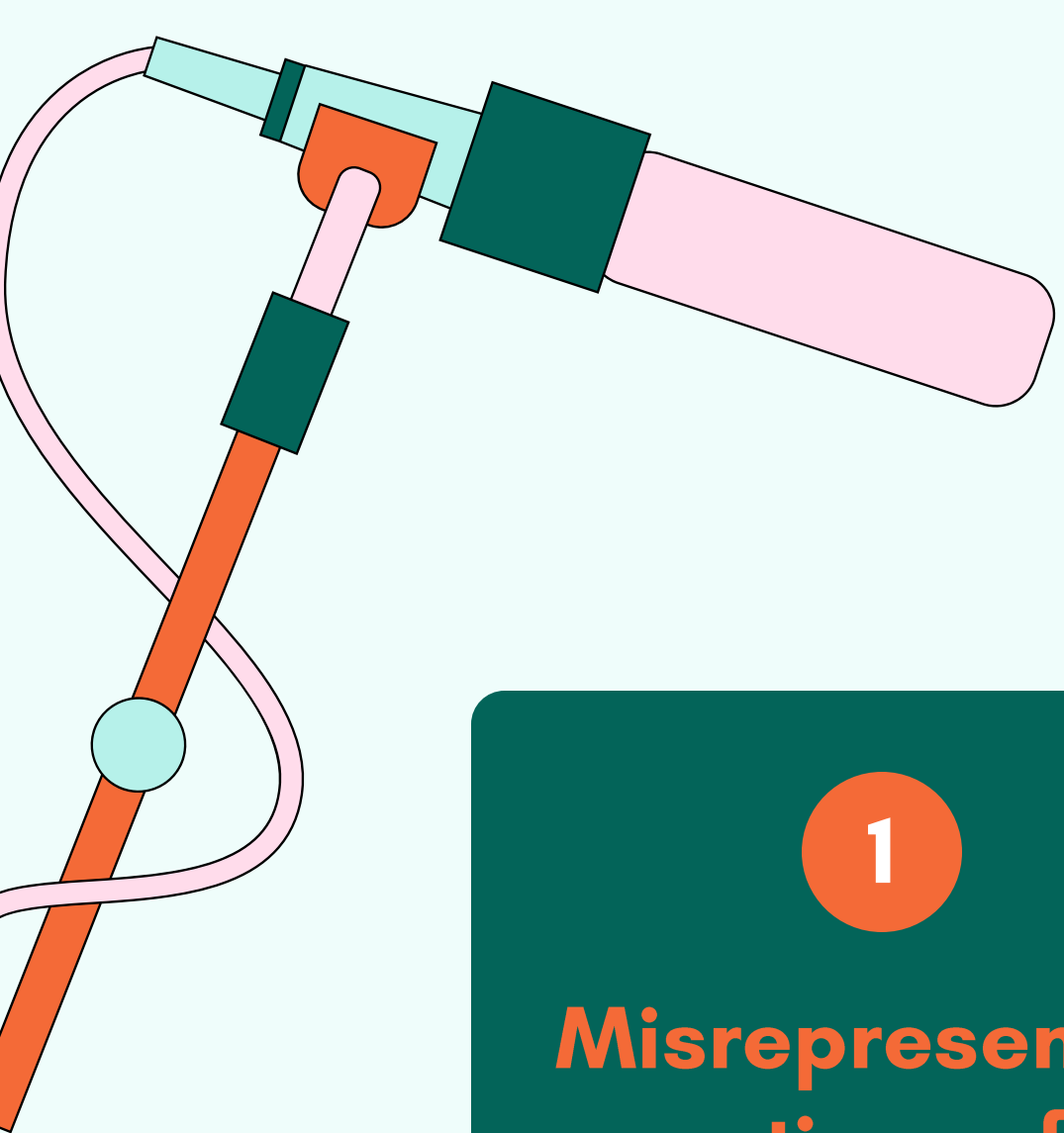
Misinformation can easily be absorbed on a large scale, particularly if the position is “persuasive” (e.g., click bait; Arias, 2018)



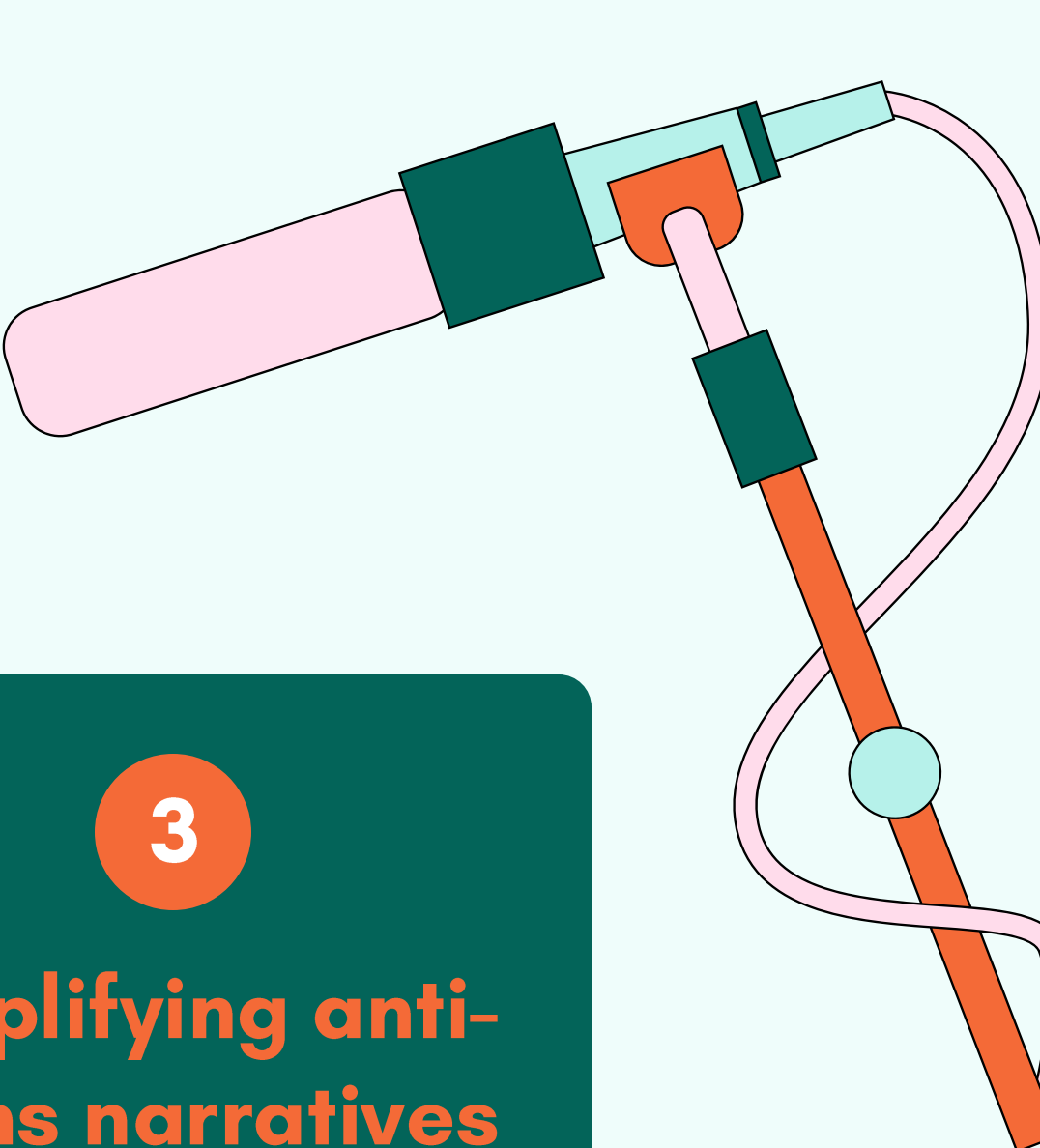
The Current Study

- 1 Critical content analysis:** searching texts based on key words to identify common themes/issues (Utt & Short, 2018)
- 2 Data set:** articles in Canadian media discussing GAC between 2020-2022
- 3 News sites:** CBC, CTV, Global, City News, True North, Rebel News, PostMillenial, Epoch Times
- 4 Keywords:** "gender dysphoria", "gender affirming", and "gender transition"
- 5 Coding** (categorizing texts under certain labels) and reviewing of codes done in pairs





Anti-GAC Themes



1

**Misrepresenting
narratives of TGD
people**

E.g., framing GAC
as problematic

2

**Using mental health
diagnoses to
invalidate identity**

E.g., people are just
anxious, depressed,
traumatized; don't
have the "capacity"
to make decisions

3

**Amplifying anti-
trans narratives**

E.g., centering anti-
trans "experts,"
detransitioning or
regret anecdotes,
politicized narratives



Affirmative Themes



1

Amplifying trans-affirming narratives

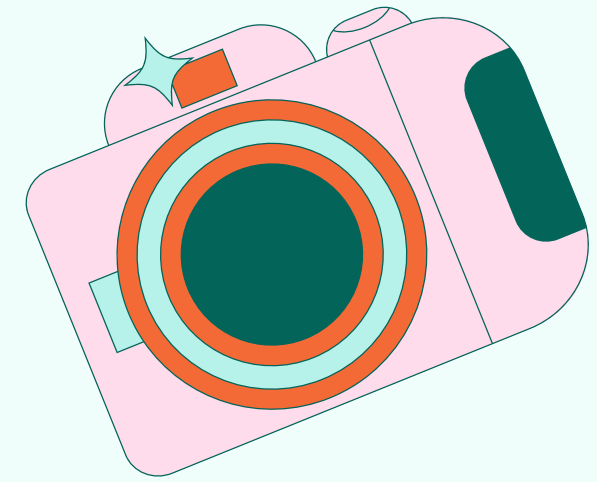
E.g., centering affirming experts, first-hand accounts of TGD people

2

Positioning GAC as life saving

E.g., how GAC improves quality of life and mental health

Implications



Why does this matter?

- Impact of the media (Happer & Philo, 2013)

How can we engage with the media?

- Media literacy (Hobbs, 2010)
- Holding media accountable

What can the media do?

- Time and place for “neutrality”
- Our own media – e.g., social media

Policy implications

- What standards should be in place for media?
- Hate speech, misinformation ≠ free speech

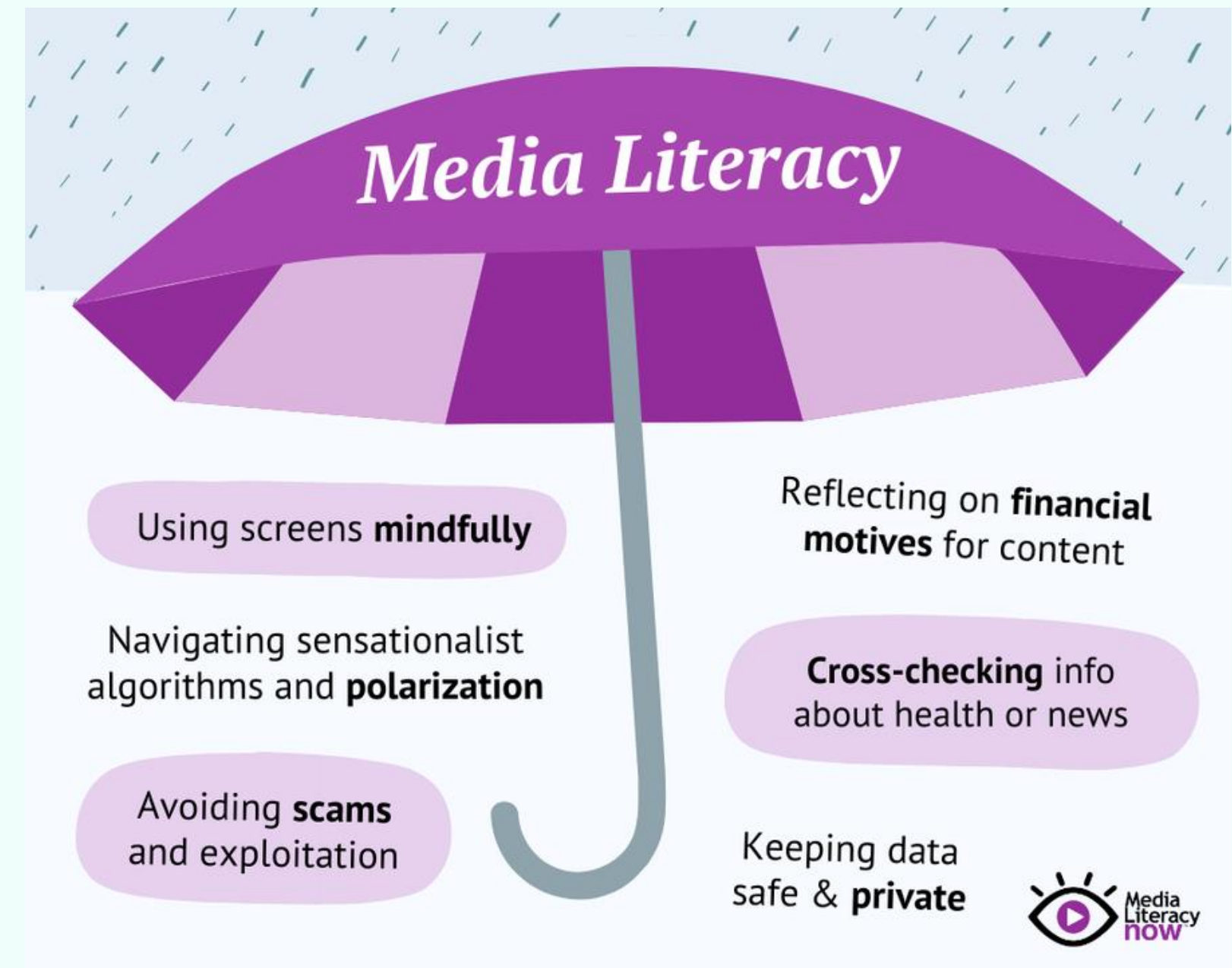


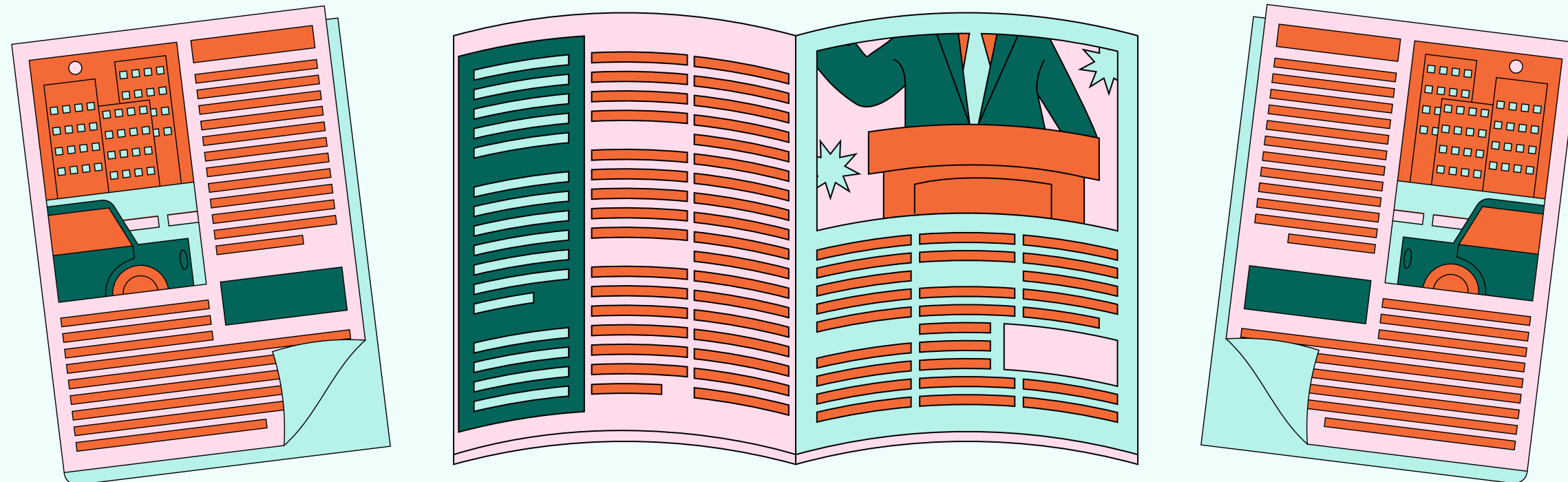
Image from Media Literacy Now

Conclusion

Media has a significant impact on our understanding and beliefs (individually, collectively, culturally), including around TGD people and GAC

The presence of articles centering affirming experts and demonstrating support show promise

There are things we can do on an individual and societal level to encourage helpful (vs. harmful) messaging



Questions?



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