



Rearing a Rainbow: Pacing the Path of Parenthood with the Transgender Child through Laurie Frankel's *This Is How It Always Is*

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Abstract: Bringing up a transgender kid is not simply parenting—it's an excursion of adoration, learning and advancement. The parenting style adopted by parents has a profound resonance on child's life and such impact is fundamental for those children who identify themselves as transgenders at the very early stage of their lives. This paper investigates the encounters of parents exploring their child's personality, underlining the significance of giving a strong and confirming position to transgenders in the society. It investigates the crucial topic of gender identity disorder and confronts the conventional norms, encouraging acceptance of such people through Laurie Frankel's semi-autobiographical novel *This Is How It Always Is*. It also examines the strong intersections between identity, family and society, stressing the significance of making a more comprehensive and tolerating environment for transgender youngsters. It highlights the primary role of parental acknowledgment in advancing the prosperity and emotional well-being of transsexual kids, showing the valuable insights and advice on how to parent a transgender child.

Keywords: Parenting, transgender child, gender identity disorder, binary gender system, societal norms.

In an age of constant flux, parenting a young kid remains a formidable process. As society keeps advancing, so does our interpretation of gender identity and progressively, parents are confronted with the difficulties of bringing up a kid who may not adhere to the conventional gender norms. This is particularly valid with the parents of transgender kids, who should explore an extraordinary set of obstacles that go past the usual nurturing methods. Parents of such gender – diverse youth often face uncertainties and have multitudinous questions about how best to support and nurture their child in giving them a calamity free life. Bringing up a transgender child necessitates fortitude and perseverance amidst all the societal norms that habitually fall flat to accommodate and validate their queer identity.

Nurturing a queer kid requires profound compassion, versatility and a pledge to understand their progeny's developing identity. This paper investigates the experiences and obligations that remain in the path of parenting a trans-kid, including the significance of establishing a safe and steady environment, voicing out for their freedom and advancing their prosperity in a world that may not be accepting them often. It is a quick evaluation and concise analysis of Laurie Frankel's novel *This Is How It Always Is*, which substantially concentrates on parenting a transgender child. The work reflects on the impediments faced by the progenitors in raising the gender variant individual. The plot revolves around the Walsh-Adams family, where the youngest of the five boys desires to identify himself as a girl, thereby presenting a complex issue in the social structure which believes in the binary gender system. Through this novel, Laurie Frankel, parent of a trans-kid, presents a nuanced exploration of challenges inherent in raising a child in a society that is characterized by rigid gender norms and also emphasizes the necessity of constructing a more inclusive world for third gender individuals.

The novel opens with the birth of Claude (later Poppy), the fifth son of Penn, a writer and Rosie, a doctor. With the introduction of their youngest child, the existence of their family takes a significant turning point when Claude wishes to turn into a young lady in future. However this at first shocks them, ultimately they begin to help their child. During the birthday festivity of Ben, one of the Claude's senior siblings, Claude shows up in princess dress for the play that is acted in the celebration. This marks the beginning of a shift in Claude's behavior. He is especially fixated on the dress and stays obstinate to wear it to his pre-school. Despite their initial resistance, Penn and Rosie eventually allow Claude to wear feminine clothes to school and decide to address the situation with the school administration. The school demands that Claude should use the nurse's restroom and change his name. However at first these multitudes of new changes create some upheaval in Claude's school, Claude is content with his new identity and adopts the girl name Poppy. Poppy's life becomes risky when his mystery begins to spread. Things escalate when his friend Nicky's father calls him a "faggot" and threatens him with a gun. After facing more hostile incidents, Rosie decides to move their family of seven to a more secure place, Seattle. She believes that the city's residents are more agreeable with the individuals who don't conform to traditional gender norms. In Seattle, Poppy finds kindness from their neighbors, Frank and Marginny, who know about Poppy's transgender identity, though the truth remains hidden from most others. However, the secret is eventually exposed, leaving Poppy distressed and confused. After years of living as Poppy, he decides to start over as a boy and asks people to address him Claude. Amid all this turmoil, Rosie receives a job offer in Bangkok. Concerned for Poppy's well-being, she accepts the opportunity and plans to take Poppy with her. There Claude is propelled by Buddha and his thoughts and prepares to confront the world with his genuine way of life and begins to embrace his true self as a girl. Meanwhile, Penn publishes a book based on Poppy's story, bringing further attention to the journey of self-discovery and acceptance.

Regardless of anything, family starts things out prior to everything. Here in this novel, familial love assumes a crucial part in shaping the existence of Claude as Poppy. From the birth to the current age, all Claude's choices are upheld by his parents and brothers. Individuals around Claude attempt to comprehend his actual inward personality by overlooking his outside appearance and help him all through the course, contradicting the entire society. Life for both Claude, as a transsexual child and his people become an incredible battle to lead naturally. Judith Butler, an American philosopher and gender theorist challenges the conventional thought that says gender is a fixed and biological category. She fosters the critical idea of "gender performativity" in her 1990 eminent work entitled *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and defines gender as "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 43). This definition stresses that gender is certainly not an innate or fundamental quality, but rather a performance that is rehearsed and reinforced through social interactions. In simple terms, individuals present their bodies in the ways that are expected of their particular gender. For example, the act of being home-oriented and wearing cosmetics, dresses and high heels reinforce the social expectation of femininity whereas the act of being independent and wearing suit and ties reinforce the social expectation of masculinity. According to Judith Butler, identity is a construct shaped by repeated actions, making gender inherently performative. The life of Claude serves as the greatest representation of gender performativity.

During his early childhood, Claude encounters his existence first as a boy and later as a girl. It is a well-established medical observation that children can encounter gender dysphoria around 4 to 5 years old. Gender dysphoria refers to "the distress that may accompany the incongruence between one's experienced or expressed gender and one's assigned gender" (American Psychiatric Association 512). For Claude, this internal discord manifests as gender identity disorder at the age of five. At this stage, he does not yet experience significant emotional turmoil and transparently passes his desire on to grow up as a young girl, even inquiring about the career opportunities available to females. However, his parent, Penn and Rosie, initially dismiss these expressions, attributing them to mere childhood curiosity. It is only when they observe Claude's increasing fixation on girls' clothing and the notable shift in his behavior that they begin to reconsider. Initially, they attempt to convince him that boys simply do not wear feminine dresses. Over time, however, they come to understand that his inner identity diverges significantly from his external appearance. Every child is a cherished individual in the eyes of their parents and Penn and Rosie, understanding that gender is fluid and not bound by societal norms, listen attentively to his feelings and

support his identity. Their acceptance enables Claude to embrace his true self, ultimately permitting Claude to emerge as Poppy.

A supportive and inconvenience free environment is essential for individuals like Poppy, whose experiences do not fit within conventional gender expectations. Determined to provide their child with a positive future, Penn and Rosie take proactive steps to ensure Claude can live authentically. On his first day of school, dressed in girls' clothing, Penn accompanies him to provide reassurance and ensure that he is not wounded by other students in any case. Despite their best efforts to shield their child from society's often hostile reactions to gender nonconformity, Penn and Rosie are aware of the societal challenges their family may face. Their principle concern is their child's happiness. When Nick, a father of one of Claude's friends, speaks derogatorily about Claude's trans identity, Penn and Rosie defend their child, unwavering in their support. Rosie, particularly distressed by an incident involving Jane Doe, a transgender individual who was brutally attacked by cis-people, becomes deeply broken about the state of transsexual people and stressed over her child's future and the potential risks for Claude. With these fears in mind, the family makes the decision to relocate to Seattle, hoping to provide Claude with a more accepting and open-minded environment. In Seattle, they have successfully offered their transgender child the supportive atmosphere needed for his well-being. However, when rumors about Claude's true identity begin to spread at school which was largely due to the inadvertent disclosure by his own brothers, Rosie who was deeply concerned for her child's safety and privacy, decides to relocate once again. This time, she takes Poppy to Thailand, where she envisions a place of greater understanding and acceptance for transgender individuals. Eventually, in this new environment, Claude finds the strength to re-embrace his identity as Poppy. As Claude's parent, Penn and Rosie's sole goal has been to provide Claude with an incredible life very much like cis-youngsters and gain him all privileges. They refuse to allow others to define their child as "other" based on his trans identity and continue their search for environments where he could discover a lasting sense of harmony.

When the school authorities insist on changing Claude's name, he takes the initiative to choose the name Poppy. His parents, delighted with his choice, immediately begin addressing him by his preferred name and pronoun, introducing him to others as their daughter in Seattle. However, after facing a series of horrible happenings in his school, Poppy becomes disheartened and decides to return to living as Claude. His parents, empathetic to his pain and confusion, once again honor his decision and revert to calling him Claude.

In their ongoing effort to support their child, Penn and Rosie seek guidance from Mr. Tongo, an expert in gender dysphoria, to better understand their child's needs. They recognize their responsibility and attempt to teach themselves to ensure Claude receives the best care as he is their kid by the day's end. Under Mr. Tongo's guidance, they begin to closely observe and document Claude's behaviors, categorizing them into "boy behavior" and "girl behavior." At times, Penn struggles to differentiate between the two categories, creating a third "maybe" column, while Rosie meticulously tracks these observations. In these ways they endeavor to teach themselves to figure out their child's evolving identity. Even after relocating to distant places, Penn and Rosie continue to consult with their therapist organizing audio and video calls, staying informed about developments in gender identity disorder and discussing Claude's progress. They also research potential medical interventions, such as hormone blockers and gender-affirming surgeries through internet and examined what might be best for their kid. As a responsible parent, they navigate the complexities of gender identity with love, care and a commitment to supporting Claude in becoming his truest self.

In *This Is How It Always Is*, Penn and Rosie make considerable and significant attempts to bring up their transgender child, Poppy, showing relentless love and commitment. They take proactive measures to comprehend and support their child's non- binary identity, showing a deep understanding of the complexities involved in such process of parenting. Rosie, as a mother, immerses herself in learning about gender identity, seeking out educational resources and engaging with supportive communities. While she grapples with the realities of having a transgender child, she consistently places Claude's happiness and his true identity at the first of her concerns. Similarly, Penn is profoundly dedicated to his child's well-being, in any event, when it implies pursuing hard decisions. He has also published a book with Claude's life as the

main theme in order to educate society about third gender people. His willingness to confront the discomfort of societal norms reflects a protective instinct. Together, they create a world of unconditional love and support within their home, even if it questions their beliefs and societal stereotypes. Ultimately, Penn and Rosie's parenting journey is characterized by their resolute dedication to build a world that is rooted in love, acceptance, and respect regardless of the obstructions they encounter.

In spite of their profound love and obligation to Poppy's prosperity, Penn and Rosie commit few errors in bringing up their transsexual kid that mirror the difficulties and intricacies of nurturing a trans-kid in the society. One of the major mistakes they make is their initial decision to conceal Claude's (later Poppy's) gender identity from the outside world. This choice detaches him and makes a feeling of mystery that weighs the family members. This act hinders Poppy's ability to fully embrace her authentic self in the future. While this action originates from their love and want to protect Poppy, they at last uncover the intricacies of nurturing a trans-kid in a world that is not always empathetic or understanding. The novel shows that there is no ideal method for nurturing a trans individual and such parenting involves continual learning and growth. Penn and Rosie's parenting shows that they are continually endeavoring to improve, even as they explore the unavoidable situations along the way.

In *This Is How It Always Is*, Laurie Frankel portrays a significant analysis of parenting a transgender child and explores the intricacies, delights and difficulties that emerge when a kid's gender identity doesn't line up with the traditional norms. Through the characters, Frankel features the strength and weakness in bringing up a trans-kid. The novel investigates how family members battle with the balance of safeguarding their loved ones while permitting them the opportunity to embrace their actual self, realizing that society may not be welcoming such individuals. It shows that parenting a trans-kid requires boldness to stand up to cultural bias and question the stereotypes. Eventually, Frankel's work depicts that nurturing a trans-kid is not tied up with having answers to all the questions or being flawless; it is tied up with embracing adaptability, empathy, and steadfast obligation to the child's independence and satisfaction. As parents of transgender child, one should listen and believe in their child. Those individuals should be given favorable surroundings in order to celebrate their unique identity. Those parents should educate themselves about transgenders and must try to comprehend their emotions. People should acknowledge that being third gender is not a sickness or disease. The novel effectively states that adoration and acknowledgment can conquer the cruelest difficulties, offering a hopeful message for families facing similar circumstances.

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