University of Massachusetts Amherst

ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst

Spring August 2014

Welcome to Guyland: Experiences of Trans* Men in College

D Chase J. Catalano

University of Massachusetts - Amherst

Welcome to Guyland: Experiences of Trans* Men in College

A Dissertation Presented

by

D. CHASE J. CATALANO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

MAY 2014

College of Education

Social Justice Education

Welcome to Guyland: Experiences of Trans* Men in College

A Dissertation Presented

by

D. CHASE J. CATALANO

Approved as to style and content by:

_____

Maurianne Adams, Chair

_____

Bailey Jackson, Member

_____

Stephen Olbrys Gencarella, Member

_____

Christine McCormick, Dean
College of Education

would never have completed my data collection (or this dissertation). As a first generation college and graduate student, I cannot express the depths of my appreciation for you both because you worked alongside me to understand the effort my dissertation required. And of course, how can I find the words to thank you for loving me unconditionally, your daughter who became your son, with an ease and grace that I believe makes you the best parents ever. Last, but certainly not least, the writing process for me has not always been pretty or made me a very nice person to live with, but Stephanie, you endured and loved me still. You are the one who really made the day-in and day-out of this work possible. I do not have the words to thank you for everything you have given me, so I'll just say I love you and promise I will not write another dissertation again.

ABSTRACT

WELCOME TO GUYLAND: EXPERIENCES OF TRANS* MEN IN COLLEGE

MAY 2014

D. CHASE J. CATALANO, B.A., DICKINSON COLLEGE

M.ED., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Emerita Maurianne Adams

Trans* identified men have emerged as a growing college and university population in higher education who have not as yet received specific research attention. I studied the experiences of trans* men in higher education and focused on their descriptions of gender identity and the advice they would offer to trans* men (or potential) trans* men about navigating college. With my focus on gender identity I hope to understand the experiences of those men who had, at one time, self-identified or been identified by others as a woman and/or female and who currently identity as man, male, masculine, or trans man. My data came from intensive interviews with 25 trans men who were, at the time of interviews, enrolled in colleges or universities in New England.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW AND SIGNIFICANCE

<u>Background of Study</u>

In my earlier comprehensive paper, I studied the memoirs of four transsexual men and focused on the medical model for biomedical transitioning for female-to-male (FtM) trans[1] people. Although a focus on the medical model discussion is important, it blankets other important issues, such as sexuality, gender expression, and gender identity for each memoirist. The expression of masculinity was a salient issue for each of these memoirists, as they described their identification as men and what that means in relationship to their gender expression and gender roles. This dissertation takes up where my previous research ended and explores how trans* men in college define and describe their gender identity, gender expression, gender roles, and gender identity. I sought to explore how trans* men express, experience, and describe their relationship to masculinity, having formerly self-identified or been identified by others as woman and/or female.

As trans* men are a diverse and understudied population of unknown size, I focused my research in the context of higher education for three reasons: to limit variability, to enhance the Higher Education and Student Affairs literature, and to give voice and agency to my participants through sharing their experiences. The first reason grows out of the need to limit the variability of participants to a single context of higher education, enhancing my use of grounded theory methods. The context-bounded research

---

[1] The terms trans, trans*, transsexual, FtM, trans man/trans men, other identities refers to men who were identified at birth as female and currently do not identify as women. A more developed definition can be found in the literature review (Chapter 2).

enabled "purposeful selection" (Morse, 2007) with similar contexts for comparative data analysis. The second reason for using a higher education population stems from my personal knowledge of higher education through my graduate and professional work. The results of my research will have implications for Student Affairs, as broad academic framework, as well as for professional practice within Student Affairs toward understanding an "emerging" student population. As demonstrated in my literature review, the facets of college and university structure, dynamics, and organization provide the foundations for what we understand to be best practices for Student Affairs professionals, and going to students to explore and describe their experiences will only enhance the work we do for and with them. Finally, my third reason was to give agency and voice to trans* men's experiences, a population largely silent in empirical research before now and allow them to articulate their conceptions of a supportive and inclusive college campus.

<u>Significance of the Study of Trans* Men's Experiences</u>

An increasing but unknown number of transgender students attend United States colleges and universities (B. Beemyn, 2003; B Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005; McKinney, 2005). There is a limited amount of research on the experiences of transgender college students, possibly due to the conflation of transgender identity with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer populations (Dilley, 2004). Other possible reasons for limited research on transgender college students include: publications that focus on policy changes instead of experiences (B. Beemyn, 2003; B. Beemyn, Curtis et al., 2005); lack of data collection on college and university campuses because forms usually allow

only two gender choices; and concerns about passing and safety may make transgender students reluctant to openly identify. The available research largely fails to disaggregate the specific identities that fit under the broad umbrella category of "transgender." To date, no scholars have specifically examined the experiences of trans* men in college, nor have they explored trans* men's conceptions of gender or their experiences navigating institutions of higher education.

The literature about trans* people has grown within the last 20 years, but much of the literature specifically about trans* men (sometimes referred to as female-to-male, FtMs transsexual men, or transgender men) has been rooted in memoirs about personal experience and transition stories. The remaining literature relies on theoretical perspectives devoid of research data, policy, and practice recommendations not based on empirical research or research data that talks generally of all trans* people, forcing comparisons between trans* women and trans* men, trying to align trans* men's experiences with trans* women's experiences (Cromwell, 1999; Stone, 1991). Literature focused on Student Affairs and Higher Education has, with only a few exceptions, "conflated the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer populations" (Dilley, 2004, p. 113). Published articles and book chapters address the needs of transgender students as an entire group (B. Beemyn, 2003; B. Beemyn, Curtis et al., 2005), but none delineate the myriad of different identities found under the transgender umbrella, such as genderqueer, trans*, MtF, or FtM. The experiences of trans* men in colleges and universities in the United States are unknown, and this research is aimed to fill this absence. The aim of this study was to give voice to trans* men about how they

make meaning of their gender and how their trans* identity has been supported or challenged in college.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following two research questions, and their sub-questions, as follows:

1. How do trans* men describe their current gender?

    a. How do trans* men describe their current gender expression?

    b. How do trans* men describe their current gender roles?

    c. How do trans* men define and describe their masculinity?

    d. What factors influence their choices about how they express or would like to express their masculinity?

    e. What factors influenced (or might influence) any choices made about the transition process?

2. How would trans* men advise trans* men, or potential trans* men, in college about what kinds of support would be needed in college settings?

    a. What type of information would be needed about the transition process?

    b. What type of information would be needed about connections to community?

    c. What type of information would be needed about identity development?

The first question focuses on how trans* college men describe their gender. The second question centers on trans* college men suggesting the kinds of support needed for success negotiating institutions of higher education. The answer to this second question adds to the limited (and often anecdotal) information in the literature on higher education,

and provides insights and thoughts from participants concerning potential new directions for institutional changes to create more inclusive campuses for trans* college men.

Overview of Dissertation

My dissertation is organized to provide readers a progression of content and analysis for my research. Chapter 2 provides a literature review that addresses the social construction of gender as a binary concept, explores trans* theory, and transition options for trans* people as well as contextualizes trans* men within social justice education and higher education. Next, in Chapter 3, I outline my methodology of grounded theory methods and qualitative descriptive method discussion and essential logistical and demographic information for my research. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present my data on my participants' gender identities, transitions, masculinity, and college/university experiences. In Chapter 7, I address my first research question on how trans men describe their gender identity, exploring how my participants described their transition status, distinctions of authenticity, relationships to masculinity, gender roles, and conceptualization of their gender. Then, in Chapter 8, I address my second research question on my participants' experiences in higher education, examining their advice for other trans* men, expectations of support in college, efforts to find allies, and notions of community. Finally, Chapter 9 provides recommendations for practitioners and scholars to create more inclusive institutions of higher education.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Introduction</u>

The literature review is divided into two parts, to support my exploration of trans*

identity among trans* identified men in college settings. Thus, part one presents an

overview of the literature on trans*[2] men and the binary system of gender that largely

shapes contemporary discussions of sex, gender, and sexuality. It sets up the theoretical

framework (queer theory) for my research on trans* men through the lens of gender as a

social construction, and the ways in which trans* men (and trans* identities) are bound

by the gender binary, even as their existence troubles it. Trans* theory contextualizes my

research within the emerging field of transgender studies by reviewing literature and

research on trans* people, specifically on trans* men. Part two shifts the focus to social

justice education and trans* men in higher education as contexts of the experience of

college-age trans* men.

In this literature review, transition processes are both explored and complicated

within the discussion of trans* theory, even though the physiological dimensions of

gender-transition, by means of surgery or hormones, are not and may not be sought,

desired, or accessible for all those who identify as trans*. Nonetheless, I include

transition processes in my literature review because they present a method to achieve

embodiment, recognition, and (in)visibility. When of interest and undertaken by trans*

men, biomedical transition options and processes are necessary to explore because these

---

[2] I use trans* to reference the myriad of and broader identities that fall under what used to be referred to as the transgender umbrella. Trans* is more commonly used to be inclusive of genderqueer and other gender variant identities. The origins of the asterisk are unclear but seem to stem from Internet language (the asterisk is a "wild-card" in a search) and allow for multiple possibilities to follow, such as transwoman, transman, transboi, and so on and can be used for inclusivity and intentional ambiguity.

options and processes can allow some trans* men to attain visibility as men, which then can be complicated by how they embody masculinity. Finally, a brief review of masculinity studies is required to attend to the desire by some trans* men to be recognized as men and gives specific attention to the social construction of men and issues of masculinity.

Part two of my literature review moves from the initial, somewhat micro focus on gender and trans* identities, toward a macro view of the experience of trans* identities through social justice education theory and higher education institutions. Social justice education examines trans* identities within systems, institutions, and cultures as a social group as well as the dynamics of power and oppression experienced by trans* men within the dominant social systems of gender. A review of higher education literature contextualizes my research and examines the considerations and attention trans* men have been afforded in efforts of institutional inclusion and support.

<u>The Social Construction of Gender as a Binary Concept</u>

Before exploring trans* identity in any depth, I will present working definitions of sex and gender, interconnected with and distinct from sexuality, as these are the roots of my theoretical location within the social construction of gender. The contested and contradictory conceptions of gender and sex require a nuanced analysis because of the ways in which trans* identity complicates while also reproducing a part of the gender binary.

Although colloquially in the United States sex and gender are often conflated and cross-referenced, there is an important academic as well as popular literature noting the

distinctions between the two. This literature makes the point that popular discourse assumes "that every human being is either male or female" (Kessler & McKenna, 1978, p. 1). Trans* identities, which are about both sex and gender identities, confound and complicate simplistic notions of sex and gender by disrupting the binary essentialism of female/male and woman/man (Browne, 2004; Hale, 1998; Hird, 2000; Lorber, 1996).

Sex is generally understood as a designation attributed to individuals based on physiological and biological factors that foster individual classification as female or male. *Gender* is associated with the social aspects (roles and behaviors) associated with each sex. Nicholson (1995) argued:

> [We] need to understand social variations in the male/female distinction as related to differences that go "all the way down," that is, as tied not just to the limited phenomena many of us associate with gender (i.e., to cultural stereotypes of personality and behavior), but also to culturally various understandings of the body, and to what it means to be a woman and a man. (p. 43)

Nicholson's argument extends *gender* beyond its commonly used definition of roles and behaviors ascribed to members of each sex (women are female, men are male), as distinct from and yet linked to physiological, biological, and chromosomal characteristics. Instead, gender is connected to characteristics (social, behavioral, and expressional) that we assume are exclusively aligned with sex. *Gender expression* describes how people convey their gender through behaviors, voice, and other presentations of self, including the social presentation of their bodies. *Gender roles* are understood to be gender-based activities or expectations of behaviors. Generally, gender expression and gender roles are used in conjunction to generalize and support meanings and distinctions between men and women, such as men have short hair, and women are caregivers.

Using Nicholson's argument of considering gender as inclusive of bodies deepens the interactions between gender, gender expression, and gender roles as terms that include sex characteristics. Pushing against popular discourse that generally refers to sex and gender as distinct concepts, whereby sex is thought of as biologically fixed, while gender is socially constructed. The binaries start with the original essentialist assumption that there are only two sexes (female and male), from which are likewise assumed two genders (man and woman), and two modes of expressing gender (masculinity and femininity). Trans* and intersex[3] people challenge both the sex and gender binaries because their existence and embodiment cross limits and restrictions of this two-category system (Catalano, McCarthy, & Shlasko, 2007). Transsexual, transgender, and trans*[4] are terms that refer to people who transgress, intentionally or unintentionally, the binary sex/gender system. This study is focused on trans* identities that, whether by behavior, physiology, or expression, challenge the "binary rule" and thus complicate the popular and unexamined "truths" about gender and sex.

Messerschmidt (2009) asserts that our understandings of sex assignment and attributions are based on visual cues of gender, and that a consideration of the relationship between sex and gender is necessary given how they are always already involved in understanding each other.[5]

> Our recognition of another's *sex* is thus dependent upon the presentation of such visible bodily characteristics as hair, clothing, physical appearance, and other

---

[3] Intersex refers to a group of medical conditions (formerly called hermaphroditism) describing people who are born with what are deemed to be genital, chromosomal, and/or reproductive capacity anomalies, or whose genitals at birth are not easily classified as male or female, or whose bodies develop hormonally after birth in such a way that their bodies are not easily classified as male or female. For more information on intersex, see Kessler (2002).

[4] While terms are still under construction (Stryker, 2008), for the purposes of this research, transgender or trans were the main terminology used, as the evolution of trans* came in the time of writing the dissertation.

[5] Messerschmidt (2009) based these arguments on the work of Kessler and McKenna (1978) and West and Zimmerman (1987).

aspects of personal front (including behavior)—a combined bodily sex and gender presentation that becomes the substitute for the concealed genitalia. Consequently, although biological differences clearly exist between male and female bodies, during social interaction, sex is always already a social interpretation. (p. 86)

Trans* bodies can muddle the "clearly" existing differences between male and female bodies, depending on how a trans* person presents/performs gender (Butler, 1990).

Given the body as a site for sex and gender within everyday interaction, it stands to reason "during most interpersonal interactions, 'sex' and 'gender' are indistinguishable from one another because we unreflectively recognize their congruence" (Messerschmidt, 2009, p. 86). The limits on categorizations or assumptions about bodies push us to consider what is "real" and how we construct (and deconstruct) our beliefs about biological essentialism about sex and gender.

Further, the gender binary normalizes heterosexuality, since the binary assumes procreative pairing as the "natural" order (Butler, 1990). Those who do not fall within the realm of heterosexuality (man/woman or "opposite sex" relationships) have been relegated to the "other" category of queer (male/male, female/female, or varying gender/sex relationships). "The gender system is said to posit heterosexuality as a primary sign of gender normality. A true man loves women; a true woman loves men" (S. Seidman, 1993, p. 114).

Trans* identities disrupt conceptions of who/what is a "true" man or woman and as a byproduct destabilize heterosexuality because gender transgression has social implications for gender legibility (what is read in everyday encounters as a man or a woman) and biomedical transition processes muddle physiological sex markers, making what it means to be in an "opposite sex" relationship resisting clear definition. As long as

10

binary definitions of sex and gender dominate popular understanding, transgender and transsexual people pose a threat to that binary system of sex/gender (Butler, 1990). To consider the type and depth of the threat that trans* identities pose, I turn to a more thorough examination of sex.

<div align="center">Sex</div>

As Kessler and McKenna (1978) have pointed out and as noted earlier, there are overlapping usages of sex and gender, both conversational usage and in the scientific literature. The dominant assumption has been that *sex* is connected to biological markers and *gender* is connected to social roles. "When it comes to sex, Western assumption that there are only two sexes probably derives from our culture's close coupling between sex and procreation… Yet this binary concept does not reflect biological reality" (Hubbard, 1996, p. 46). Even the factors that are seen to determine the biological dimorphisms of *sex* (male and female) are themselves not reliably binary and are socially constructed (West & Fenstemaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

There are more than two different kinds of chromosomal sexes and genital configurations used as the major physiological factors for a "biological" construction of the sex binary (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Kessler, 2002). "Choosing which criteria to use in determining sex, and choosing to make the determination at all, are social decisions for which scientists can offer no absolute guidelines" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 5). The number of variations of genital and chromosomal configurations could be categorized as a multiplicity of sex categories, but instead they are reified into variations of two sexes (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Kessler, 2002). Butler (2004) further troubles the notion of

"assigned" sex, as reproduced categories because the category itself is socially produced and relayed. The categories themselves only provide an illusion of choice between pre-determined hegemonic options.

> If the bodily traits "indicate" sex, then sex is not quite the same as the means by which it is indicated. Sex is made understandable through the signs that indicate how it should be read or understood. These bodily indicators are the cultural means by which the sexed body is read. They are themselves bodily, and they operate as signs, so there is no easy way to distinguish between what is 'materially' true, and what is "culturally" true about a sexed body, but only that the body does not become sexually readable without those signs, and that those signs are irreducibly cultural and material at once. (p. 87)

Our clothing, gestures, and cultural and material signs which are often manipulated and constructed by our clothed bodies, constitute socially constructed markers of gender as well as sexuality. Generally, the categories are chosen on the basis of socially agreed upon norms of presentation of self that reflect the assumed sex of the body underneath the clothing. Both the sex and gender binaries are reliant on each other, and sex is produced by gender, because we are generally lacking immediately visible proof of sex. The relationship between sex and gender is so pervasive that it becomes nearly impossible to distinguish among human consciousness of social interaction, meaning-making, and material bodies even for the person who wears clothing to "represent" that person's interrogated sex-identification.

It is challenging to grasp the paradox by which the physical/material body is both necessary and not necessary to the understanding of sex categories, and this paradox makes talking about the sociality and materiality of trans* lives difficult. Trans* people are tethered to biological sex distinctions that have preceded their gendered social interactions with others. They (may) transgress biological distinctions while (sometimes) aligning with and utilizing the gender binary for social location. In light of these

paradoxes, I derived my own functional definition of the term *sex* for the purposes of this study, based on the work of West and Zimmerman (1987) and West and Fenstemaker (1995) as: the socially and culturally agreed upon biological construction of the body at birth, "rather than straightforward statement of the biological 'facts'" (West & Fenstemaker, 1995, p. 20), which may change based on surgical and/or hormonal changes to the body.

Gender

Gender is defined as "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127). In this definition, "situated" refers to socially organized activities that are "not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings … through interaction" (p. 128). The gender binary is the building block of how gender is understood, conceptualized, and explained in our social interactions as well as to our internalized thoughts, beliefs, even unconscious assumptions that are the product of a lifetime of social interactions.

Stryker (2008) notes that gender is historical, temporal, geographical, cultural, contingent, and contextual. It is the connection of the gender binary to dimorphic sex categories that establishes the commonsense relationship that male equals masculine and female equals feminine roles (Connell, 2002; Feinberg, 1998). Gender is something done simultaneously with other social identities and an "emergent property of social situations" (West & Fenstemaker, 1995, p. 9). Yet, there is a social relationship in our understanding of gender, regardless of whether there are clear referents or assumed

references to bodies (Connell, 2002; West & Fenstemaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Gender, often understood as a social construction, has roots in our understandings of how gender roles are social roles, assumed behaviors, attitudes, preferences, and other characterizations attributed to masculinity and femininity. However, masculinity and femininity are subject to time, space, interpretation, and context.

> [T]heir meanings change radically depending upon geopolitical boundaries and cultural constraints on who is imagining whom, and for what purpose. That the terms recur is interesting enough, but the recurrence does not index a sameness, but rather the way in which the social articulation of the term depends upon its repetition, which constitutes one dimension of the performative structure of gender. Terms of gender designation are thus never settled once and for all but are constantly in the process of being remade. (Butler, 2004, p. 10)

The concept of "gender performativity" provides a shorthand and oversimplified analytic framework to examine *gender* in its context of social interaction and performance. Often performativity was misunderstood as a notion that gender is "not real." Stryker (2008) dismisses this misunderstanding and contends that Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity is not stating gender is

> merely a performance and therefore not real… rather, it was that the reality of gender for *everybody* is the "doing of it." Rather than being an objective quality of the body (defined by sex), gender is constituted by all the innumerable acts of performing it: how we dress, move, speak, touch, look. Gender is a language we use to communicate ourselves to others and to understand ourselves. The implication of this argument is that transgender genders are as real as any others, and they are achieved in the same fundamental way (p. 131).

People of all genders, including those who identify as trans*, are understood to be part of the gender system and may even collude with dominant, hierarchical, hegemonic notions of gender.

Gender uses the body "as form of evidence that proves its truth is just discourse, a story we tell about what the evidence of the body means" (Stryker, 2008, p. 132). Butler's (1993) theory of performativity, according to Stryker,

> opened up for theorists within the new transgender movement the prospect that new "truths" of transgender experiences, new ways of narrating the relationship between gendered sense of self, social role, and embodiment, could begin to be told—precisely what Sandy Stone had called for in her "posttranssexual" manifesto. (p. 132)

The idea that bodies, genders, and lives can be seen in ways that destabilize our notions of gender help explain why it should be that trans* identities often become the site of explorations about gender. There are concerns about such over-identification of trans* identities with gender exploration, such as Rubin's (1998) critique of "the new queer chic" (p. 276), in which trans* lives are appropriated by non-trans* people to demonstrate failure of matching body morphology and gender identity; non-trans* theorists reinforce their "normal" gender configurations by "othering" trans* identities as abnormal.

For the purposes of this study, my working definition for *gender* is: the social relationships of biological sex, usually limited or understood as male and female, to the embodiment and performance of masculinity and femininity that is determined by the individual at some time after birth, and can be in accord with or contradicted by an internal sense of gender (gender identity) and is demonstrated through gender expression.

Now that I have explored the complexities within the two terms that constitute gender and sex binaries, I take a specific turn toward men and masculinities, as trans* men are still dependent on a gender binary, even if they wish to resist it. I examine literature about masculinity as part of dichotomous gender socialization and what it may

15

offer regarding the embodiment trans* men seek to inhabit. Masculinity studies, as a body of literature, provides another layer onto the theoretical framework that shapes my research about trans* identities.

Masculinity

The general literature of masculinity studies was developed through work of such academics as Kimmel (1996), Connell (2005), Kaufman (1999), Messner (2000), and O'Neil (1990). Since masculinity studies has begun to receive recognition, other scholars have focused on higher education and taken up considerations on the ways masculinity impacts students experiences in college and university life (see Davis, 2002; Harper & Harris, 2010; Laker, 2003). Scholars are opening sites where men and masculinity can be viewed, understood, and critiqued in similar ways that feminist use their theoretical framework to examine women and gender. Some masculinity studies scholars question what it means to intentionally study men and challenge current theoretical foundations for understanding men (Kaufman, 1999; Kimmel & Davis, 2011). I borrowed part of the title of my dissertation from Kimmel's (2008) *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. Guyland describes the conditions of climates, messages, and influences that boys (adolescence) endure as they navigate their transition into adulthood (men).

Kimmel outlines three distinct intersecting cultures that form the unhealthiness of Guyland: Culture of Entitlement, The Culture of Silence, and Culture of Protection (Kimmel, 2008; Kimmel & Davis, 2011). By understanding the persistence and structural mechanisms that create the intersections of these cultures, there is hope that while Guyland (masculine hegemony) is pervasive, it is also possible to develop "the capacity

to become critically aware of how it works and to develop consciousness so that we transform our culture and help boys become men by being true to themselves, not some artificial code" (Kimmel & Davis, 2011, p. 10). The interventions and practical suggestions for impacting the force of gender socialization into boy's and men's lives (creating this 17ransve space of Guyland) address ways to counsel, connect, and transform the landscape of Guyland (Kimmel & Davis, 2011).

At its core, Guyland presents a way of viewing the privileges afforded to men who perform, execute, and embody hegemonic masculinity and affords a type of masculinity in practice that upholds female subordination (sexism) (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Masculinity scholars consider the costs associated with hegemonic masculinity. "Though the cost of sexism may not be as dehumanizing for men as it is for women, there is considerable evidence that men's gender socialization is harmful" (Wagner, 2011, p. 212). The admission of the pernicious effects of hegemonic masculinity on young men is a call for conversations about the lives of men, studied as men (Kimmel & Davis, 2011). The examination of men's lives is a way to consider the social construction of men and masculinity, which is connected to my research on trans* men, since at least some of them may (and do) identify with hegemonic masculinity and are impacted by Guyland, although in possibly different ways from cisgender men.

There are a few notions embedded in masculinity studies, which become troubled when trans* men are included into masculinity studies. Kimmel and Messner (1998) point out

> The important fact of men's lives is not that they are biological males, but that they become men. Our sex may be male, but our identity is developed through a complex social process of interaction with the culture in which we both learn the

17

gender scripts appropriate to our culture and attempt to modify those scripts to make them more palatable. (p. ix)

Masculinity studies, as understood within this historic and canonical quotation by Kimmel and Messner, is entrenched in an understanding that men are biologically male, and leaves out the possibility of trans* men. Such a position upholds the sexual binary as rooted in biological and unwavering truth and does not give time or attention to the historical, social, and temporal constructions of sex as a category. Failure to understand masculinity without troubling or questioning the biological implication of maleness gives primacy to the implied phallus over the performance of gendered acts that influence social interactions or meaning making.

> People who present ambiguous "bodily emblems" or "sex"—such as transsexuals in transition from one sex to another—produce hesitation in an otherwise smooth social process of sex assignment and attribution. Yet by doing so, they simultaneously bring the social construction of sex (and gender) to light. (Messerschmidt, 2009, p. 86)

The core of masculinity studies has yet to excavate what it really means to be a "man" and relies on a common definition or expectations of maleness.

There are no studies that engage in critical thinking or theorizing that is independent from the assumption of maleness based on male bodies. Aside from the lack of biological critique of the male form, the process of gender socialization and the roles referenced in the Kimmel and Messner quotation attend to a question of palatability. In the original quotation, Kimmel and Messner (1998) refer to a process of making gender scripts more palatable, which likens palatability to desensitizing observations of behaviors, affects, roles, and other dynamics of masculinity as more consumable, potentially non-threatening, and acceptable within the boundaries of everyday life (normalizing). The idea of seeking to make gender roles more palatable evokes questions

about what is more palatable and for whom. For masculinity studies, it seems that the audience of these palatable gender performances are other men. Kimmel (2000) pointed out, "We are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men… Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval. It is other men who evaluate the performance" (p. 214). The homosociality of manhood (relationships that are not sexual or romantic, in this case between men, such as friendship, mentorship, etc.) offers an insular cultural experience that may offer significant concerns and difficulties for trans* men who must meet approval from those who were socialized with a different set of expectations.

The foundational work within masculinity studies does not include trans* men, nor does it consider the possibility of their existence within men's studies. Further, masculinity studies never acknowledges or considers masculinity as a property available to women or trans* people. Masculinity as a topic for female-bodied people was dismissed as a non-researchable topic until academics theorized about female masculinity (Halberstam, 1998) and masculinity without men (Noble, 2004). One rationale for the dismissal of female masculinity was that it is not threatening, and even when it manifests as trans* identity, trans men's female partners do not seem to mind.

> The female partners of transmen rarely experience the shock of disclosure the way wives of cross-dressers do; their partners' masculinity is commonly more publicly visible and integrated into their gender expression, since masculinity in females is somewhat more socially acceptable than femininity in males. (Lev, 2006, p. 270)

Cultural expectations support notions that women who are in same sex relationships would be attracted to masculine appearing women, reifying opposite sex dynamics via heteronormativity.

The Standards of Care (Meyer et al., 2001) views female masculinity or the successful expression of masculinity by persons identified as female as reasonable or

expected, which only compounds disbelief of female cross-dressing and FtM invisibility. "Gender variant behaviors such as female cross-dressing remained unseen by clinicians" (p. 4). The medical communities' disbelief of cross-dressing women (or female-bodied transvestites) encourages the perception of the lower numbers of trans* men, as well as statistics that indicate disproportionate numbers of MtFs to FtMs (Meyer et al., 2001). The question remains of where or how to address issues of masculinity beyond male bodies, which is why masculinity studies is one of the foci of my literature review.

To have trans* men considered within masculinity studies, the biological maleness and the becoming of a man must both be thrown into question and viewed as worthy of examination. Trans* men might offer insights into the learning of gender scripts, possibly (but not always) gender scripts that are more inclusive and flexible, given their childhood socialization as girls and because manhood may not have been central to their gender socialization. At the very least, trans* men muck up our assumptions about gender socialization (in their process of transition and whatever end state they consider to be finished transitioning), embodiment, and performance. For trans* men, the complications of personal history and becoming may cause alignment and resistance to assumed categories about gender but within specific temporal limits (Butler, 2004; Nicholson, 1995).

Trans* men raise questions that have not yet been addressed within masculinity studies, such as the ways trans* men (or FtM people) may resist hegemonic masculinity and may make masculinity incoherent (Peetom, 2009). However, until masculinity studies deals with the question of bodies and how they rest on assumptions of surety regarding biological maleness, then conversations about masculinity remain superficial

without considering how and when bodies matter and what (if anything) this has to do with sex.

The body becomes an inescapable location from where gender is read. Embodied gender needs to be considered separately since

> [It is] the confluence and symbiosis of sex appearance and gender behavior in the social validation or invalidation of masculinity and femininity… In short, the body is a participant in shaping and generating social practice, and consequently, it is impossible to consider human agency without taking embodied gender into account/ (Messerschmidt, 2009, p. 87)

The complications for trans* men of what it means to present as, to believe oneself as, and to interact in a way that is interpreted as masculine are ideas riddled with questions about bodies.

The consideration of trans* men's bodies (and histories) offer questions that both disentangle and further complicate how bodies are tied to ideas about gender and sex. As people with female histories, trans* men's experiences may offer an unconventional view of gender because of the interaction of past female socialization and current masculine embodiment.

> FTMs and transmen offer an uncommon perspective on the constructions of sex, gender, masculinity, femininity, maleness, and femaleness. It is unique because they are socialized to be females; their identities, however, no matter how bodies are constructed, are aligned with signs that are culturally symbolic of masculinity and maleness/ (Cromwell, 1999, p. 143)

Thus, issues of transition, history, embodiment, and identity are avenues I consider in my research.

There are many questions that remain regarding the future of masculinity studies, such as distinctions between embodied, social, and sexual reads of masculinities, which have yet to emerge. The considerations of what it means to embody and be read as

21

potentially "owning" masculinity was an initial piece that spurred my research. However, as the first section on sex, gender, and sexuality demonstrates, the complexity of gendered experiences is a rich area of research exploration. Masculinity studies provides a basis for exploring issues of masculinity with trans* men but cannot fully address the scope of their experiences, thus I utilize queer theory as a means of addressing the complexities of how trans* men queer gender.

Queer and Postmodern Theories: Queering the Binaries

Queer theorists and scholars critique efforts to focus on the distinctions as well as the entanglement of sexuality and gender (Califia, 2003; Jagose, 1996; Sedgwick, 1990). Queer theory poses questions of itself while embarking in conversations about queer identities, geographies, locations, and discourse. The utility of queer theory is its ability to resist normative assumptions about bodies and desire, allowing for the surfacing of questions that disrupt assumptions of identity. My theoretical framework utilizes queer theory for a contradictory "both" approach to the relationship between gender and sexuality, specifically focusing on trans* men (gender) without ignoring the relationship their gender has to trans* inclusion within the LGBT moniker (sexuality). Queer theory provides a useful theoretical framework for my research because it attends both to the limitations and to the benefits of the gender binary as well as the question of inclusion in communities that are "queer" (as in non-normative) in approaching trans* men's experience.

Queer theory is said to have originated in the United States in the 1980s, fostered in academia while also connected to direct-action groups, such as Queer Nation and ACT

UP (S. Seidman, 1995). Through discursive and textual analysis, queer theory questions the solidity and normativity of the heterosexual/homosexual binary, a binary that is reliant on the gender binary, and trans* identities cause instability to both binary constructions. Queer identification, in this sense, is not about naming a unitary identity but about naming those whose identities serve as "opposition to disciplining, normalizing social forces" (S. Seidman, 1993, p. 133). The emergence of queer theory pushes the boundaries and work of identity politics through poststructuralist action (discursive deconstruction).

S. Seidman (1993) advocates for the use of postmodern and poststructural "practices," to de-center and deconstruct the regimes of power embedded in identities through institutions and culture and reinforced by interpersonal interactions. Postmodernism and poststructuralism offer the ability to attempt a rethinking of assumed knowledge of gender as a category, providing space for flourishing gender identities.

Postmodernism is, in as much as postmodernism can be said to be about anything, an examination of culture, which includes language. Somewhat similarly, poststructuralism is an examination of language and semiotics in which everything is discourse (Derrida, 1978). Postmodernism offers deconstruction (Derrida, 1976) as a way of examining, disturbing, and displacing "the power of hierarchies by showing their arbitrary, social, and political character. Deconstruction may be described as a cultural politics of knowledge" (S. Seidman, 1995, p. 125). Functionally, deconstruction encourages a reconsideration of culture that is explicitly critical of any exclusion of marginalized identity groups (Lemert, 1997). Poststructuralism offers similar utility of queering through the practice of decentering (Derrida, 1976), a way to disrupt the

modernist center of dominant/agent identities and offer narratives of difference. Through the practice of decentering, a binary construction of gender identity is disrupted. The disruption in the binary causes a metaphorical space to examine power, complexity, and hegemony. Decentering rejects an unexamined patriarchal view of gender, and the gender binary is examined as a concept that limits social freedom through language.

Together, postmodernism and poststructuralism offer ways to disrupt assumptions embedded in dominant narratives, to decenter ideas from hegemonic assumptions, structures, and power, and to deconstruct politics and power structured via silencing and through language. Put simply, these approaches cause queering of our current mind/body and gender/sexuality understandings, making visible how our identities have been normalized and how this normalization goes unquestioned. Queer theory is most theoretically useful because it is a simultaneous focus on genders and sexualities with attention to destabilizing the power/knowledge structure of what is "normal," destabilizing social identity binaries of gender (women and men), sex (female and male), and sexuality (queer and heterosexual).

Destabilizing binaries is primary to my research, given that the gender binary organizes so much of our social order and identities through overly simplistic understandings of bodies and experiences (Lorber, 1994). Queer theory allows for what has evolved into the verb *to queer*. In general, "to queer," as I have made-meaning of it, can be a verb, noun, or adjective and is intended to evoke a postmodern analysis (Shlasko, 2005). To queer (as a verb) is to make incoherent or uncomfortable something considered normal or a universal truth contradictory or different (odd) that may be anti-normative or unrecognizable (Morris, 1998; Shlasko, 2005). Queering expands

24

possibilities and leaves space for the potentiality of gender identities. To queer is to point out what has been silenced and amplify it so as to make it valuable instead of devalued or marginal.

Trans* subjects allow for particular queering or use of queer theory to challenge normative bodies and sexualities. Prosser (1998) argues, "queer studies has made the transgendered [sic] subject, the subject who crosses gender boundaries, a key queer trope: the means by which not only to challenge sex, gender and sexuality binaries but to institutionalize homosexuality as queer" (p. 5). Theoretical attention to transgender subjectivity calls attention to crossing boundaries, including boundaries between gay men and lesbians into what would help queer studies develop itself apart from feminism; transgender was a means of mobilization across theories and identities and to disrupt and destabilize constructions of the gender and sex binaries (Prosser, 1998).

Marine (2011) defines queer people as those who "are distinguishable by the ways in which their identities defy socially prescribed norms of gender identity and sexual orientation" (p. 5).[6] To queer, in postmodernist terms, might be to deconstruct the dominant narrative that makes gender normativity invisible and supports that invisibility through heterosexism. To queer gender is to eliminate the silencing power of the hegemonic binary gender construct that keeps alternative genders hidden and makes them incoherent. Queering gender also points out the false binary of man/woman and thereby puts into play the possibilities of metanarratives of queerness that emerge from complex notions of trans* identities. The important contribution of queer theory is its resistance to

---

[6] Marine (2011) refers to queer as a noun and adjective for those who "stand apart from the 'normalized' identity of heterosexuality or *cisgender* individuals (cisgender, as described by Schilt and Westbrook, is a term to denote those whose assigned sex at birth generally corresponds to their gender identity and expression)" (p. 5).

a concept of authentic gender. It allows for consideration of transition options as one of many ways to address the materiality of the body (Butler, 1990, 2004; Halberstam, 1994; Sullivan, 2003). Transition choices, when accessed, can be understood as an effort to be seen *and* acknowledge how such steps transgress and resist the gender binary *but* also uphold its centrality to a conception of gender tethered to the gender binary.

<u>Trans* Theory</u>

Trans* identities provide a site for deconstructing (queering) the gender binary through embodiment, gender transgression, and passing. In doing so, trans* theory addresses the contradiction by which the gender binary makes trans* identities both invisible and hyper-visible. The gender binary is what provides political and theoretical traction for trans* resistance to gender normality and conformity (invisibility). Yet, gender transgression is reliant upon a common understanding of gender, otherwise what one is transgressing would be imperceptible, which would in turn make those transgressions invisible. In this section, I take up trans* theory to examine the contradiction trans* identities draw upon *and* complicate the gender binary.

Valentine (2007) offered a historical overview of the terminology and identity understood as *transgender* and teases out the overlaps, contested affiliation with, and disconnects from lesbian and gay communities and identities. Valentine (2004) also asserted that the question of the relationship between sexuality and gender is

> ultimately ethnographic and historical rather than purely theoretical, because this relationship is itself possible only in historical and cultural contexts where "gender" and "sexuality" have come to be—and are able to be—conceptualized as distinct arenas of human experience, (p. 219)

The possibilities for trans* identities (or transgender in specific reference to Valentine's work) allows for a more intersectional view that resists the creation of a monolithic social identity category because it is impacted by ethnography and history.

Transgender and transsexual (or more simply trans*) identity categories disrupt the sex and gender binaries, as noted above. Transsexual or transgender men (trans* men[7]), even when they change their bodies through hormones and surgeries (also known as biomedically transitioning) may be viewed as not completely male (in terms of life history, self-identification, or in morphology as interpreted through sex category definitions) but still live their lives as men. Some trans* men who enter into relationships with women identify those as *heterosexual* relationships, as distinct from lesbian. This distinction draws attention to the ways in which gender is invoked when exploring sexual relationships. To name the relationship "lesbian" denies the trans* man his agency for self-determination of social identity category membership, yet morphology (body or genital) or life history serves as a basis to call into question whether he is "valid" in his application of heterosexual to his sexual relationship with a woman. Trans* identities draw attention to the inaccuracies derived exclusively from sex, gender, and sexuality categories. Trans* identities thus reveal limitations in language assumed to be precise, rooted in science, and immutable, thereby highlighting that it is actually none of these.

Because the gender binary supports the sexual binary (hetero/homo) and "scientific" notions of sex support both, confusion on many fronts comes from the complicated linkages between sex, sexuality, and gender. Messerschmidt (2009) argues that a "reconsideration of the relationship between 'sex' and 'gender' is now necessary

---

[7] While there is literature that uses transman (Cromwell, 1999), I intentionally use trans man or trans* man because the space between words denotes that trans* is not a modifier of man, but a distinct signifier, similar to "gay man."

because in historical studies of attempts to define 'sex,' gender has proved always already to be involved" (p. 71-72). Because sex has been tied to gender, trans* identities challenge the larger frameworks that hold the entire sex/gender structure in place. Trans* identities, in many ways, are the ultimate sex and gender deviants because they can and do disrupt the expectations of male/man and female/woman.

Trans* identities call for a focus on gender, in some ways ignoring sex, because of how we know or recognize what we believe is sex through gender identities.

> The meaning of sex, then, is socially "read" through interpretations placed on the visible body… Indeed, recognition of both "sex" and "gender" is always already a social act—part of everyday interaction—that occurs simultaneously. And consequently, during most interpersonal interactions, "sex" and "gender" are indistinguishable from one another because we unreflectively recognize their congruence. (Messerschmidt, 2009, p. 86)

This means that what we read as sex is gender, an act of doing, since sex assignment has little, if anything, to do with our everyday life (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Further, trans* people, those who may seem gender-ambiguous or those who have transitioned, "produce hesitation in an otherwise smooth social process of sex assignment and attribution. Yet by doing so, they simultaneously bring the social construction of sex (and gender) to light" (Messerschmidt, 2009, p. 86). Trans* identities push gender analysis past superficial interactions destabilizing the hegemony of the sex/gender regime.

Queer theory questions simplistic accounts that have generally been used to explain trans* people's origin story of *trapped in the wrong body* (Spade, 2003; Stone, 1997). The problem with the "wrong body" trope is that it requires trans* people to account for their gender through a retrospective of their experiences, thoughts, and understandings of themselves that is not required of non-trans* people and is an oversimplified framing of a narrative created to achieve embodiment access via medical

institutions (Cromwell, 1999; Spade, 2003; Stone, 1997). The deconstruction of narratives about decisions to transition are useful, but those narratives are still limited by the discourses that exist, one that focuses on justifications for taking any transition steps at all to satisfy the medical model (Cromwell, 1999; Spade, 2003; Stone, 1997). Biomedical and social transition options are as much about desires of the mind as about embodiment "because we embody the discourses that exist in our culture, our very being is constituted by them, they are a part of us, and thus we cannot simply throw them off" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 41). Hence, queer theory and poststructuralism provide the theoretical framework to resist the notion of the "wrong body" narrative and encourages a consideration of the plethora of reasons many trans* people consider some types of transitioning process (social, linguistic, or biomedical).

In an effort to remove the potential of trans* identities as a category, phenomena, and experience from causing ripples in the dominant binaries that construct normative gender (and sexuality), trans* identities are pathologized as a psychological disorder, stigmatized, and therefore banished from the realm of "normal" categories. Seeing trans* identities as unnatural conjures an image of trans* experiences that are distinct from non-trans* (or cisgender) people removing the possibility that those who are gay, lesbian, woman, man, or heterosexual transgress gender boundaries and roles.

Trans* Terminology

The term *transsexual* emerged from the medical and popular literature in the 1950s as "a person who aspired to or actually lived in the anatomically contrary gender role, whether or not hormones has been administered or surgery had been performed"

(Meyer et al., 2001, p. 42).[8] *Transgender*, a term still under construction (Stryker, 2008) is "an umbrella term to include everyone who challenges the boundaries of sex and gender. It is also used to draw distinctions between those who reassign the sex they were labeled at birth, and… those whose gender expression is considered inappropriate" (Feinberg, 1996, p. x). Both terms (transgender and transsexual) challenge the rigidity of gender roles and gender expression.

Colloquially, some people use *transsexual* and *transgender* interchangeably, and others draw clear distinctions between them. For example, *transsexual* has been used to define those who seek surgical and hormonal transition options, and *transgender* has been used to broadly characterize gender expression that subverts the gender binary (Bornstein, 1994). Such distinctions have created hierarchy within trans* communities with more "authenticity" ascribed to those who closely match the transsexual model (Schilt & Waszkiewicz, 2006). Those who go through biomedical transition processes are seen as "more real" because of their interest in, ability to, and adherence to the medical model for transitioning.

In an effort to avoid hierarchical distinctions within the community:

> The simpler and more impartial *trans*, by itself and in conjunction with other terms [seems to be of growing preference]. There is still little standardization of language around trans experiences, which also tend to be complicated by various political, medical, and personal agendas in academic literature. Also, transpeople have their own understandings of terms and phrases that differ from those used by academics and other professionals [such as those in psychological and other medical communities]. (Martin & Yonkin, 2006, p. 106)

---

[8] The Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc. is now called the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Inc. (WPATH). The citation notes the first author who was the Chairperson of the Committee.

Definitional distinctions are important, but it is equally important that all individuals "describe and label their own gender identities in whatever ways feel most appropriate to them" (Catalano et al., 2007, p. 219).

Trans*, as a term, is the newest iteration of trans or transgender functioning as a more inclusive umbrella designation, one that references the growing omnipresence of internet language where the asterisk serves as a wildcard for multiple words, and diminishes conflicts over "authenticity" between transsexual versus transgender terminology. For political, inclusive, and temporal purposes, I use trans, transgender, or trans-identified terminology when I refer to participants in my research, and trans* in reference to broader communities, movements, and theories.[9]

The following working definitions take into consideration political implications and social experiences, knowing the terminology an individual uses for self-identification may be at odds with these working definitions. *Transgender, trans, or trans**, as an identity category or concept, refers to the transgression of the gender binary and other norms pertaining to sex or gender and is a self-determined category. *Trans* identity and trans* communities* will be used as an umbrella term for those who intentionally or unintentionally challenge the boundaries of sex and gender and to signal the myriad identities for which it can refer to including, but not limited to: *genderqueer, FtM, MtF, trannyboy, transgrrrl, drag queen, drag king, transvestite, transsexual, transgender, androgynous, gender-nonconforming, bi-gendered, and gender variant.*

---

[9] I make the distinction regarding my participants because trans* became more common in usage after member-checks were conducted with my participants.

Transsexual[10] will be used to refer to those who use that identity label for her/him/hirself and for reference to the pathology of Gender Identity Disorder (GID). I interpret a person's use of transsexual as being linked to biomedical transitioning in direct ways that transgender does not necessarily require, but it is noteworthy to mention that there are those in trans* communities who follow and comply with the medical model, and there are also those who identify as transsexual who resist the medical model. In discussing my research, I honor participants' use of language as accurately as I understood them to identify themselves, acknowledging that for many there was more than one term that they used (or that I understood them to use) and for some language was context dependent.

There are other terms related to the topic of trans* that are only touched upon in this research but are worth addressing to avoid confusion. Those who write about trans* identity, and certainly those who live it, may use a variety of the aforementioned identity labels, as well as many others that are constantly evolving and shifting. A definition of *genderqueer* is necessary because it is a semi-regular identity term used by participants. *Genderqueer* is a gender identity that resists categorization, not conforming within traditional categories of the sex/gender binary, and possibly failing at recognition.[11] *Genderqueer* in relationship with my research relies on the verb form of queer, to queer gender, which keeps the focus on the gender identity and gender expression of the individual.

---

[10] I am utilizing the spelling of transsexual, instead of transexual, which is a political identity spelling cited from Wilchins (1997) as coming from British activism to usurp the medical communities language of a compound word, trans-sexual.
[11] Wilchins (2002) writes about genderqueer identity but never produces a definition, possibly by intention.

The clarification of terminology explains how I use these terms in my study, although when quoting, I honor the terminology used by my participants. Intentional language usage with clear definitions allows for clarity prior to describing how those identities interact with institutions and culture. In the next sub-section, I turn my attention to oppression and the ways trans* identities interact with systems of power and privilege.

Trans* Oppression

Trans oppression*, referred to in some literature as *genderism* (Bilidoeau, 2009; Hill, 2002; Hill & Willoughby, 2005; Wilchins, 2002), manifests through marginalization, powerlessness, exploitation, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young, 1990).

> Genderism is an ideology that reinforces the negative evaluation of gender non-conformity or an incongruence between sex and gender. It is a cultural belief that perpetuates negative judgments of people who do not present as a stereotypical man or woman. (Hill & Willoughby, 2005, p. 534)

Bilodeau's discussion of *genderism* based the concept on four characteristics: social labeling, gender accountability, privileging binary gender systems, and invisibility and isolation of transgender persons. In my research, I prefer to utilize the term *trans* oppression* (Catalano et al., 2007; Catalano & Shlasko, 2010, 2013) because the language fits more soundly with the structural and systemic social justice education language and focuses on trans* lives and experiences, whereas *genderism* in its attempts to address the broader oppression of the gender binary and ultimately re-centers the gender binary by making trans* people and experiences either tangential or invisible.

There are many ways to occupy the category of trans*, and there are consequences to being identified within that category. I use trans* and transgender as

adjectives, yet there are constructions of *transgendering* as a gerund that draws attention

to behavior and social process (Ekins & King, 2006). The conceptualization of

transgendering allows for the fluidity of meaning and enactment, whether permanently or

temporarily, and

> [It allows for] the idea of living in between genders; and to the idea of living
> "beyond gender" altogether. It also refers to the social process within which
> competing transgendering stories and attendant identities and ideologies emerge,
> develop, and wax and wane in influence, in time and place. (p. xiv)

While there is a theoretical utility in the notion of transgendering, there has not been

much progress (in community or in academic/scholarship) in consideration of

transgendering. Although it is interesting, it is not useful in my current work.

Most recently, Valentine (2007) offered his own insight on the identity category

of transgender, specifically on the concept of transgender community as a product of the

imaginary, because it is not imagined, but the result of categorization within institutional

systems and not how people categorize themselves. Through his fieldwork and interviews

with trans* women he described

> how the collective mode of transgender both succeeds *and* fails to account for the
> identities and communities so described. I focus on these people partly because
> they demonstrate the instability of "transgender" even as they are central to an
> imaginary of what a transgender community is. (p. 69)

His research, an anthropological ethnography to understand a particular social identity

group, exposes that as of the time of his writing (and I would argue as of yet) there is no

clarification or shared meaning of trans* communities. Instead:

> [Trans* communities exist only within] the context of those very entities which
> are concerned to *find* a transgender community: social service organizations,
> social science accounts, and activist discourses… This does not mean that
> transgender identity and community are figments of the imagination, but rather
> that they are *products of an imaginary*. (p. 68)

The impact of trans* oppression is experienced, in part, through the pathologizing of trans* identities and results in disjointed experiences (inconsistent across those who share trans* identities) and ambiguous communities (trans* identities are lacking intragroup connections) because of a failure of a shared language of identification.

Valentine's (2007) research demonstrated that transgender as a category is not coherent, as there are not shared meanings among those who may identify within the category, and he points out that communities of people are not necessarily organizing around a singular or even slight variation of "transgender." Meanwhile, social services and other institutions have already started employing *transgender* as if it were a fixed category. The institutionalization of transgender as a category can be characterized as an attempt to wrangle trans* identities to fit within the gender binary, while still locating trans* identities as "other" or apart from the normative categories of man and woman.

There are assumptions about the group alignment/affiliation of transgender identities within the broader community moniker of LGBTQ communities, although these assumptions are contested by various subsets of that community[12]. The historical interconnectedness and assumptions within the LGBT or LGBTQ nomenclature is beyond the scope of this literature review, but it may prove useful, briefly, to state that the framing of a social group as "transgender" or "trans*" can be viewed as connected and disconnected from identity politics about gender and sexuality, yet distinctly separate from both. Despite historical links between transgender, gay and lesbian, and queer

---

[12] The ambiguous formation of transgender communities and dis-alignment with the notion of LGBT/LGBTQ as an overarching categorization and moniker demonstrates the precariousness of social groups. See Halberstam (2003), Stryker (2008) and Meyerowitz (2002) for critiques and histories of transgender identities. See Marine (2011) for BGLT as alphabetical configuration rather than putting emphasis on any identity based on order.

communities, their histories are not interchangeable (Marine, 2011; Stryker, 2008).

Marine notes that experiences of gender and sexuality also are not interchangeable.

> Because transgender people express their gender in myriad ways, they also experience their sexuality in myriad ways… Transgender people's concerns are connected with those who are bisexual, gay, or lesbian because these identities share a common facet of oppression: by facility to conform to prescribed gender stereotypes for men's and women's behaviors in society, each is "transgressing gender" in different ways. (p. 61)

The language of gender is embedded within the language of sexuality, making the languages reliant and dependent on each other for clarification, even though they are part of two different social identities and somewhat distinct from each other.

Yet social groups, even those potentially understood as experiencing any one or more of the five faces of oppression (Young, 1990), must not be understood in isolation from other identities. The processes of affinity and differentiation, Young cautioned, "do not give groups a substantive essence. There is no common nature that members of a group share. As aspects of a process, moreover, groups are fluid; they come into being and may fade away" (p. 47). Given Young's assertion, it stands to reason that transgender communities should be examined in relationship to social group formations and processes. My research provides space for participants to describe how they are connected to communities on their campus and to examine how, and if, they are connected to trans* communities. Given the limited literature on trans* communities, I next move to a review of literature about trans* identities.

Literature Focusing on Trans* Men

Since the mid-1990s, books that address female-to-male (FtM) transgender/transsexual identity have been published in a variety of genres, including

memoirs[13], anthologies[14], a variety of academic disciplines[15], and psychological guidance

books (books written by mental health practitioners who seek to aid either transsexual

people or their families)[16]. The memoir genre continues to grow from the 10 FtM

memoirs published[17] since the beginning of my research. My research adds voices and

empirical research to develop a more thorough understanding of the lives of trans* men.

Cromwell (1999) identified 1995 as the first time there was an increase in

literature on FtMs since the 1960s and corroborates my observation that as of 1991 there

had been only one FtM memoir published.[18] In 1997, Aaron H. Devor, at the time known

as Holly Devor, published *FTM: Female-to-male transsexuals in society*, the first social

science research published since Lothstein's psychologically rooted research in 1983.

Green (1997), a memoir author and trans* advocate/educator, speculates about the

absence of research on FtMs prior to Devor's publication:

> What I found then [1984] and for the most part since has consisted mainly of
> critiques of highly dysfunctional families; accounts of "gender dysphoric"
> children presented to clinicians by their homophobic parents; dismissive, tut-tut
> attitudes towards girls who "refused" to give up their "tomboy" ways; a great deal
> of misogyny and sexism; studies that generalize about FTM experience based on
> one or two interviews; the assumption that the FTM process is the mirror image of

---

[13] A memoir as an identifying category is a way of clustering books characterized as narrative or autobiography, and may not be consistent with publisher classifications. I acknowledge my limitation in understanding how or why the publishing industry has chosen such genre assignment. (See Cummings, 2006; Green, 2004; Kailey, 2005; Khosla, 2006; Martino, 1977; Scholinski, 1997; Valerio, 2006)

[14] (See Amato & Davies, 2004; Bornstein & Bergman, 2010; Cameron, 1996; Diamond, 2004; Dzmura, 2010; Kane-DeMaios & Bullough, 2006; Kotula, 2002; Nestle, Howell, & Wilchins, 2002; Sennett, 2006)

[15] (See G. Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Califia, 2003; Cromwell, 1999; Devor, 1997; Forshee, 2008; Hale, 1998; Hill, 2002; Mackenzie, 1994; Nadal, Rivera & Corpus, 2010; Namaste, 2000; Prosser, 1998; Rubin, 2003; Spade, 2011)

[16] (See Lev, 2004; Kane-DeMaios & Bullough, 2006; Morrow & Messinger, 2006). There are of course many other mental health and support books available, but I have mentioned the few that were helpful in my research as a starting point.

[17] I conducted numerous different types of internet and library searches for books which cover the topic of FTM, utilizing a wide-range of phrasing and word combinations for searches, as well as combed through previously published author's references for possible leads on books. The number (10) reflects memoirs that were published outside of the United States.

[18] Prior to 1995, I could find only one published memoir (Martino, 1977).

the male-to-female (MTF) process; and the constant refrain that "not enough study has been done." (p. xi)

The publication of Devor's book served to increase the visibility of FTM identity and experience as a researchable topic.

Sloop (2004) pointed to the impact of the Brandon Teena murder and the subsequent film *Boys Don't Cry* (based on the facts of the murder case) that brought transgender issues to mainstream media attention, and there were a number of possibilities as to why there was an increase in FtM voices as well as transsexual and transgender voices in general. Whittle (1998) argues that an upswing in trans* voices was the result of the Internet.

> [Through the Internet trans* people] are able to develop a sense of home within the cyber community and no longer need to deny their transgenderism. Thus the community within and without cyberspace has formed a new identification based upon failing, rather than succeeding, at "passing." The actual rather than the real becomes authentic. (p. 402)

Wilchins (2004) echoed Whittle's assertion by claiming that the advent of the Internet and its unfettered and somewhat anonymous access to information increased the ability for trans* people to live less isolated lives.

The ways in which cyberspace enabled an emergence of trans* identities and information sharing also allowed for a more complicated emergence of communities and identities. A contested emergence of trans* visibility developed, spurred on by the use of the Internet.

> The trans community as a movement has achieved a significantly large profile in public discourse… Movement activists explain this phenomenon, suggesting that the Internet has allowed people to educate themselves and others, to make contact, and to organize without ever having to appear in public as a trans person— reducing the risk to which individuals must expose themselves in order to organize. (Shapiro, 2004, p. 166)

Further, the consequences of the medicalization of gender transgression created a culture in which "prior to the Internet, it was possible for transpeople to have no knowledge of anyone else like themselves, and the dominant mode of existence, which was encouraged by the medical community, was stealth" (p. 170). Encouragement to be stealthy[19] and hide one's trans* identity post-transition was echoed in many trans* narratives and historical documents (e.g., Bornstein, 1994; Califia, 2003; Green, 2004; Stone, 1997). The potential for trans* activism and the ways to organize in a realm that can be both visible and invisible for the individual continue to be advantageous for trans* identities in some mainstream public venues.

Certainly the development of the medical and hormonal advancements increased the ability for transgender and transsexual people to find treatments that would assist in their biomedical transition (Hausman, 1995). However, healthcare access is a significant consideration, regardless of whether there are any developments in the fields of science, due to finances, fear, body discomfort, and ability to find trans*-savvy medical providers (Rachlin, Green, & Lombardi, 2008). Yet, popular culture and the general mainstream may be perceived to be less of a daunting sphere to navigate with celebrities, such as Chaz Bono (2011), child of Cher and Sonny Bono, coming out as transgender and his subsequent memoir. Whatever the impetus for the increased visibility and discourse, the appearance of trans* narratives by those who were assigned to the category of female at birth, for which all engaged in some form of biomedical transition to become men,

---

[19] "Stealth" is a specific in-community term used to refer to how a trans* person lives as a cisgender person without a trans* past. I used being stealthy about one's trans* identity here because I think it makes the meaning clearer.

allowed for an understanding of their experiences as self-identified transsexuals through their voices and placed a subtle emphasis that biomedical transition was a necessity for becoming a man.

An examination of the messages within trans* men's memoirs about masculinity has not occurred, but eventually there was research (albeit limited) on the experiences of trans* men. Cromwell (1999) pointed out the number of other research and theoretical-based writings that promised to return to the topic of FtMs after a discussion of MtFs, but never did so. My research study on trans* men in college is in response to the prior lack of follow-through Cromwell described. Trans* men are an understudied group, overall and in comparison to MtFs, which is not to say that MtFs, or any trans* people have been significantly studied. My choice was based on personal connection to the topic, a notable absence in the research, and interest in studying formerly female-bodied people who now embody, acquire, and perform masculinity.

Prior researcher focus on MtFs over FtMs may be connected to the ways in which trans* women were thought to threaten patriarchy through their rejection of male identity and privilege. "Sexism assures that heterosexual men who wear women's clothing will experience distress in the form of social, occupational, and even legal problems, especially if they are caught with 'their pants down'" (Lev, 2004, p. 170). Female-bodied people who wear men's clothing are seen as a different kind of threat because they are seen to be replicating the dominant form of embodied authority. There was also an issue of limited access to FtMs; MtFs were "more researchable" because they sought out gender clinics for biomedical transition resources, "delivering" themselves into the hands of researchers (Meyerowitz, 2002; Namaste, 2000; Schilt & Waszkiewicz, 2006; Stone,

1997). FtMs were encouraged to transition in isolation (Green, 2004), which aligned with ideas of socialization into masculine gender roles of self-reliance and autonomy. Trans* men were encouraged to assimilate into these masculine norms that also cause isolation and that was supported and constructed through medical personnel via the medical model.

The emergence of empirical research on trans* men allowed for potentially a broader view of trans* men as a group through direct observation and analysis. In the next sub-sections, I summarize three foundational publications on FtM/transmen.[20]

Existence of FtMs

Devor (1997) published the longest text on female-to-male (FtM) transsexual identity to date, totaling over 600 pages. Devor's research covers interviews with 45 self-identified female-to-male transsexuals and provides historical context to FtM transsexuals' existence, explores theories about transsexualism and theories of child gender acquisition. The research conveys an extensive number of categories and themes based on qualitative analysis. Any attempt to consolidate and summarize a work of such significant length and detail would diminish the comprehensiveness of the work; instead, I focus on the pieces of Devor's work that directly links to my research. Areas of specific connection include transsexualism as an identity, attempts to understand gender identity, transition choices and transitioning, and gender visions and reflections.

Devor (1997) posited that claiming an FtM identity is "one of the most profound redirections of one's life that a person can make" (p. 379).

---

[20] I have chosen to review the previous research as it was chronologically published to avoid a perception of hierarchy.

> [The decision to identify as a transsexual was one that comes after] lifelong feelings of embarrassment and failure at femininity, at womanhood, and at femaleness. They [the participants] carried within them a sense that there must be some way for them to fit better with the expectations of those among whom they lived. (p. 379-380)

The language of embarrassment and failure are strong terms that represent the significance of the gender binary and how socialization works as a mechanism to understand gender. Devor states that one-third of participants immediately recognized FtM identity as their solution to their "gender problem." Self-education and comparisons with others' stories were ongoing in the process, especially stories, accounts, and media based information, but it was "accounts provided by other transsexual people [that] proved to be highly influential sources of information" (p. 380). Devor relayed how participants expressed a desire to mitigate their anxiety with their bodies before they sought out stories of other transsexual people.

Given the timeframe for Devor's research, there was considerably less awareness and popularity about trans* identities in the late 1990s, and the Internet had yet to develop into its current ubiquity. Finding transsexual identities was most common for Devor's participants through media and television, which is an indicator of how much the Internet has impacted the last 16-plus years of how information is transmitted and ease of finding information about trans* people.

> Most of the youngest participants first heard about transsexualism from television talk and news magazine shows in the late 1970s and the 1980s which featured transsexual guests or stories… Only a few participants' first exposure to transsexualism came in the person of a transsexual acquaintance or friend. (p. 353)

Participants attached a deeper significance to information provided by those who were "in-community" because they reflect a possibility of existence (and even flourishing) of a

life after identification as FtM. After self-identification and an acceptance of

identification as a transsexual, the next step was to consider transition choices.

Devor (1997) notes that hormone treatment was used by almost all of the

participants, which allows for the expression of masculinized secondary sex

characteristics and allows them to pass as men, as long as clothed. The distinction

between when clothed and naked is similar to managing two different worlds.

> Thus participants precariously traded in two different currencies at the same time… [T]hey looked and acted like men on the outside so that people would assume that they had correspondingly entirely male bodies to match... Physical markers of sex generally hold considerably greater power in attribution made by others than do social ones, and breasts carry greater weight than do beards and voices. Thus if participants' breasts were to be discovered, they could override all other cues of participants' manhood, (p. 419)

The observation of the duality of identity for the participants comes through in the

constant gender surveillance (by self and by others) the participants endured in their

transition process. Passing is a complicated process, contingent on the perspective of

what identity is desired to pass as and dependent on the "transgender gaze" (Halberstam,

2005). The transgender gaze offers considerations of trans* identity and passing as a

paradox "made up in equal parts of visibility and temporality" (p. 77). Passing is an issue

of visibility that is dependent on how others view trans* people and "depends on complex

relations in time and space between seeing and not seeing, appearing and disappearing,

knowing and not knowing" (p. 78). For example, does a person have the perspective of

desiring to pass every day or the perspective of living as a man with a trans* past?

Gender surveillance of the self and by others was a concern for many of Devor's research

participants.

Using restrooms becomes a specific site of achievement, as Devor (1997) notes, "participants' abilities to pass unchallenged through exclusively men-only spaces represented an important achievement of manhood. It was only in such places that participants could be absolutely certain that they were not being perceived as some sort of hybrid sex" (p. 471). Similar achievement was described in the relief of finding a sexual partner who could "see them and love them as they truly were" (p. 496) without having to retain a hyper-vigilance regarding their gender at home, being men, and men with female pasts.

Wrong Bodies

Devor's (1997) research was participant focused and qualitative research based, with a focus on constructing the components of FtM's sense of identity. I now turn my attention to Cromwell (1999) and his research on the lives of trans* men. Cromwell used qualitative research but focused more on a theoretical approach. Cromwell set out to research his own social identity group, FtMs and transmen,[21] to make visible the lives of men who were invisible and marginalized within literature about transpeople. Cromwell argues that invisibility and marginalization of FtMs and transmen occurs on four levels: invisibility of female past and assigned female identity, medical pathologizing of women via medical and popular discourse, invisibility as a result of living as men, and transmen who are identified as FtM/transmen are treated as fake (less than real) men. Given the oppression of FtM/transmen, Cromwell set out to share the feelings, memories, and lived

---

[21] Cromwell (1999) uses a number of combined words throughout his text, such as transpeople, transsubjectivity, and transcommunity. I use his language in reference to his work, but note dissent in current trans* communities about using trans* as he does.

44

experiences of "transmen and FTMs who, in varying degrees, are out as transpeople and live both outside the lines and within them" (p. 14).Thus, his work does not include voices of anyone who rejected the identifiers of transman or FtM.

Cromwell (1999) specifically addressed language, discourse, and stereotypes about FtM/transmen. Cromwell's work deconstructs the discourse surrounding the phrase "the wrong body," as part of the dominant narrative about how trans* people come to a trans* identity, locating a split between mind and body. Cromwell problematized the use of "the wrong body" and points out, "For many transsexuals, once the wrong body has been surgically altered they no longer consider themselves to be transsexual… Their wrong body (a biophysical entity of sex), now 'corrected,' becomes a gendered body of a woman or a man" (p. 104). Of consideration is the importance of time in regards to trans* bodies, which can be "corrected" by surgical and hormonal intervention to get to coherent gendered bodies. Cromwell argues that the use of "the wrong body" is a limitation in language and a surface level description for the disconnection between mind and body. Instead, he insists we consider for whom is the body wrong, suggesting it is rooted in our sex/gender binary system and that the limitation in language causes inaccuracies in interpretation of the "individual experience of transness" (p. 105).

Part of Cromwell's (1999) argument against the "wrong body" phrase is that it may be most applicable to MtF transsexuals, but "the majority of FTMs and transmen do not have gender dysphoria… What many experience, however, is body-part dysphoria, which focuses on elements such as breasts and menstruation that are quintessentially female" (p. 105). Cromwell insists, "[I]t is the rare FTM or transman who does not know from an early age what his gender identity is" (p. 105). The implication of this shared

narrative requires a sense of self-awareness and identity awareness aligned with a particular portion of the medical narrative regarding GID diagnosis.

Cromwell (1999) asserts that the sex/gender binary and its impact on childhood socialization does not allow for mind/body disconnections or variations and impacts the self-conception transpeople have of their bodies and potential identities.

> What needs to be understood is that the individual may have never identified as a woman but rather may have always identified as a man or as something else. In spite of messages from family, peers, and society in general, and in spite of biological evidence (in particular, genitalia) to the contrary, most female-bodied transpeople have always had the self-concept of being male and/or man, although to varying degrees… In spite of transsexual discourses to the contrary, surgery is not the ultimate destination for many. (p. 107)

As evident in Cromwell's above assertions, it is simultaneously about bodies *and* not about bodies, identities *and* attributions, passing *and* being visible.

Cromwell's work was the first to point out the marginalization of transmen/FtMs in the trans* literature and connected to the myriad possibilities for trans* men to identify. Even if it failed to interrogate how it perpetuated a dominant narrative about personal gender histories, it still allowed for the possibilities that trans* bodies could be and if trans* identities were temporary or not (trans* as a noun versus trans* as an adjective).

Embodiment

The final researcher I review is Rubin (2003) who utilized qualitative research to develop theoretical perspectives on FtM identity, embodiment, bodies, masculinities, and identity histories of participants. Rubin's work was similar to Devor's (1997), given how it addresses lived experiences of FtMs and simultaneously provides a more focused

discussion on masculinity than Cromwell's (1999) research. In many ways, Rubin's work takes the position of FtMs as men and simultaneously as FtM men. Rubin's research is based on phenomenological interviews with 22 participants, ethnography, and fieldwork. Participants were all from urban settings, ages 23-44 at the time of the interviews, identified as FtMs, and all but three were on testosterone. Rubin described his participants as people with the "courage to live ordinary yet unconventional lives" (p. 3).

Rubins' (2003) research reveals, in regards to bodies and transitions, a hierarchical structure about who is truly or authentically FtM determined by use of hormones and personal history language. For example, hierarchical distinctions were made about personal sexual identity history.

> The non-tomboy FTMs classify FTM tomboys as "secondary transsexuals," whereas they see themselves as "primary transsexuals." … Likewise, the FTMs who never had lesbian careers think of themselves as 'primary' and those with lesbian careers as "secondary" transsexuals. (p. 98)

The distinctions between primary and secondary transsexuals is ultimately about linking authenticity to those who never associated with any terms or communities that could be recognized as girls or female; a tomboy childhood identification (similar to a lesbian identity) meant the person was recognized as a girl, and those who considered themselves at the top of the hierarchy described their childhoods seen as sissy boys who rejected "normal" boyhood activities. The more "real" FtMs were those who rejected all forms of femaleness in their past gender, including terms like "tomboy." Further, Rubin relays how a participant chastised his selection criteria by strongly encouraging him to only include and emphasize those FtMs on testosterone because "this was true transsexualism" (p. 8). Authenticity for being FtM apparently requires hormones, based on how "community standards stress that hormones make the man" (p. 9). Regardless of other

perspectives that reject gender transition as the final arbiter for trans* identification, Rubin's work notes the clear beginnings of hierarchy with who are "really" FtMs based on hormone use and reflects a lack of consideration for those who have limited access to resources, or desire, to be on testosterone.

Given the primacy of bodies and embodiment in Rubins' (2003) research, failure to transition, or even worse, a lack of interest in transition, was viewed with significant skepticism about the authenticity of someone's transsexual identity (another hierarchical distinction).

> Transitioning, or at least a desire to transition, is hegemonically regarded as the truest sign of a transsexual identity. Decisions not to transition are regarded skeptically, although more leeway is given to those who want to transition but cannot due to reasons beyond their control. (p. 138)

According to Rubin's participants, recognition via transition options is intertwined with embodiment and material bodies, as primary indicators of "true" transsexualism. This perspective places physical bodies as primary sites of change in the path toward being the men they have always already been, reflecting the medical model requirement of a period of persistent desire to have the body match (within the sex/gender dominant binary) their gender identity. The primacy for transition and how it marks the "trueness" of FtM identity contribute to a hierarchy within communities and designates who is authentic.

My research is situated approximately a decade after Rubin's (2003) and examines how notions of authenticity, transition, identity, and embodiment persist. Do trans* men articulate their identity through embodiment, using transition as a primary source of distinction of who is "really" trans*? In what ways are their gender expressions cultivated around gender norms or gender expectations? Do pressures around transition

and masculinity exist for trans* men in college? To address issues of trans* authenticity,

hierarchy, and identity, it is essential to review literature on transitioning. In the next

section, I review the options for trans* men's biomedical transition, exploring the

possibilities and guidelines for accessing embodiment.

<center>Transition</center>

> It is possible to say, and necessary to say, that the diagnosis leads the way to the
> alleviation of suffering; and it is possible, and necessary, to say that the diagnosis
> intensifies the very suffering that requires alleviation. (Butler, 2004, p. 100)

The history of psychological and medical decisions that led to the diagnosis that

was until recently known as Gender Identity Disorder (GID), previously called sexual

inversion, 49ransvestitism, transsexualism, is now identified as Gender Dsyphoria, began

the process of pathologizing gender nonconformity. In this case, the "medical model" of

trans* identity refers primarily to what is now called the World Professional Association

Transgender Health (WPATH)[22] that issues the Standards of Care (SOC) for Gender

Identity Disorder (Coleman et al., 2011).

> The overall goal of the *SOC* is to provide clinical guidance for health
> professionals to assist transsexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming people
> with safe and effective pathways to achieving lasting personal comfort with their
> gendered selves, in order to maximize their overall health, psychological well-
> being, and self-fulfillment. (p. 166)

The medical model impacts whether, how, and when a person may biomedically

transition. This leads to a conundrum wherein trans* people must be psychopathologized

to qualify for treatment. Some trans* individuals believe in the legitimacy of the medical

model, and many do not; in either case, the medical model requires complicity for access

---

[22] Formerly the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association.

to biomedical transition options. To understand the impact of this system, it is essential to understand the components of the medical model, the role of gender conformity in the process, and issues of power and access.

"Gender dysphoria" is a condition listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), a reference book of psychological disorders produced by the American Psychological Association (APA). In the most recent version of the SOCv7 (Coleman et al., 2011), WPATH articulates a new push toward understanding the individualized treatment for transsexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming people.

> Thus, transsexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming individuals are not inherently disordered. Rather, the distress of gender dysphoria, when present, is the concern that might be diagnosable and for which various treatment options are available. The existence of a diagnosis for such dysphoria often facilitates access to health care and can guide further research into effective treatments. (p. 169)

Such a change represents a shift toward a different diagnostic approach and acknowledgment of how transition-related options are influenced by a diagnosis (or lack of diagnosis). The involvement of trans* people and trans* allies within the medical communities have impacted the point of view of WPATH, as well as the APA.

The recent changes (in 2011) to SOCv7 and the DSM-V are not directly relevant to my research because the previous guidelines were in play for my participants. The SOCv6 and all of its previous versions provide the parameters for medical professionals to offer assistance to those determined to have Gender Identity Disorder (GID) (Meyer, 2001). The SOCv6 served as an outline for my participants of how to biomedically transition, and a cooperative patient was an individual who followed the outline.

> After the diagnosis of GID is made the therapeutic approach usually includes three elements or phases (sometimes labeled triadic therapy): a real-life experience in the desired role, hormones of the desired gender, and surgery to change the genitalia and other sex characteristics. (Meyer et al., 2001, p. 3)

The SOCv6 provided some leeway for clinicians and patients to determine the order of

the transition process (Meyer et al., 2001).

> Typically, triadic therapy takes place in the order of hormones = = > real-life
> experience = = > surgery, or sometimes: real-life experience == > hormones = = >
> surgery. For some biologic females, the preferred sequence may be hormones = =
> > breast surgery = = > real-life experience… Clinicians have increasingly become
> aware that not all persons with gender identity disorders need or want all three
> elements of triadic therapy. (p. 3)

The outline of the medical model does allow for variation, although genital surgery is

assumed to be the final step.

Although the SOCv6 acknowledged the possibility that not all FtMs consider

genital surgery, there was still a "focus on genital surgery as the marker of the 'realness'

of gender... [and a] drive for 'wholeness' on the part of the transsexual, a drive that is

supported and reified through interactions with medical and psychological institutions"

(Schilt & Waszkiewicz, 2006, p. 6). The underlining premise of the SOCv6 was that

anyone who experiences gender in a way that does not conform to binary gender,

determined by anatomy, could be diagnosed with a pathological disorder, which provides

justification for medical or psychiatric treatment (Martin & Yonkin, 2006). Because the

medical model takes a stance that gender variance is a disorder, those who have sought

treatment to access biomedical options have been pathologized simply by the reality that

GID is listed in the DSM.

Even if a person desires to conform to the gender binary (which not all non-trans*

or trans* people do) biomedical transition options can be difficult to access. Limitations

can include class, race, physical or mental disabilities, and one's degree of willingness to

"play along" with the medical community (Green, 2004; Spade, 2003). Some trans*

51

people struggle to access medical resources or are not interested in access to resources and were considered "not real" transsexuals. The label of who is "real" and who is "not real" gives power to the medical community to determine gender identities (Green, 2004). All these issues are further complicated by the exclusion of transition-related care from most health insurance policies (Green, 2004; Spade, 2003; Stryker, 2008).

Three of the major criticisms of the SOCv6 are: 1) it pathologizes transgender identity even though it has not been researched as a possible natural variation (Martin & Yonkin, 2006), 2) it fails to take into account how distress some trans* people experience is a response to oppressive social, economic, and political systems rather than to their gender per se (Martin & Yonkin, 2006), and 3) *"gender variance is a normal expression of human diversity"* (Lev, 2006, p. 264). The 2011 changes to the diagnosis reflect how trans* voices were heard in their criticism of how GID confers stigma via psychopathology. Possible benefits for keeping GID as a diagnosis surround the potential for medical insurance coverage and access to doctors and surgeons.

By ignoring the powerful influence of societal enforcement of the gender binary, the medical model has situated GID as "an underlying bodily dysfunction or disease process" (Martin & Yonkin, 2006, p. 111). Instead, consider Lev's (2006) view that "identity development in transgender people as a normative, healthy process of self-actualization" (p. 268).

> [To label transgender] people as disordered when their distress is due to an oppressive environment is not only incorrect but potentially harmful because it suggests that something is wrong with the person and it directs interventive attention toward the person's internal functioning and away from the person-environment interaction. (Wakefield, 1992, p. 240)

The construction of transgender as a disorder assigns a pathological label to the distress

that sometimes accompanies transgender realization, thus blaming trans* people for their

victimization by oppressive systems (Martin & Yonkin, 2006). The pathologizing label of

GID reinforces and legitimizes stigma against trans* people.

Trans* people who do not want to follow the medical model, will be able to avoid

GID as a diagnosis, at the possible cost of limited (or denied) access to biomedical

transition options because of their failure to conform to the legitimate medically defined

pathology (Spade, 2003). Yet, what remains is that due to the pathology supporting the

diagnosis,

> [Therapists view gender as] a relatively a permanent phenomenon. It won't do, for
> instance, to walk into a clinic and say that it was only after you read a book by
> Kate Bornstein that you realized what you wanted to do, but that it wasn't really
> conscious for you until that time. (Butler, 2004, p. 81)
> .

Similar flaws are noted by Spade who points out the flaws of constructing a narrative to

satisfy a therapist "to work" the system and access transition related resources. The crux

of the problem remains how trans* people are required to seek the help of the medical

community to biomedically transition. Even the premise that trans* people need or desire

sex reassignment surgery (SRS) has been propagated by the medical community (Billings

& Urban, 1996), despite significant variance among trans* people about the importance

attached to biomedical transition.

Trans* activists challenged many aspects of the medical model, including the

terminology of SRS. A more commonly preferred term is gender-confirming surgeries,

which describes the surgical interventions as confirmation of an individual's identity

rather than as creating a new gender status (Martin & Yonkin, 2006) and locates the

power to ascertain and ascribe gender with the individual rather than with doctors.

The medical model's configuration of the path for biomedical transitioning

demonstrates how societal forces enforce a norm that men and women should look and

act in distinct ways (Lombardi & Davis, 2006). Much of the literature prior to the 1990s

was based on the work of Dr. Harry Benjamin; the literature was not focused on changing

society's conception of gender but on helping trans* people be able to achieve

"normative" gender presentation (Califia, 2003). The implication was that anyone who

transgressed, resisted, or failed to conform to the gender binary should receive treatment

but only if they allowed themselves to be labeled with a mental disorder (Lev, 2004).

GID, as a diagnosis, placed trans* people under the control of the medical

community to gain access to biomedical options for transitioning. The first exercise of

power over an individual's transition process is by the psychiatrists, psychologists, and

social workers as gatekeepers (Lev, 2004, 2006; Rachlin, 2002). The medical community

has long been invested in the medical model of transsexualism as a way to maintain

supervision of the transition process.

> When the first academic gender dysphoria clinics were started on an experimental
> basis in the 1960s, the medical staff would not perform surgery on demand,
> because of the professional risks involved in performing experimental surgery on
> "sociopaths" [at this time there was not yet an official diagnosis in the DSM].
> (Stone, 1997, p. 290)

The medical communities progressed toward a definition of transsexualism as a means to

end gender dysphoria, which allowed them to offer surgeries and hormonal interventions

to people who they deemed to be dysphoric enough. By 1979 there were as many as 40

gender identity clinics and research programs (King, 1996). "Gender dysphoria turns the

focus away from the actor and on to the condition and at the same time represents a

reaffirmation of professional authority" (p. 96). The gender clinics and research programs

were developed because doctors needed a means to keep sex-change operations legal, and

because it reinforced their role as healers and benevolent authorities (Billings & Urban,

1996). The concept of gender dysphoria gave medical professionals a lot of status and

control and pushed trans* people farther away from decision-making roles in their own

transitions.

Current treatments for biomedical transitioning are tied to the psychiatric model

because surgeons and endocrinologists honor the psychiatric classification as a

prerequisite for surgical and hormonal treatment (Wilson, 1997). At this point, removing

GID from the DSM would risk closing the door to doctors providing services to

transgender patients. Doctors could refuse to provide transition services if the patient's

identity were not corroborated by a psychological diagnosis. The diagnosis of GID gives

those few doctors who are willing to serve the trans* communities a semblance of

protection in case they are accused of providing unethical or unnecessary procedures (as

many trans* surgeries were considered prior to GID approved treatment methods).

The SOCv6 outlines how the SOC were established to allow for a benefit of the

GID diagnosis to attain health insurance coverage.

> The designation of gender identity disorders as mental disorders is not a license
> for stigmatization, or for the deprivation of gender patients' civil rights. The use
> of formal diagnosis is often important in offering relief, providing health
> insurance coverage, and guiding research to provide more effective future
> treatments. (Meyer et al., 2001, p. 6)

With a psychological diagnosis of GID, transgender and transsexual patients should be

afforded coverage within health insurance policies to receive the biomedical treatments

that the medical model supports.

> [Yet,] many insurers explicitly exclude transsexual-related medical procedures
> from their plans, regardless of the inclusion of GID in the *DSM*. Medical

treatments for transsexualism are usually excluded from insurance packages because sex reassignment procedures are viewed as cosmetic, cost-prohibitive, inappropriate for the treatment of a psychiatric disorder, and/or experimental. (Lombardi & Davis, 2006, p. 347)

The exclusion of health insurance coverage for trans* related treatment is an example of

how the DSM is a tool of the managed health care system (Lev, 2004).

The purpose of the pathologizing diagnosis was nominally to ensure health

coverage (assuming that trans* people are able to obtain health coverage at all), and yet,

healthcare policies specifically exclude coverage.

This is truly an inexcusable double-bind—if being transgendered is not considered psychopathological, it should be delisted as a mental disorder; if it is to be considered psychopathological, its treatment should be covered as a legitimate health care need. (Stryker, 2008, p. 15)

The SOC were crafted to legitimate doctors' decisions to provide transition services and

imagined that those treatments would be covered by healthcare insurance plans. The

removal of the listing in the DSM may not only hinder trans related health care; without a

diagnosis of GID, many doctors can deny treatment to trans* patients. The cost of the

removal from the DSM may be the further stigmatization of trans* people by the medical

communities who have provide the biomedical treatments.

Trans* body image issues are often considered a psychopathology within the

medical community, while abnormally larger breasts in men (gynocomastia) are

considered a physical ailment necessitating surgical procedures. "But transsexual men

cannot have their breast tissue removed because that process is called a sex change,

which is nearly always excluded from coverage, even though the procedures are

technically almost identical" (Green, 2004, p. 91). Therapists serve a clear role in the

SOCv6 as gatekeepers, a role in collusion with surgeons and doctors who affirm

insurance companies' rejection of coverage for surgeries and procedures related to sex reassignment.

Therapists end up in a complicated role of "endorsing" or "rejecting" whether a person is "trans* enough" to move forward toward biomedical options. Much of the analysis is based on the narrative that the trans* person tells her/his/hir therapist.

> The phrase "trapped in the body of the opposite sex" was coined in a poignant attempt to explain what I and others like me feel. While easy to understand, the phrase has been used too often and oversimplifies the complexities of the issue. I did not feel "trapped" within my body so much as I felt trapped by the expectations that accompany the body which I occupied. (Hernandez, 2009, p. 185)

Yet, how is it possible to articulate being trapped into expectations when embodiment and gender normativity are the standards for understanding, especially by non-trans* therapists? Instead, therapists often seek stories of a childhood rife with gender confusion, gender transgression, and body dsyphoria, and those who are unable or unwilling to articulate such a "normative" narrative of gender trouble can find themselves held up on their path to transition.

> In addition to performing a certain narrative of a gender troubled childhood, the most over requirement for GID diagnosis is the ability to inhabit and perform the new gender category "successfully." Through my own interactions with medical professionals, accounts of other trans people, and medical scholarship on transsexuality, I have gathered that the favored indication of such "success" seems to be the intelligibility of one's new gender in the eyes of non-trans people. Because the ability to be perceived by non-trans people as a non-trans person is valorized, normative expressions of gender within a singular category are mandated. (Spade, 2003, p. 26)

The final decision is not about whether a trans* person feels s/he/ze has achieved a self-actualized gendered self but about how others perceive them as "normal."

A trans* person who is able to get the endorsement of a therapist to go on hormones faces other obstacles to navigate. The actual obtainment of hormones,

commonly prescribed medications insurance companies cover as treatment for many

medical conditions are in turn rejected or excluded from coverage by those same

insurance companies if the hormones are for transsexual client (Green, 2004). The extra

cost of paying for hormones out of pocket, instead of via a co-pay, may be beyond the

financial resources of a trans* person. The conundrum is that GID is the passport that

allows trans* people access to transition procedures, and it simultaneously limits

coverage under health insurance. Trans* people are either forced to lie (diagnostic

subterfuge regarding purpose for hormone use) or to pay exorbitant costs for treatment

that should be covered.

In an effort to provide a comprehensive and theoretical review that attends to

trans* identities, I have examined the gender binary, queer theory, trans* theory, and

masculinity studies. I now turn to social justice education as a broad theoretical location,

useful for examining the formation of social groups and dynamics, addressing issues of

power and privilege for trans* men. I then contextualize trans* men within the literature

in higher education as an institution to examine issues of trans* men's inclusion within

those institutions.

Contexts for Experience and Application

Social Justice Education

Social justice education, as a framework, provides the tools for systemic/cultural,

institutional, and interpersonal analysis of power, privilege, and oppression that impact

the lives of trans* men. As a scholar whose work is embedded in an explicit social justice

education framework, that means my work is informed by a multitude of disciplines and

scholarship. In social justice education, there is an expectation that other social theories are utilized to evolve our work (Bell, 2007), and queer theory is a useful additional theoretical frame for examining issues of experience and oppression of trans* identities, as it is influenced by postmodernism and poststructuralism. Lemert (1997) suggests that we should "think of poststructuralism and postmodernism as first and foremost forms of knowledge derived from a political practice" (p. 107). Postmodernism and poststructuralism reject notions of knowledge as disconnected from social life, and both social theories, offer ways of reconsidering and interpreting "reality" (Lemert, 1997). Queer theory performs a postmodern analysis within social justice education, as queer theory favors "a de-centering or deconstructive strategy that retreats from positive programmatic social and political proposals" (Seidman, 1995, p. 125). As oppression is dependent on a constant assertion and regulation (hegemony) that what is "normal" is valued, then social justice education seeks to disrupt hegemony to point out alternative perspectives and values. I consider acts of destabilizing, questioning, and exploring possibilities beyond what is assumed to be true, and connections to the lived experiences are foundational to social justice education work, exposing the structures of power that maintain oppression on all levels. The influence of queer theory, postmodernism, and poststructuralism in my theoretical framework of social justice education allows an examination of social group formation and oppression theory). In the following section, I review social justice education as it connects to issues of justice and injustice, and then explore social groups and oppression theory with an understanding of lived experiences as central to enacting social change.

As a theoretical framework, social justice education utilizes an "*interdisciplinary framework* for analyzing oppression and *a set of interactive, experiential pedagogical principles* to help learners understand the meaning of social difference and oppression both in the social system and in their personal lives" (Bell, 2007, p. 2). An analysis of systemic injustice—as well as injustice across social categories, such as race, class, or gender—calls for a theory of oppression (Adams, 2014), attending to issues of justice and injustice; is grounded in how oppression is pervasive, restrictive, hierarchical (power between groups); and is complicated by our multiple social identities; and is internalized (Bell, 2007). Within this grounding is the consideration that dimensions of oppression, sometimes referred to as "isms," are considered to have shared characteristics (Bell, 2007; Young, 1990).

Education is one of the sites in which these theoretical frames are deployed and informed by the work of Paulo Freire (2000). Freire asserts that dehumanization is a result of oppression, for both those who are oppressed and for those who serve as oppressors. He offers a pedagogical framework that disrupts the binary of oppressor and oppressed, posing education as action done *with* the oppressed, instead of a model for education that was *for* oppressed people; his ideas call for reconsidering of educational hierarchies, to remind us that knowledge is not more valuable when created by the social location of the privileged; it is enhanced by experience and collaborations based on conceptualizing liberation, which further serves to humanize us all.

Freire's (2000) suggestion toward achieving liberation is rooted in praxis: "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). Such a framework

provides understanding for the principles of social justice pedagogy and how it encourages reflection as individuals and members of social groups. I consider pedagogy, in the Freirian sense, to be connected to all interactions within an educational institution, or at least there is potential for educational throughout the institution that is not limited to the classroom site; social justice as a pedagogy is inclusive of an entire educational process, inside and outside of the formal learning environment.

Social Groups and Lived Experiences of Inequality

Social group affiliation is integral to the social justice education focus of my research because of the role of systemic cultural practices, affinities within social groups of experiences, social relationships, group identification, and the ways in which understandings of ourselves in the larger societal structure are shaped by marginalization or advantage (Young, 1990). Social groups also "exist only in relation to other social groups" (p. 46), which are understood to be related through binaries of advantage or disadvantage shaped by societal power structures. "Group differentiation is both an inevitable and a desirable aspect of modern social process. Social justice… requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction and respect for group differences without oppression" (p. 47). In other words, social justice requires that we notice the ways in which our differences have been socially constructed to rationalize or justify social inequalities of advantage or disadvantage.

The language of oppression within a social justice education framework is useful as a means to talk about and across concepts of power, privilege, and marginalization in a larger framework than individual identities.

Oppression, is most useful as a starting point because it refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, medical and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms—in short, the normal process of everyday life. (Young, 1990, p. 41)

The dynamics described by a theory of oppression are tied to the structures and cultures that are embedded in all parts of society and manifest via interpersonal, institutional, and systemic injustices. The starting point of oppression is integral, Young (1990) argues, because of common conditions that she "divided into five categories: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence" (p. 40). The examination of oppression through these categories helps promote understanding of how experiences are complex interactions not limited to a singular identity. "Group differences cut across lives in a multiplicity of ways that can entail privilege and oppression for the same person in different respects" (p. 42). Social groups provide a basis for how people understand themselves and others (Young, 1990).

Noticing and resisting oppression means envisioning an end to inequality and impacting structures and systems that support sustained inequality. This, in turn, requires a theory or understanding of social justice. Social justice looks at and notices our differences as a means of acknowledging social group membership and the power within those positions (privilege and subordinate positions). The binary of power positions can be understood to cause division and identity politics, using difference as a justification for oppression. However, it is not a binary of power (privilege and subordinate) that cause oppression but the value given to the different social identity categories valued or devalued within a larger system of power. My theoretical framework includes elements

of sociology and queer theory because they resist the limits of identity politics,[23] which have the ability to exclude and to be divisive and unstable.[24]

With an understanding of systems of oppression, inequalities between identity groups are exposed, and that difference itself is often used to justify oppression. Privilege and power must be contextualized, and therefore resist a simple binary conception of privileged versus marginalized, especially within the reality that we all have multiple social identities and thus experience both advantage and disadvantage in categorically different dimensions of our everyday lives. The intersections of advantage and disadvantage, based on individual positionality or status in relation to race, class, gender, sexuality ability, age, and religion (all "categories" of social identity) have led to a literature that focuses not on individual "isms" but on "intersectionality" as a phenomenon in its own right (Adams, 2014).

Crenshaw (1991) suggests that we consider intersectionality as a means to address the tensions that arise among our multiple identities and the power afforded to those different identities in an effort to engage in politics of social change and reconsider our focus on social constructionism. She argues that it is not the categories themselves that are problematic but the power we attach to those categories, which she identifies as vulgar constructionism.

> Vulgar constructionism thus distorts the possibilities for meaningful identity politics by conflating at least two separate but closely linked manifestations of power. One is the power exercised simply through the process of categorization; the other, the power to cause that categorization to have social and material consequences. (p. 1297)

---

[23] Identity politics describes social relations based on conflict or coalition between identity groups and have meaning based on power in broader cultural dynamics (Lipsitz, 2006). For a more expanded articulation of an identity politics analysis see Crenshaw (1991).
[24] See Fuss (1989, 1991) on criticism of postmodernism, creations of binaries, repudiation of the Other, and implications in the assertion of identity.

For example, the categorization of trans* identities as non-normative (seen as the "other"

to cisgender identities) creates a fractured notion of trans* as a social identity category

that becomes more fractured when multiple identities (race, economic status, national

origin, etc.) are considered, which destabilize the category itself with internal power

imbalances. Crenshaw's suggestion of intersectionality encourages digging deeper into

these intersections of race, class, gender, instead of walking away from trans* identity

because of the power imbalances other identities bring to it. "A strong case can be made

that the most critical resistance strategy for disempowered groups is to occupy or defend

a politics of social location rather than to vacate or destroy it" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1297).

To understand the possibilities of identity politics or social group dynamics and to avoid

"vulgarized constructionism," a more comprehensive exploration of the epistemology of

a group using a social justice lens must take place.

Oppression and Transitioning

        To understand the marginalization of trans* identities, one must understand how

they are connected to messages of stigma that manifest as internalized oppression. Green

(2004) frames how stigma is connected to transsexuality via the classification of GID as a

mental illness. With this classification, anyone seeking biomedical treatment for

transitioning is classified as abnormal and mentally ill and is required to submit to the

authority of doctors and surgeons. Trans* people's inability to control treatment renders

them powerless in their own transition, further contributing to a stigmatized position. The

encompassing hold of the medical system, including psychological bodies, like the APA

and insurance companies, leaves little room to influence the association of trans* identity

with mental disorders. The proliferation of connections between trans* identities to disease, disorder, or birth defects by trans* narratives only strengthens messages of stigma (Cummings, 2006; Khosla, 2006).

Trans* people are stuck in a conundrum because rejection of pathology may lead to an individual's inability to access transition related options and links transsexual identity to stigma (Green, 2004). The necessity of utilizing medical communities (or more appropriately medical authorities) for permission to pursue a biomedical course of transition creates a seemingly unbreakable link between "disease" or "disorder" and biomedical transitioning. The association of mental disorder with trans* identities is just one obstacle in an attempt to avoid being medically marked as "other" or "abnormal."

Additional institutional and interpersonal manifestations of oppression include medical personnel who refuse to provide care to trans* patients (Feinberg, 1998; Green, 2004), and some doctors refusal to acknowledge that they work with transsexuals, for fear association with the trans* community will stigmatize them (Green, 2004). Those who identify or are identified as trans* in any connotation or definition of the term are subject to experiences of oppression from various systems and institutions. In placing themselves under the care of doctors, trans* people are asking for biomedical help to achieve a level of self-actualization.

> The medical approach to our gender identities forces us to rigidly conform ourselves to medical providers' opinions about what "real masculinity" and "real femininity" mean, and to produce narratives of struggle around those identities that mirror the diagnostic criteria of GID. For those of us seeking to disrupt the very definitions and categories upon which the medical model of transsexuality relies, the gender-regulating processes of this medical treatment can be dehumanizing, traumatic, or impossible to complete. (Spade, 2003, p. 28-29)

Trans* people are subject to the perceptions, assumptions, and cultural lens of their medical providers or must admit a having a gender abnormality so that they can receive medical help.

Although there is possible liberation from such institutional oppression, there is also the stark reality that laws and policies are not supportive of trans* people's rights or needs. Butler (2004) argues:

> [Even by strategically approaching the diagnosis, in an effort to navigate the gauntlet of the Standards of Care, what surfaces is whether] submitting to the diagnosis does not involve, more or less consciously, a certain subjection to the diagnosis such that one does end up internalizing some aspect of the diagnosis, conceiving of oneself as mentally ill or "failing" in normality, or both, even as one seeks to take a purely instrumental attitude toward these terms. (p. 82).

In framework of social justice education, Butler calls the question of whether such tactics create the platform for internalized oppression.

Body norms are another site of oppression because gendered bodies are expected to look and act a certain way to achieve recognition. Accessing services requires collusion with institutions, which requires alignment with the gender binary. To resist that binary can mean denial of services without any recourse. Some trans* people refuse the institutional construction of "normative gender" because it is in opposition to the gender freedom they are trying to achieve, with any form of transition (Spade & Wahng, 2004). To borrow the phrase from Kate Bornstein (1994), some people would prefer to be viewed as *gender outlaws* and might seek surgeries or hormones to create a less easily identifiable gendered body. Further, there is a powerlessness experienced by trans* people because they are denied self-determination (Butler, 2004; Green, 2004; Spade, 2003). Instead, self-determination comes at the cost of being identified as abnormal due to a psychological disorder (GID). In the end, the medical industrial complex maintains

institutional and cultural control over the gender identity and self-image of anyone who attempts to employ tactics to accomplish the goal (that is, transition) without internalizing the pathology.

Social justice education utilizes history and social movements (social group experiences and narratives) to examine oppression and oppressive systems and uses social group identity specific theories (such as critical race theory) to offer tools to analyze oppression and offer alternative possibilities to end oppression (Bell, 2007). In the last section of this literature review, I provide historical and contemporary information about the experiences of trans* men in higher education.

Higher Education

In this section I contextualize my research on trans* men in higher education and address issues of embodiment and institutional control. College or university settings provide a context to examine oppression, power and knowledge on the individual, institutional, and cultural levels. Social justice education provides the tools for examination, analysis, and complication of identities and multiple social memberships, while attending to the institutional and cultural structures that perpetuate oppression. Education as a practice of freedom (hooks, 1994) is to offer to those participating with opportunities to make meaning of their experiences as they encounter structures and institutions that construct our everyday world.

As Pusch (2005) noted in his research on trans* students, discouragement of their trans* identity "served to reinforce a bi-gendered cultural system where one must look convincingly like their self-identified gender through hormones and surgery" (p. 53).

Recognition and being forced to fit into institutional norms are important considerations in how higher education has been attentive to or unsupportive of the inclusion of trans* students, especially if they are reinforcing the medical model of pathologized trans* identities (Marine, 2011). Within the context of higher education, it is necessary to attend to the ways trans* students have been (and continue to be) addressed in higher education literature. First, I start with how higher education examines trans* students. Second, I address how Student Affairs, as a specific field in higher education, conducted research to address trans* students and the services that institutions seek to provide. Within my examination of student affairs literature, I explore the ways the LGBT moniker has served to make trans* students experiences invisible, and references to trans* students in the aggregate limits understanding of their experiences. Finally, I examine how the higher education literature reflects a model of "fixing" the problem of trans* inclusion, addressing the material needs of students without examining the underlying structures that continue to marginalize trans* students.

The structure of higher education never included the potentiality of trans* students, and the additive method of inclusion (adding the "T" to LGB) can no longer contain, support, or address the gender diversity of student populations. Further, higher education has yet to structurally address issues of sexism and gender inequity, but if gender continues to be understood as a rigid binary, then higher education will continue to reinforce the institutional structure that allows no room for trans* and other gender variant people. Fellebaum (2011) notes:

> We are expected to behave in certain ways based on our gender, which is often assumed based on our biological sex and reinforced through compulsory heterosexuality. This is why it is so important to consider the impact of higher

education on the daily lives of our students; like us, they are forced to perform a gender every day. (p. 137)

Awareness of and attention to gender variation among student populations needs to be considered more fully. The current framework for trans* inclusion creates policy changes without institutional critical examinations of informal practices. For example, an examination of the ways administrative practices to enact symbolic and psychic violence on gender, trans*, and cisgender people alike (Spade, 2011) might lead to more sustainable and broadly institutional-based change.

When trans* students are considered, often it is in the classroom site, and much of the literature concerns pedagogical strategies, using trans* identities to spur conversations about gender.

As a whole, academics' uses of transgender subjects to illustrate gender theories have been problematic and often tokenizing… A first step in teaching about transgender is to honestly assess personal viewpoints by critically examining the ways we construct and teach our courses. (Wentling, Windsor, Schilt, & Lucal, 2008, p. 50)

Trans* identities are used as mainly illustrative, and a number of publications focus on pedagogy tips to avoid further marginalization of an already silenced population. Wentling et al. (2008) suggest the following strategies: contextualizing terms, avoid stereotyping, avoid placing responsibility on trans* people for the "persistence of the gender binary," (p. 51) use works by actual trans* people, contextualize research about trans* people, limit/put boundaries on discussions of trans* bodies and provide resources, prepare class for guest speakers, distinguish sexual identity from gender identity, and root discussions in theoretical frameworks instead of debates on the value of or "truth" of trans* existence. Catalano et al. (2007) provide content and considerations for an explicit

69

approach to center trans* identities to engage trans* and nontrans* (cisgender) people in

an educational design around transgender oppression.

The reality is that higher education is not equipped to deal with gender diversity

in student populations, and while LGBT cultural centers were created and hope to address

the marginalization of trans* people, these are small gestures that fail to address the

larger issues of institutions structured around not just normative genders but an absence

of recognition of trans* identities. Questions have yet to surface about the tactic of using

gender as anything more than a demographic note, especially when gender and sex are

often conflated within research on higher education; furthermore, questions remain about

whether expanding gender categories is an act of inclusion or simply an act of

appeasement. Data without action can be more harmful than never bothering to collect

data about actual campus demographics.

Staff and faculty should also be included in campus demographics for the

presence and existence of trans* people on college and university campuses. Jennifer

Finney Boylan (2003) published her memoir, *She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders*, as

a faculty member at Colby College in Maine, where she discusses her transition and her

career. Boylan is not the only trans* person in academia whose visibility has brought

attention to trans* faculty and staff in higher education. For example, McKinnon (2012)

addresses being on the job market in higher education as an openly trans* person. In

recent years there has been a notable increase in discussions about trans* issues in higher

education, as apparent in the coverage it has received in *The Chronicle of Higher

Education*. *The Chronicle* has published articles and blog posts about trans* inclusion in

higher education, discussing policy changes and practices across institutions and at

specific institutions (Sander, 2013; Tilsley, 2010; Troop, 2011). The conversations about

trans* students in higher education are not limited to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*,

as a recently published article in *The New York Times* explored the complexities of trans*

genders and queer sexualities among college students (Schulman, 2013). The

conversations remain unresolved about how to respond to the presence of trans* students

on campus and how has that support been developed.

Student Affairs Literature

Much of the work to support trans* students comes from the student affairs[25]

"side" of higher education, and specifically from LGBT Resource Centers[26]. Over the

years, the number of LGBT Resource Centers was as low as 5 professionally staffed

centers to current estimates of over 110 centers with 153 individual practitioners not

housed in LGBT Resource Centers and more being established every year (B. Beemyn,

2002, 2003; Miracle, 2012). It is possible to consider the growing numbers of these

cultural centers as indicative of the investment in resolving LGBT student concerns.

However, the establishment of cultural centers serving those with marginalized genders

and sexualities does not necessarily demonstrate institutional investment.

> These offices must also be centrally located on campus to reinforce their
> importance to an institution's diversity agenda. Places these offices within
> buildings on the campus fringes or providing inadequate space marginalizes MSS
> [Multicultural Student Services] and sends a subliminal message to identity
> groups that low priority has been placed on them and their needs. (Stewart &
> Bridges, 2011, p. 57)

---

[25] By student affairs I mean offices and centers that provide "services, programs, and resources that help students learn and grow outside of the classroom" (http://www.naspa.org/career/whatis/default.cfm).

[26] I will use LGBT Resource Centers as a general title for cultural centers that address issues of gender and sexuality inclusion, support, education, and advocacy on campus, given variation from campus to campus (Sanlo, 2000).

Institutions must be cautious about placing cultural centers on the literal geographic and figurative margins of campus as well as making them the only sites on campus where trans* and sexuality identity issues are discussed.

Increased visibility and awareness of trans* people by young people means discussions about gender and sexuality occur in K-12 education as well as more young people coming out at younger ages impacts the ways student affairs must address trans* identities.

> Still, although many students are finding affirmation at younger ages, many continue to struggle with issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, particularly but not exclusively as these identities intersect with gender, race, religion, class, and nationality, among other identities. In addition, as individuals across the continuum of sexual orientation and gender identity continue to gain acceptance in society through increased visibility, they face a more covert kind of discrimination. (Negrete & Purcell, 2011, p. 83)

Coming out at younger ages presents support mechanisms for some, while others are still exploring and understanding their gender during college.

Given how the bulk of understanding and education for trans* experiences falls within student affairs, it is important to note the lack of education provided for those within the field. There is very little literature available about both the preparation for and the jobs of directors for LGBT Resource Centers (Negrete & Purcell, 2011; Sanlo, 2000). In the one research article available on directors' of LGBT Resource Centers experiences, they name their disappointment "that there are not yet LGBT-related courses to formally prepare people to direct LGBT CRCs [Campus Resource Centers]" (Sanlo, 2000, p. 490).

> Few if any graduate preparation programs for student affairs professionals have a course specifically related to addressing issues of sexual orientation or gender identity … Moreover, some professionals might be averse to learning about or providing services for LGBT students owing to personal moral conflicts or in anticipation of political backlash. These professionals might choose to ignore the

unique needs of LGBT students. Unfortunately, these students do not have the
ability to ignore these issues themselves. (Negrete & Purcell, 2011, p. 91)

Student affairs may be active in the search to create more inclusive campuses, but student
affairs faculty are still lagging behind in providing education in graduate preparation that
for those whose job is explicitly working for trans* inclusion.

The publications addressing the specific needs of trans* students in the early to
mid-2000s had limited empirical data about trans* college students, and as McKinney
(2005) notes, much of the research on trans* people does not include the experiences of
trans* college students. What was known about trans* students was based on narratives
written by trans* students and their experiences.

> There are not likely to be enough out transgender students on most campuses to
> form their own organization. One must use existing organizations, most likely
> LGB organizations. Again, not all transgender people want to be associated with
> these organizations, but there is usually nowhere else to hang that "T." (Lees,
> 1998, p. 41)

While not ideal, those who were serving trans* students were those who worked with
LGBT populations, there was an echo of what was happening in the larger LGBT
populations of including trans* identities in communities of sexual diversity. In some
ways, the inclusion of trans* students in LGBT Resource Centers came out of the fact
that there was no other location to serve the needs of trans* students and an expectation
that those comfortable with sexual diversity would be affirming to gender diversity.

Research on Trans* Students

The research on trans* student experience is also limited, as the first study was
published in 2005 that sought to capture "the experiences of transgender students on
campuses across the country" (McKinney, 2005, p. 3). Rankin (2006) pointed out the

limited research on LGBTQ students and the lack of generalizability. "Much of the academic writing on LGBT students, however, is not empirical, but rather it takes the form of advice or personal reflections based on experience" (p. 113). Small data samples impact the ability to discuss experiences within an institution and make it nearly impossible to make claims about experiences across institutions. The limited data also impact the ability to make claims about campus climate and development of allies.

> Although both victimization and openness of heterosexual students to LGBT issues seem to be improving, it is difficult to tell if this is occurring as there is no consistent measurement of these concepts nor are there longitudinal studies of change over time. (p. 114)

The benefit of longitudinal studies is a significant point to reinforce in the above quotation, but significant also is the silencing of trans* students through the LGBT moniker; the use of "heterosexual" makes trans* identities invisible, as they are not necessarily part of the construct of the hetero/homo binary.

The usage of the LGBT moniker has also impacted the clarity of trans* students' experiences. "Although much of what has been written about the needs of transgender college students has presumed them to be synonymous with those who identify as bisexual, gay, or lesbian, their concerns are distinctive" (Marine, 2011, p. 61). There is a common trend in the use of the LGBT moniker that demonstrates the existence of trans* students, but the focus of the research is on sexuality, which is most commonly demonstrated using language of homophobia[27]. Even in research that notes that trans* identities are a gender and not a sexuality, there are moments in which trans* becomes invisible through the LGBT moniker. Consider the following example, "Recent research

---

[27] For examples of literature that uses the LGBT moniker but does not attend to trans* identities, see Herbst and Malaney, 1999; Renn, 1998; Schueler, Hoffman, and Peterson, 2009.

explores LGBT identities related to social class and class systems, posing questions about how non-heterosexual identities intersect with class privilege and oppression (Becker, 1997; Raffo, 1997; Vanderbosch, 1997)" (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005, p. 28). From this quotation, one could infer that trans* is coded or considered a "non-heterosexual" identity, which is not an opinion shared across trans* communities or individuals but only confuses the focus of the research. Bilodeau and Renn (2005) make trans* identities invisible again in their article when they point out that "it becomes apparent that stage models [based on identity, age, and internal conflict, such as gay identity development] are not adequate to describe all non-heterosexual identity process" (p. 28). Yes, the establishment of trans* as disrupting the normative gender and sexual binary is significant and notable, but that does not allow for such a broad characterization of all trans* identities as non-heterosexual. Instead of considering how "rigid linear stage models are unlikely to apply to all or even most LGBT people" (Eliason & Schope, 2007, p. 20), trans* identities become enmeshed and confused within the moniker. In many ways, the moniker serves as only a slight nod toward trans* identities in an effort of inclusion that fails without notation or mention. Spade (2008) referred to the use of the LGBT moniker as "LGBfakeT" to reinforce the silencing power of the moniker. Because of these various deficiencies, trans* students are often placed in the context of being a "problem" that needs to be solved through a variety of institutional interventions.

Focus on "Fixing" the Problem

There are few empirical studies published that focus on research about trans* students (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009; McKinney, 2005; Pusch, 2005). The bulk of publications

about trans* students focus on policy and practice changes, in an effort to make campuses more inclusive (B. Beemyn, 2002, 2003, 2005; B. Beemyn, Curtis et al., 2005; B. Beemyn, Domingue, Pettit, & Smith, 2005; B. Beemyn & Pettit, 2006; Sausa, 2002). For example, B. Beemyn, Domingue et al. (2005) state:

> To assist college and universities in becoming more supportive of transgender students, staff, and faculty, we offer the following practical recommendations in areas where gender-variant people are likely to encounter discrimination on campuses: health care, residence halls, bathrooms, locker rooms, records and documents, public inclusion, and programming, training, and support. (p. 90)

The suggestions focus on recommendations for institutional changes as practical, tangible, and material changes that can assist in improving the experiences of trans* students.

B. Beemyn, Curtis et al. (2005) expanded on how student affairs administrators should make sure educational programs are inclusive of trans* students' experiences, provide support services beyond just including the "T" in the LGB moniker, and develop non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and gender expression. In regards to housing, they pointed out that

> Some transgender students prefer not to reveal the status of their physical body, which may not be congruent with their gender identity or expression. Colleges and universities should thus allow students to demonstrate the need for a particular housing option by providing a letter from a medical professional. (p. 53)

Further, in an effort to provide appropriate options for trans* students, housing or residential life staff should be aware of rooms that have private bathrooms and showers, as "many transgender students prefer private restrooms and shower facilities for safety reasons" (p. 53). The aforementioned suggestions of inclusion efforts focused on the material needs of students. Trans* specific publications address how general campus

climate suggestions for LGBT inclusion are impractical if the "T" in LGBT is not

addressed as distinct from and with different needs from gay, bisexual, and lesbian

students.

Best practices for trans* inclusion are the major focus of publications that deal

with what many in higher education considered a "new" student population on campus.

> College administrators and student affairs staff need to develop transgender-
> specific policies and practices in each of these [housing, counseling and health
> care, bathrooms, locker rooms, documents and records, standardized forms, and
> training and programming] areas. But they also must be able to work with
> transgender students on an individual basis, recognizing that these students have
> diverse identities, experiences, and needs. (B. Beemyn, 2005, para 11).

Suggestions in much of the literature propose both policy changes and addressing

individual students to avoid assuming monolithic experiences or needs by trans* students.

Specific recommendations include staff, programs, and institutional changes.

Specifically, the staffing recommendations include: creating a well-funded LGBT Center

with a full-time professional director and support staff; training the trainers on trans*

issues; and providing training on trans* issues to student affairs administrators and other

staff members who regularly interact with students. Programmatic considerations address

the short-term awareness (offering trans* specific programming), and sustaining services

(assisting with the creation of a discussion group for trans* and gender questioning

students). Institutional changes for trans* inclusion changes requires small scale and large

scale changes. Small scale changes may include, but are not limited to, having advocates

in units where trans* students are more likely to encounter obstacles, using trans*

inclusive language on school forms, printed materials, and web sites, and establishing a

mechanism to change the gender designation on college records (B. Beemyn, 2002, 2003,

2005; B. Beemyn, Curtis et al., 2005; B. Beemyn, Domingue et al., 2005; B. Beemyn &

Pettit, 2006). Large scale changes may include, but are not limited to developing policies and procedures for addressing transphobia, violence and harassment, adding "gender identity" to the college's non-discrimination policies, and creating and publicizing the location of unisex restrooms and enabling trans* people to use the restroom they find appropriate (B. Beemyn, 2002, 2003, 2005; B. Beemyn, Curtis et al., 2005; B. Beemyn, Domingue et al., 2005; B. Beemyn & Pettit, 2006; Sausa, 2002).

Prior to these recommendations, there were also troubling publications on the experiences of trans* students. Most notably, Nakamura (1998) provides some insight into the material and physical space limitations for trans* students on campus but draws a picture of trans* students as filled with shame.

> Many transgender students are ashamed of their status and hate the public gaze that is cast on them. As a result, they might be unwilling to report incidents because they don't want to "cause more trouble." Stay proactive in order to maintain the civil rights of these students. (p. 182)

Nakamura makes an unsubstantiated assumption of shame, without empirical data about or from trans* students and establishes an expectation of internalized oppression without unpacking it. Certainly, safety concerns exist for those with marginalized identities, but such broad sweeping claims about shame and hatred of the public gaze is unfounded and lead to a particular view about trans* students' desire for limited notoriety.

Nakamura's good intentions provides an initial awareness, even if misguided, because many institutions began to consider how to create a more trans*-inclusive campus. The needs of trans* students, to have places where they can use the restroom, live, and feel included within their college or university community are worthy and important goals. Early publications provide many ways to support the existence, retention, and involvement of trans* students in higher education. However, these

78

publications also made trans* students, faculty, and staff at colleges a site of fascination for many scholars, especially given the limited data about trans* people on campuses.

Consider the work of Dean Spade (2010), a faculty member at the University of Seattle, and one of the only known trans* tenure track law faculty in the country.

> The extra work of being an "only one," of struggling to make myself and my area of inquiry legible enough, the zillions of articles and student papers from around the country that I feel pressured to review in order to do damage control as increasing numbers of students and professors get "fascinated" by the topic of trans people and our legal problems. The ways that "passing lunch"[28] requires me to do a Trans 101 workshop that, prior to this job change, I would have refused to do for an audience of less than fifty because of how especially and cumulatively exhausting that kind of educative performance is. (p. 77-78)

For trans* students, the pressure of being the "only one" or in lucky cases "one of a few" on their campuses could mean they are invited to do similar education for their peers as well as faculty and administrators.

Given the significant number of practical suggestions regarding addressing the needs of trans* students, much of the progress toward those steps have not been achieved. "Arguably, there has been significantly less progress when it comes to addressing the needs of transgender students on campus" (Negrete & Purcell, 2011, p. 83). Issues of funding to create LGBT Resource Centers and provide programming focusing trans* identities could certainly be one of the causes of the slow progression as well as institutional roadblocks to include gender identity and gender expression within institutional non-discrimination policies. One of the more sustainable recommendations for a more trans*-inclusive campus is "for non-trans people to educate themselves about the issues confronting transgender students" (McKinney, 2005, p. 73). Education of the

---

[28] The phrase "passing lunch" refers to an article by Chang and Davis (2010) who attribute pressure and possible failure on marginalized faculty to have tenure conferred on them due to not adequately socializing with colleagues, or "flunking lunch."

self and of others at the institution is called for in every policy and practice article in publication. The outline or format of how, when, by whom, and content of those educational initiatives is not outlined in any of the student affairs literature.

The overall consideration that all institutions of higher education face some degree of challenge due to bias on the basis of gender illuminates issues of trans* oppression, sexism, and heterosexism; failure to have conversations about the complexity of such a reality means that methods of inclusion can be superficial and limited in the types of support available for trans* students. To assume trans* is the only gender embodiment or expression of gender that is transgressive or in flux is problematic and fails to consider the gender diversity of those students who identify as cisgender. To expand our notions of trans* oppression to the impact it has on non-trans* students (faculty and staff) is a reminder that demographic information is still contingent on the social construction of gender. "At every moment the essence of a women's college is disrupted because gender performance shifts continuously. This means that a women's college defined by who is admitted may never truly exist" (Hart & Lester, 2011, p. 212). Instead of dealing with the messiness of gender, institutions of higher education allow trans* students to carry the burden of gender fluidity when many students experience gender as a complex and sometimes confusing and contradictory experience. It is my intention in this study to expand our understandings of trans* student experience, embracing the messiness in the utilization of empirical research focused on trans* men, and centering their voices regarding possible institutional changes.

My research explores both trans* men's identities and how they navigate institutions of higher education. Trans* men's identities are the subject of my first

research question. My second research question addresses the context of higher education. Central to issues of how trans* men maneuver within and are recognized by their colleges and universities are issues of access, and inclusion for campus communities. In the next chapter, I outline and discuss my methodological approach to my research questions, interviews, and coding.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

<u>Restatement of Research Questions</u>

The study addresses the following three research questions, and their sub-

questions, as follows:

1. How do trans* men describe their current gender?

   a) How do trans* men describe their current gender expression?

   b) How do trans* men describe their current gender roles?

   c) How do trans* men define and describe their masculinity?

   d) What factors influence their choices about how they express or would like to express their masculinity?

   e) What factors influenced (or might influence) any choices made about the transition process?

2. How would trans* men advise trans* men, or potential trans men, in college about what kinds of support would be needed in college settings?

   a) What type of information would be needed about the transition process?

   b) What type of information would be needed about connections to community?

   c) What type of information would be needed about identity development?

Justification for the Use of Grounded Theory

My research focus on the words and description of experiences of trans* men in their own words was best served by utilizing qualitative research methods. Within the many possible types of qualitative methods, I proposed to use grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) because it is a method that can take many different forms (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is used to classify a phenomenon, "but also to construct different elements of a theory" (Dey, 2007, p. 168-169). Grounded theory's generation of theory through evidence allowed me to create a substantive theory based on my data through constant comparative methods in my data analysis.

To explore how trans* men[29] describe and define their masculinity, grounded theory provided a systematic basis for data analysis that focused on emergent themes and contrasts between participants' answers, leading to a theoretical framework of trans* men's experience with masculinity. In grounded theory, the "research needs to be focused on the meanings attached by the participant, not by me as the researcher" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 33). The interviews I conducted were based on intensive interview methodology (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory pairs well with intensive interviewing because interviews allow for more "direct control over the construction of data than most other methods" (p. 28). I employed member-checking to seek transcription clarification (Charmaz, 2006). I also used memoing (Charmaz, 2006) to note ideas, significant parts on an interview, and interview reflection of questions and answers during the data

---

[29] I use trans* to reference the myriad of and broader identities that fall under what used to be referred to as the transgender umbrella. Trans* is more commonly used to be inclusive of genderqueer and other gender variant identities. At the time of my research, trans* was not as broadly used, therefore research questions and references to specific participants use trans or transgender.

collection stage. The memoing process was where I noted questions that did or did not work during interviews, comments or observations from interviews, and initial ideas about possible themes from the interviews that were sometimes useful in the data analysis process of my research. My initial intention was to construct a substantive theory of how trans* men construct their masculinity.

Qualitative Descriptive and Phenomenology Methods

Following grounded theory methods, I researched and wrote my literature review after my coding process of my data (Charmaz, 2006). My literature review utilizes and was influenced by queer theory (Butler, 1990, 2004; Califia, 2003; Halberstam, 1994; Sedgwick, 1990; S. Seidman, 1995; Sullivan, 2003) as a means of grounding the complicated relationship of bodies to gender identity and gender expression. Considerations of themes and categories that I derived from my coding process were complicated by the influence of queer theory that destabilized any generalization of experiences and complicated how "terms of gender designation are thus never settled once and for all but are constantly in the process of being remade" (Butler, 2004, p. 10). Queer theory, in respect to my methodology, impacted my data presentation chapters (Chapters 4, 5, & 6) that are more aligned with qualitative descriptive method (Sandelowski, 2000) and my discussion chapters (Chapters 7 & 8) that are more aligned with phenomenology (I. Seidman, 2006).

Qualitative descriptive method does not require "a conceptual or otherwise highly abstract rendering of data" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 335). The presentation of my findings attempts to provide a broad description of the experiences of a phenomenon (trans* men

in higher education). In this way, "qualitative descriptive studies offer a comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events" (p. 336). Attention to the participants' words is consistent with grounded theory coding methods because of my use of *in vivo* codes in my process, constant comparative method in coding, and reliance on participant's words to generate themes. The discussion chapters, however, follow phenomenology and qualitative descriptive forms of qualitative research methods because I did not develop a substantive theory of trans* men's identities.

My decision to use qualitative descriptive methods and phenomenology were how I addressed the impact of queer theory on my initial idea of constructing a substantive theory of trans* men's identities. There are three reasons that I did not develop a theory. First, the data itself did not lend themselves to any form of cohesion that could be theorized. Similarities exist among participants, but there was nothing cohesive about their trans* men's identities that allows for a unified substantive theory of their gender identity. Their descriptions that varied from transness as temporary to transness as enduring provide too many tensions about their self-conceptions to allow for any rendering of identity through an identity development conceptualization. Second, and building off the first, I question whether the building of a theoretical model of trans* men's identity development only serves to encourage assimilation into masculine hegemony or enhance already existing notions of "authenticity" about transness or "real" men. This second reason is also my articulation of the influence of queer theory in my process. Finally, I believe research on trans* men and trans* men in higher education is too new to begin to theorize about their identities.

The nascent research on trans* men leaves little work to build off and too many questions untested and unanswered. Qualitative descriptive method and phenomenology allow for more consideration of my data, to question more carefully and slowly trans* men's identities, considering context, age, and social identities. My methodological shift resists confining my understanding of why or how trans* men exist, but what are ways trans* men's gender identities and expressions add nuance and possibilities to and/or beyond a gender binary system. In my decision to use alternate, but aligned forms of methods, I avoid treating trans* men as "objects of curiosity" (Pusch, 2005), and instead demonstrate ethical research that remains open to interpretation and new data.

<u>Researcher Identity Statement</u>

I provide an autobiographical statement about my trans* identity because ethically it is a transparency required of a researcher who has an emic view of his topic to demonstrate my self-awareness of how I am connected to my research topic. Around the spring of 2001, I asked friends and colleagues to call me Chase, a gender-neutral, self-chosen name, instead of my birth name, which was decidedly female (Dianne) because I wanted to explore my genderqueer and female masculine identities. I spent two years identifying as genderqueer and non-transitioning trans. During those two years, when I was a full-time hall director at a large public university in the northeastern region of the United States, I spent a lot of time watching college men, analyzing masculinity, reflecting on my gender, considering my relationship with my body, and exploring how I wanted to be seen in the world. I watched the men who surrounded my daily life, college men. I observed how college men acted, how they were performing masculinity, and

observed cultural cues associated with male identification. I spent time analyzing how I felt connected and disconnected to gender as a system and frame of cultural identification. I came to feel an increasing absence of identification with female identity and reflected on where my desire to biomedically transition from female to male was rooted: internalized sexism, body image issues, and male privilege seeking behavior.

In the fall of 2003, shortly after I started my doctoral program, I asked that my family, friends, students, and colleagues refer to me by male pronouns. I had begun to feel intense discomfort in female references to my identity, and decided that although I did not fully connect with "normative masculinity," I did want to be viewed and referred to as a man. In December of 2004, I began testosterone injections, which was followed by chest reconstructive surgery in June of 2005. The coupled effect of testosterone and chest reconstructive surgery meant that by the fall semester of 2005, I was consistently passing as a man.

Each day was filled with new experiences that even the copious hours of observations spent prior to my transition prepared me for; my experiences as a recognized man were subtle and constant. For less than I year I had between living as someone who was "in-between" genders (in both feeling and treatment), at times people referred to me as "it," which made me cautious of the quick validation that came from strangers who referred to me with male pronouns (seemingly effortlessly). I had many fears and insecurities about passing as a man; hyper-aware of language codes and behaviors that were not a part of my childhood socialization. My insecurities were heightened when I noticed how those who knew me as a woman prior to my biomedical transition struggled to use male pronouns for me. I interpreted this failure of

87

acknowledgment of my new identity as an inability of their brains to release the residual visual image of me as female. I had to learn to distinguish what was an accidental slip and what was a refusal to acknowledge my trans* man identity. At the same time, I had a series of fascinating experiences when using public men's restrooms, as interactions in public spaces with men who followed rules that I had only heard described. My quasi-anthropological watching of men could not have prepared me for the countless ways masculinity would brush up against my female and woman socialized past.

I try to remain vigilant and resistant to masculine norms and male dominance, knowing that for each instance I am also failing to see, or resist my complicity to, many instances of "normative" masculinity and male dominance; both are the price I willingly to pay to live as a man in my modified body. It was integral for my identity as trans* to be known to my participants for two reasons. First, my trans* identity allowed for credible access to trans* men. I was not seeking them out as oddities to examine. The voices of these men have never been sought before, and I was disappointed by that reality. Second, and more importantly, I felt (and still feel) it was necessary for work about trans* men to be done by trans* men, at least as research in its initial stages. I worry about the "othering" of trans* men that would be done under the caveat of objectivity; I do not believe any research is devoid of subjectivity.

I do not claim to have any special insights into the experiences of trans* men, but I have done a considerable amount of thinking, empathizing, analyzing, and studying trans as an identity and experience. Whether my experience was similar to or dissimilar from another trans* man's experiences, I have compassion sustained from my experiences as a trans* man. I have the desire to share their stories and experiences with

unflinching honesty so that conversations about trans* men in college do not exist in

abstractions or isolation, by only trans* men and their allies.

<center>Ethical Considerations</center>

In her work on cultural competency, Williams (2006) described postpositivist

paradigm as holding a perspective that while there are individual differences in a group,

there is a common core to a cultural identity, which can be "defined, validated, and

shared with others" (p. 211). Yet she points out that the limitations of a postpostivitist

paradigm on cultural competency to generalize or create "static" descriptions of cultures

(rooted in a historical view) and still center whiteness. Whereas,

> [A constructivist paradigm will] focus on immersion in the current lived
> experience of culture as it has adapted and developed to meet contemporary
> challenges… and the culture as the group defines it must be the core of a helping
> process that is co-constructed according to emic language, symbols, and social
> processes. (p. 212)

Thus, it is constructed from the point of view of the group instead of an outsider's point

of view.

As a trans* person, I have an emic view of my research and participants, which

can be helpful but also limiting as a researcher and a participant to assume that I can only

understand trans* men and that my participants could only be understood by a researcher

with a shared identity. "However, the constructivist approach to cultural competence

creates a space within which it is possible to think about the professional contributions of

expertise based on lived experience and immersion in the contemporary realities of a

cultural group" (Williams, 2006, p. 213). I have done my due diligence by reliance on

feedback from my chair, outside readers, and my committee to maintain an approach to

my research reflective of my lived experience in a way that enhances the descriptions of the data generated from my participants' words.

<div align="center">Initial Methods</div>

<div align="center">Memoing</div>

The process of memo writing was integral to my coding, data analysis, and tweaking of interview questions. Grounded theory's tandem process of coding and memoing helps to alleviate the pressure of uncertainty by challenging researchers to stop coding and capture, in the moment, their conceptual ideals about the codes they find, memoing progress, describing patterns begin to emerge (Holton, 2007). The significance of memoing functioned as a site for constant comparative method of data analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I used the memoing process as a way to assess, analyze, and explore ideas and opinions that surface through the multiple stages of the participant selection, interviewing, and coding processes. As I am both an insider and outsider to the population I studied, memoing provided me a location to articulate the complexity of my role as a researcher. Memos also served as a place to document my reactions to my complex relationship to my data and participants. I reviewed the memos to evaluate my process in coding and categorizing my data and examined how much any of my personal experiences influenced my descriptions of participant experiences.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

I sought 20-25 undergraduate participants who identify as trans men or trans-identified men, later referred to for ease as trans* men, a broad umbrella term to indicate the differentiation between non-trans* men and trans* men, as well as the myriad possible other terms that trans men may use to identify themselves (i.e., FtM/FTM, trans guy, genderqueer, and trans boi). My use of "trans man" was indicative of my desire to capture the general experience of someone who was identified at birth as a female, socialized and treated within female gender roles, and presently does not identify as a woman and/or female.

My graduate studies are in education, and undergraduates were posited as ideal research participants for my research because they shared a similar context (higher education) for trans* identity experiences, there were no age restrictions to access them, and their context aligned with my background as a student affairs practitioner. As current college and university students, trans* identified men could describe their current experiences within higher education. Many of the participants recently, within the last two to five years prior to being a participant, started identifying as trans*, and were able to elaborate more extensively about their experiences identifying as trans* and with negotiating masculinity. Those participants who came to college already identifying as trans*, then faced decisions about how to navigate their trans* identity and masculinity within the context of higher education. For participants who were just beginning their coming out process as trans*, I was privy to their articulations about self-exploration and understanding; the process of self-discovery provided valuable insights into their experiences as trans* men and masculinity.

Sampling

I had a three-step approach for soliciting participants for my research: listservs, emails, and purposeful snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Browne, 2005; Faugeir & Sargeant, 1997; R. Lee, 1993; Watters & Biernacki, 1989). I included my criteria for selection in my call for participants and explained how I was using trans men as an identifier for potential participants (Appendix A). I employed these three methods to find participants because trans* men in college are a "hidden population;" their possible openness of identification as trans* is not supported by the larger culture and results in discrimination (Browne, 2005; Faugeir & Sargeant, 1997; R. Lee, 1993; Watters & Biernacki, 1989)**.** By employing three methods to search for participants, I increased the possibility to connect with a variety of trans men in various locations in New England.

The listservs I chose were based on direct connection to the trans* identified men's communities, to social justice educators and practitioners, and academics who study (or identify as) trans*, thereby are more likely to be connected with trans* men in college. My targeted listservs were:

- **East Coast Female-to-Male (ECFTM)** – Listserv on Yahoo! Groups, which connects me with FTMs throughout the east coast of the United States. I contacted Bet Powers, the listserv manager, to request that he posts my call for participants.

- **FtMs in College** – A listserv on Yahoo! Groups, which provides a space for FtMs, who are going to or are in college, to share their experiences. I sent my call for participants to the moderator, to post the announcement on the listserv.

- **Social Justice Education Listserv** – I utilized the Social Justice Education (SJE) Program's Listserv for students, staff, faculty, alums, and friends of the SJE Program to pass along my call for participants to either students or colleagues who work at colleges and universities.

- **Transacademics** (www.trans-academics.org) – "Trans-Academics.org is a place where people of all genders can discuss gender theory, the trans community and its various identities, both as a part of the academic world and day-to-day life" (Trans-Academics.org). Through a registered account on this website, I was able to post my call for participants.

All participants who contacted me indicated that they received information about my research call for participants from either email listservs, social medial, or via direct email from someone who passed on my call for participants from a listserv. The continuous forwarding of my call for participants on other listservs provided an initial and wide-reaching attempt to locate possible participants who were socially or academically connected to trans* communities and student affairs practitioners.

I used direct emails to various college and university LGBT Resource Centers, even though I wanted to avoid assumptions that trans* men were connected to LGB populations, because to contact LGBT Resource Centers simultaneously acknowledges that many trans* resources on college and university campuses are located in LGBT offices and centers. To accommodate a more expansive campus approach, I sent my call for participants to individuals in a variety of academic departments (such as Women's and Gender Studies) and student affairs offices (such as Residence Life, Disability Services, and Student Activities). In connection with this step, I contacted friends and

colleagues at institutions in New England and requested that they pass along my call for participants to particular students who met my criteria for selection and might be willing to participating.

Given that I sought to connect with members of a "hidden population," I employed a small measure of purposeful snowball sampling by requesting that participants pass along my call for participants to other trans* men they knew, whether at their institution or another college/university in New England. Snowball sampling (also referred to as targeted sampling or chain referral sampling) "is a purposeful, systematic method by which controlled lists of specified populations within geographical districts are developed and detailed plans are designed to recruit adequate numbers of cases within each of the targets" (Watters & Biernacki, 1989, p. 420)**.** My call for participants, through my intentional efforts with listservs and to connect with my personal and professional network of colleagues at different colleges and universities in New England, coupled with snowball sampling, may have increased the possible variations of experiences within the community (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Further, the use of snowball sampling might have helped with recruiting participants who may not be connected to any listservs or campus offices to avoid characterization within the group identity as "trans man" because of stigma issues or discomfort but who still identify within this broad category through individual relationships (Browne, 2005). Some participants had potential to connect me with other trans* men on their campus via his social or institutional networks, but I achieved my desired number of participants without needing to employ this tactic.

94

Criteria for Selection

My participant selection criteria were based on six factors[30]: 1) identify under the umbrella term of trans man; 2) enrolled as an undergraduate student in a non-virtual[31] college or university within the United States, including 2 or 4 year institutions[32]; 3) are enrolled, and have been enrolled, for at least two consecutive semesters at a college or university[33]; 4) speak English; 5) were born and raised in the United States; and 6) attend a college or university in the New England region of the United States (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and VT). The Call for Participants included a link to a Google-based survey[34], which allowed for any potential participant to fill out the demographic questionnaire (which included the criteria for eligibility in the research) and downloaded the results into a password-protected document for my review. From the document that the online questionnaire generated, I determined who met the initial participant criteria. All potential participants who filled out the questionnaire, but did not meet the six specific criteria for selection were sent an email that informed them of their ineligibility status and encouraged to remain in contact for future possible research (Appendix B Ineligibility Letter).

Of the 32 potential participants, there were 7 who were not selected or eligible for participation for the following reasons: graduate student, did not provide a functional

---

[30] For clarification purposes, I am intentionally using the original language in my criteria, hence the lack of use of trans*.
[31] I will not select participants who are enrolled in virtual colleges/university or on-line higher education programs because that would reduce the element of interaction.
[32] I am not focused on the residential aspect of a college or university, but rather the experience of attending a college or university.
[33] Student status can be full- or part-time enrollment, as some participants may have financial limitations.
[34] Survey link:
https://spreadsheets.google.com/embeddedform?formkey=dDNBWnAtVlBoeVpielBxRGQwblZxUVE6MA

email, out of geographic region, did not respond to email, or were unavailable to interview.

Within my criteria for selection, I limited the population to a regional location. The regional restriction was based on financial limitations for travel and my preference to conduct only face-to-face interviews. The high number of colleges, community colleges, and universities in New England increased the potential for a high number of participants, which helped address the uncertainty of how many potential participants would respond to my call for participants. I was unable to judge whether the regional area I selected would yield 25 participants or an excess of 25 participants. Possibly because of my method of Call for Participants, time of academic year, or other factors, I ended up with exactly 25 participants.

Potential for Secondary Selection Criteria

The number of trans* men in college and their social identities are unknown (B. Beemyn, 2003; B. Beemyn, Curtis et al., 2005; McKinney, 2005). My interest in the experiences of trans* men in college did not include any specific questions on intersections of social identities. If I received an abundance of potential participants, I would have used other social identities as a selection criteria to attend to the "the variations in meaning and different contexts and groups" (Morse, 2007, p. 232). I was not required to develop secondary selection criteria because I did not experience a potential participant pool that was in excess of my desired 25 participants. Potential participants were informed in the call for participants that selection of participants was based on completion of questionnaire and demographic information.

Participant selection, after the initial six selection criteria were met, was not required. I started contact with the first few potential participants and continued connecting with potential participants as the online demographic questionnaire was completed. In the next section, I review the many ways participants were demographically similar and different, including some information about their social identities, college or university type (private, public, community), and institutional gender designation (women's college or coeducational institution).

There was a possibility of obtaining a relatively homogenous sample, specifically in some identity areas, such as race or institution type. A desired participant pool reflects a purposeful selection of participants with a diversity of social identities, institutional experiences, and variation of meaning (Morse, 2007). I was interested in the "characteristics of instances" (p. 242), in that I remained open to consider the possibility that even those trans* men with divergent identities and educational institution characteristics might have similar experiences or views about institutional experience and identity. Alternately, those trans* men with similar social identities and educational institution characteristics may have conflicting experiences and views about institutional experience and identity.

<div align="center">Contact Established</div>

Participants who met the five criteria for selection were sent an email confirming interest in the research (Appendix C) from my personal email account (chase.catalano@gmail.com) with a Consent Form (Appendix D) form for review. The protocol included 1) a statement about establishing initial contact via phone to answer

<div align="center">97</div>

any questions or concerns about the research, 2) information for the participant that an electronic version of the consent form for the interview for his files was available (a paper version was brought to the interview), and 3) establishment of an initial rapport. There were few phone conversations that occurred, as most initial and remaining contact happened via email to coordinate a suitable and appropriate location on campus for our interview (such as a library conference room, or a conference room in a campus center) and if the student was able to reserve such a space for our interview. Since I planned to travel to the participant, I hoped that by giving the participants the power to choose the location of the interview it would help create a sense of comfort. Interview locations included campus library spaces, off-campus apartments, residence hall rooms, academic classrooms, LGBT Center lounges and spaces, and personal homes.

<center>Confidentiality</center>

Interviews were recorded initially on my iPod through my Belkin TuneTalk Stereo for iPod, but that method was quickly abandoned for its unreliability with sound; instead, I switched to using GarageBand from my laptop. Interviews were converted to audio files on my password-protected laptop after the interview to ensure that the information was secure. Each interview was saved under the pseudonym chosen by the participant. A copy of the interviews was made onto audio compact discs (cd), labeled according to pseudonyms, and placed in a locked file drawer for safety until the dissertation defense is concluded. Any handwritten interview notes taken during the interview were entered into a computer document (and saved under the pseudonym), and the paper copy was destroyed. An audio file copy of the interview remained on my

password-protected computers where I worked with the transcriptions of the interviews. All digital files, documents, recordings, interview notes, memoing, and transcriptions were saved under participants' pseudonyms. The record of the participants' real names and pseudonyms were stored on my password-protected computers. All paper copies of interviews, recordings, and paper transcripts will be kept in a locked file drawer/locked box. After the study is completed, I will keep the data, data analysis, and digital transcripts of the interviews for at least three years or the minimum amount of time dictated by the University of Massachusetts Amherst, whichever is greater. All paper copies of transcripts, audio copies of interviews on my computer, and audio cds copies of interviews will be destroyed once the study is deemed complete by my dissertation chair.

Interviews

I used intensive interviewing methods, which allowed "an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience and, thus, is a useful method for interpretive inquiry" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). The intensive interview process is similar in concept to the in-depth interview process described by I. Seidman (2006), but functionally intensive interviewing is limited to one interview instead of a series of three interviews. During intensive interviews "the interviewer's questions ask the participant to describe and reflect upon his or her experiences in ways that seldom occur in everyday life" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). The intensive interview method begins with a few open-ended questions, and then shifts into a more detailed and focused discussion (Charmaz, 2006).

Prior to each interview, participants were given time to review, ask questions about, and sign an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). All digitally recorded

interviews also involved informal memoing to note any important answers or questions during the interview. I created a standard interview protocol in collaboration with and approved by my dissertation chair (see Appendix E), which reflected broad introductory questions and moves onto focused questions. I made slight changes in my initial protocol after the first few interviews, based on success and articulation of participants, which was expected to occur. I evaluated the impact and utilization of the different questions to assess whether the initial protocol was effective or if there were questions that led to more substantial answers by the participants. Overall, my initial protocol remained intact with only slight modifications to specific questions and order of questions.

Transcription

Transcription was done through a privately hired transcriber with a confidentiality agreement (APPENDIX F) and was paid from personal funds, plus grant money awarded from NASPA Foundation and the ACPA Foundation. Each original interview transcription was sent from the transcriber and saved under pseudonym chosen by each participant. I worked with each document sent to the transcriber to remove any identifying features of a participants' interview. I also reviewed each transcript text while listening to the audio file to fix any inaccuracies from the transcriber and to edit any text that she inaccurately recorded. For example, the term cisgender was misheard by the transcriber and was corrected.

Each completed transcription was sent electronically to the corresponding participant in a Microsoft Word Document as a form of member-checking. The email (APPENDIX G) that accompanied each transcription, detailed lines or sections where

clarification of ideas or references was needed, and/or areas where I requested more description, and participants were encouraged to expand on anything they said in the interview for clarity. Participants were asked to respond to the request for transcription clarification within two weeks of its arrival. A few participants never responded to my transcript review requests, which were sent approximately a year after the initial interview. For those participants who did respond with clarifications and additional answers, those answers were noted in the transcript file and added to the transcript for analysis.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

<div align="center">Coding</div>

I utilized HyperRESEARCH software to sort, code, and organize my data. I used *in vivo* coding, to "preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). My first round of *in vivo* coding generated approximately 2,400 codes, which were organized into groups; I utilized the interview questions as a structure to examine answers across all participants, which formed 37 groups or topical areas. My second level of coding was focused coding of the data within each category to describe the themes. Focused coding is used to "condense data and provide a handle on them" (p. 59). Throughout first level and second level coding, I wrote a memo while I worked on each group, which contained notes, observations, and questions for consideration. During the focused coding process, which eventually consolidated my data into approximately 230 codes, I used the memos to explore the themes that I deemed emergent from each category of data.

In review of my themes and significant amount of data, it was clear that my dissertation would not be able to engage answering all three of my initial research questions. I decided to focus on the first and third question, after consultation with my dissertation chair because to include the second question on "normative" masculinity would require an even longer data presentation than the three current chapters. Put simply, there was too much data. Chapter 7 is the analysis of the data presented to answer the first research question. Chapter 8 is the discussion of the second research question, as presented at the start of Chapter 3.

Following the next step in grounded theory research, I researched and created my literature review, based on the themes and content developed from coding. As previously mentioned, I employed a variation of descriptive qualitative method and phenomenology. Descriptive qualitative method was employed to describe my data, and phenomenology was utilized to discuss the data. My final chapter (Chapter 9) provides recommendation for practice and future research.

<u>Demographic Information</u>

Potential participants were directed to a website through a Google Form that allowed them to fill out demographic information, to aid in selection of participants based on meeting the criteria for selection, which was secure and inaccessible via a general search on the Internet[35]. Of the New England states where participants had to be attending college (for proximity to researcher), there was the following representation: 3 from Connecticut, 1 from Maine, 18 from Massachusetts, 1 from New Hampshire, 0 from

---

[35] https://spreadsheets.google.com/embeddedform?formkey=dDNBWnAtVlBoeVpielBxRGQwblZxUVE6MA

Rhode Island, and 2 from Vermont. Because the majority of participants attended a

college or university in Massachusetts, there was not much variation across New

England; however, within Massachusetts, there was variation in type of institution. The

table below describes the variety of institutions, using the size and setting classification

by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation

for the Advancement of Teaching).

Table 1. Variety of Institutions Represented in the Sample

Classification of Size and Setting	Number of Institutions[36]
Large four-year, Highly Residential (L4/HR) FTE enrollment of at least 10,000 degree-seeking students at bachelor's degree granting institution. At least half of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus [defined as institutionally-owned, -controlled, or –affiliated housing] and at least 80% attend full time.	10
Medium four-year, Highly Residential (M4/HR) FTE enrollment of 3,000–9,999 degree-seeking students at bachelor's degree granting institution. At least half of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus [defined as institutionally-owned, -controlled, or –affiliated housing] and at least 80% attend full time.	5
Small four-year, Highly Residential (S4/HR) FTE enrollment of 1,000–2,999 degree-seeking students at bachelor's degree granting institution. At least half of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus [defined as institutionally-owned, -controlled, or –affiliated housing] and at least 80% attend full time.	6
Very Small four-year, Primarily residential (VS4/R) FTE enrollment of fewer than 1,000 degree-seeking students at bachelor's degree granting institution. 25-49 percent of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus and at least 50% attend full time.	1
Medium four-year, Primarily Residential (M4/R) FTE enrollment of 3,000–9,999 degree-seeking students at bachelor's degree granting institution. At least half of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus and at least 80% attend full time.	1
Medium four-year, Primarily Nonresidential (M4/NR) FTE enrollment of 3,000–9,999 degree-seeking students at bachelor's degree granting institution. Fewer than 25 percent of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus and/or fewer than 50% attend full time (includes exclusively distance education institutions).	1
Large Two-year (L2) FTE* enrollment of 5,000–9,999 students at associate's degree granting institution.	1

[36] The total number of institutions counted does add up to 25. It should be noted that some participants attended the same institution.

Of those institutional types, 16 participants attended private institutions, and 9 attended

public institutions. Only 3 participants attended a single sex institution (Ben, Shawn, and

Tucker). Shawn and Tucker attended the same college, and their experiences were most

divergent in Tucker's connection to trans* communities, and Shawn's lack of connection

to trans* communities, at their college.

The age range of participants was 18 to 52 years old with a median age of

approximately[37] 22.5 years old. Based on the initial demographic questionnaire, the

participants identified within these racial categories (They were able to choose all that

applied as well as write in identity categories.):

Table 2. Racial Identities of Participants

Racial Identity	Frequency
White	17

Biracial
    Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander & White: 1
    Native American & White: 3
    Latino & White: 1
	5

African American/Black	1

Multiracial/Multiethnic
    Black/African American, Multiracial/Multiethnic. Parents born and raised in South
        Africa as "coloureds": 1
    Black/African American, Multiracial/Multi-ethic (Irish): 1
	2

Because of the lack of information on trans* populations, specifically populations within

the New England region, I am unable to determine whether my demographic data are

representative of the larger trans* man populations.

---

[37] I used approximately because one participant did not provide his age in the demographic questionnaire, but based on
appearance and references made during his interview, I would estimate his age as between 20 to 23 years old.

As for sexual orientation, participants were able to choose as many as applied, as well as write in options that felt most comfortable. Here is a breakdown of sexual orientations participants used for self-descriptions:

Table 3. Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	Frequency
Attracted to people of all genders, particularly queer people	1
Bisexual	1
Bisexual (not picky)	1
Gay/ Gay Male	1
Gay-ish	1
Homosexual	1
No specific sexual orientation	2
Open Minded	1
Pansexual	4
Queer	8
Straight/ Open	1
Straight/ Straight Male	4
Undefined gay	1

The total number of named sexual orientations exceeds the actual number of participants, as some people listed multiple identities and described a range of sexualities and types of relationships. Notable is that 32% of participants identified as queer, which was the largest percentage shared across the various sexual orientations. Again, because little is known about the larger trans* populations, it is not possible to know if the participants in my research are representative of the diversity of identities within trans* communities.

Trans* identification, based on participant information in the demographic questionnaire is best captured in the following table, which allowed participants to check as many identity terms as desired:

Table 4. Preferred Gender Identity Term

Identity Term	Frequency
Transgender (TG)	18
Genderqueer (GQ)	10
Gender non-conforming (GNC)	8
Trans	17
Man	14
Transsexual (TS)	10
FtM	17
Androgynous	4
Transman	11
Transguy	12
Trannyboy/Trannyboi (Tby/i)	4
Not listed here (NLH)	3

All participants were asked to explain their choice for identity terms, and were

encouraged to explain what identity language was preferred if they selected "not listed

here." Of those who selected "not listed here," there were varying reasons for this choice.

James1, who identified as genderqueer, gender non-conforming, and man stated: "I

identify as mainly masculine (although I have some traits I consider highly feminine), but

have no major discomfort with my female body." Nate reviewed the various terms and

his reasons for his choices and rejections.

> Transgender and genderqueer are more political identifications for me. I
> politically identify with parts of these communities. … Trans… meh it's a prefix
> not an identity for me. … Not listed here—gender is a giant multidimensional
> vector in a time-variant space so no handful of words could adequately describe
> my gender.

His rejection of "trans" as a prefix or an adjective, but not as an identity was an important

note because of the ways transman and trans man are often used indiscriminately, but

have different meanings to individuals. Finally, Robert felt he had limited choices that

resonated with his sense of identity.

> I don't think I'm enough of a man to describe myself as one –yet—but I hope
> hormones and surgery will change that. I don't like saying I'm female-to-male
> because it includes the word "female." And while I'm interested in androgyny and

gender non-conformity in an intellectual or aesthetic sense, I consider that a part of my personality, not my innermost identity. And since my status as transgender or transsexual will change with my medical choices, I suppose "trans" is all that's left to me.

Participants noted, not just in these selected references about those who chose "not listed here," the temporality, limitations, and complications of the variations of trans* identities, and the implications of choices.

Table 5. Participants' Trans* Identities (from the Demographic Survey)

	TG	GQ	GNC	Trans	Man	TS	FtM	Androgynous	Transman	Transguy	Tby/i	NLH
AJ	X			X	X	X	X		X	X		
Ben				X								
Bill	X	X	X	X			X			X		
Brandon					X				X			
Charlie	X			X	X	X	X		X		X	
Deciding	X			X			X		X	X		
Jack	X			X	X		X		X			
Jackson	X				X	X	X			X		
James1		X	X		X							X
James2	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
JB	X			X	X		X		X	X		
Joshua	X	X					X			X		
Micah	X	X		X			X	X		X	X	
Mike				X	X	X			X			
Myles	X			X	X	X	X		X	X		
Nate	X	X			X	X	X					X
Patrick	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	
Ren	X	X	X	X				X				
Riley	X			X	X	X	X		X	X		
Robert				X								X
Sal		X	X		X	X	X			X		
Shawn	X								X			
Tucker	X	X	X	X						X	X	
Tyler	X		X	X	X	X	X		X			
Wyatt					X	X	X					

Participants' trans* identities from demographic survey

Table 5 demonstrates the variation between and across participants, as well as similarities of their trans* identification.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS ON GENDER

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings[38] about how the participants came to a trans[39] identity. The chapter begins with foregrounding how participants described their gender (identity and expression) prior to identifying as trans, moves to how they came to identify as trans, and concludes with how they describe their current gender identity and gender expression. I have organized the data presentation in an effort to provide context for how participants came to identify as trans and their current gender identity and gender expression. A table to help readers manage the data and themes follows each section.

Descriptions of Gender

I asked participants about pre-trans and current gender identity and gender expression, as well as their process of arriving at their trans identification. I asked questions about how participants came to identify as trans to gather information about the process of identification and its possible impact, influence, and/or identification on their gender. In an effort to gain more insight into how participants viewed their gender as a complex system of dynamics and interactions, I also asked them questions about where they learned about trans identity, positives and negative possible changes since identifying as trans, and any things they know now that they wish they had known when they first started identifying as trans (hindsight). Finally, because gender is not

---

[38] Unless otherwise noted, thematic presentation of data is in alphabetic order.

[39] I utilize "trans" instead of "trans*" in my data presentation because that is how I presented the questions in the interview protocol and reflects the specific language of the time when the interviews occurred.

experienced in a vacuum (West & Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987), I asked participants about communities they are connected to on campus, to try to frame a broader sense of interpersonal and institutional frames of reference about their experiences.

"Pre-trans" refers to a range of descriptions by my participants. As I cover in my findings later in this chapter, there were variations about when and how participants came to identify as trans; for some, it has been a lifetime identification with a form of gender variation and/or male identification, and for others, it was a process that recently became affinity or identity affiliation. The purpose of presenting these data is to share participants' words regarding how they view their own identity, beginning with reflection and moving into current perception and articulation.

Pre-trans Gender Identity

To gain an understanding of current gender identity, it is important to understand participants' pre-trans gender identification and their meaning-making throughout their "gender journeys." Four themes best explain participants' pre-trans gender identity: *female*, *genderless*, *mix of stuff*, and *tomboy*.

Female identity comprises a variety of ways of understanding participant's prior gender identity. Participants varied in how they came to understand their prior identity as female, such as female was a default identity since it seemed to be the only option (even if "female" did not feel right). "Young adult female person because that was default [laughs]" (Nate). *Female identity* also included how there was no confusion or concern about gender identification. "Well, when I was kid I identified as female, completely

110

female. I was fine with that… [until puberty]" (Brandon). Other participants described *female identity* as a category they were pushed into and reluctantly accepted. "For a while I didn't know what transgender was and so I just identified myself as a female who was really weird [laughs]" (Charlie). Within the theme were descriptions of *female identity* as not necessarily an identity but rather a given that was not connected to a conscious claiming. "I don't feel, personally, that I really have one [gender identity] before I knew that I was transgender. Although people identified me as female so I guess that's how I would say it" (Jack). Finally, as one participant described it, female identity was their pre-trans gender identity because the participant never thought of himself as boy, even though he had short hair and transgressed gender. "I never really questioned being a girl. Well, I grew up in a really liberal family, so if I wanted to have short hair, play soccer, and dress as a boy, it didn't mean I wasn't a girl. So, even though I didn't relate to the girls, I never thought of myself as a boy" (Robert).

Participants who were placed within the theme of *genderless* as a way to describe their pre-trans gender identity did not strongly identify with gender or did not feel they had a gender until they became in some way either trans identified. "I didn't really think about it. At some point, I consciously identified myself as not female. But that's about it" (Wyatt). Some participants ignored gender or felt no real attachment to gender identity, while others described a dis-identification with gender that they could not articulate. "I just sort of ignored gender for the most part" (Jackson).

A third group of participants described their pre-trans gender identity as a *mix of stuff* to reflect their complicated process of self-understanding. Participants in this theme considered the transition process without knowing there was such a thing as transition

111

options or that it led to trans identification. "[I just thought] I'm going to go, when I get older, off the street and get plastic surgery and convert myself to a male that will be fine, that's not transgender [laughs]" (Charlie). Some described their realization of "guy" identity for themselves after puberty because they felt like a freak or developed a different kind of self-awareness around gender.

> Confused, I guess. I mean I didn't know what trans … But, when I was seven, I thought that I was my dad's son and I was – I didn't understand why he didn't know that. Or why my sister didn't think I was her brother and it was just really weird. Like troublesome … So, it was a pretty personal experience. (Sal)

Most generally, a *mix of stuff* described the complicated thoughts and feelings connected to a trans gender identity, whether trying to opt out of gender or waiting until they could identify as man; it may have been clear to the participant that he was not a girl, but self-identification as a boy was not clear, and other options were not available to access.

Connected to a *mix of stuff* was a sense of female identity by default and provides a broader picture of how participants had a *mix of stuff* going on inside to describe a form of dis-identification that was happening.

> So I never really identified as a girl or as a woman. The hardest thing for me probably coming to terms with being trans, was trying to come to terms with what it would mean to present as a white male in this society and that whole long list of baggage. But also, for me, what it would mean not to give up woman, 'cause I never really identified with that. Girl, never really identified that, but dyke. Lesbian didn't identify with dyke. Dyke was hard for me to figure out how to navigate. So, I guess it was, sort of – I didn't really label it because I didn't basically once I started getting the language of trans or gender-variant, I started using it. At least in my own head, if not to other people. (Patrick)

The influence of culture, ethnicity, and sexuality on gender identification (including butch dyke, bi, and stone butch) was also another way gender identity was a *mix of stuff*.

Tomboy refers to descriptions by participants who claimed this as a form of gender identity and used the specific term instead of "female" or "girl" language. "When

I was a teenager and probably a little after that, I was pretty much a tomboy" (JB). There were not specific elaborations but rather an understanding of themselves as tomboys— female children who transgress gender boundaries in attire, aesthetic, and/or activities. "I was kind of tomboyish, I guess, I wasn't super girly or anything" (Riley). Participants use tomboy in reference to both gender identity and gender expression, although the theme described above is in reference to the specific question about pre-trans gender identity.

Table 6. Pre-trans Gender Identity

	Female	Genderless	Mix of stuff	Tomboy
AJ	X		X	
Ben	X	X	X	
Bill	X			
Brandon	X		X	
Charlie	X		X	
Deciding		X	X	
Jack	X	X		
Jackson		X		
James1		X	X	
James2			X	
JB			X	X
Joshua			X	
Micah	X		X	
Mike			X	
Myles	X			
Nate	X		X	
Patrick		X	X	X
Ren	X			
Riley	X	X	X	X
Robert	X			
Sal			X	
Shawn			X	
Tucker			X	X
Tyler	X		X	
Wyatt	X	X		
TOTALS	**14**	**8**	**18**	**4**

Pre-trans Gender Expression

Participants' descriptions of their pre-trans gender expression can be summarized

by five major themes: *attempted femininity*, *avoided gender clarity*, *just was*, *masculine*

leanings, and *queer association*. *Attempted femininity* reflects descriptions about attempts

(forced or self-initiated) to adhere to femininity.

> My parents would make me wear something formal, and it would be girly.... I
> liked nothing in the clothes, and it was just like I don't want to do this…. And
> then I tried to dress girly every once in a while. I'd be like, I want to be normal.
> And I just it wouldn't feel right. I didn't feel like myself. (Tyler)

Some participants did such things as wore dresses, tried to fit into female gender roles, or

felt pressured to be a girl or feminine (forced/coerced femininity that was resisted).

> I tried very hard to be a straight girl. And so my gender expressions were very
> forced and fake, and very stereotyped, and sort of a classic sort of skirt and heels
> type way and my actions and mannerism followed suit … I was taking them on as
> a persona to appear to the outside world as such. (Deciding)

Overall, this theme is reflective of attempts to conform to female or girl role

identification or expression.

Avoided gender clarity reflects intentional acts to be unrecognizably gendered or

refusals to be female. Whether a matter of trying to be not as clearly gendered as possible

or intentionally expressing an ambiguous gender expression, participants engaged in

intentional acts to cause a disruption of assumptions or clarity about their gender identity.

"For a while, I was kind of an androgynous little kid, and I hated all things associate with

the feminine and refused to wear anything but like track pants and extra large t-shirts

when I was really small" (Sal). Some participants played with masculinity and

femininity. "I would put on make-up and give myself a not mascara, ah, eye liner

mustache and dress in camo coat … and my parents kind of freaked out. But just every

114

once in a while I still want to put on a skirt … just because I can" (AJ). Others

intentionally engaged in something akin to binding and participated in athletics to

eliminate feminine curves, all attempts to reach a body modification without necessarily

conscious choices about such modifications.

> I worked out a lot, tried to keep like my body in this really kind of lean state so
> that I didn't have so many curves and I didn't really mind so much… It's
> interesting like before I even realized that I might identify as trans I was wearing
> like tight sports bras to hold the breasts down but it wasn't actually binding.
> (Joshua)

Avoided gender clarity was also done by negotiating with limits, especially regarding

what type of clothing parents were willing to purchase for them and settled for as neutral

a look as they could get away with.

> So, a lot of my gender expression was sort of the compromise of what I was
> comfortable with and what I could - and what my family was willing to - that
> middle, so that they'd be willing to pay for it 'cause a lot of gender expression is
> embodied in clothing. (Patrick)

Internal resistance and external factors were components in resistance to female or girl

role identification and attempts by some participants to hide their female bodies.

Just was is a theme that reflects descriptions of gender expressions that are not

easily categorized. Phrases provided by participants included: "not really expressing

actual gender stereotypes" (Riley), "open and culturally different" (James1), and

"awkward" (Ben); these descriptions are not about intentional resisting but are

descriptions of uncertainty and disconnect with gender expression categories based on

pre-trans meaning-making of what later became trans identification. Overall, intention

and clarity were not related to expression but for lack of comfort or understanding of

possibly variations and future options without outright or intentional refusal. For

example, Patrick did not gender things for himself until he noticed that others were

gendering things, so actions were an expression of him ascribed by others as a form of

gender expression, which led to his considerations about gender.

> Like a lot of things I didn't see as gendered despite the fact that most other people
> would consider them gendered. … The fact that I grew up playing hockey and
> then switched to figure skating, none of that was gendered to me until I started
> seeing how everyone else was gendering it because I was raised by sort of a very
> strong feminist mom who intentionally didn't. (Patrick)

Patrick' gender *just was*. Others ascribed gender to activities, while he was just engaging

in activities that were of interest to him.

> *Masculine leanings* reflect participants' descriptions of a pre-trans identified

connection to masculinity. Bill maintained that his gender expression has been the same

all his life (which was masculine). "I think I've dressed and acted the same my entire life.

I've always been… I was a tomboy as a kid, and I don't know. I wear the same clothes I

wore in high school" (Bill). Others describe intentional acts of trying to align their body

or activities with masculinity. Descriptions include behaviors that were seen as not being

a girl, such as fighting, and expressions described, as tomboy.

> And so I grew up climbing trees and hitting people with sticks. And that was
> pretty normal where in terms of my school, but I figured out when I went to high
> school that wasn't exactly everybody else's experience. [laughs] It took until I
> was maybe 13 or 14 for my parents to get me to wear a dress to social outings.
> (Tucker)

Activities were not the only way they described their *masculine leanings*, it also included

identifying as a butch lesbian, which was close enough to masculinity for some

participants. Describing a form of female masculinity that was maintained was possibly a

decision in avoidance of gender clarity.

> By the time I hit 8th or 9th grade, I had moved more towards the butch/dyke kind
> of identity or whatever. My hair got progressively shorter and I started wearing
> boy's clothes, but I didn't bind my chest or anything and I still went by female
> pronouns. (Myles)

116

Masculine leanings reflected the ways participants made gestures away from femininity but not making direct links with masculinity as associated with manhood, as there were alternatives, such as clothing and short hair, and sexuality was a way to express that within the confines of female identification.

Queer association encompasses participant descriptions of gender expression as connected through sexuality. Data in this theme included being perceived as lesbian or butch lesbian or some type of gender expression that aligned with a queer female identity, which provided a modicum of latitude to either express masculinity or to avoid gender clarity. "I would have to say dyke, just because of my masculinity" (Mike). By viewing their gender expression through a lens of sexuality, for some, there was a resistance to the gender expression alignment that is assumed with heterosexuality.

> But I never really identified like as a lesbian person. I just sort of identified as more gay or queer and so once I stopped trying to be like the perfect little straight girl, I definitely, my gender expression morphed more towards - I think you might consider like a butch lesbian and things like that. (Deciding)

Deciding reflected the ways in which gender identity and expression was conflated with terms associated with sexuality, making a *queer association* between his resistance to his female identity with a queer identification.

Table 7. Pre-trans Gender Expression

	Attempted femininity	Avoided gender clarity	Just was	Masculine leanings	Queer associations
AJ	X	X			
Ben		X	X		
Bill		X		X	
Brandon	X	X			
Charlie	X				X
Deciding	X			X	X
Jack		X			
Jackson	X			X	
James1			X		
James2				X	X
JB				X	
Joshua		X		X	
Micah	X			X	
Mike				X	X
Myles	X			X	X
Nate	X	X	X		
Patrick	X	X	X	X	X
Ren				X	
Riley		X	X	X	
Robert		X		X	
Sal	X	X			
Shawn				X	X
Tucker	X	X		X	
Tyler	X			X	
Wyatt				X	
TOTALS	**12**	**12**	**5**	**17**	**7**

Came to Trans Identity

The concept of coming to trans identity was relayed in complicated and multi-layered narratives, which are reflected in the sub-categories of data that also speak to this subject. In general, the process of coming to a trans identity includes narratives woven within how participants learned about trans identities, had positive and negative experiences since identifying as trans, and hindsight reflection about the process of identifying as trans. The start of identifying as trans cannot be pinned down to one universal experience across participants. The data are grouped in a way to provide some

structure in an identification process but is best understood as a broad framework, with many variations and entry points, to view coming to trans identification.

Coming to a trans identity for the participants included a variety of experiences, not all the same for each participant. The themes I generated reflect different parts of the process of coming to a trans identity, which included how the reactions of others were a part of that story for many of the participants, different starting or ending points, different processes through a range of contexts, and varying factors that influenced progressions, halts, and reversals along the path to identification. Although tempting to view this as a process or continuum, my goal was not to articulate an identity development model, but to offer space to view the complexity and diversity of experiences.[40] Overall, there were 11 themes generated to summarize responses to the question about how a participant came to identify as trans: known since childhood, did not feel like a woman, sexuality, introduced to trans identity, exploration of trans identification, connection with masculinity, resisted trans identification, coming out, reactions to coming out, genderqueer, and confirmation of trans identity.

Known since childhood indicated knowledge of being not female, or being male, or being trans since childhood. For some it was as a first/early memory and for others it was high school.

> Well from a very, very, young age, I was male. I don't really remember if I was ever female, but probably four or five, I really realized I was just like my brothers; rough and tumble and run around with just a pair of shorts on. And it wasn't probably until I was six, that I realized that I was a lot of different. (Mike)

---

[40] See Marine (2011) for a review of some models of trans* people and trans* student identity development models.

There were desires to transition as a child but without knowing something could be done or how to articulate the feelings. "I mean I've always known, since I was fairly little like that I did not feel like a woman. However, it wasn't until high school that I really realized that I could do something about that" (Jackson). Access to information about the possibilities or help with articulation with knowledge was useful for those who had *known since childhood*, while others considered how they felt about their identity.

Did not feel like a woman reflects an awareness of identify as not female, girl, or woman. "It wasn't that I knew I was male; it was that I knew I wasn't female" (Brandon). Descriptions within this theme conveys an identification that reaches something beyond tomboy, something more male, although such a direct identification as male may not have seemed a possibility or an accurate description of identification and was coupled with a pronounced discomfort of female identification. Ben described his experience at a summer internship comprised of an all-female group as a way to express his discomfort. "I'm really uncomfortable being in this all-female environment. Being treated as female. Having to dress or they all dressed in a feminine way." He noted his discomfort in how they were addressed as a group ("as ladies") and how it was a persistent feeling for his life. "I referred to people as people, person, even in phrases that it sounds weird. I always did that, and it made sense, and I refer to myself that way as a person with this belief" (Ben). This theme encompasses discomfort with "female" referenced attire, terminology, or bodies.

Sexuality discusses how some of the participants came to a trans identity through an exploration of sexuality, proximity to queer communities or organizations, or a rejection of lesbian identification. For those who described an affiliation with queer, gay,

or lesbian identities or communities in their coming to a trans identity, there were variations of how these affiliations connected to a future identification as trans. For example, Bill experienced a spark of awareness through his affiliation with his high school Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA).

> When I was 16 and in my high school's Gay-Straight Alliance - so one of the other members was trans. That kind of started my brain thinking and I, read the Internet or whatever. [laughs] And so I found genderqueer and kind of latched on to it at 16. (Bill)

Deciding had a mix of straight and older lesbian friends with no one having any recognition of trans identities. "So, when I did kind of come out as queer, I was comfortable in sort of a non-gender conforming gay identity" (Deciding). *Sexuality* served as a location to make gender non-conformity comfortable.

Some participants, possibly due to lack of access to or about trans people, explored lesbian identities, which did not fit. "Well, I was really confused, I guess, about who it is I was. So, I was really angry and homophobic. And then I decided that I was going to be a lesbian, and that didn't seem quite right [laughs]" (Jack). For others, their sexuality went hand in hand with discovering their gender. "So, kind of what happened, I guess is in 8th grade, I figured out I liked women and shortly thereafter, I figured out I wasn't one" (Patrick). Lesbian was the only identity for Mike to use to understand his feelings. "And I started identifying, for lack any other knowledge, as lesbian. If I love women, and I've got a female body, then I must be a lesbian" (Mike). *Sexuality* varied in its ability to serve as a productive exploration site, as for some, it was a good site, while for others, it was a choice by default, and for others, it was an uncomfortable place, which will be explored more in depth in Chapter 7.

Introduced to trans identity represents the various ways that trans identities were introduced to the participants included: YouTube video blogs (vlogs), college campus events and experiences, gay pride events, GSA, speakers, personal interactions with a trans person, conversations with college administrators, popular culture images, romantic partners, research for paper, books about trans identities, and anti-domestic violence organizations. Deciding's introduction to trans identities was a not pleasant first knowledge, and that led to a resistance to trans identification.

> I read this really horrible book. I don't remember what it was, but it was about this trans man who identifies as gay and the entire book was his self-involved sob story about him not having a real penis and, therefore, he could never find love so now he's lonely and going to die alone. … [H]is family abandoned him and he had no friends and he had no lovers and life was horrible and it was just this really horrible picture of trans people and that book kind of scared me off. (Deciding)

For others, it was a "coming home" or a spark of recognition that helped them understand what they were feeling in a term and/or process.

> I guess, basically the summer before I started college I sort of came across the idea that it was possible to transition to male on Internet probably, seems like a lot of people do these days, and… I honestly didn't really question it much since I was pretty [laughs] sure that was that described me fairly well. (Wyatt)

Whether negative or positive introduction, *introduced to trans identity* was a part of the identification process because it provided information, even if that information was initially rejected.

Exploration of trans identification covers the ways the participant's explored trans as a possible self-identification, including a concept about being "trans enough."

> It's like, so you're allowed to be in an effeminate guy, but if I am, it just means that I'm not being trans good enough. … Almost everyone here is a trans man and almost everyone here [at my university] is already transitioned. Or, is in the process of transitioning or can't see why you wouldn't want to. (Ren)

122

The emphasis on transitioning or the ways to be trans was a consideration in the

exploration of trans identity. Participants' explorations covered internal and external

considerations.

> And so that kind of helped realize that it wasn't just me being a tomboy it was me being a trans guy. … I guess I kind of mentally explored where my gender balance was, between male and female. … I felt more strongly that I was just a regular guy. (Riley)

While internally, they examined their own views, feelings, awareness, and considered

their external presentation of self (such as through style of dress), their external process

meant they visited sites of information regarding resources and tested out different

pronouns or a gender-neutral name. Shawn named the steps in his process that made him

feel more connected to his trans identity, which included how he communicated his self-

perceptions to others.

> I can't look in the mirror and identify with that name [my birth name], but I can see myself as Shawn. And I just grew so much more confident and it felt right and that's just - It's been slow, obviously, but that's basically how it happened. It was just a lot of thinking and a lot of research and a lot of exploring. And telling people is a big part of it too, I think, 'cause it helps.

Exploration of trans identification included telling others about their self-identification,

as a way of making meaning of their self-reflection. Another process of exploration that

was a part of coming to a trans identity was how participants considered masculinity.

> *Connection with masculinity* describes how participants related to others and

themselves through forms of masculine gender expression (short hair, athleticism, etc.).

> It started as discomfort with: I don't like these things about feminine identity in my life. … There was stuff I was supposed to identify with, certain female characters, and TV shows or books that every girl was - thought was the coolest female character. I was like, this character is boring, … I just do not identify. (James1)

This theme captured a growing awareness of a distinction between tomboy identification into something more than being a tomboy, a connection to male identity or masculine gender expression. "I'm not sure how this exactly came about. Like I always played sports, and I always had my hair cut short, and then I got to middle school and I realized, 'Oh girls have to look like girls now'" (Charlie). Charlie's startling realization articulates how he came to understand that there was an age limit on his ability to express his gender outside of the expected gender binary.

Resisted trans identification describes the reasons and ways the participants resisted identifying as trans. Participants described identifying with the possibility of being trans or man (for many, but not all) and a reluctance or fear of claiming a trans identity. Some participants responded with anger and fear; afraid to put a name on an identity that explained how they were feeling or wanting to identify.

> And I had to get to passed the point of hating myself about it. I wasn't really comfortable with concepts just because it was nothing that had ever encountered growing up and I didn't think my family would be accepting of it or anything. (Myles)

A resistance to trans identification was a way to avoid coming out and the fear of rejection some participants assumed would accompany coming out. Bill was worried about his large family and how they would react to his news. "And so I kind of just pretended it wasn't happening. And I think that's some of the reason why I didn't want to publicly identify myself. 'Cause once I did, then I would have to deal with it" (Bill). Some of the considerations that led to a type of *resisted trans identity* came from feeling like there was a need (internal or external) to make a decision about transitioning.

> And so I spent a long time, kind of angsting and feeling like I had to choose, decide to do something right now because I was really [pause] it got, the more you find out, the more present it gets. [laughs] And it's like, I felt like I was trying

124

to figure which way to fall down a hill. And I couldn't… I mean and I was already falling, but I couldn't figure out which direction. (Nate)

For those participants who at some point *resisted trans identity*, there were factors of uncertainty that influenced their resistance.

Coming out conveys different ways participants shared coming out as trans as part of their process of coming to a trans identity, as part of their identity awareness and affiliation narrative. Participants varied in meaning and scope regarding *coming out*, as some were more open within their campus, family, or community, and others only acknowledged their trans identity to those who they felt needed to know or whom they wanted to know. For example, Ben talks about his *coming out* process as gradual, but limited in what he shared.

> So, I started talking to some friends a little bit about not feeling right in my body and that's pretty much all I put it with … I think at first I told them, I'm not - that I was questioning stuff involving my gender. And I was really afraid to put a name on it. (Ben)

Coming out was a part of coming to a trans identity, but the impact of that coming out process was also significant to the process.

Reactions to coming out represents the reactions participants received from others after coming out. Participants discussed reactions by families and friends to their coming out as trans.

> For the most part [the reactions of my family were] really, really, good. Surprisingly good because they're all very conservative Christian people. And so I was surprised that there was this much acceptance as there was, but I'm definitely glad that there was. (Brandon)

Within participants' stories were affirmations of support and advocacy by some, but some participants described rejection and angst regarding the coming out reaction.

I don't know if she [my mom] was kind of angry about because I kind of put some stress and tension or anger in the household. And I'm sure that wasn't that great for her, my little brother cried and then disowned me. Maybe he'll come around …but in the context and the tone she used probably not. (JB)

The stories of support and rejection were not just about families but also included campus communities.

Genderqueer reflects descriptions of how participants did not subscribe to a binary gender in their self-identification and preferred a more fluid view of their gender. Participants spoke about *genderqueer* as an identification they came to that felt more comfortable as a description and/or in conjunction with their trans identification.

So, it was a gradual process. I think it's taken a while to really feel like I at least have some sort of label that works and like genderqueer really works for me. Not in the sense that I like intentional fuck with gender but that I feel like my identity and the way I express myself can be pretty fluid. And I didn't ever really have such a great way to label that before, so I just went with FtM for a long time. That doesn't really work for me now. (Joshua)

Genderqueer reflected for some participants a temporary stopping point in their process, and for others, it became a clearer way to identify their relationship to gender.

Confirmation of trans identity describes how trans identity became more real, comfortable, or visible to participants. The theme covers a focus on acts, such as being referred to with the correct name, pronouns, or gender role (not daughter), and a masculine identity. "I was starting to feel more and more male and that was not me being a tomboy. It was me actually wanting to be male. And there was a way to describe that, and it was actually legitimate" (Riley). Some of the descriptions encapsulated a comfort with trans identification, such as relaxing on policing people's pronoun use or feeling connection to the self-knowledge and confidence.

It's simple, when people use male pronouns with me, it makes me really happy. When people use female pronouns with me, it makes me kind of angry. The why,

and the does this feel right, and should I do this - that doesn't matter. ... Why do I feel this way? … And I still sort of go back and forth about that even though I'm very sure that I'm trans identified and that this is the most comfortable or the most comfortable and the most true to myself that I've felt. Ever. (Ben)

For some participants, ensconced within these descriptions was a developing awareness that transition was no longer an option but a forgone conclusion in their efforts to live life as a man.

So, they [his parents] sent me to a doctor at [a university], Dr. [name deleted for confidentiality], and he did all of these tests on me, and then he sat me down, and said, "You're not a lesbian." … And then he explained to me what transsexualism was, and I was like, "Well, that makes sense," and I said, "But what am I supposed to do about it?" And he said, "Well, probably your parents aren't going to allow you to do anything about it." Okay, this was early '70s. And he said, "But there are things that can be done." And I said, "Well, what if I just stayed the way I am? Just be a lesbian and just defy my parents?" And he said, "Well, you can do that, but chances are it's going to come to a time where you're not going to be able to live that way. And it did." (Mike)

As the oldest participant in my research, Mike described his desire to transition, even if he had to wait a long time for the opportunity to be viable and the road was hard to travel.

Confirmation of trans identity was also about seeing someone who identifies as trans and being able to recognize yourself in that person's story, experience, expression, or identity. "So, eventually I saw somebody else who was transgender and he was talking about… He was a presenter talking about being transgender and I was like, 'Oh that's me.' So, that happened [laughs]" (Jack). The ability to see that the thoughts, ideas, and desires as not only possible but confirmed as possible was powerful for participants. Ideas of transitioning or results of being on testosterone offered a look into a possible future and for some participants served as a *confirmation of trans identity*.

Table 8. Came to Trans Identity

	Known since childhood	Did not feel like a woman	Sexuality	Introduced to trans identity	Exploration of trans identification	Connection with masculinity	Resisted trans identification	Coming out	Reactions to coming out	Genderqueer	Confirmation of trans identity
AJ	X				X						X
Ben		X			X	X	X	X	X		X
Bill			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Brandon		X			X			X	X		X
Charlie		X		X	X	X					X
Deciding			X	X	X		X				
Jack			X	X			X				X
Jackson	X	X		X	X			X	X		X
James1	X				X	X					
James2			X	X	X	X	X	X			X
JB				X	X	X	X	X	X		
Joshua				X	X			X	X	X	
Micah			X		X			X	X	X	
Mike	X		X	X	X	X			X		X
Myles				X	X		X	X	X		
Nate				X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Patrick			X		X		X	X	X		X
Ren				X	X			X			X
Riley	X			X	X						X
Robert			X		X			X			X
Sal			X		X			X	X	X	
Shawn				X	X						X
Tucker				X	X			X	X	X	X
Tyler			X	X	X						
Wyatt				X	X						X
TOTALS	**5**	**4**	**10**	**17**	**24**	**6**	**9**	**15**	**13**	**6**	**17**

Positive Changes Since Identifying as Trans

Participants were asked to consider any positive changes that had occurred since identifying as trans. Three major themes were emergent on participant's positive changes since identifying as trans: connected, state of mind, and words to feelings. The three

128

themes reflect a synergy across participants' experiences were overwhelmingly consistent.

Connected illuminates how participants were able to develop different, new, or more meaningful connections with themselves since identifying as trans. "I just feel more comfortable in my own skin, in general" (Brandon). Participants described relationships with others as more positive, mature, and healthier, especially by those participants who were surprised by family acceptance of their trans identity. "I have more healthy relationships with the people in my life 'cause I'm being honest with myself and them" (Tucker). *Connected* was also described as a byproduct of (social, medical, or surgical) transitions, which clarified their internal image of themselves.

> I definitely felt a lot more comfortable with myself with interacting with other people in society. Before I just, I felt kind of like outside of society, but then after I started living as male, then I felt like I could actually interact with people in a normal way. (Wyatt)

In general, participants discussed that they were *connected* to a feeling of comfort that allowed them to be more connected with people, and feel less apart of society.

State of mind captures an overall framework for participant's thoughts and emotions. Some were very clear in what they felt less of since identifying as trans, such as anger, depression, anxiety, living a double life, agitation, self-hatred, and pronoun confusion. "I'm not angry anymore. [laughs] … [M]y self-esteem is much higher especially since I started looking more male [people] who regard me the way I feel about myself, and myself self-esteem and my confidence is up" (Jack). Participants also described emotions they could now felt more of, such as self-confidence, self-comfort, empowerment and agency. "And also, I just I feel so much better. … I feel so much more confident and so much more happy with my life" (Micah). Participants noted how they

felt an increased comfort and connection with others. Others saw them the way they saw themselves and generally described a more positive *state of mind*. Common across participants was some variation of the phrase, "I just feel more comfortable in my skin."

Words to feelings describes how participants felt identifying as trans put words to feelings. "But, also just being able to put words to feelings I've had about disassociation, not feeling comfortable, just all those sorts of things, being able to put the language to it and then be able to do something about it" (Patrick). Other examples of *words to feelings* were most clear in descriptions of coming out (to self and others) and how identifying as trans lessened discomfort and stress levels about not fitting in (to body, gender, roles, social situations).

> Growing up I never felt right in my skin, but I didn't have… I didn't hate body in a way that I felt like I could actively just change it. Just something didn't feel quite right and since coming out as trans and that's changed. (Deciding)

Participants described the ability to put *words to feelings,* which allowed them to pinpoint and name their discomfort, even if changing the cause of discomfort was a slow process. "Even though it's going to take a while, kind of feeling like I have more agency, which is really nice because I can identify the problem and do something about it" (Nate). Putting *words to feelings*, as Nate described it, was a renewed sense of personal agency that came with being able to articulate his identity.

Table 9. Positive Changes Since Identifying as Trans

	Connected	State of mind	Words to feelings
AJ		X	X
Ben	X	X	
Bill	X	X	
Brandon	X	X	X
Charlie	X	X	
Deciding	X	X	X
Jack		X	
Jackson	X	X	
James1	X	X	
James2		X	X
JB	X	X	X
Joshua	X	X	
Micah	X	X	
Mike	X	X	X
Myles	X	X	
Nate	X	X	X
Patrick	X	X	X
Ren		X	X
Riley	X	X	
Robert	X	X	
Sal		X	X
Shawn		X	
Tucker	X	X	
Tyler		X	X
Wyatt	X		
TOTALS	**18**	**24**	**11**

Negatives Since Identifying as Trans

Participants described the negative experiences since identifying as trans within the following major themes: *continuous stressors*, *lacking recognition*, *lost relationships*, and *not that I can think of*. *Continuous stressors* cover the many topics that serve as a source of strife, but most common were areas of stress that related to trans identification and gender perception, such as worry over reactions from others if participants came out as trans, considerations of who they should come out to, and issues of transphobia and harassment.

> Well my mom and I've certainly had some interesting experiences in our relationship since … [I came out as trans]. For the most part, they're wildly frustrating. Some of the people that I live with here are not so awesome, and not super accepting. So, there have been sometimes where it's been really shitty and for the most part like I'm okay with that. … I live on this borderline between internalized transphobia and like, "Okay I can just handle this and it's not that big a deal." (Tyler)

Participants described the struggle to share their trans identity with family or friends, and how the weight of wanting to share but fear of reactions was a heavy burden.

> For a period of time, it felt like there was a lot I was hiding from my parents. It still sort of feels like there's a lot I'm hiding from parents, but it feels like less of a burden now because I've told them some things, whether or not they choose to accept them is a different story. (Ben)

Issues of family acceptance was a *constant stressor* for participants because they no longer were living at home on a continuous basis, so it forced them to consider what would happen with each trip and if they would have to or want to tell them about their trans identity.

Issues of visibility were a *constant stressor*, especially when body image and identity comfort were still uncomfortable.

> It makes me feel like there's nowhere where I can go, where people won't see me as 'the trans kid.' There's just no escape from the body and the pronouns and all of that. And I just, I feel like my body is something that follows me around campus. [laughs] 'Cause people, at this point, people often know that I'm trans before they meet me 'cause I'm the only one who's out here. (Robert)

The idea of being the "only one" on campus was a *constant stressor*, which was impacted by another *constant stressor* of body image. Issues about body discomfort in day-to-day experiences and trans oppression were also described, even when participants reframed their experiences in trying to find strength through adversity.

> And I think, at first, I thought they were a negative, like the whole uncomfortable bathroom situation, which is quite prevalent. And I still have a lot of anxiety about that stuff and a lot of things are triggering in a way that weren't triggering

before. Such as body dysphoria and anxiety about the bathroom, and other things that people take for granted in gender. But I still think it's something that I'm going to grow from. (JB)

For some participants, college was considered a safe place, and *continuous stressors*

came from when they considered leaving their campus environment.

[My college] is this safe little bubble and then the negatives are definitely leaving and having - my parents don't know and, this summer … I'm going home. … So, it's a good place to grow, but then you have to go and leave and it's scary. I am scared. (Shawn)

Generally, *continuous stressors* were a range of activities that caused discomfort, tension,

fear, and anxiety; the stressors about trans identity were described as constant and leaving

almost no areas of the participants' lives untouched. Patrick most aptly summarized

continuous stressors as "often just this extra level of things to deal with."

Lacking recognition was a specific stressor about areas and experiences that were

specific to instances where participants' identity, name, pronoun, or experience were not

affirmed, and included refusals or silences to discuss trans identity.

They [my parents] say that they support me now, but they still have a lot of trouble. And I've been out for four years and they still have trouble with pronouns. They still have trouble with my name. And they still just have trouble with trans issues in general. (AJ)

Within *lacking recognition* were a barrage of day-to-day experiences that included

moments of not passing, use of wrong pronouns by others, being misperceived as uber-

lesbian, and refusal by friends and families to use anything but birth name and gender.

Ben discussed how this was particularly frustrating at an all-women's college in his

follow-up note to our interview.

Many transguys at women's colleges get read as female because most people just assume that everyone's female there. Even if you are someone who gets read as male elsewhere (whether or not you want to be), you'll be very likely to be read as female if you are a student at a women's college. The students are more used to

133

gender ambiguity and queer gender presentations, and they've been trained to read that as female. (Ben)

Institution type played a role in *lack of recognition*, but overall it encompassed experiences at all institutions in how it spoke to people using wrong pronouns, names, and the like.

Another area within *lack of recognition* discussed was how participants transitioned in any biomedical way made gender variance less visible, which was a disappointment for those who valued the fluidity of gender.

> I would say that the biggest negative change since I started transitioning was that the gender variance that is a big part of my identity is a lot less visible and so I feel …. I look like a frat boy, since that is how I dress, even though dressing like that before was at least somewhat transgressive. I have been putting a lot of pressure on myself to be really open about being queer and being a feminist since those things aren't as terribly obvious as they used to be. (Bill)

As Bill described, he experiences a *lack of recognition* from those within trans communities because he is unrecognizable as trans or even as transgressing gender. The invisibility of transness as something that is not just about biomedical transitioning also led to *lack of recognition* for James1. "A lot of people are really kind of confused 'cause they feel like I'm doing it wrong, if I'm not going to go through a physical transition" (James1). Within the theme of *lack of recognition* were pressures to embody a certain kind of masculinity, expectations about transgressive or normative masculine gender expression, and conditional support based on transition decisions.

Lost relationships articulates how participants felt they were losing or lost a variety of relationships. Participants may not have connected in their past with a female identity, but there was a form of community among women that their masculinity removes from them.

134

So, I miss the ease of being able to connect with women, I think that's the biggest thing. … But it's kind of sad for me, when I know a woman and you can tell there's a little bit of tension there and then when … she knows I'm trans, suddenly that disappears. Kinda sad to me that that exists. (Joshua)

Participants also reflected on the ways their masculine, male, or trans identity has caused them to feel they have lost connections with women.

One of the things that really that I was struggling a lot with when I was sort of going through all of this was, I don't know how to phrase it but, not being able to identify *in* a group of women. … But there was something in that - I felt was really special and important and it felt a huge sense of loss to lose that. (Ben)

Interpersonally, participants described how *lost relationships* included instances where coming out had caused friends to reject them. "I've definitely lost a couple of friends over it, who could not rectify the differences between me and what the Bible told them" (Myles). Captured within this theme were feelings of being disconnected or strained relationships with others.

I mean, with my family I don't know if it's gotten worse or better. I mean in some ways I feel more open like talking to them, but there almost kind of - I wouldn't say closed off, but just, they don't know how to handle it yet and it's kind of taking them a long time. (James2)

The intersection of *lost relationships* and *lack of recognition* occurred for participants in their dealings with family responses, as the slow acceptance or rejection led to a feeling of losing relationships.

Not all participants had negative experiences since identifying as trans, which became a theme: *not that I can think of*. This theme included statements by participants who could not identify any significant negative impacts since identifying as trans. For example, Jack talked about how he expected some rejection for identifying as trans.

There really aren't very many negative changes. Some people don't like trans people, I guess that's sort of a negative change, but they always didn't like trans

people. [laughs] It's just that now I'm a trans person, so it hasn't really changed
and my life is just better. (Jack)

Similarly, Wyatt could not think of any negative impacts since identifying as trans.

Considering that some of the literature describes coming out or transitioning as trans

focuses on shame and isolation (Nakamura, 1998), I think it is integral to identify that

this theme existed in the data as well as that only 3 participants who provided answers

that fell within this theme.

Table 10. Negative Changes Since Identifying as Trans

	Continuous stressors	Lacking recognition	Lost relationships	Not that I can think of
AJ		X	X	
Ben	X	X	X	
Bill	X	X		
Brandon	X		X	
Charlie	X			
Deciding	X			
Jack				X
Jackson	X	X		
James1		X		
James2	X		X	
JB	X		X	
Joshua		X	X	
Micah		X		
Mike				
Myles		X	X	X
Nate	X	X	X	
Patrick	X	X	X	
Ren	X	X	X	
Riley	X			
Robert	X	X	X	
Sal	X		X	
Shawn	X			
Tucker		X	X	
Tyler	X	X	X	
Wyatt				X
TOTALS	**16**	**14**	**14**	**3**

Campus Community

Part of attending college for most students, including those exploring gender identity and gender expression, means considering to whom they were connected or how they would describe their "communities." The initial question regarding campus communities was included as a way to determine if there were patterns across participants' campus groups or communities. The data are organized to relay how participants viewed their communities within their college or university, such as their friend groups or their affiliations. Participants described what I refer to as their communities through five themes: *academic community*, *campus organization/job*, *gay/queer community*, *not too socially connected*, and *random group*.

Academic community reflects answers that identify an academic community, whether based on major or based on interest in that academic endeavor (an academic pursuit that is not affiliated with a major but with an academic program). While Ben did not feel an affiliation with those in his academic major beyond an academic relationship, he distinguished his social relationships from an academic program. "My social connection would be with theater here. I did a lot of theater here, both for the department and student groups. So probably my strongest sort of community would be our student theater group here" (Ben). However, Jackson felt his primary relationships with those at his university were within his major.

> Well I'm mostly part of an academic community. Unlike many, many other people at the university, my main reason for being at the university is to get my degree and get out of there. [laughs] So, I think that for the most part, my social groups tend to be surrounding my classes, academia. (Jackson)

Participants in this theme identified within their academic major or with an academic department for their friendships and campus connections.

Campus organizations/jobs refers to descriptions of official and unofficial student organizations[41]. There were ranges of types of content, experiences, and jobs across the participants. For example, Deciding felt very connected to his job on campus.

> I'm an EMT on campus and that job [laughs] tends to define a lot of what I do. It's a very supportive group of people, come from all walks of life. But that's definitely a group that I work a lot with and identify with. (Deciding)

Micah had less of a direct and more unofficial community based on music.

> The music community. I pretty much know a lot of the top musicians at the school, a lot of them are on the record labels. So I sort of interact with a lot of music people, who are really into communications, who work for the [university] radio, who are film majors. (Micah)

Two participants described their affiliation, like a family, to their athletic teams: Nate to fencing, and Shawn to rugby.

Gay/queer community describes an affiliation or connection on campus to a formal or informal gay/queer community. Brandon was connected to the community through his housing, which was a residential identity based learning community.

> Well, the biggest one would be the gay one, easily. Because I've been on the gay floor for two years, three years next year, pretty much all my friends are related to that floor in some way. So, that's probably the major identity component of it. (Brandon)

There were a number of participants who were affiliated with some type of LGBT or GSA organization on campus or tangentially connected to it because of their friendships.

> Well, I was never formally a part of a queer [group] [campus organization name deleted for confidentiality] which is our sort of LGBT Group. I was never a part of that. Most of my friends are queer. … So it didn't feel like a community because all the queer people I know are - they're friends but it doesn't feel like a community. (Ben)

---

[41] I use the term official to mean recognized or institutionally sanctioned student organizations. Unofficial is a way to denote a hobby or activity that may not have a college/university sanction or be considered an official organization but is a type of community with a shared activity or vision.

Participants in this theme described an affinity to formal and informal queer identities as a place of community.

Not all participants described themselves as connected to their campus community or felt they were not engaged socially at their college or university. The reasons for disconnect varied. Ren described himself as without too many university friends because "most of them graduated." JB did not feel as though he had a social connection to campus because of his age. "So, I think too like since I'm a non-traditional older student, even though I look like I'm 16 sometimes... [laughs] I think that I just don't think like 20, 21, 22 year olds." Finally, Bill described his social disconnect as related to where he lives. "I'm actually not very involved with the campus community because I live off-campus quite a bit" (Bill). The reasons for disconnection varied, but the fact that they were not directly linked in with any communities on campus was notable.

Random group encompasses an undefined group based on no set features or focus *per se*, such as descriptions of a group in a dorm/residence hall, a group of friends through bands at college, or a group of activists with various causes. Overall, this segment or primary community was difficult to name, as highlighted by Tyler.

> And as for my group of friends … it's not really the cool kids or the athletes or even the loser's or anything, it's just [a] group of friends. I can't really describe the clique 'cause we're all very different. There's one person who would be really popular and then another person who's an outcast, but really cool if you get to know the person. So, it's just hard to describe the group. (Tyler)

Other participant's random groups are linked to how their college sets up their on-campus living, as placed in a dorm/house, which they remain in while at the institution.

> And then my dorm. I have a small dorm. It's only about 93 people live there. It's the smallest one on campus, and …[it has] a kitchen side and the kitchen side is a full kitchen. And so there's a lot of community around cooking and eating

together. People on the floors usually get along very well. I'm close to about two
floors worth of - kind of in general. (Nate)

Participants fell into multiple themes and were able to describe reasons they were

connected with or in some cases disconnected from their college or university. The next

themes describe what kind of, if any, trans communities participants may have been

connected to, on their campuses.

Table 11. Campus Community

	Academic community	Campus organization/job	Gay/queer community	Not too socially connected	Random group
AJ					
Ben	X	X	X		X
Bill	X	X		X	
Brandon		X	X		
Charlie		X	X		
Deciding		X			
Jack		X	X		X
Jackson	X	X	X		
James1	X				
James2			X		X
JB	X			X	
Joshua		X	X		
Micah	X	X	X		
Mike					
Myles					X
Nate	X	X	X		X
Patrick		X	X		
Ren		X	X		X
Riley					X
Robert		X	X		
Sal		X	X		
Shawn		X			
Tucker	X	X			
Tyler		X	X		X
Wyatt	X	X			X
TOTALS	**9**	**18**	**14**	**2**	**9**

Trans Communities at College

Participants were asked whether they had chosen to engage with any type of trans community at college. Four major themes characterize their answers: *haven't engaged, mostly queer community, there really isn't one,* and *trans community.* For those answers within the theme of *haven't engaged*, there was an understanding of an existing trans community (or communities), but participants were not a part for various reasons. JB, who stated he had some social anxiety issues about entering new spaces, commented that there were other reasons why he had not engaged with trans community at his school.

> It's very cliquey and everybody kind of already has their own friends. So, I mean even an open house just seems like you're like this small flower or something like. … It's kinda of like you have break into a clique and I've never been good at that, and nor do I want to associate with cliquey people. So, it's really hard. Even when I was identifying as gay, I could never find a sense of community and never... I couldn't break into a community like that, and I feel like it's the same thing with this too. But I also feel like within the trans community, there's a lot of nit pickiness, as far as: are you trans enough? And I'm not just… I'm not willing to play that game. I'm just not. (JB)

AJ was not into going to student organization meetings, so he did not connect with the trans community. "I was in [the student organization for LGBT students] for a while, but I just… a bit of squabbling and just can't be buggered. [laughs] … But when it comes to go to weekly meetings, I just cannot get there [laughs]" (AJ). Shawn did not have a reason why but never wanted to connect to the trans community on his campus. "I haven't really. I don't know. I don't really, no. [laughs] I don't know [why]. I just never wanted to" (Shawn). For participants, *haven't engaged* describes a variety of reasons for not participating in already existing trans communities on their campus, whether a disconnection with organizations in general or lack of interest in participating.

Mostly queer community covered descriptions of campuses that had communities that mostly focused on gay and lesbian issues and identities. For example, Tyler explained the demographics, as he saw them, of the LGBT campus organization. "It's just kind of a gay and lesbian group, it seems like" (Tyler). Myles described how he has struggled to meet any other trans people on his campus, but has found support within the queer community.

> At school I haven't really met too many other people who identify as trans. One grad student actually runs the trans support group over at the [LGBT Center], that I've been to once or twice. But whenever gone, I've been the only one there, aside from her, so it's not much of a group. [A staff member at the Center] over at the [LGBT Center], she's the director, she's pretty awesome about stuff. … I went with her to a local public access that's run by some trans women. And I was on that, so that was pretty cool. [The LGBT Center] has been a really good resource for that. But I haven't really met much - too many people in terms of a trans community. More just a general queer community, that is over all pretty supportive. (Myles)

Robert described how he felt tied to the queer community, yet within that community, he felt as though he did not have a place.

> This is something that comes up a lot actually. Almost all of my friends are in the [campus queer organization] or are queer and are a part of that queer group. And I kind of… I don't really consider myself part of other communities on campus. And that's partly because I've had some things and I've actually been out of school for a while this year. So I haven't spread out that much but no, I'm tied to the queer community here, whether I like it or not 'cause it's like I came - sort of I joined it 'cause I knew that I was going to need acceptance and stuff. But then being the only trans person, my place in that group is pretty strange. The gay guys don't know what to make of me and I don't want to be included with the queer women. And it's just - trying to figure things out. Improvising basically. (Robert)

James2 described how he tried to be involved in the queer community on campus but ended up leaving it to try to find a trans community.

> I was the president of [name deleted for confidentiality] which is the queer club here and most of it was gays and lesbians and there wasn't really a [trans] community there, so I kind of left that and I've just kind of used, the other surrounding communities that are to help with that. (James2)

Jack reported that his campus organization was in the process of making their organization more trans inclusive, but he remained uninterested in being connected to them and did not feel that was a trans community.

> At college, not really. I don't know of any trans community. We have [name of organization, deleted for confidentiality] which is basically [like a GSA, edited for confidentiality]. And they're trying to change the name so that it's more trans inclusive because one of their, one of the E-board members is trans now. So that's sort of, it's not really a trans community and I go sometimes but… Ah [sound of disinterest] [laughs]. (Jack)

The theme *mostly queer community* also conveyed how there were distinctions between queer and trans communities, regardless of efforts to create an inclusive environment.

> There's a huge disconnect on our campus. [laughs] The coordinator of the center, she's phenomenal and she tries really, really hard to be trans inclusive and teach other people about trans identity and stuff like that. As much as she can without being a trans person herself. But the students that come in are [laughs] I feel like they're completely ignorant about all things trans and what's appropriate to ask and what's not. And most of the time I feel like trans people are left out of the conversations that happen in there or there's assumptions made that make it uncomfortable for trans people to hang out in there… Yeah, I do think that [there is a disconnect between the trans and queer communities]. Yes for the most part on campus. In the greater [city] area, it's hard to tell, but on campus, at least, I feel like there's a disconnect. (Jackson)

Finally, Joshua mentioned that he was affiliated with the queer community on campus, but the level of drama was too high for him to continue to be connected; instead, he focused on trans activism through membership in a college committee, although he is the only trans person involved in the committee.

> Yeah, I joined a QSA [Queer/Straight Alliance] [laughs]. It was so incredibly dysfunctional. Whatever, at some point I just decided it was not a productive use of my time. It was making me pretty crazy. But, there's, a committee called Trans Campus, which is a sub-committee of the Committee Council for Community. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which basically was like a former affirmative action; it was expanded to cover more stuff. And so, I'm the only student on this committee, which is frustrating because I know there are other trans people on this campus... Anyway, so, there are faculty, staff, and administrators who are on

this committee and, what we do is work on policy and what can we change on this campus. (Joshua)

Participants within *mostly queer communities* felt an urge to connect with trans communities, but did not connect with them because they found they did not exist. Instead, they found potential connections within queer communities, built their own trans inclusion on campus, or found other community connections on campus.

Some participants offered that there was an absence of a trans community or communities on their campus were placed within the theme *there really isn't one*. Tyler said that besides the one trans friend he made, who he does not get along with anymore, he was not aware of any other trans people at his school.

> I have one friend and we're not friends any more. … So I haven't really been able to be around people who understand me. So that's another reason why I've been depressed about it. I'm just around people, they try to understand it, but they just can't. (Tyler)

Sal had a similar experience of being one of the only trans people at his college.

> Well, they don't to seem to think so. … I am friends with someone who's trans who went here and transferred [whispers something] transferred out because it was shitty and was like, "Don't go there. They're gonna be mean." And I was like, "Oh I can take it. Whatever. You're ridiculous." … The people in counseling were like, "Oh in my 30 years I've never seen anyone who identified like that, so it's not our fault that we don't know what to do with you." Baa. But there's a trans student at the law school next door … But, I don't know. They seem to think that we don't exist. (Sal)

Robert also had a similar experience of being one of the only trans people at his school, and mentioned that there was a disconnect between trans and genderqueer identities and experiences.

> We had dinner once. We're not really friends. I mean the trans community is me and then [name deleted for confidentiality], but he's faculty. And then there are the odd people who will call themselves genderqueer, if you talk to them at great length. But that's not an identity they immediately state. That's not something that gets expressed. (Robert)

144

Participants within this theme articulated a possible interest in trans community development yet they were impacted by the lack of numbers of trans people or the dynamics within queer communities to create any sustainable relationships.

Even when there were other trans people on campus, there was not necessarily a connection between trans people in a way that indicated a community. "Yeah, so, [my university] doesn't really have a trans community. There are trans people here and there. Some are out. Most are not. I would say most are not" (Nate). Ben noted a similar experience to Nate's that there were people who identified as trans, but that did not mean that there was a feeling of community.

> There isn't really one. … There's a club that just got formed called [deleted for confidentiality] and I've been sort of participating in that a little bit. They just talk about gender a lot. And I don't really like to talk in a formal setting usually. [laughs] And I've made friends with some other trans or genderqueer identified people since then, but I don't really - It doesn't feel like there's a community here, which really kind of bugged me. It felt like there was very little support and I define my support myself, rather than knowing who I can go to. … So I found people both in the administration and students who could be the support I need but it sort of sucked that there wasn't sort of a more formal community. (Ben)

On Riley's campus, *there really isn't one*, but there was a trans community at a nearby college, although he did not feel confident attending on his own.

> I was going to go [to the meeting at nearby college], but then he had to go back to [his home state], so maybe next semester. I don't know. I guess I would feel somewhat more confident if I had a friend with me. I mean I'm totally open to it, I don't want to ostracize myself from them. (Riley)

There really isn't one described participants' inability to connect with or feel connected to anything that resembled their perception of a community of trans people.

Trans community encapsulated descriptions of levels of involvement by participants in the types of trans community or communities at their college. Bill made

the distinction that he was connected to trans events but not necessarily to the trans

community at his institution.

> Well not with the specifically trans community on campus, but some of my
> friends here are trans and I've always been a part of a trans community. … One of
> the first things I did here was go to the Trans Pride in [in a local town]. I mean
> that's something that's very important. And then when of the other things I do is
> I'm on the [university LGBT speakers bureau]. And so I talked to lots of people
> about being trans all the time. 'Cause it's not something I have a problem talking
> about. (Bill)

Deciding had a different distinction because on his campus, trans people were entwined

with the queer community, so he had connections to both.

> We also have a very active, sort of umbrella group of queer student groups on
> campus, and I've been both members of those of our general sort of catchall queer
> group and also the trans student alliance here. I was an in a leadership position in
> the sort of more general queer group but I've done work with both. (Deciding)

Trans community at Tucker's school was well established, and he enjoyed being

connected, while not having his trans identity the focus of his relationships.

> Once I came here I was - it was really nice actually because there's an established
> trans community here already. And I am not a mentor in it. And I get to just chill
> and sort of reap the benefits of having a really inclusive comfortable community,
> and not having to play that role, which is a new feeling for me … I mean I'm
> involved in the trans community here to some extent. We have a resource center
> for sexuality and gender that I hang out in. And I know trans guys on campus.
> And I make sure if I hear about people who have friends who are just starting to
> come out or something, I make sure that they get the right resources and that they
> go to the right people. But I've actually distanced myself a little more from that
> 'cause it is nice to just sort of not have it be the central issue in my life. (Tucker)

Tucker defined community as connections to people and resources available on campus.

> Other participants described the different reasons they were less connected or why

they stepped away from the *trans community* on their campus. Ren felt as though his

community was too binary focused and transition oriented for him.

> I've kind of distanced myself from them now just because I feel like our trans
> community is very box orientated. It's like, you must go either, M to F, F to M,

146

and that's where you are. It's a very limiting kind of community and we have, like I said, almost everyone has transitioned or is planning to and there's never been much … So, I guess I have problems with that hypocrisy in our community, that and we're like a community of lesbians of trans boys and queer drama is just too much for me. (Ren)

Patrick's affiliation with his *trans community* also diminished toward his junior year because of activist burnout and feeling alienated from the group.

I really did freshman, sophomore, and kind of junior year. I was really active in our group on campus, did a lot of stuff with them, was running it for a little while, and then activists burn out sets in, and I curled up and hid in our theater, and didn't remerge really. … There was a moment that was really, really alienating to me and some other people, but especially to me, that happened. And the way it happened was such that I didn't necessarily want to make an issue for the group, 'cause then it would turn into this whole long discussion series. 'Cause students here talk on end. I'm pretty sure it's not just students here, but from my experience, students here really do talk on end, and nothing changes, and so rather than spark that, I decided to remove myself from the community. (Patrick)

Finally, *trans community* was described as a place where participants lingered, but as with Brandon, once major transition issues were past, then it became less of a priority.

When I first got here I did. Because I am on the gay floor, basically. ... I felt kind of like a disconnect between me and them, simply because my issues were different. And there were a few trans people that I knew and I kind of latched on to them, kinda like, "Oh you're like me. You understand this kind of thing." As time has gone on, and I've kind of assimilated more to, I guess, the male identity, the male everything - transition is basically over in my head - I feel less of a need to have that connection, and I mean I will talk to people, but it's not my priority at all. It's - I don't know if that explains. (Brandon)

Brandon's experience with finding a trans community was dependent on time, and he felt he had completed his transition and had little need to have a community for his trans identity.

Table 12. Trans Community at College

	Haven't engaged	Mostly queer community	There really isn't one	Trans community
AJ	X		X	
Ben	X		X	
Bill	X			X
Brandon				X
Charlie				X
Deciding				X
Jack		X	X	
Jackson		X	X	
James1			X	
James2		X	X	
JB	X			
Joshua			X	X
Micah			X	
Mike				X
Myles		X		
Nate			X	
Patrick				X
Ren				X
Riley	X			
Robert		X	X	
Sal		X	X	
Shawn	X			
Tucker				X
Tyler		X	X	
Wyatt	X		X	
TOTALS	**7**	**7**	**13**	**9**

Trans Communities Not at College

Participants were asked about whether they engaged with trans communities that were outside of their college or university. There were four major themes for this category: *community back home, not a whole lot, off-campus groups,* and *online communities. Community back home* describes communities from their "home" (a place not where they attended college) where participants' felt supported and connected. Only a few participants referenced *community back home* as a personal site for comfort, while

others mentioned those as communities they knew existed but were not personally connected.

Not a whole lot refers to ways participants did not or do not connect to trans communities outside of their college or university setting. (This does not imply that these participants were connected to any trans communities on campus.) Limitations regarding participation to trans communities not at college were scheduling conflicts, geographical limitations, or lack of interest. *Off-campus groups* describe various ways participants were connected to trans organizations or groups in close proximity to their college or university campus. Some ways participants connected with those groups were through Trans Pride events, conferences, trans students at nearby campuses, and youth centers. The level of involvement in these groups varied, dependent on interest, timing, and need (whether there was or was not a community on campus). *Online communities* describe the various ways the Internet facilitated trans community connections as sites for education or combating isolation. Participants utilized YouTube and other videos to learn about and to witness trans identities and joined online discussion groups to seek answers; others described themselves as part of online communities but were not active members of online trans community group or just followed blogs. Still others described online communities as something that they were previously invested in, but now that they were actually dealing with the issues described online, there was not much time, and the experience was not the same.

Table 13. Trans Communities Not at College

	Community back home	Not a whole lot	Off-campus groups	Online communities
AJ		X		
Ben		X	X	X
Bill	X		X	
Brandon		X	X	
Charlie	X	X		
Deciding			X	
Jack			X	
Jackson		X		
James1				
James2			X	
JB		X		X
Joshua		X	X	
Micah			X	
Mike			X	X
Myles			X	
Nate				X
Patrick	X			X
Ren		X		
Riley		X		
Robert	X	X		X
Sal			X	
Shawn				
Tucker				
Tyler				
Wyatt		X		
TOTALS	**4**	**11**	**11**	**6**

Current Gender Identity

I now turn, after describing how they came to a trans identity, to how participants described their current gender identity. In their current gender identity, participants' descriptions were put into four themes, with participants falling within multiple themes, dependent on how much information participants wished or felt compelled to share with others: *a guy*, *genderqueer*, *man and trans*, and *trans*.

A guy included self-descriptors as a man or male under the colloquial term guy. "I currently identify as a guy, a normal guy" (Robert). Some used sexuality as a qualifier,

such as straight or gay. "I'm male and, … [pauses] Yeah, I just identify as male. I mean

nothing a little… maybe a queer male, but still, just male" (JB). *A guy* includes those who

described a core male identity. "I mean, a lot of times I forget that I'm trans so I would

say a man" (James2). Participants did fall into multiple themes (see demographics in

Chapter 3), and for some participants being a guy, without trans as an adjective was

important.

Genderqueer describes a dis-identification with the categories of male and

female, with some participants using the identity of genderqueer; genderqueer was

something more and other outside the confines of a gender binary. "It's really male and

female are just too suffocating for me" (Micah). Other participants use "genderqueer"

with trans as an adjective. "Usually, I identify myself as a genderqueer trans guy" (Bill).

Yet for some participants, *genderqueer* was as a term conditional on audience.

> I identify as genderqueer or trans male, depending on whose asking. … And so,
> unless I want to have a big explanatory session about what genderqueer means,
> and sort of reclamation of the word queer and stuff, I go with trans guy and that
> fits pretty well. (Tucker)

Participants described *genderqueer* as a term that usually required some explanation, so

while it was a preferred personal identification term, they deployed it only within certain

contexts or parameters of willingness to define it for others.

Man and trans indicates the direct association and connection between both terms

as a gender identity. "I identify as male. I identify as a trans man, and I identify with the

masculinity side of like I guess manhood, if you will [laughs]" (Deciding). Participants

who used this language noted the conjunction of the two terms. *Trans*, as a solo term,

described participants who used trans, transgender, or transsexual in their identification.

Some used *trans* as way to distinguish their connection to the gender identity man. "I do

identify as trans. I'm always gonna be trans. That's always going to be part of my struggle" (AJ). *Trans* was also used to make a distinction from "a guy." Patrick, for example, preferred *trans* to be a solo term, with FtM sometimes used as a specific identification term but distinctly avoids identifying as *a guy*.

> I will occasionally identify as trans guy. … I'm not often big on identifying as a guy. I'm really not big on identifying as a man. Because one of the hardest things for me was always tackling how can I be trans. I know I'm not a woman but I'm not also a really a man either. … I try to present more male. And I am trans. (Patrick)

Patrick describes grappling with what it means to be trans and having that be visible to others.

Table 14. Current Gender Identity

	A guy	Genderqueer	Man & Trans	Trans	Gender outlier
AJ	X		X	X	
Ben				X	
Bill		X			
Brandon	X				
Charlie	X		X		
Deciding			X		
Jack	X				
Jackson	X			X	
James1					X
James2	X				
JB	X				
Joshua	X			X	
Micah		X			
Mike	X				
Myles	X				
Nate	X	X	X	X	
Patrick	X	X		X	
Ren		X			
Riley	X		X		
Robert	X				
Sal	X	X		X	
Shawn				X	
Tucker		X		X	
Tyler				X	
Wyatt	X				
TOTALS	16	7	5	10	1

<u>Current Gender Expression</u>

The next area of data presented explores participants' gender expressions, as a part of their gender that accompanies their various gender identities. Three themes were determined to encapsulate current gender expression: *not trying to be masculine*, *relatively masculine*, and *works toward passing*.

Not trying to be masculine conveys how the participants distanced themselves from what they considered very masculine appearances (but not necessarily male), such as gay male, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, and an overall resistance to being aligned with normative masculinity. Charlie described his current gender expression as "metrosexual" and male appearing. He explained,

> Yeah. I, well I'll spend a good amount of day grooming. Do a lot with my hair. I make sure my nails aren't dirty and I just like to wear clothes that match. It's the typical type of gay thing I guess [laughs].

Other participants conveyed how their gender expression was about challenging the restrictiveness of masculinity.

> Masculine to androgynous. I tend to err on the side of masculine, but I like androgynous clothing and I like androgynous looks. I'm more interested in removing obvious gender markers than I am in creating them. (Tucker)

The theme indicated that gender expression was both acceptance of alternate masculinities and rejection of overt stereotypical masculinity.

Relatively masculine reflects answers about gender expression that were somewhere within the masculine spectrum. Robert identified as "more masculine than I'd like because I have to do things in order to pass." Ben described his gender expression as "still kind of androgynous leaning toward masculine." A number of the participants described themselves as falling toward or firmly within the bounds of recognizable

153

masculinity, although distinct from hyper-masculinity. "More toward the masculine. I'm not hyper-masculine" (Jackson). Nate provided this qualifier in his description, "I describe it as generally masculine with some quirky parts." Participants whose descriptions were placed within this theme had connections to masculinity and boundaries with how that masculinity would be expressed.

Works toward passing communicates participants' gender expression as centered on their desire to pass as man, which meant being seen as expressing masculinity.

> I think one of the first things that comes to my mind when I think of my gender expression is that I bind and I work towards passing as male. So, there are things that I do with my dress and appearance to match up to that like keeping my hair short with no bangs. Or things like wearing an undershirt is a very subtle masculine thing that comes out. (Deciding)

Within the theme was an awareness of masculinity and indicators of masculinity (clothing, hair, etc.). Notable were compromises in gender expression that occurred for the sake of visibility/readability—especially for those who seem conflicted about expressing clear masculinity.

> Sometimes I look like a total bro dude and sometimes I totally hate that about myself because I hate bro dudes. … Before I came here [to my college], I was totally like rainbow bandana's and tight pants and whatever. And then I came here and this is not safe space for trans people. And then I started dressing like a bro dude. And kind of expressing it - like when I'm - if I'm a [LGBT group meeting] or in here [my room] it's one thing, but if I'm just walking around campus then you bet I'm going to be stomping around in my tiny little boys Timberland boots and being all, "I'm taking up space, and don't get up in my shit," 'cause you kind of have to. (Sal)

Some participants described how they felt compromised in their gender expression in an effort to pass; yet others felt like passing an important way to clearly convey their gender expression.

There was one outlier for this theme (and in general among the data relating on gender identity and gender expression). James1, who identified as genderqueer, but "I identify as someone with a female body who really is into sort of the male social role, That's the big thing" (James1). Hir gender expression was focused on gender neutrality, in ways to diminish the visible clarity of hir female body.

> I try to just be really neutral 'cause I don't want to make a thing either way 'cause I could go in very stereotypically masculine thing, but I feel like if I do that then it's like I don't want to deal with the whole issue of explaining my gender. (James1)

James1 presented a different kind of trans identity from other participants because ze was focused on social interactions, and hir concerns around embodiment of masculinity or maleness was only related to others' perceptions of whether ze was "doing it wrong." James1's connection to trans identity was rooted in cultural values and roles, with considerations for bodies but mostly about social roles and gender perceptions.

Table 15. Current Gender Expression

	Not trying to be masculine	**Relatively masculine**	**Works toward passing**
AJ	X	X	
Ben		X	X
Bill		X	X
Brandon		X	
Charlie	X		
Deciding			X
Jack		X	
Jackson		X	
James1	X		
James2		X	
JB	X	X	
Joshua		X	
Micah	X	X	
Mike		X	
Myles			X
Nate		X	X
Patrick	X		X
Ren	X	X	
Riley		X	
Robert	X	X	X
Sal			X
Shawn		X	
Tucker	X	X	
Tyler		X	X
Wyatt		X	
TOTALS	**9**	**19**	**9**

Summary of Findings on Gender

In this chapter, I presented findings on how participants described their gender identity and expression prior to identifying as trans. I also described how they came to identify as trans, including the positive and negative experiences since they started identifying as trans. Outside of their context of positive and negative experience, I also introduced findings on how participants described their community affiliations, their connections to trans communities on campus, and their connections to trans communities not on campus. Finally, I provided my findings on how my participants described their

current gender identity and gender expression. The next chapter presents findings on how

participants embody their gender as well as their choices and views on biomedical and

social transitioning (status, choices, and descriptions of components) and their

descriptions of their own masculinity.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS ON TRANSITION AND MASCULINITY

<u>Introduction</u>

Within this chapter, I present my findings on participants' choices around the transition process and their articulations of masculinity. The juxtaposition of transition paths and masculinity is not meant to indicate their interrelatedness; rather, the complexity of the data requires an intentional proximity in the data presentation. The data about transitioning demonstrates a connection with perceptions and embodiment of masculinity within the context of this research, which allows them to be explored within the same chapter. Further, as will be explored in analysis of the data in Chapter 7, presenting the data in this way will allow a context in attempting to answer one of the initial research questions for this project that sought to consider if transition choices were or were not influenced by desires to express or embody masculinity.

<u>Transitions</u>

Transitioning has many components, and intentions of participants varied. Transition possibilities were considerations for all participants, whether or not they had a personal interest to invest in the process. Of interest in this data presentation and why the questions about transition were involved in this study was to glean the type of information accessible and the analysis participants engaged in regarding their past, present, or future choices about transitioning. The sections below present data about where participants found information on transitioning, how they described the components of a transition process, transition status of participants, considerations for

current transition choices, and future considerations about engaging or not engaging in transition choices.

<center>Learning About Trans Identity</center>

The various approaches by which participants described their research on trans identity involves a range of opportunities for learning that a phenomenon as trans identity was possible. Participants described five major sources for learning about trans identity: *books*, *college*, *Internet*, *queer submersion*, and *trans contact*. Some participants used *books* as a source of more information about trans identity or referenced specific books they read that were useful in their self-exploration.

> But probably some of the more profound things were learning about trans identity was a lot of reading I had done, especially Kate Bornstein's (1994) *Gender Outlaw* … [It captured] a lot of things that I had felt but hadn't necessarily had ways to word. … That book was, in a lot of ways, the catalyst for me coming out actually. Finally. (Patrick)

Books provided a recognition of their experiences that were useful tools in learning about trans identities.

College reflects participant assertions that their college or university was a site of learning about trans identity. Participants described various aspects of the college environment as ways they met trans (or gender transgressive) people or uncovered information in their classes.

> So, I didn't really know a whole lot about the trans stuff before I was in college. And even in college, I mean I knew that there were some trans people here, but I didn't really… I didn't really know them very well until after I started thinking about gender. [laughs] Which is kind of funny. (Ben)

The college environment provided multiple sites for participants to seek information about and to explore trans identities.

<center>159</center>

Internet was the most common source for information. Participants conducted

general searches on the Internet or visited specific websites to learn more about trans

identity.

> I started looking at all these videos and reading about all this stuff, and watching
> YouTube videos was really super helpful for me. Seeing all these guys and having
> their transition videos in public view and being so unashamed of who they were.
> (Micah).

Internet information sites included blogs, YouTube, web comics, webzines, and some

specific trans or FtM websites.

> I've always really liked web comics. And when I was first reading up on gender,
> whatever, I read this comic called Venus Envy, which I don't think is running any
> more, but I just remember reading it. And I think that's what kind of caught my
> attention the most, more than just this is what this means and this is what this
> means. So, I'd say that was my introduction. (Bill)

Internet provided information about trans identities as well as exposure to trans people's

documented lives.

Queer submersion refers to participant involvement in high school GSAs, college

LGBT groups, or queer community groups that led to their trans identity awareness. "But

yeah, just sort of submerging myself in the queer and feminist arenas is how I learned

about it" (Jackson). The interconnectedness of trans identities and queer identities was

linked to their interrelation within the moniker of LGBT. "I was really into MySpace at

that point. I had a group on my MySpace that was for like, butch, lesbians, and then I

noticed that a lot of people that in it were also trans" (James2). The variety of sources for

participants in the Internet provided them with both vast content and narrative

experiences.

Trans contact involved family members, friends, staff at college or youth centers,

or contacts at Pride events (trans or gay pride) that gave participants information on the

possibilities in trans identities. "When I was 16 and in my high school's Gay-Straight

Alliance - so one of the other members was trans. That kind of started my brain thinking"

(Bill). In some cases, the *trans contact* came through the Internet, via a trans person's

blog or through fictional television shows that led to finding blogs or other points of

contact.

> A lot of it was from *The L-Word* and then because of my interest in it, and the fact that I - that's me, I looked it up online. I started finding out information from websites and then [LGBT group] events too. They have trans booths and stuff, so I'd go there and talk to them, except they were mainly trans women so. 'Cause it seems like that's more common actually for some reason. But yeah that's it. (Tyler)

Trans contact described any interactions, virtual or face-to-face, participants had about

life experiences of trans people.

Table 16. Learning About Trans Identity

	Books	College	Internet	Queer submersion	Trans contact
AJ	X				X
Ben	X	X	X		X
Bill	X		X	X	X
Brandon			X		
Charlie	X		X		
Deciding	X	X			X
Jack			X	X	X
Jackson		X	X	X	
James1					X
James2			X	X	
JB			X		
Joshua	X				X
Micah			X		X
Mike	X				X
Myles		X	X		
Nate					X
Patrick	X	X	X		
Ren		X		X	X
Riley	X		X		
Robert			X	X	X
Sal	X		X		X
Shawn			X		X
Tucker	X		X		X
Tyler	X		X		X
Wyatt			X		
TOTALS	**12**	**6**	**18**	**6**	**17**

Transition Information Sources

To begin presenting the complex data on transitioning, the first to be examined is the types and kind of information sources about the transition process. Three major themes best describe sites and sources of information for participants: *online/Internet*, *other trans people*, and *other various sources*. These three themes reflected as much about the process of seeking information as the ways information was accessible to them. Many participants used a combination of resources in gaining information about transitioning.

Online/Internet describes where participants sought information. Sal succinctly described his use of the Internet: "So after I heard that these things existed [about transitioning], I was just like, 'Internet tell me,' and the Internet is really helpful" (Sal). Participants described looking for information on the Internet and listed specific websites that were useful, including DSM, Google searches, MySpace, YouTube (videos of trans people and transitioning), web comics, and Wikipedia. Information sought via the Internet included packing (any type of padding or phallic-type item in one's pants or underwear that gives the impression of a penis), researching information, reading other trans guys' stories, watching videos trans guys posted about their transition, and information on hormones (types, doses, and injection methods). Participants also used the Internet to research information provided by trans people. "Different websites and then on YouTube people explain it a lot. They'll teach you how to give yourself injections and so that would be where I found it out" (Robert). The Internet provided access to other trans men's transitions, which provided context and connection.

> I started looking at all these videos and reading about all this stuff, and watching YouTube videos was really super helpful for me. Seeing all these guys and having their transition videos in public view and being so unashamed of who they were. … And it just clicked so hard. (Micah)

Online/Internet provided multiple kinds of sites for information about the existence of transitioning methods but also personal experiences with going through the transition process.

Other trans people were another information source that participants cited. "Groups, I mean, talking to other people who were going through it" (Joshua). Participants described a variety of interactions as informational sources. They had dated someone who is trans, a trans person who openly transitioned at their school,

163

observations of a trans friend who was very stealthy and found his female past traumatic,

and conversations with other trans friends.

> Definitely talking to people. I think it also helped that one of my friends last year,
> one of my trans friends, he pretty much came back at the beginning of last year…
> And he was on hormones by January. So, he's sort of handled things in a different
> way than I did. He had sort of much bigger social transition. (Ben)

Other trans people introduced participants to resources about where to access transition

options, how to transition (such as binding, which refers to the literal binding of one's

female breasts to give a more masculine appearing chest), and community connections

(attending groups set up for trans people).

> There were a lot of trans men on this campus, not so many trans women.
> But once I came here I sort of like learned more of the reality of things and
> sort of got a better understanding of things in general. (Deciding)

Trans men were not the only trans people who provided information, as participants

found information from trans women they dated or trans women who are friends, even

though the transition process is different.

> And we [he and his trans woman friend] had talked about gender so many times
> and she was the only person I could talk about gender … She just was so
> knowledgeable about this stuff because she had already gone through it and
> granted it's from a different perspective but I was just talking to her. (Micah)

Participants talked about mentors, such as one mentor at youth center who was a trans

male and then older trans people who have served as mentors, who answered transition-

related questions as well as their general experience being trans.

> After I was out for a while people started pointing me in the direction of other
> trans people who were older than me and who had done medical transitioning
> things. Which is cool 'cause some of the people have become really, really close
> to me and sort of like big brother type figures, which is awesome. (Sal)

Not all trans interactions were personal relationships, as participants discussed authors

and artists with whose work they connected; while these were not necessarily a personal

connection *per se*, the access and content of the work was, for some, instrumental in

making connections about desire or lack of desire for genital surgery. For example,

Tucker was looking for information about bottom surgery options.

> He [Loren Cameron (1996), author of *Body Alchemy*] actually came here, which
> was brilliant… But I came across his photography right after I came here. So I'd
> been identifying as trans already but there are so few resources about what bottom
> surgery looks like and how it works. (Tucker)

Participants who did not personally know any trans people found opportunities to speak

with trans people, such as going to events that had a trans speaker or content or LGBT

Pride events that had trans -specific booths.

Other various sources sketches either vague references to sources described by

only a few participants that do not fall into *online/Internet* or *other trans people*. Most of

the *other various sources* were coupled with either *online/Internet* and/or *other trans

people*. Some of the descriptions were vague, using phrases, such as "read about it" or

"did research."

> So I did all this research. I looked into the transgender community and everything
> just fit and it seemed like for once in my life someone knew how I was feeling.
> And I - yeah I did a lot of research [laughs]. (Charlie)

Other participants talked about books (memoirs and fiction), content in academic courses,

and media (television shows, documentaries, and fictional movies).

> In my intro gender studies class [laughs]. Yeah and then we sort of glossed over
> it, but it was a piece of it. And then also in my Philosophy of Sex, Gender, and
> Society class was a little bit more in depth. We got to read Jennifer Boylan's
> book, *She's Not There,* and so once I realized that it was possible… (Jackson)

There was not necessarily any one person or source Jack needed to connect with, rather it

came from his own intuition. "Well, I guess in terms of changing my name and my

pronoun, it was intuitive. … Clothes, it was intuitive… And hormones... I guess half

intuitive and have therapy maybe. I don't know" (Jack). Within this theme was an assertion that some pieces of information were intuitive, coupled with another source of information.

Table 17. Transition Information Sources

	Online/Internet	Other Trans People	Other Various Sources
AJ		X	
Ben	X	X	X
Bill	X	X	
Brandon	X		
Charlie	X		X
Deciding		X	X
Jack	X	X	X
Jackson	X		X
James1			
James2	X		
JB	X		X
Joshua		X	X
Micah	X	X	
Mike			X
Myles	X		X
Nate	X		X
Patrick	X		X
Ren		X	X
Riley	X		
Robert	X		
Sal	X	X	
Shawn	X	X	X
Tucker	X	X	
Tyler	X	X	X
Wyatt	X		
TOTALS	**19**	**12**	**14**

Transition Components

The next subsection of data addresses what participants consider to be the components of transitioning. Popular culture often refers to transitioning as "the sex change surgery," but the literature and medical model define it as a multitude of

components that include social, emotional, hormonal, surgical, therapeutic, and other

changes (Martin & Yonkin, 2006). Participants varied their focus between transition as a

physical/medical process, or as a social process, with some naming both. The three major

themes from this category were: *physical transition*, *self-acceptance*, and *social*

transition.

Physical transition characterizes the physical (referred to as medical by some

participants) components of transitioning including: hormones, surgery (mostly

referencing chest reconstruction surgery and not genital reconstruction surgery), therapy,

and hysterectomy. "Well, I think the major two physical ones would just be considered

hormones, and for me, top surgery because I care a lot less about bottom surgery"

(Brandon). Therapy, as a topic, was included within this theme because it referred to the

gatekeeping role of counseling to determine eligibility for medical transition related

choices. "I went to therapy for a while. I probably will have to go again before I get a

note. [laughs] It's not really my favorite" (Jackson). There were some overlaps between

physical transition and *social transition*, especially as it related to how the

physical/medical seemed urged on by social pressures of conformity, legal boundaries, or

safety concerns.

> I haven't had a hysto [hysterectomy], which for a while was like, "Oh whatever, I
> don't need to do that," like, "There's nothing wrong with the parts, so just leave
> 'em," but now I'm realizing that I might not be able to get my birth certificate
> changed if I don't. (Joshua)

Joshua did not have any interest in having a hysterectomy, as his internal female organs

did not impact his self-view or comfort, but issues of safety would influence his choices

to seek out different surgical options or needs. Although his uterus is not outwardly

apparent, its internal presence may impact his ability to change legal documents, and

identity documents that are mismatched are problematic for identity verification, leaving

him vulnerable to government and medical scrutiny.

Self-acceptance was described as a component of the transition process to indicate

how participants sought self-acceptance about their choices.

> The rest of all my process was all mental. Finding what it meant to be male and then that's still a work in progress because I had this ideology of what male, maleness, is all about based on conditioning because I had two brothers and a dad. And they're whole ideology of male, I basically adopted that, and it wasn't until really I went to [my college] and started really looking at masculinity, in looking at the screw ups, the seriously fucked up things that we do to our kids, that I realized that the only way I'm going to find masculinity is to look within myself. (Mike)

The process of *self-acceptance* was indicated as a continuous component to the transition

process.

> You're male, but you're different. And a lot of people never come to terms with accepting that and so they have a lot of anger and a lot of just adverseness to the fact that they were born transgender, and it's not fair. So, I think accepting the fact that you are trans and you're a different type of male is a big part of transitioning. (Charlie)

Another participant noted that part of *self-acceptance* in the transition process was about

self-education.

> Educating myself about queer theory and doing lots of reading and making sure that I have a good understanding of as much as I can. So I've done a lot of reading by people who are either trans male or genderqueer or connected to trans male people and some trans women. (Tucker)

In general, *self-acceptance* referred to how participants needed time to become

comfortable with themselves and their gender identity evolution, including exploring

masculinity, which intersected with concepts within the theme *social transition*.

Social transition encapsulates the socio-political, socio-legal, and interpersonal

aspects of transitioning (generalized as social) that includes pronouns, mental state,

understanding male social roles/socialization, adjusting to others' perceptions, passing

and trying to pass, social name change, legal name change, wardrobe, and haircut.

> I guess, I mean, the first thing that really started my transition was changing my name and then my pronouns. And then I feel like that was the big step, in coming out to everybody. And then starting to use male pronouns was definitely a part of it, but I don't know, it's just a natural progression after that. (Bill)

Social transition contained urgency by participants to be viewed as a male; being seen as

male, without confusion or mistakes, seemed to be common among the descriptions.

> And I think the other component, I guess would be learning to socialize as male. I never did that, obviously, as a child. And kind of learning the rules of being male in a male society and making mistakes and laughing about it later but it having it being really awkward at the time. (Brandon)

Coming out was a part of *social transition*, which allowed participants to try out ideas

and develop comfort with their gender, establishing a platform to consider biomedical

transition options.

> I've been transitioning since, I guess, like socially transitioning since September. I came out to all my friends in October, telling them my preferred name and my preferred pronouns, which went really well. And I started wearing binders, and I started packing, so it's been sort of this social process where I'm fixing the appearances that I have already. (Micah)

Overall, *social transition* deals with the interactions between the participant and the

world, whether through documents, interpersonal relationships, or internally with their

own decision-making.

Table 18. Transition Components

	Physical Transition	Self-acceptance	Social transition
AJ	X		X
Ben	X		X
Bill			X
Brandon	X		X
Charlie	X	X	
Deciding			X
Jack	X		X
Jackson	X		X
James1			X
James2			
JB		X	X
Joshua	X		X
Micah	X		X
Mike	X	X	X
Myles			
Nate	X		X
Patrick	X		X
Ren			
Riley			
Robert	X	X	X
Sal	X		X
Shawn	X		X
Tucker	X	X	X
Tyler			X
Wyatt	X		X
TOTALS	**16**	**5**	**20**

Transition Interest and Status

Participants were asked, "Do you consider yourself as someone who seeks to transition? Why or Why not?" Transition was never defined for participants; it was left open to individual interpretation, and there was a range of answers provided (social, political, legal, physical, and internal). The major themes capture participants' overall transition status and perspectives: *hormones*, *chest surgery*, *bottom surgery*, *hysterectomy*, *legal documents, need to change body*, *not yet begun*, and *no plans to transition*.

170

Bottom surgery delineates participants' perspectives on the various options and types of genital surgeries. Only one participant had any type of bottom surgery, and he was very content with the results.

> And I went up here to [a surgeon in Canada] in 2000. 2000, yeah I think so. And had a clitoral release with testicular implants. My whole reason for waiting that long was I was hoping the technology would catch up, and technology has come a long way. (Mike)

A few others had the perspective of wanting or considering bottom surgeries. "Other bottom surgery eventually. It's probably going to be a while before I can afford anything like that" (Wyatt). Most participants stated that they were unconvinced of the results or not interested in pursuing (or really considering) any kind of bottom surgery; these perspectives can be summarized by Deciding's response. "The jury is out on bottom surgery." Further, they felt there were many kinds to consider, were uncertain if they would truly pursue because of financial feasibility concerns, or felt the surgical options were still primitive. "I would never get bottom surgery until it's better. … In my mind [it's] a waste of time and money" (Ren). Generally, perspectives were enmeshed in a conflicted about whether they would pursue bottom surgery because of issues of recovery, cost, or necessity. "So, I - sometimes I'm like, yeah I want that, but maybe10 years from now. And sometimes I'm like, 'Hmm, I think I can do without.' I don't know" (Sal). Many participants indicated that they were not interested in pursuing bottom surgery at this time, or at all, but that was dependent on finances, surgical advancement in procedures, and future personal desires.

Chest surgery communicates participants' perspectives on various types of breast removal and chest sculpting surgeries, commonly referred to as *top surgery*. Participants had various perspectives, including a desire to have chest surgery, plans already made to

171

have chest surgery, and had undergone chest surgery. In general, there was a desire for a

male-appearing chest. "Well, the chest surgery because I just don't think that there should

be boobs on my body. Let's be honest. [laughs] I just don't think they should be there. It

doesn't feel right to me" (Jackson). A number of participants were in the process of

saving enough money or finding a surgeon, since most insurance policies do not cover

the procedure.

> Yep [I want chest surgery], hopefully, I guess optimistically within the next year
> and then maybe realistically within the next two years. … I think I'll be able to
> get my finances together. I've already, kind of, started to prep for that, so. I'm
> hoping at least within the next two years. (James2)

Other participants described themselves as "pretty sure" they would have chest surgery,

with the rationale mostly for others' perception than for self.

> I'm pretty sure I want surgery. Although I don't necessarily have a huge problem
> with my chest. But the problem I have is what other people interpret it to mean …
> I mean in a perfect world you wouldn't have to do anything. But in a less perfect
> world, I would take hormones, but not do the surgery. But I want to teach high
> school. And I want to do all these things and it feels like it's a necessary process.
> And I think I would enjoy having a flat chest. But I don't know. It's kind of
> complicated I guess. (Bill)

Jack stated he was not actively pursuing chest surgery but not opposed to it.

The desire for a male-appearing chest was a significant factor, even for those who

felt their chest was not large. "Yeah. So, surgery is top surgery [and] is kind of a no

brainer. Even if I wasn't trans, I would want top surgery because I never wanted 'em.

Would like to get rid of 'em. [laughs]" (Nate). Length of time for those making plans for

chest surgery ranged from a few months or within a year or so. Most considerations for

time were based on when or how to cover the costs of the surgery.

> I really want to get top surgery. It's really my number one priority, but since it's
> so expensive. Testosterone will obviously be first. I mean, if I can get that [chest

surgery] first that would be great, but I can't. [laughs] So, money, money, money. (Micah)

As much as participants expressed significant interest in *chest surgery,* many noted the way cost was a hindrance to pursuing it as a current option.

Hormones describe participants' views on the decision about taking testosterone (T). Descriptions included length of time on T and consideration of T. "But, yeah, hormones are definitely on my agenda. I have my doctor's appointment in seven days, which is really awesome" (Sal). More than half of the participants described themselves as on T, with some on T for as short as a few weeks to others on T for as long as decades. One participant, in the transcript confirmation follow-up, let me know that he had begun T, and another who became connected to me via social media went on T within a year after the interview. Those in consideration of going on T described weighed a variety of factors in their decision-making, including health concerns, uncertain about permanent changes, and consideration of family reactions. Tucker was uncertain about whether going on T would feel like a push into the "other" gender box.

> I don't plan on taking hormones right now, but it's certainly possible that my mind will change about that 'cause I've certainly gone back and forth over the past two years. … But, I keep coming back to: I know that I'm going to be just as unhappy in the other gender box. (Tucker)

The development of secondary sex characteristics from T, for Tucker, would be too much like being confined within a different category in the gender binary, but he remained opened to the possibility in the future.

Most participants highlighted the secondary sex characteristic developments that were a result of injecting T, such as a deeper voice, facial hair, and the end of menses. "I was so excited to get on T. [laughs] Especially when my facial hair started coming in…

173

Getting myself, or getting that image to look the way I felt like I should look, was very important to me." (Mike). The uses of testosterone to highlight masculinizing characteristics were a major impetus for going on the hormone.

Hysterectomy reflects the range of interest by participants in undergoing a hysterectomy. A few participants described themselves as considering having a hysterectomy because of the possible side effects of hormones (health risks of cancer), current insurance coverage for the surgery, or to avoid other health problems.

> The only thing I would consider is if something started to go wrong downstairs and I need to have things removed, and insurance would cover it, then I'd go that route. But otherwise, I'm just like whatever, leave it alone. I don't care. (Brandon)

There were legal implications for some regarding the surgery, since it is required in some states for a gender marker change on a birth certificate. Riley noted that his interest in a hysterectomy was not based on desire but on discomfort going to the doctor for pelvic exams.

> Yeah, I mean, I can I pass 100% of the time now so that's a big over the hill I think. And I think I could probably technically live the rest of my life like this … The thing I can't really deal with or really don't want to deal with is having to go ob-gyn appointments every year. (Riley)

There was varied interest in the surgery with a few participants expressing a desire to have the surgery, especially if on T, as a plan for the future, while others described a "wait and see" position.

Legal documents covers how participants noted concerns about changing in legal documents to match current gender identity, which is a transition component. Legal documents for these participants, included name change, and social security name change.

174

I changed my name. And the first step after that is [to] change your Social Security card. I did that. And then after that I got my [State deleted for confidentiality] ID. … Legal documents as for my gender… that's not going to happen in this state until I get some sort of surgery. And I'm not going to very soon. So, whenever I decide to think about surgery, that's when I'll decide to think about changing those documents. (Jack)

Less definitive were changing gender markers on birth certificates, whether due to legal issues (variance of state by state requirements) or less desire to change those documents.

Need to change body illustrates an overall need for bodies to change, not just because of the physical representation but for the psychic harm the current state of the body caused to the participant.

I'm tired of looking at it [my physical body]… I do [bind my chest] when I feel like passing even then I don't pass. … It's just a very large mental anguish that I feel, looking at this body and knowing that it's nowhere near what I want to be and not just because of my weight. It's rather difficult. (AJ)

Participants described their desire to undergo biomedical transition aspects as about a need to find a body that feels right, even if it will never be as perfect as desired.

For me, I know that I will never have the body that I imagine I want, but I would like to take steps toward obtaining that. Because for me being able to pass as male is important but also being able to like pass within myself as male is sort of like key to my happiness and with every step that I've taken from coming out to starting on T, whether it was like changing my address or like starting to bind or changing my pronouns. Every step that I've taken has made me happier and I want to continue that. (Deciding)

For some participants, there were certain aspects that urged the need for biomedical intervention to the point of desperation, such as Mike who recounted how the pain was overwhelming.

My girlfriend who is now my wife, came home one afternoon and found me sitting in my - and at the time we were roommates - found me sitting in my bedroom with a shot gun in my mouth. And I put my head back just far enough to tell her to go away. And she sat down right in front of me and she says, "You're not going to go out alone." And I said, "I just can't do this anymore." And she said, "So let's find a way to do something else." And that was the turning point in

175

my life, is to know that somebody out there was willing to help me find a way to stop being in al; the pain I was in. (Mike)

Overall, participants described that the transition process did or would allow them to feel more comfortable with their bodies, and surgeries served to enhance that comfort; basically, *need to change body* explains how transitioning was a way to feel comfortable with themselves.

No plans to transition described only one participant who had no plans for any form of biomedical transition because the cost is too high for what ze considered low rewards.

It's like it would make me a little bit happier for a huge amount of effort and money… I'm going to Scotland which has … sort of a different thing about how we sort gender and so it even drops it further as a need because there's all these other social cues that I would use on interacting with people. And it's yeah just not a priority. (James1)

James1 was the only participant to express a desire not to pursue any form of biomedical transition.

Not yet begun captured those participants who had yet to begin any biomedical transition process but had plans to begin relatively soon. Ben had a variety of factors that caused him not to pursue biomedical transition options. "It sort of has to do with financial stuff, as well as family, and it has to feel like it's okay timing and stuff. Feeling stable enough in my job and all these other things" (Ben). Most common constraints cited by participants were family, health insurance, campus opportunities, finances, and timing.

176

Table 19. Transition Interest/Considerations and Status

	Hormones	Chest Surgery	Bottom Surgery	Hysterectomy	Legal Documents	Need to Change Body	Not Yet Begun	No Plans to Transition	Social Transitioning	Transition Complete
AJ	X	X	X			X				
Ben							X			
Bill	X	X	X	X						
Brandon	X	X	X	X						X
Charlie	X	X	X	X						X
Deciding	X	X	X			X				
Jack	X	X	X		X					
Jackson	X	X		X						
James1									X	
James2	X	X								
JB	X	X				X				
Joshua	X	X		X						X
Micah	X	X							X	
Mike	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Myles	X	X	X			X				
Nate	X	X								
Patrick	X	X		X	X					
Ren	X	X	X			X	X			
Riley	X	X		X		X				X
Robert	X	X	X							
Sal	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Shawn	X	X	X					X		
Tucker	X	X							X	
Tyler	X	X	X	X		X				
Wyatt	X	X	X	X		X				
TOTALS	**23**	**23**	**14**	**11**	**4**	**10**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**4**

Transition Choice Influences

In this category, data presented cover the reasons and rationales that influenced

choices participants made about transition options. There were five main themes

regarding factors that influenced the current choices participants had made in their

transition process: *access to resources*, *family impact*, *not really*, and *self-exploration*.

     Access to resources reports how participants had limited access to resources,

which was a factor that influenced their transition choices. Resources, such as money and

health insurance, were the two most common factors cited.

> I'd say really it would be a matter of time and money … If I have the money and I
> am able to do it. I'm not going to go broke doing it. But it's important and so I
> wouldn't say that really anything outside of finances. (James2)

Participants also described geography as a factor because it limited access to therapists

(no therapists in college town, had to travel out of state, or difficulty in finding a

competent therapist).

> So, … specifically the reason why I'm driving the frigg down to Philadelphia is
> because … there are no good therapist around here. When I say there are no good
> therapist, I don't mean about gender. I mean there are no good therapist [laughs]
> in this area. (Patrick)

Participants noted the limitation of knowledgeable and/or reasonably located health care

providers.

     Tyler explained his perceptions of the counseling center at his college and what

he perceived to be the limitations of staff therapists.

> Well there's counseling at the school, but I hear they … number the amount of
> times you can meet with them. It is free, but it's also it's not even like every
> Friday at this time… So, it's not really an option, plus if they're not accepting
> even though they have to be, they're not - they're probably not trained to deal
> with this, and I want to go to someone who is trained in the specific area, and
> know what they're doing and understand it. (Tyler)

Limited resources, access to transportation, money, and age were common factors

described that limited *access to resources* that influenced transition choices.

Family impact reflects how considerations of family were included in

participants' choices, including how coming out to family (chosen or biological) delayed

or influenced choices. For those participants who were financially dependent on family,

not coming out or finding support set limits on going on hormones until family was

aware (and hopefully supportive).

> The fact that my family doesn't know, so that makes it nearly impossible to start getting facial hair and all that. Also, since I don't have a job and I don't have money, I need my parents to pay for things and since they don't know, they're not going to pay for that, and then I have to lie about things, which isn't cool. (Tyler)

Pace or speed of a transition process was impacted by family response, input, or opinions.

> But really I think like family reactions… They weren't bad … [They were] just really trying to convince me that I made the wrong decision. And it did make me, I think, slow down the process a lot. Which in the end I think is good, I think that's a good thing. … So, I think forcing myself to slow down was actually really, really helpful. (Joshua)

Concerns about acceptance were conflicted with internal desires to feel comfortable

created difficult family relationships, such as for Robert, who talked about his delaying

transition because of his relationship with his grandmother.

> The reason was my grandmother was diagnosed with cancer two years ago. … I was her first grandchild, and she really, really likes me and she had this whole thing, my whole life about me being the pretty granddaughter. … I didn't want to ruin that illusion for her. … I was going to put off transition, and then I realized that I would never get a chance to tell her … So, that [she passed away] happened and I never told her (Robert)

In general, participants conveyed that they were hoping to ensure family support before

beginning a biomedical transition process.

Not really describes how, for a few participants, there were not really any

significant factors that influenced their transition choices. This theme does not mean

179

participants did not consider factors, but these participants noted that none of them had any significant impasses that influenced their decision-making.

> I mean, not really. My family [was] pretty much okay. … At this point, I was already half-living as male so I could only go one-way or the other. … So, socially it made sense. Financially, it didn't cost me much to start on hormones 'cause it's pretty cheap through the student health center. I mean money was something of a concern for the surgery, but it was worth it. (Wyatt)

A couple of participants noted they did not have much of a relationship with family, so transitioning against their wishes was not much of a consideration in their choices. "And as far as my family, I've come this far, pretty much against their wishes, so I wouldn't say that they would really impact it any further at this point" (James2).

Self-exploration describes how participants considered self-exploration as a significant factor that influenced their transition choice decisions.

> What I choose to do with it [my last year in college] was sort of be like 60% out. [laughter] Which is kind of an awkward place to be and in some ways I wish I hadn't chosen that, but I needed time to feel sure about my decision. Sure about my identity. Sure that I want to go through all this. And comfortable with all the things that were changing. I knew I needed that time. (Ben)

Participants recounted how they needed time to develop a sense of self-comfort with transitioning, considerations regarding the impact of testosterone, reflecting on self-perceptions, and time to feel secure in their choices. "But, I think just coming to a point where I'm comfortable with myself and every step that I've taken along the way, even before coming to terms with this, the more masculine I got the more comfortable I felt" (JB). *Self-exploration* covers the need for participants to make choices that fit with their own sense of self (identity and expression), which was an important factor for their choices to engage in (or not) different aspects of biomedical transition.

180

Table 20. Transition Choice Influences

	Access to Resources	Family Impact	Not Really	Self-exploration	Safety
AJ	X	X		X	
Ben	X	X		X	
Bill			X	X	
Brandon	X			X	
Charlie	X	X			
Deciding				X	
Jack	X		X		
Jackson		X		X	
James1					
James2	X	X	X		
JB				X	
Joshua		X		X	
Micah	X	X			
Mike					
Myles					
Nate					
Patrick	X				
Ren				X	
Riley	X				
Robert		X			
Sal		X		X	
Shawn				X	
Tucker	X			X	X
Tyler	X	X		X	
Wyatt			X		
TOTALS	**11**	**10**	**4**	**13**	**1**

Future Influences Regarding Transition Choices

Participants were asked if there were any factors that might influence future choices about transition components. Four major themes were determined as emergent: *family considerations*, *finances*, *health factors*, and *issues of safety*.

Family considerations deals with all forms of family (parents, having children, sexual partners, and possible future partner) and how those relationships may be a factor in future transition choices. "Also my parents. [laughs] But I think that I've kind of gotten to the point where I'm moving after I graduate, so it's kind of like a whatever"

(Jackson). Part of *family considerations* included coming to terms with family rejection of trans identity and making decisions about what is the right choice for the participant. "And I'm sorry my family isn't going to change my mind unless they come up with something really, really good, and I can't figure out what that would be" (Ren). Future partners (as a form of chosen family) and the possible sexual limitations within those relationships were a factor within this theme as well. "'Cause right now, I'm happy with where I am, but sexual possibilities are probably the only thing that are creating any type of …[hesitation to say I am done with any future surgical options]" (Charlie). *Family considerations* included needs and desires for future partners that might influence participants' sense of self or embodiment.

Finances covered all aspects of finances as they related to future transition choices, such as income and cost of procedures/prescriptions.

> Part of the reason I haven't figured why I'm planning to have top surgery is 'cause I don't know when I'm going to be able to afford it. But, I think I'm probably going to try and do it so I can add it into student loans. (Bill)

The ability to financially access surgical options and other related biomedical transition options were the most common consideration. "Probably at this point the major factor, the main factors, are money and insurance stuff. But how am I going to be able to afford to do this?" (Patrick). Regardless of the strength of a participant's desire to engage in biomedical transition options, lack of funding or health insurance coverage served as a significant impediment to their pursuit of biomedical transition options.

Health factors encompassed any issues related to health that were factors regarding biomedical transition consideration.

> Probably not the only thing that would probably throw a wrench in things or influence a decision otherwise is any other health issues that either would come

182

into play. I mean, right now I'm having some health issues that already[are] pushing things back. So, I think that would be the only thing that would probably alter where I think this going and where I think I need to be happy at this point. (JB)

Unknown factors regarding long-term use of testosterone were a concern and whether participants would consider a hysterectomy based on the possible health risks. "Well, cancer, that would be a big influencer. If that pops up I'm going to make some quick changes [laughs]" (Brandon). Ren described his significant investment in the biomedical transition process, and that short of death, he would pursue those options. "It's kind of a given that it's going to happen, I just don't know exactly how. I don't think anything will make me stray from it except for: no this will kill you" (Ren). In general, a major influence was whether any biomedical transition choice would lead to a significant health risk.

Issues of safety included concerns about the ability to find or keep a job as well as whether their trans identity would cause them to be seen as unsafe to work with children, inability to provide matching identity documents, geography, and lack of proximity to other trans people. "I want to teach children eventually, and I'm afraid I will not be accepted. And you know what? Anything job related that I'm scared" (Shawn). Geography was a component regarding safety concerns.

I want to make sure that I in the future, if I moved to an area in the country where I can have access to health care that is less judgmental. Where I know that, I could hopefully walk into the hospital and potentially be safe. (Deciding)

While biomedical transition options provide trans men the ability to live as men, the issues of safety remain a concern, especially in vulnerable situations, such as emergency health treatment by doctors and other medical staff who have never encountered trans

bodies; the uncertainty of whether trans men would be treated well (or even treated at all) is a significant concern for their future safety.

Table 21. Future Transition Choice Influences

	Family Considerations	Finances	Health Factors	Issues of Safety	Matching Documents	Pretty Satisfied	Transition Options
AJ		X	X				X
Ben		X					X
Bill		X					X
Brandon		X	X				X
Charlie	X					X	X
Deciding		X		X			X
Jack		X			X		X
Jackson	X	X	X				X
James1					X		
James2	X				X		X
JB			X				
Joshua				X	X		X
Micah			X				
Mike							
Myles	X						
Nate							
Patrick		X					X
Ren	X		X				
Riley	X					X	
Robert							X
Sal							X
Shawn				X	X		X
Tucker	X	X	X	X			X
Tyler		X		X			X
Wyatt							X
TOTALS	**7**	**10**	**7**	**5**	**5**	**2**	**17**

Hindsight

The topic of hindsight reflects a question to participants about whether there was information currently known to them that they wished was known to them when they first started identifying as trans. Six themes convey the range of answers about the kind of

prior knowledge, if any, participants in hindsight wished they had known prior to identifying as trans: *gender flexibility*, *more information*, *okay with process*, *trans visibility*, *trusted others*, and *trusted self*.

Gender flexibility encompasses how participants articulated having prior knowledge that identifying as trans did not diminish or require them to reject any form of gender flexibility. Participants expressed a wish that they had known that there were different ways of being trans. "Mainly that just 'cause you say trans doesn't mean there's one definition for that" (Ren). The descriptions included how participants wished they had knowledge about variations and ways to approach trans identity instead of the prescribed Harry Benjamin Standards Assessment (Meyer et al., 2001). "Every gender identity is valid and you don't have to ascribe to the sort of Benjamin Standards of Care thing, which is you must be fully transsexual and straight" (Tucker). Bill expressed his desire to hear about variations of masculinity as it related to transition readiness. "I wish that I had known that [pauses] I didn't have to feel 100% like this, I don't know, this stereotypical guy to transition" (Bill). Included in this theme were desires articulated by participants to have access to multiple narratives of trans experiences. *Gender Outlaws* (Bornstein, 1994) was specifically mentioned as a text that opened up possibilities for gender identity and expression.

More information reflects a broad range of content that participants wished they had known earlier, which included but was broader than *gender flexibility*. Charlie described how he wished there was just more information instead of the misinformation he assumed to be true.

> [I wish I had known] … that you couldn't go to a plastic surgeon [laughs] and have them change everything. Yeah, that. I wish I had known more about the

185

process. I wish I had known about getting therapy and about what it was. I just
wish I had known what exactly was going on 'cause then I - It was good that I had
saved up all that money from before for some ambiguous surgery [laughs].
(Charlie)

Honest, clear, and direct information was a common area of wished for hindsight
knowledge. Shawn simply wished he had learned of trans identities sooner.

I kind of wished I had known. I mean I knew the term transgender and transsexual
in high school, but I didn't know it, you know? Like I didn't - and I almost wish I
had because I feel like even in high school I could have started this process. Or at
least the summer before I came to [my college]. (Shawn)

Participants named a vast number of topics that in hindsight, they wish they had known
more information about, including on-campus resources, surgical options, how to
participate in collegiate sports, existence of trans people, health issues, books, general
resources, multiple narratives of trans experiences, do assuming gay people will be
accepting, feeling like an outsider would not always persist, passing and how it related to
context, role model considerations, and knowing about how difficult it would be to relate
to women as a man. The most prevalent areas that participants wished for more
information were about transition options (including passing and life as a man), health
issues, acceptance issues, and self-reflection topics.

Okay with process reflects a perspective from participants that, while they may
have preferred to have access to information or resources sooner in their gender journey,
these participants generally felt comfortable with how their coming to a trans identity
unfolded. "I don't think there's anything that I would have wished I'd known. I very
much am okay with going through the process and learning, and not feeling like I'm
regretting anything" (Micah). Participants described various perspectives on why they

186

were *okay with the process*, such as Mike who felt he possibly would not have been ready

for to have certain experiences sooner.

> And I've said it more than once, if I had known how huge that impact [having
> bottom surgery] was I would have definitely had the surgery a long time ago. But
> I didn't have the information. Then again, I mean to second-guess that whole
> theory; I might not have been ready. I might not had the same - it might not have
> had the same impact if I had done it 10 year earlier. (Mike)

Hindsight, in general, allowed participants to reflect on their experiences, and while there

were wishes for easier, quicker, or more direct paths, *okay with the process* described

participants' awareness of the process unfolding in an appropriate amount of time.

> *Trans visibility* is a theme that characterizes participants' desired need for trans

visibility. Generally, the theme addresses feelings of isolation that participants articulated

because they did not know trans people existed.

> And I wish I knew that, I wish I knew the statistics and population. Because I did
> feel rather alone and then, you know, as time went on I found that trans men were
> freaking everywhere and that's just really rad. (AJ)

Patrick wished he had considered an idea of a role model and how that might have more

clearly focused his exploration. Joshua wished that he had narratives that dispelled the

myth those in relationships while going through transition break up.

> I don't even know that that [my transitioning] was the most traumatic thing in our
> relationship. We've had other stuff that's been so much more important … I wish
> that I had known that because that was a message I got so loud and clear from
> everybody: Relationships don't survive transition. (Joshua)

Misinformation and stereotypes that could have been abated were part of the wish for

more *trans visibility* theme.

> *Trusted others* conveys participants' regrets about not trusting the reactions of

others to their coming out and their fears of rejection.

> Now that I know that people are really generally accepting for the most part, I wish I knew that at the beginning because when I first realized it, I was just so depressed 'cause it was like, no one gonna accept me. Everyone is going to think I'm a freak and all that. So that would have helped. (Tyler)

Joshua had worried about the void that was created when he lost his relationships within his dyke community and his lack of trusting that other communities would be available or accessible.

> I also wish I had known that I was not going to miss the dyke community and that sounds bad, but it's not… That felt like a really serious loss for me. Not being able to go to the dyke bar and just fit in whatever but I have a new community. … But I think that was like a big source of stress for me. (Joshua)

In general, participants relayed feelings of relief for times when others did not reject them, as that was anticipated.

Trusted self describes how participants wished they had trusted their own instincts about themselves and that trans identification or transition was real and authentic for them.

> As I'm getting ready for surgery, like mentally for that, realizing things like, you can want something with absolutely all of your being and still be absolutely terrified, which is sometimes hard to explain to people. It's like, yes this is so right and yes I have these fears and these doubts. It doesn't make it less right. It's just these things can exist in conjunction, this fear and this confidence. (Robert)

Self-doubt came through in how participants did not know they could trust their instincts as well as trust the resources at their institution.

188

Table 22. Hindsight

	Gender Flexibility	More Information	Ok with Process	Trans Visibility	Trusted Others	Trusted Self
AJ		X		X		
Ben	X	X				
Bill	X			X		X
Brandon					X	X
Charlie		X				
Deciding			X			
Jack		X	X			
Jackson		X			X	
James1	X	X				
James2						
JB	X					
Joshua		X		X	X	
Micah			X			
Mike		X	X			
Myles		X	X		X	
Nate		X		X		
Patrick	X	X		X		
Ren	X	X		X	X	
Riley						
Robert		X				X
Sal		X	X			
Shawn		X	X	X		X
Tucker	X					
Tyler				X	X	
Wyatt						
TOTALS	**7**	**15**	**7**	**8**	**6**	**4**

Masculinity

Given the focus of my dissertation on trans men, I was intentional to ask questions specifically about masculinity in reference to their gender identity and gender expression. The following section presents a limited review of data about how participants described and defined their own masculinity, others' perceptions of their masculinity, and how they make meaning of others' perceptions of their masculinity. My second research question focused on how participants, who were once identified as (by self-definition or imposed by others) as female, make meaning of normative masculinity.

The data about normative masculinity is too vast and complex to be contained within this dissertation and will be utilized in future projects. The questions that arose from the thematic arrangement of the participants' descriptions of masculinity were considerable in number. I present some of the data that foreground the complexities that would arise from analyzing that data here, in an effort to demonstrate why the presentation of the data needs to be a part of a separate project. The foundational questions that rose about whether masculinity was something we do, think, and/or feel; how we are seen or want to be seen; and how those we date influence it (fitting into a heteronormative paradigm).

The overall thematic coding of this small section of the data reflects that descriptions were not always consistent with intent or internal desire but describes current circumstances and future desires. Further, participants were not rooted in one theme; instead, there were considerable intersections between themes that will be of use in the discussion in Chapter 7.

Descriptions of Masculinity

Four major themes emerged on how participants described their own masculinity: *masculine with a side of critical theory*, *non-traditional masculinity*, *not really masculine*, and *traditional aspects of masculinity*.

Masculine with a side of critical theory represents how feminism, queer theory, or a critical awareness of gender were taken into consideration in a participant's expression of masculinity.

> See masculinity is tricky. As a sociology major with a Woman and Gender Studies minor, I always feel like I'm continually figuring out how can my identity and me be happy and cohesive with the fact that I have feminist ideals. So, I guess that I'm masculine with a side of feminism. [laughs] (Jackson)

Masculinity descriptions coded as a part of this theme fell into multiple themes, but there was distinctiveness in their description of their own masculinity that surfaced some form of analysis of how their ideological framework impacts their awareness of their masculine expression and/or identity.

> [sigh] I kind of go between a masculinity influenced by feminism and radical masculinity, which is new kind of term I wandered across that sounds kind of interesting; kind of a masculinity that's masculine simply because I'm a guy. 'Cause I've been taught a lot that girls can do anything guys can, and so what's calling something masculine or feminine, kind of seems to me sometimes which stereotype do you most closely fit to. (Nate)

Descriptions within *masculinity with a side of critical theory* included the ways participants' ideologies impacted their desire for gender expression that felt true to them.

Non-traditional masculinity covered descriptions of different forms of non-traditional but still recognizable masculinity, with an intentional avoidance of hyper-masculinity.

> I guess I'm not the most masculine guy in the world, for sure. I don't really watch sports and all that stuff. … Yeah, I guess the one thing that's somewhat different than the stereotypically geeky masculinity is that I don't really do the computer game, computer stuff and the video game stuff all that much. (Wyatt)

The descriptions of *non-traditional masculinity* also included how they were not a form of hyper-masculinity and may demonstrate behaviors, roles, or expressions that do not align with normative masculinity.

> I'm not making any claims to be a macho guy. I think that I really don't identify with a lot of the aggression and the high-energy things that often get called stereotypically male. 'Cause I'm quieter and … someone described it as sensitive guy. (Robert)

In general, they described rejections of normativity or a tempering of the hegemonic notions of masculinity.

I think what's interesting is moving from a queer space to being completely perceived as normative, which is, I think, that's really interesting. … I don't ever want to actually be seen as a straight guy. I think that would really throw off my sort of perception, how people perceive me [laughs]. (Micah)

Non-traditional masculinity does not mean rejection of masculinity as a feeling, but the sense of masculinity within the person as different from normative masculinity. "While aspect of it [my masculinity] are sometimes stereotypical, I like to think of my masculinity as having a softer touch than a lot of the masculinity I see in through my male friends" (Deciding). *Non-traditional masculinity* was as much about rejection of stereotypes as a self-description that set participants apart from the stereotypes.

Not really masculine described phrases or thoughts that did not necessarily reject masculinity nor considered an alternative to masculinity but stated feeling as though masculine was not an accurate adjective for the participant's gender identity or expression. For example, Ben stated, "As I said before I don't really see myself as a very masculine person." Some participants felt a lack of alignment with any kind of clear or recognizable masculinity.

Traditional aspects of masculinity described how participants fell into what might be defined, at least defined by the participants, as normative masculinity.

But I mean I fit into the role of typical man I guess. … So, in a lot of ways, I fit into the stereotypical role, but it doesn't, it's definitely not something that it's a factor in why I choose the things that I choose. (James2)

Whether they described their masculinity as traditional or not, some retained a desire to have opportunities to transgress traditional masculine expression.

I want to feel queer, but I think I just pass as an Abercrombie boy. … I feel pretty masculine, and I still have this kind of gay boy side of myself that I'm okay with, I'm totally okay with that. (JB)

192

Masculinity was about perceptions others had of participants and also about the types of activities participants engaged.

> I think through things like competitiveness and stuff, I definitely do that and sometimes I get over competitive … I've always done stereotypical masculine activities. I would always play sports, not on teams, but just hanging out with my friends. (Myles)

Those participants who were placed in the theme of *traditional aspects of masculinity* described a variety of behaviors and feelings as well as their understanding of how others perceive them in their self-assessment of their masculinity.

Table 23. Descriptions of Masculinity

	Gender Flexibility	More Information	Ok with Process	Trans Visibility	Trusted Others	Trusted Self
AJ		X		X		
Ben	X	X				
Bill	X			X		X
Brandon					X	X
Charlie		X				
Deciding			X			
Jack		X	X			
Jackson		X			X	
James1	X	X				
James2						
JB	X					
Joshua		X		X	X	
Micah			X			
Mike		X	X			
Myles		X	X		X	
Nate		X		X		
Patrick	X	X		X		
Ren	X	X		X	X	
Riley						
Robert		X				X
Sal		X	X			
Shawn		X	X	X		X
Tucker	X					
Tyler				X	X	
Wyatt						
TOTALS	**7**	**15**	**7**	**8**	**6**	**4**

Others' Perceptions of Participants' Masculinity

In trying to describe how others perceive their masculinity, participants were clear that their answers were context dependent and based on comparison to other people's masculinity, femininity, or gender as well as sexuality. The emergent themes were: *assumed female*, *feminine and/or queer*, *trans identity impacts perception*, and *viewed as relatively masculine*.

Assumed a girl/female described an inability for participants to pass as male and a failure by other people to acknowledge any expressions of masculinity—even when the participant was trying to express masculinity. "To the average person I don't pass very well. So, the average person doesn't perceive my masculinity in any way, shape, or form, and that bothers the hell out of me. I correct people, and they don't get it" (AJ). Bodies, gestures, and other cues seemed to diminish the ability for participants to pass with any sort of gender variation. James1, who identified as genderqueer, felt there was an obvious reason others did not acknowledge hir masculinity. "They just look at the boobs. [laughs] Let's be honest ... [laughs]" (James1). Regardless of the gender roles ze enacted or hir self-perception, James1's bodily indication was the only factor that mattered as far as others' perceptions of hir masculinity.

Feminine and/or queer includes perceptions of gender expression that were read as a type of feminine or queer masculinity and led to someone calling their male identity into question.

> When I relax around people and when I'm hanging out with my queer friends, I may get fabulous. [laughs] And then I feel like when that happens, it definitely shifts and I know that they're not perceiving me as a male person anymore. I mean some of them are, but a lot of them aren't. (Robert)

The descriptions within this theme ranged from diminishment of any perceived masculinity to a queer or gay male identity, which was denied masculine attributes. For example, Myles noticed he was passing when he experienced homophobic slurs.

> Although lately I've been getting read more as a fag than as anything else. [I know that because of] the drunk people shouting, "Fag, homo," when me and my friends are walking down the street and just completely uncreative insults but.... Although I figure at least I'm passing. [laugh].

Myles was able to glean that his masculinity was at least somewhat perceived if other students on his campus were using gay male homophobic slurs. Charlie, however, experienced more intense scrutiny from his trans friends than his gay friends regarding his masculinity. "The gay males consider me to be masculine, and then my trans friends consider me to be really feminine" (Charlie). Charlie considers his masculinity as viewed from two different points of view that have different expectations for masculinity.

Trans identity impacts perception comes out of the numerous comments about how when the participant's trans identity was known, it impacted perceptions of the participant's masculinity and treatment of the participant. Participants described interactions where they were held to different standards once their trans identity was known, such as being challenged on issues of enacting privilege or assimilation.

> Just… Oh my God, I don't know. A lot of times it's like, "Oh well, you were born a girl, you must be more sensitive, right?" I'm like, "Oh, you think that, but I'm really not enjoying listening to this right now." I don't know. It's kind of ungendering. It's like, "Oh well, because you were born this way you must be able to identify with me in these ways." (Sal)

Known trans identity seemed also to complicate how others understood how to treat the participant's masculinity.

> And now that they all know about me being trans, is kind of like they don't know what stereotypes to hold me to. So the fact of me being trans, at all, is such a challenge to what they've experienced before. (Robert)

Generally, participants believed that people felt more comfortable to critique their masculinity once they knew about their trans identification or female past.

Viewed as relatively masculine describes responses that indicated others acknowledged a participant's masculinity, although not a hyper-masculinity *per se*. "[pauses] Yeah, I think people view me as relatively masculine. I mean not obviously, in the extreme way. [laughs] But relative to the people in my social group, I guess" (Wyatt). A few participants spoke about context and juxtaposition as a way to describe times when they were perceived as relatively masculine. "Old people, I can guarantee 100% of the time, they'll think I'm a male … Standing next to a whole bunch of straight women, I look really masculine" (Jackson). Perceptions of masculinity were influenced by the context and social identities of those viewing them.

Table 24. Others' Perceptions of Their Masculinity

	Assumed girl/female	Feminine and/or queer	Trans identity impacts perception	Viewed as relatively masculine
AJ	X			
Ben			X	X
Bill		X		X
Brandon		X	X	X
Charlie		X		X
Deciding			X	X
Jack				X
Jackson				X
James1	X		X	
James2				X
JB	X			X
Joshua		X		X
Micah	X		X	
Mike		X	X	X
Myles		X		
Nate	X		X	X
Patrick		X		
Ren		X		
Riley				X
Robert		X	X	X
Sal	X		X	
Shawn	X			X
Tucker			X	X
Tyler	X		X	
Wyatt				X
TOTALS	**8**	**9**	**11**	**17**

Influences on Masculine Expression

Focusing on masculinity more closely, participants were asked whether there were any factors that influenced how they expressed or would like to express their masculinity. The factors that influenced participants' expressions of masculinity were put into six themes: *body*, *express myself the way I want*, *perceptions and identity*, *pressure to conform*, *safety considerations*, and *uncertainty*.

Body included both issues of how participants bodies were read as female, as well as discomfort with body size, height, or shape that impacted how participants were able

to express their masculinity. For the participants who struggled with being read as having a female body, the clearest body factor was breasts or "boobs" as Tucker called them. He provided a one-word answer and followed it up with "Yeah. They get in the way" (Tucker). Ben provided a clear distinction about how *body* influenced perceptions of masculinity. "Especially here [at school] and expressing your masculinity when you're read as female is very different than expressing it when you're read as male" (Ben). Others were not as influenced by gender perception *per se*, but about body image issues or tempering expectations about body image based on body shape. "[pauses] Well, I won't often go shirtless but that's more discomfort with the size of my body than my scars 'cause I don't care that I have scars. So, that's more of a personal issue then a gender thing [laughs]" (Joshua). Participants' comfort with their bodies ranged from personal comfort to how others would interpret their bodies.

Express myself the way I want reflects data about how participants perform the kind of masculinity they desire to, regardless of other issues.

> I've been fortunate enough to have... How do I describe this? A body that is not overly feminine. I have a kind of tomboyish body, even before starting T, and so I've been lucky enough to have the ability and privilege to pass more easily with[out] having to do lots of crazy any things and that my body can be seen as male easily and for that I'm grateful. (Deciding)

Jack experienced some significant critiques about his masculinity from a woman he dated who tried to enforce stereotypical masculinity about his emotions.

> I mean it sort of limited my - the way that I expressed my masculinity where I felt like I had to be sort of masculine, but then I was like that's BS [bullshit] and I dumped her. [laughs] And since then I've been, you know, with doing whatever I wanted to and expressing myself however I want to.

Within the theme was a comfort in expressed and performed masculinity, even if there was resistance or pressure to attempt a more overt or hegemonic masculinity.

Perceptions and identity conveys how, when some participants were asked about expressing or desires to express their masculinity, they focused on issues of *perception and identity*, such as the impact of their other social identities (such as race). Micah desired to have people perceive him as a man, but he was also familiar with people misperceiving his identity.

> I am mixed race and people always mistake my race. They think that I'm Spanish or they think that I'm something, I don't know, whatever. And I'm none of that. My parents are actually from South Africa, so like I'm very much aware of people perceiving me in very different ways than I actually am.

Nate focused on how masculinity intersected with his race.

> Yeah, I mean I don't want to be seen as someone who's threatening because in general Black men are seen as threatening and that's not how I want to be. But I hate that it's something that I don't - I hate that that's something I have feel like I need to think about sometimes.

Within this theme participants discussed how, whether it was known or not, their trans identity seems to impact how they were viewed or perceived.

Pressure to conform describes how participants endeavored not to change to please others yet were told to act more masculine or worried their expression was going to be perceived as too feminine. James1, who is genderqueer identified and aligns hir gender expression within Scottish culture, explained how he received pressure to conform to U.S. normative masculinity.

> I refused for many years to cut off my hair. [laughs] … both genders wear hair long, and God damn it, I'm keeping my hair this length. … This is another thing I was doing wrong; I was supposed to get a short haircut. (James1)

Pressure came from family, friends, romantic relationships, or the larger culture.

Safety considerations covers issues of the importance of passing as a strategy to ensure safety. "I guess when I feel it's an issue of passing, like the bathroom situation or

in a bar setting, or certain settings I feel like passing is more important than others." (JB).

As a factor influencing how participants expressed their masculinity, context was

important for the theme of safety.

> If I'm hanging around my friends, I feel more comfortable with it, whereas maybe
> in class, not so much because I'm on the roster by a female name, and everything.
> It depends on how - whether the group of people I'm with know I identify as
> trans. I feel like it's probably one of the biggest factors in it, in how safe I feel in a
> given situation. Because I mean [my university] is overall pretty open and
> accepting, but there are some pockets of pretty intense, homophobia, transphobia,
> just overly hateful. (Myles)

> Issues of passing were also noted as they related to fitting into the gender binary.

> I don't know whether it falls under expressing my masculinity but I do want to
> put on a skirt every once in a while and just be a bloke in a skirt and I don't have
> that option in America. I really don't. Especially using male bathrooms, I would
> probably get beaten the shit out of. (AJ)

Passing becomes even more fraught if AJ were to consider wearing a skirt, which would

not enhance his masculinity in others' estimations.

Uncertainty captures ways participants felt a lack of confidence or uncertainty

regarding expressing masculinity. "I don't have very much confidence in my

masculinity" (Ben). Other participants expressed uncertainty as to whether there were any

factors that influenced their masculinity.

> I guess in terms of like stuff I do outside of work, like caving and rock climbing
> and that sort of stuff, I would want to be able to fit in with people who do that in
> terms of that … women do those things, but [laughs] sort of outdoorsman to some
> extent I guess. (Wyatt)

Masculinity and gender were confusing and difficult to navigate for some participants,

thus they were uncertain in what factors influence their masculine expressions or what a

masculine expression would look like.

Table 25. Factors Impacting Expression of Masculinity

	Body	Express myself the way I want	Perceptions & identity	Pressure to conform	Safety considerations	Uncertainty
AJ			X	X	X	
Ben	X		X			X
Bill			X	X	X	
Brandon			X		X	
Charlie	X					
Deciding		X				
Jack		X		X		
Jackson			X	X		
James1	X			X		
James2		X		X		
JB			X	X	X	
Joshua	X	X				
Micah		X	X			
Mike	X					
Myles					X	
Nate	X		X	X		
Patrick	X		X			
Ren						
Riley		X		X		
Robert						
Sal					X	
Shawn					X	X
Tucker	X					
Tyler	X		X			
Wyatt		X				X
TOTALS	**9**	**7**	**10**	**9**	**7**	**3**

Gender Roles

Gender roles describe the activities and responsibilities assigned to genders, most commonly referred to as masculine and feminine roles with the former assigned to men and the latter to women. Many of the participants struggled to answer questions about whether or not they identified with any particular gender roles but not because of what it asked; instead, there was a lack of clarity about the term "gender role." Many participants

asked for examples of what was meant by gender role, and uncertainty remains on how

much of the data is more reflective of examples given than a participant's point of view.

There is a high possibility that the themes below reflect the clarification prompts

provided to participants. Therefore, the data below is cautiously presented, with analysis

in a future chapter. The themes determined as emergent were: *gender equality*, *masculine*

behaviors, *masculine identifiers*, *resistant to categories*, and *unclear*.

Gender equality reflects beliefs about gender equality through gender roles and

focused on a binary system of gender. "I feel like male and female gender roles should be

equal in pretty much every aspect and the ones we have now aren't" (Riley). Nate

discussed how gender roles should reflect equality between men and women and certain

roles should be possible for either.

> So trying to be caring and a good listener, I've seen both genders with that in that
> in their gender role… Athletism. Academics with regards to math and science and
> engineering, and these are all things I've seen in both people with gender roles.
> (Nate)

The theme *gender equality* resists the notion that there are gender roles limited to each

gender and, instead, advocates for gender roles to be available for all men and women.

Masculine behaviors encapsulates an alignment by a participant with typically

normative masculine behaviors as described by the participants (protector, breadwinner,

etc.). AJ provided an overall summary of how he connected his masculine gender roles to

his behaviors.

> But the breadwinner, the one takes care of the family. … Financially basically
> and, you know, fix stuff around the house, kill spiders even though I usually run
> and scream in terror. … But I love fixing crap around the house and just being
> technical. (AJ)

Many of the participants connected to some type of stereotypical masculine gender role as conveyed through behavior, such as the strong and silent "type" (Micah) or to what the participant characterized as gentlemanly behaviors.

> I am a big believer in chivalry. I always hold the door open. I always let women go first … I always stand, if I'm on the train and there are no seats and a woman gets on, I always get up. I always pay for a date. (Jack)

Masculine behaviors indicates a connection to behaviors usually assigned to men and that indicate masculinity, which differs from *masculine identifiers*.

Masculine identifiers reflect a connection to terms (identifiers) ascribed to normative masculine identities (son, brother, boyfriend, father, etc.) as well as desired but not yet attained assignation of those identifiers. A few participants stated that the person they are dating refers to them as their boyfriend, and some experienced family members who identify them as a brother or son. For example, Deciding stated, "I could see myself as like father and in a fatherly role. I guess at this point in my life, I would… My ideas of what fatherhood and myself would mean are fairly vague [laughs]." In thinking of gender roles in the future, a number of participants identified their ability to see themselves as more connected to the role or title of father as way of connecting with *masculine identifiers*.

Not all participants were interested in aligning themselves with gender roles. *Resistant to categories* reflects descriptions that resisted any type of gender role or gender category; because the roles did not fit for the participant, there was a refusal to make direct claims to gender roles.

> I try not to stick gender roles to anything. I don't necessarily like the concept of gender roles and I feel like people should figure it out for themselves. I think it should be more fluid than it is. Or is generally perceived to be by the general populous. (Myles)

Resistant to categories as a theme spoke to how participants were not interested in any form of gender roles, regardless of their ability to be viewed as equally accessible to men or women.

Unclear reflects both participants' confusion about what was meant by gender roles and/or articulated an uncertainty regarding whether they intentionally connected with any specific gender roles. For example, Sal's first response to the initial question was, "I don't know. Do you have some options to choose from?" After naming some roles, he then came to identify with some of them. However, others, even if there was no confusion about the question, remained firm that they did not think in terms of gender roles. "For the most part, I feel like I just interact with people as myself, whatever that is" (Riley). If there were connections to any gender roles, then it was an accidental alignment. "So, the ways in which I would say that I do are sort of the gender role, more traditional gender roles, are accidental" (Patrick). Patrick's response was indicative of how there was no conscious connection to roles as they applied to gender, whether behaviors or identities.

Table 26. Gender Roles

	Gender equality	Masculine behaviors	Masculine identifiers	Resistant to categories	Unclear
AJ			X		
Ben		X		X	
Bill				X	
Brandon			X	X	X
Charlie		X	X		
Deciding			X	X	X
Jack		X			
Jackson	X		X		
James1		X			
James2					
JB		X		X	
Joshua				X	
Micah		X	X	X	
Mike					
Myles			X	X	
Nate	X	X	X		X
Patrick	X			X	X
Ren		X	X	X	X
Riley	X			X	X
Robert		X	X		X
Sal		X	X		X
Shawn		X	X		
Tucker		X	X	X	
Tyler		X	X		X
Wyatt			X		X
TOTALS	**4**	**13**	**15**	**12**	**10**

Conclusion

Chapter 4 provided data about participants' gender identity and how they came to identify as trans; this chapter (Chapter 5) provided the data about participants' investment in or considerations regarding biomedical transition as well as conceptions of masculinity. In the final data chapter (Chapter 6), I turn to the data about how participants have experienced college as trans men.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS ON TRANS MEN'S COLLEGE EXPERIENCES

<u>Introduction</u>

The foci of this chapter are my findings on the experiences of trans men in college. The data presented here includes how trans men participants experienced challenges in college, ways they have been supported in college, and advice to those who may or do attend college. Finally, the chapter includes suggestions by participants for making institutions of higher education more inclusive for trans men.

<u>Challenges Since Identifying as Trans</u>

The section below provides data about challenges trans men experienced in college since identifying as trans. The major themes that emerged from the data were: *academics*, *bathroom issues*; *campus offices/services*; *continuous coming out*; *few, if any*, *challenges*; *harassed*, *mis-gendering*; *personal history*; *pressures*; *pretend inclusivity*; *relationships*; and *tokenized*.

Academics encompasses how participants were challenged (or unsupported) in the academic realm. Within *academics* included issues of how class rosters were used, even when preferred name fields were on rosters, which went ignored by faculty.

> I know what the rosters look like. It's like I know they're there. And so like I've never had any trouble with preferred name. But, I still have to tell my professors which pronouns I use or else as soon as they meet me in class will start using the wrong pronouns. Unless they're one of the one's that actually like looking for it. (Ren)

Interactions with faculty were characterized as sometimes challenging. Sal detailed an

interaction with a faculty member who refused to seriously engage new information

about gender or self-identification.

> My psych professor last semester, we have these meetings half way through and she was asking me about gender stuff and was asking me about gender neutral pronouns, and I'm trying to explain it to her, and she was like laughing at me. And like, "Okay you're not taking this seriously at all, and I don't want to talk to you about it anymore." (Sal)

This theme also addressed misinformation within course content about gender that was

distressing and frustrating to the participants.

> I think the other challenge for me is when I'm in a classroom and I feel like a professor is trying to speak to gender issues, but isn't doing such a great job. And it's not that they're saying something bad, they're not being offensive or…. Sometimes I see people, and not even necessarily the professor, but like a student, makes some sort of statement that is just not true and nobody corrects them or they don't necessarily know how to correct them. So that's, that's kind of frustrating for me. (Joshua)

> *Bathroom issues,* although well documented in previous publications on trans

people (B. Beemyn, 2003, 2005; B. Beemyn, Curtis et al., 2005; B. Beemyn, Domingue

et al., 2005), covered any and all issues about restrooms and bathroom at the college or

university.

> Just in terms of other challenges, bathrooms. 'Cause our university does not have a whole [lot of] gender-neutral bathrooms. It's got a couple, but not enough, and so I think that that's probably one of my main concerns with college. (Jackson)

Included in these concerns were the type, number, and accommodations within residence

halls and what the institution communicated as "gender-neutral" housing options.

"Bathrooms are often a problem. Being able to know where I can use the bathroom,

where the gender-neutral bathrooms are" (Patrick). Participants cited the numerous

challenges to finding a safe and appropriate location regarding where to use an everyday

need of a restroom and a comfortable bathroom in the places they lived.

Campus offices/services identified issues with policies and practices.

> Well bureaucracy stuff, red tape, legal problems, trying to find a room that is gender-neutral, but what they mean by gender-neutral is just finding somebody else who's also trans. (Brandon)

Participants described frustrations that the trainings for campus offices stay at an

introductory level and little thought is given to issues of room assignments and roommate

pairings. Participants explained how floor meetings felt unsafe and gave examples of

issues with the specific offices: Residence Life, Counseling Services, and Health

Services.

> I've been seeing a counselor here at school since I arrived … so I see her every week. Tell her about being a trans in my life. She still calls me "she." When I asked, she took me to the front desk to ask for something or other about getting to my gender specialist and she said, "She needs a ride." (Robert)

Concerns were also named regarding how to navigate athletic participation.

> It definitely makes sports harder 'cause there's just not a lot of - I mean there's more information now and support now, but there's just… It's sometimes really hard to find, for being a trans athlete and trying to figure out, do I want to transition on the team or not? Is it worth it? It's just not a lot of information for figuring out the answer to that question, which can be frustrating when things in athletics make it really difficult and make your athletic experience harder to compete at the level you need to. (Nate)

Finally, issues of institutional technology (such as email or registrar) addressed struggles

with name changes and how information was generated or utilized.

> The fact that the system has my legal name. So, my email address isn't - doesn't start with ["P"] … so there's a lot of emails I don't get because people don't know my birth name and don't realize it's a different initial. (Patrick)

Policies and practices with *campus offices/services* were named as inconsistent or not

fully meeting the needs to address all areas of participants' lives.

Continuous coming out describes how participants felt the process of continuously coming out was a challenge in college. This theme intersected with many of the other major themes, such as *pressure*, *relationships*, and *academics*, because coming out is a continuous process.

> Telling people. … It's gotten a lot better now that the rugby team knows, I get Shawn a lot more, but in my classes still, I'm not really comfortable in the middle of the semester being like, "By the way, I want to be Shawn instead of…" … But I think coming out as the biggest hurdle here for sure. (Shawn)

The varying context participants found themselves in caused them to consider whether to come out prior to beginning a romantic or sexual relationship, coming out to faculty, or in different college or university offices.

> Just this constant… I didn't transition to pass. I transitioned to make my body feel right. Even the hormones, it was about making my body feel right, which general perception is that I'm a much more relaxed person now … It's frustrating to me to have to constantly be coming out. (Joshua)

Continuous coming out covers issues of visibility and invisibility and the toll it takes on participants to have to engage in choices about who to, when to, and how to let people know about their trans identities.

> For some participants, *few, if any, challenges,* addressed how minor challenges had to do with transition timing, luck, and/or a more trans inclusive campus.

> I definitely was pretty lucky coming here, not only because a lot of the people here are open minded, all the way up to administrative people. But it's a small community so it was pretty easy to get things changed or get support if I needed it and be able to find that here. I wouldn't say there was many problems related to specifically to the college. I mean, I obviously went through issues. (James2)

Some of the participants felt they faced *few, if any, challenges* and pointed out how others who are trans had endured more difficulties than they. "I didn't have any, but I saw where other people did" (Mike). While not many participants described *few, if any,*

challenges, they did notice that it may have been their particular experience and not an overall experience for all trans students on at their institution.

Harassed covers how a few participants recalled instances of harassment by fellow students about their gender ambiguity.

> Well, we have a surprising amount of discrimination at the [rugby] tournament.… There's this group of girls [from another school] who walked past me, and they were making bets on whether I was a girl or a guy. And it's just stuff like that. (Shawn)

Participants described ways they were *harassed* about their gender expression or the ways others responded to their gender as challenges they had at their institution.

Mis-gendering encompassed the experiences of participants who were referred to with the wrong name or pronoun. Tucker recalled his experience at his prior institution, which was one of the factors that led him to transfer. "Pronouns from professors was really, really difficult, like pulling teeth difficult, all the time … Every class. Ridiculous" (Tucker). Intentionality of the incidents did not diminish the discomfort for the participant.

> I think, just in terms of when I go to various departments, they all have my gender listed as F so [laughs] they always, without fail, use female pronouns. And that's sort of a challenge for me, just because I don't like it, obviously. (Jackson)

Mis-gendering described ways participants were not recognized for either their trans identity or their gender identity as men, which challenged their ability to interact in various locations at their institutions.

Personal history conveyed how public knowledge about participants' personal gender history (female past) impacted their experiences in college as well as applications to graduate school and future jobs.

> Another thing is figuring out, in terms of professional life and grad school, is - like I have a paper already published in my name with a bunch of other people, and I'm in the bio. When I was writing it, I was already trans, and I was like, there's no way I can write this without any pronouns. It's just too long of a blurb. But I can't write it with male pronouns. So it's like, I'm gonna write with female pronouns, but what am I going to do later? Am I not going to ever reference this paper or what? (Nate)

Participants recounted how people on campus knew them before identifying as trans adds to their discomfort and caused challenges navigating their everyday.

> And with a new incoming class, every year the same thing happens. I wonder how or if that will change when I get my name changed and when I've been on T longer. But the way it is right now, every, there's a whole new group of first years who need to know I'm trans so they can use the right pronouns because I may or may not be passing to them. (Deciding)

Others discussed how their previous gender was unknown unless they chose to share it; in an effort to avoid this challenge, participants changed their names, which meant less sharing about personal history.

> I sort of definitely interact a lot better with people who don't know that I'm trans than people who do, and to some extent I probably would interact with more with like people in my dorm and my hall. Really at this point in my life they're the only people who know my past because they knew me freshman year when I was living female roommate. So I might - I would probably get along better with them if it weren't for that. (Wyatt)

In Micah's experience, his personal history as trans was used against him in verbal altercations with other students (being called the wrong name on purpose).

> So, I think that people try to pull you down, no matter what. And they will try to use whatever they can to pull you down. Especially when they think that this is like, "Oh I know you're birth name." That's ammunition. It's kind of getting past that and trying to let people actually see me as how I am. So that's been the hardest thing; that's been the most challenging.

Personal history impacts participants in differing ways but served as a means to make them feel alienated and cautious about how they engaged with different people and places on campus.

Pressure described both the physical (such as constant binding) and emotional

stress (psychological) described by the participants.

> [pauses] I think probably the main challenge is the amount of mental energy it took to make all these decisions and figure out what I wanted to do. Just be angsty for a while. [laughs] Probably took time from my schoolwork for the first couple of years. I mean physical difficulties associated with things like binding definitely. (Wyatt)

There was also *pressure* to identify a certain way by trans/queer community.

> But *the* hardest thing has been moving beyond the trans thing. 'Cause it's like I had so many people supporting me in that - like had the entire trans community backing me up when I came out and change my pronouns and changed my name. But, now that I'm kind of backing away from - it's like … And I had people take me out shopping, and give me clothes. … And I had three suites worth of people giving me advice on that and then as soon as I was like, yeah cool but I'm still going to do it this way. And then I kind of lost that support network. (Ren)

The *pressure* to identify or perform his transness was one that isolated Ren from the trans

community that existed on his campus, to be a certain kind of recognizable masculinity.

Micah talked about a similar pressure but that it came from his therapist, who was trying

to give him tips on his masculine gender expression, which felt like *pressure* to lose parts

of himself.

> And I felt like there was this whole thing going on where she didn't think I was trans enough. And maybe I misunderstood her and how she was coming across, but it just seemed like I was being judged for not being trans enough. (Micah)

Micah's therapist, in what he hoped was an attempt to help, only increased the *pressure*

he felt to be a certain kind of man, and to fail at that was to question of whether he was

"really" trans. Tucker described his reaction to those who questioned his right to attend

his all-female college and trying to figure himself out within his institutional context.

> Okay, I'm now at a woman's college. The first question from people who have never really had a conversation with a trans guy who's at a woman's college is why are you here? And the answer for me is: it's a safe space, and it's good

212

academic space, and I like this area. But I mean I understand the question and I understand the sort of hostility behind the question that's usually there. (Tucker)

Tucker understood their perspective but did not feel he was at the wrong institution.

Other *pressure* issues included: social identity navigation, financial stress, coming out, personal history, and pressure to pick a side in a gender binary debate when neither is representative of hir experience are a few of the examples provided in the data. This theme also describes circumstances of awkwardness and pressure to perform a certain type of masculinity.

Pretend inclusivity encapsulated descriptions by participants of how the faculty, staff, and students projected a climate of trans inclusion, but seem to fail in their estimation.

> The challenges that have really come across my path have been from the student body, where this is, I mean it's not - people here think they're very liberal, which is wrong. … They have this idea that they know how the world works and if you try to explain it to them in a different way, they will totally reject it. … So, it's been really - it's been a trip trying to describe this to people who have otherwise no contact with people like me. (Micah)

Within *pretend inclusivity* were acknowledgments of institutional efforts for inclusivity that were seen as attempts instead of successful practices. "[My university] sort of has this thing with gender-neutral pronouns, and a lot of these sort of institutional acceptance -Not quite acceptance, but institutional attempts at acceptance, I guess, of trans individual" (Patrick). Issues of disappointment with lack of attention to policy and practice were also a part of this theme. If the strategies and measures are put into place to address trans inclusion but they are not utilized, then that is another form of *pretend inclusion*. Ren described how rosters include preferred name and pronoun, but it was not utilized by faculty and therefore ineffective.

They [faculty] don't look at it [the field on the roster]. … And so like I've never had any trouble with preferred name. But, I still have to tell my professors which pronouns I use or else as soon as they meet me in class will start using the wrong pronouns. (Ren)

Ren's description points to what was themed *pretend inclusion* because the institution had a policy in place, but his experiences reflected a disappointment with the misalignment between trans inclusion and institutional practice.

Relationships identified challenging interactions with others, including from family, compounded by social identities, and friendships.

Not specifically in college, but society also, I can't identify so easily with straight cisgender man or the woman anymore. It is kind of the state of it between there, will always be that there because I was never socialized as a male. But I don't identify as female. So I won't have a lot of the experiences that a lot – many people have regardless of their gender. And so, sometimes there's difficulty in relating to people. (Brandon)

Relationships also referred to an inability to make connections or difficulty finding someone else who is trans. "I don't find, as far as people that I can easily kind of pick out, people in my major that are trans. I think when I walk over to like the more humanities section I do" (JB). Nate described how racial identity and religion intersected to impact his ability to have *relationships* with his family.

And also with race because – I mean at least it's been nice because at least in my family, on my dad's side at least, people don't really care if you're gay or lesbian or trans or bi or whatever. But people on my mom's side tend to be a lot more religious. And so like I said, my mom giving me the hell-fire and brimstone talk and I know my other aunts and uncles on my mom side know 'cause she told them. But they haven't told my aunt – my grandparents on that side, at all. And they haven't, since my mom told them, they haven't talked to me about that aspect. Even though I've talked to them about other things 'cause they're coming to my graduation. (Nate)

Tyler stated that he avoided *relationships* with men because of fear.

I've never felt threatened in any way, maybe because I'm not friends with guys and I'm not really scared of girls. … Girls are more like, if they're gonna try to hurt you, it's going to be verbally. … So I guess that's one of the reasons why I stay away from guys for the most part.

In general, participants described the ways they felt rejected or anticipated rejection from groups.

The challenge that's the most difficult is definitely relationships with other people … Just really not knowing – not knowing, which group other people want me to be in. I've been rejected because I'm a girl, and I've rejected 'cause I'm a guy. (Robert)

Trans identity based on Robert and Tyler's descriptions, make developing *relationships* more complicated and scary.

Tokenized illuminates ways participants resisted defining trans as a monolithic group or the "go-to tranny." For example, Ren described his response when he was asked to speak to the trans perspective in a class.

I don't know. I'm Ren. It's like, "What do you expect out of this?" And it's like," I refuse to speak for the trans perspective because A) I don't even get along with most tranny's, 'cause my perspective does not match. How am I supposed to speak for them?" This doesn't quite work.

Tokenized also addresses how participants were not sure how to deal with the *pressure* and *personal history* in a way to make their gender clear without being the focus of their academic pursuits.

And so there is that aspect of: How do I want to handle it in my professional life? Because in my professional life I just want it to be male, and there to be no confusion or issue because I don't want gender to eclipse my academic accomplishments, because it's just my gender. It's just one thing. It's just my eye color. It's just my skin. It's just not – it shouldn't be a big deal. (Nate)

Nate's statement indicates that he was dealing with *personal history*, *pressure*, and concerns about future *tokenization*. The intersections of themes provides the multifaceted perspective on how participants felt challenged being trans in college.

Table 27. Challenges Since Identifying as Trans

	Academics	Bathroom issues	Campus offices/services	Continuous coming out	Few, if any, challenges	Harassed	Mis-gendering	Personal history	Pressure	Pretend inclusivity	Relationships	Tokenized
AJ	X	X	X		X		X					
Ben	X		X	X			X	X	X			
Bill			X		X							
Brandon			X						X		X	
Charlie				X	X			X			X	
Deciding				X				X	X			
Jack			X		X			X		X	X	
Jackson		X	X		X		X		X	X	X	
James1			X					X	X			
James2			X		X				X			X
JB	X				X		X	X	X		X	
Joshua	X			X					X			X
Micah								X	X	X	X	
Mike					X		X				X	
Myles		X	X		X				X		X	
Nate	X		X		X		X	X	X		X	X
Patrick	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Ren	X	X	X				X		X	X	X	X
Riley		X	X					X	X		X	
Robert	X	X	X				X		X		X	
Sal	X	X	X			X		X	X			
Shawn	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	
Tucker	X	X					X		X		X	
Tyler	X	X	X		X				X	X	X	
Wyatt					X			X	X			
TOTALS	**12**	**11**	**17**	**5**	**12**	**3**	**11**	**13**	**19**	**6**	**16**	**4**

<u>Supported Since Identifying as Trans</u>

There were a variety of ways that trans men participants felt they were supported in college. The major themes were: *administration/staff support*, *faculty support*, *friends*, *everything was pretty much fine*, *my family*, and *policies and practices*.

Administration/staff support describes ways those in administration roles on campus were viewed as supportive for participants and included specific offices mentioned where support was found. Support from administration came in many different forms, including messages to the entire university community. "So, I know that things happen but at the same time the staff seemed to be on our side, in general. I can't say anything for campus security, but the President you know is very, very cool" (AJ). Within this theme were mentions of specific interactions with administrators who were sources of support. "As I said, I've found some really supportive people. Res life was awesome. One of the deans was awesome. My boss here is awesome" (Ben). Reasons cited for inclusion of certain staff or offices were those who advocated for trans students and who went through trainings to be more educated.

> Yeah, I mean the coordinator for the [LGBT Center] at our university would bend over backwards and often does, trying to make not just my life but any trans person's life a little easier. … And she's working right now on trying to make it so that the registrar's office will put in a name that you prefer rather than your legal name. … And health services is great. They're [university] Health Services, all of them actually went to [state trans organization] conference for health care providers at [the university] and all of them went and got - sat through the conference and stuff. (Jackson)

James2 identified his viewed of being supported because he was asked to help with trainings on trans identities for RA staffs or being asked by his employer how to handle employment paperwork and mismatched gender identification.

And he just told me to get back to him and let him know and I've found that that's really the only problems that I run into is, whatever institution is that I'm dealing with, they just kind of say like, "Okay. What is your suggestion to fixing it?" 'Cause they're could be any number of things you could do.

Support also included navigating the institutional policies and practices, such as a willingness to help with room assignment, finding health care providers in the city or specifically at the university, advocating for participant's inclusion in gender neutral housing, and how to put a preferred versus legal name on forms. Myles discussed how his Residence Director (RD) was his major support on campus because of how he helped him navigate housing and find other resources.

> [My RD's] been a really good support in hooking me up with various services on campus. He's the reason I manage to get into gender-neutral housing for the spring semester, because talked to people in Res Life and found out there was an opening. He got me moved in, even though it wasn't a normal room switch time of year and stuff… So, I'd say [my RD's] probably been the biggest supporter on campus [laughs]. (Myles)

> *Administrative/staff support* also included a consistency of behavior throughout

the university. Patrick described his experience with public safety and then with his Dean in which everyone respected his pronouns.

> Yeah a really great example is: so about two months before I turned 21, I got way too drunk, ended up getting sick outside. And public safety, if they see someone getting sick from alcohol, basically either you're getting in trouble or you go to the hospital. … And the public safety officer was really great about calling me by male pronouns. So much so that he wrote up in the report that way. … And then you also have to meet with the Dean. And so walk in, with the dean's office, and I'm sitting here going, "Oh great." Because they had to write everything into the system, I was not getting called by "right name and pronouns." It was just like, "Oh, here we go." And as soon as my dean actually looks at the PSA Officer's report it was like, "Oh, you're trans?" [snaps his fingers] And immediately made the switch. (Patrick)

Finally, one participant mentioned the importance of having trans staff members who he felt he could connect with and sought out for support or conversation.

It's really been really nice because there's, on the staff here, there's a trans guy who's specifically… I think he works with grad students more, but he works with everybody. … And he just gets it, which has been really, really nice. (Nate)

Administrative/staff support included individual interactions and supportive people as well as broader offices and services.

Everything was pretty much fine conveyed how their college felt like a generally safe place or that there were moments of support that were enough encouragement. "But like every person that I've encountered on this campus that I've had conversations with, that I've outed myself to, it's been positive. It's been great" (Joshua). Wyatt, for example, did not encounter any significant supports, nor did he necessarily experience any challenges prior to, during, or after his transition because, as he said, "It's almost too easy." Descriptions also included acknowledgment of some challenges at the school, but the overall experience at the college was good or the campus climate felt comfortable.

Just knowing that the community here is very accepting. You know that coming on to this campus, it is a safe place. People, even if they don't agree with it, will be okay with it. … And even people, who if they hadn't come to [my college] wouldn't have that outlook, but yet they're here and they get it and they understand, so, it's nice. (Shawn)

The direct connections with trans communities was not necessary for Shawn, but the existence of those communities made the campus feel as though *everything was pretty much fine.* Micah recounted that, while he faced challenges on his campus, he felt supported when he was invited to perform at a Human Rights concert.

I did my thing and people just came up to me after, and they were like, "That's really great. You have so much courage to go up there and talk about your life and not be ashamed of it." And I was like, "That's really want I want to do." I don't want to be ashamed of who I am.

Since most participants identified areas that were a challenge at their institutions, it is clear, as Micah's above quotation notes, that there were still moments when *everything was pretty much fine.*

Even for those who described their campus as generally positive, there were some caveats to describe how *everything was pretty much fine.* "[My college] is trans friendly, absolutely across the board their trans friendly. They're like benevolent parents that are trying real hard not to enable their children to be shitheads, but they don't know how not to [laughs]" (Mike). The fact that people were really good about asking about pronouns and noticing non-normative gender was an indicator of *everything was pretty much fine.*

> Pronouns are really easy with most students. Like most people ask, if you look at all non-normative in your gender presentation, and the people who don't ask, pick it up the first time anyways. It's just not a problem here because everybody is used to seeing it. (Tucker)

Overall, this theme described the openness and support encountered by a participant, even if they noted there were some challenges on campus. "So, I found the school to be very supportive with the exception of the teachers screwing up pronouns" (Robert). James2 noted that he just felt as though the overall community was a good place for him to go to college and find support for his transition.

> I definitely was pretty lucky coming here, not only because a lot of the people here are open minded, all the way up to administrative people. But it's a small community so it was pretty easy to get things changed or get support if I needed it and be able to find that here. I wouldn't say there was many problems related to specifically to the college. (James2)

Finally, *everything was pretty much fine* also covered how some participants did not have to worry or interact much with administration, policies, or faculty regarding their trans identity. The fact that his name had been legally changed and was described as unisex prior, meant he really did not have to deal with being out and was not sure that many

220

people thought he was a girl to begin with. "Mostly I think I kind of snuck it in under [my University's] radar, but… [pauses] Yep, I don't know what else [laughs]" (Wyatt).

Wyatt's experience was specific to his experience of being able to go virtually undetected in his transition of paperwork and documentation, which caused him to characterize his experience as *everything was pretty much fine.*

Faculty support summarized how faculty members were supportive or offered support.

> Oh, they're great, I mean all the teachers here are great. My English teacher, she knew because I wrote papers for her, and she was really cool about it. My ASL [American Sign Language] teacher's really cool about it. My education teacher was really cool about it. (Jack)

Faculty who were known as trans were another way students felt *faculty support.* JB noted that having trans faculty members or instructors was also a way to find role models and support.

> I think I've had a lot of good experience with that. I've had two instructors that are trans, so I think that's pretty helpful and I think that that's very rare, in college to be trans, and have that opportunity. And I think those would be two good role models that I didn't think of before.

Faculty support was noted when professors took the time to inquire in non-invasive ways about pronouns and name of students, instead of relying on the roster.

> I had one professor, spring of first year, who first day of class handed out a piece of paper. It was like name, preferred name, email, you know, that kind of stuff, but also … a section of the thing that was what pronouns would you like me to use in class and … are these pronouns that I can use in your evals? … She was sensitive to the fact that you may be out within your community here but not within the greater community at home. (Deciding)

Faculty paying attention to pronouns was a clear demonstration of support. Bill described support as rooted in practices that allowed him to change his name and pronoun and the follow through by faculty members.

[My university] luckily has a thing where you can change your name, so the first name that they see is the name that you want them to see, for the most part. … So, after the first day of class, I just sent an email to all my professors [and told them I am transitioning] … But some people picked up on something that other people didn't and use female pronouns. And then, so I just asked my professors to set the example by using male pronouns, and every single response I got was like, "Yeah that's fine. That's great."

Other ways participants characterized *faculty support* was interactions in class about feedback regarding content. Sal noted that this professor's positive response to his feedback about the class was a way he felt supported.

I'm in a statistics class this semester, and for the first half of the class, every time we had a new example of something the professor would break it down to how many males and females or he would say how many guys and how many girls are in the room, and I always got counted as a girl, and it was frustrating as hell. And I knew he didn't like - he isn't doing it maliciously, but I would get so wrapped up in being distracted by that and angry about that and like, "How dare you assign all of us an identity? Blah, blah, blah," that I totally did not focus, which was not good. But I finally had a conversation with him about it, and he turned out to be really supportive and made a really conscious effort to use different examples and stop gendering me and anyone else in front of the class, which was cool.

Micah had a similar experience when he created a presentation to educate his class about gender.

And so I did this presentation. It was about an hour long, and afterwards the people asked such good questions, not even offensive questions. They were just like - they actually really wanted to know. Like what my relationship was like with my girlfriend now that I'm trans or what my relationship has been with my parents. … What's going to happen to me when I go through hormones? So they were really receptive to it, and a whole bunch of people went up to my professor after class and told her that was really great. (Micah)

Faculty support also includes ways in which trans identity and gender confusion were not surfaced, which felt like a form of support.

My advisor, my current advisor, is really awesome, and I think it's pretty obvious that I'm gender-different, in whatever way. But he's never said anything. I've never said anything. We've never felt the need to have this conversation … which I think is ideal 'cause it's a non-issue. (Nate)

222

To be supported by faculty was to be allowed to choose the level of conversations about

their trans identity, in how much or how little attention was devoted to the students'

identity. The notion of attention to or lack of attention to a participant's trans identity was

also present in the theme *friends*.

      Friends describes how individuals and communities at college/university

provided moments or spaces of support. How friends demonstrated supportive behaviors

were described as those who would call each other on mistakes with name or pronoun,

instead of relying on the participant to do it.

> In addition, as I mentioned, the Greek society I belong to has been really
> incredible 'cause a lot of them did know me before I was out, and then later on
> when I joined, they were - everyone was really good about trying and calling me
> male pronouns and catching each other on it. (Patrick)

Pronouns and name were a significant source of how *friends* demonstrated support.

> For the most part, my friends have been really good. Those who did know me by
> my birth name have made a concerted effort to switch over. People have been
> trying to switch pronouns. Some of them are really good and hardly ever slip, and
> some of 'em at least go, "She, no wait he," like that kind of thing. At least they're
> stopping and correcting themselves. I don't expect it to be seamless and perfect, I
> just appreciate that people try. (Myles)

Similar to Myles, some participants did not expect perfection but were appreciative of

efforts made by friends.

      Gay friends were identified as a supportive group because they were, for Brandon,

open and sympathized, even if they could not directly relate to his issues.

> The gay floor just because they're more accepting about stuff in general. And
> most of my friends who do know about it, they're fine with it, there's no problems
> with it and even though they don't understand what it's like because they haven't
> gone through it. If I do have a problem relating to it, they can sympathize, which
> is good support obviously as well.

Expectations of friends varied among participants. For example, Wyatt described friend

support as those who seemed to forget about his female past.

> [pauses] As far as my friends and stuff, I mean they - all I really asked from them was to just switch pronouns and switch names and then forget about it and they were pretty good at that. … Yeah. I mean there's only really a couple of people that fit into that category of people who know but who I like still interact with a lot. So, they're all good with that. Sometimes I wonder if they even remember.

James1 described how support for hir also meant asking minimal questions.

> The best support I've actually gotten is people who are just like, "Okay. Whatever. Moving on." Which was actually my favorite thing, 'cause it's what that said to me is, you are you as a person not this interesting specimen … I don't really want to you acquire me as "the genderqueer friend" to fill out your little diversity. [laughs] What I watch is people who are just like shrug and carry on, but just remember some little respectful things.

Alternately, for some participants, supportive *friends* included those who engaged in

conversations around gender exploration with the participant.

> My friend [name deleted for confidentiality] was amazing for that [being supportive] just because he has a non-normative view of masculinity. So, he's been able to help me explore that and just - when internalize, it's, "But if this is making you uncomfortable, why are you doing it?" And that's - he just has been really helpful in presenting new ideas and new questions to explore. (Ren)

Supportive gestures by *friends* were also demonstrated through travel and financial

assistance.

> I've had a lot support from just friends of mine helping and whether it's driving me to appointments or things like that. … As I said before, they used to also throw change into my testosterone jar and that helped out a lot. I got like $150.00 when I cashed that in, which covered all my initially expenses for that. (James2)

There were a number of ways friends could demonstrate support and those gestures or

conversations were not universally true for all participants.

> *My family* was a theme that was conveyed by only a couple of participants but

was notable because of the significance family support was for those participants.

Well, I guess the big support system would be my family, because with the exception of one person, they were all extremely supportive, surprisingly so. And have been all the way through. So, obviously when you're going to college, it's a whole new experiences and stuff like that being able to go back to them and explain things that are happening is definitely a huge help. (Brandon)

The role of *my family* was a support for participants in the validation of their trans identity. "It's weird to hear female pronouns from anyone nowadays, but mentally I correct it when my family uses female pronouns. Without asking my aunt and uncle and grandparents on my Dad's side have switched pronouns, which is super cool!" (Nate). The recognition from their families described as something that was not a direct part of their college experience but impacted their time at college.

Policies and practices addresses how institutional *policies and practices* increased or created a feeling of support. Most commonly referenced were policies that allowed for changing name or gender on university/college documents. "Administrative offices, recently we had a change. It's now … easier to change your gender on your documents" (Nate). Support was further demonstrated by practices that allowed students easier access to change their name and pronoun through a university website. "They have I believe it's in the [university registrar website] section. I believe it's in there. But you can change your name. You can change your preferred pronouns. … And they show up on the class rosters" (Ren). There were overlaps between this theme and *administration/staff support* in how administrators were those who enact campus policies and practices.

The dean who I work with has been phenomenal. My name change was really easy. For the health center, they put this thing on my form that like says male pronouns. And I got them to alter the PE requirements for me so that I wouldn't have to take PE with other people 'cause I can't bind while I exercise. (Robert)

225

Deciding noted that his campus lacks a number of policies that one would expect to find at a college, which allowed for him to feel at ease. "[My college] itself has so few rules that it really, being trans hasn't really affected me and my relationship with the administration. Like you can have a male-bodied and female-bodied roommate here, so my transition status doesn't change anything" (Deciding). Participants noted that support through *policies and practices* came through in the fight to keep or extend trans inclusive policies and practices.

> There was a period of time where they were actually considering getting rid of gender-neutral housing because this guy was throwing a huge fit about it. And she [the director of the LGBT Office] basically went in, lobbied and said, "No. [laughs] This is a safety concern. You're not [going to] do it." And she's working right now on trying to make it so that the registrar's office will put in a name that you prefer rather than your legal name. (Jackson)

Support via *policies and practices* included descriptions of when participants pointed out a need for policy consideration and then thoughtful changes were made.

> I requested a single but some men would want to room with another man probably a biological man so you have to think is that in the best interest of the kid for safety? Should we let them choose their own roommate in that case? … But they have made improvements since and now there's an option on the housing application where you can say if your trans, and it's basically to let them know so they can contact you and ask you what you want to do for your room assignment and stuff like that, which is new since I've been here (James2).

Finally, *policies and practices* included how resources were shared across organizations and institutions.

> I've gotten a lot of support just from other queer clubs in the area, or [another local college] … people are always sending resources back and forth. Always sending me links if there's some sort of electronic newsletter that's related [to trans issues] and people always send me that stuff and that's helped out a lot just with information. (James2)

Participants shared different ways their awareness of *policies and practices* created a

more trans inclusive campus. In the next section, I review the data about how the

participants, based on their experience, described advice to trans men in college.

Table 28. Supported Since Identifying as Trans

	Administration/ staff support	Faculty support	Friends	Everything was pretty much fine	My family	Policies and practices
AJ	X	X		X		X
Ben	X					X
Bill		X				X
Brandon			X		X	
Charlie		X	X			
Deciding	X	X		X		X
Jack	X	X		X		
Jackson	X					X
James1			X			X
James2	X	X	X	X		X
JB		X		X		
Joshua	X			X		
Micah		X		X		
Mike	X			X		X
Myles	X	X	X			
Nate	X	X	X		X	X
Patrick	X		X	X		X
Ren	X	X	X	X		X
Riley	X		X	X		
Robert	X	X		X		X
Sal	X	X				X
Shawn	X		X	X		
Tucker				X		
Tyler		X	X			
Wyatt	X		X	X		
TOTALS	**17**	**14**	**14**	**15**		**13**

<u>Advice to Other Trans Men</u>

Participants were asked to consider what advice they would give to trans men in college or to those who may come to identify as trans men in college. Their answers were determined to fall within the following eight major themes: *confidence, find allies, research your school, self-advocacy, self-awareness, transition advice, uncertain about advice,* and *work with campus administration.*

Confidence includes descriptions of encouragement to be brave and proud.

Be brave about it. Be confident in who you are. I think 'cause that's my biggest struggle. … I'm scared. But I shouldn't be. I should be proud. And I would tell them just be proud of it and everything else will come if it's what you really want. (Shawn)

Sal encouraged other trans men to respond to discomfort or fear with confidence.

And if they didn't or if they went somewhere specifically where they know it's going to be rough, I hope that they're ready to be really ballsy or at least ready to be fake being really ballsy. 'Cause I think that's gonna make it the easiest if you're not apologizing about it. (Sal)

Sal's advice points out that being one of the only trans men or one of the few might be difficult but that others should fake confidence, even if they do not feel it. Charlie seemed also to echo the need for confidence and openness. "Yeah, I think the best ways to be open about it and to be confident" (Charlie). Robert, who admitted that he struggled with his own confidence, noted that ignoring others' opinions was a way to feel more confident. "I've really had to… I'm not sure if I've succeeded, but I have to definitely try not to care what other people think 'cause it's not worth it. You just drive yourself crazy" (Robert). Trusting others, or having the *confidence* to trust others, was also part of this theme.

If you're on a team, or know people that will generally be totally chill about you being trans, come out to them as soon as possible. I waited until the last moment

with some people and I wish I had come out to them earlier because they have been so positive, and so supportive about it. I would say if there are people who you know will be supportive, come out to them as soon as possible. (Nate)

Confidence did not mean that participants advocated that "outness" as a requirement, and instead suggested that it be based on self-comfort.

And try to come out to as many people as possible, as long as you feel comfortable, so then you can start being yourself and see if that really is who you are, especially if you're in the stage I'm in. (Tyler)

There were mixed opinions about being out and the ways that may or may not help with confidence among participants.

One theme that was fairly consistent across participants was to *find allies*, which was also the most prevalent form of advice.

And specifically around college, find who your allies are. Find them. Because I can guarantee you, even if you're at some school that has a notoriously bad reputation for diversity, there's going to be at least one person on that campus who will have your back. And that person may not be super easy to find, but there's always somebody. (Joshua)

Participants found a variety of ways to advocate for other trans men to *find allies*. "I would definitely say utilize the opportunities you have to find a good solid community" (James2). James1 suggested that clarity was a key aspect to ensure a way to *find allies*.

I would say be really clear. This sounds counter-intuitive 'cause it's one of those things that's slippery and confusing, but to be clear with other people. … And so it can save you a lot of really irritating conversations. If you're just clear right off the bat. And it will also save you a lot of awkward explaining to that friend you made freshman year … who's kind of become an acquaintance. (James1)

To *find allies* for some participants meant they were also a basis for support to transition.

And so really find your allies and come out to them as soon as possible because having support would, I think, change my college experience. Being out sooner especially to, especially to friends, I think I would have started socially transitioning much earlier. (Nate)

Finding allies was considered the best way to find support on a college or university

campus, as a means to not feel isolated.

The description of an ally was not consistent across participants. Some

participants described allies as people who you go to if you need help. "Don't be afraid to

tell someone if you're having trouble" (Ren). Allies were also the people who can lead

the way with clarifying your pronouns and helping make connections for others.

> And the other thing, it's hard to introduce yourself with the correct pronouns, but it's really easy for someone else to introduce you with the correct pronouns. So, when you go to a meeting with the dean and your advisor comes along and says, "Blah, blah, blah, Tucker. He's thinking about these classes. Can you help advise him?" That sets a precedent immediately and that makes it a lot easier to bring it up if they get the pronoun wrong. (Tucker)

Finding allies also spoke to how allies were people trans men needed to trust and

overcoming fear of connecting to avoid rejection.

> I'd just say: don't be scared of going to people who you think can help you, or - and if you can find a safe environment, obviously try and make friends there. It's probably going to be easier, than just trying to find someone out of the blue and not really knowing how they feel about transgender people. (Riley)

Allyship was about taking risks to make connections with other people. "Definitely put

yourself out there. For me, I mean I got here and had friends in two seconds 'cause that's

just how I am … And you'll be fine if they're your friends, they will understand no

matter what" (Shawn).

Encouragement to *find allies* also meant connecting to activities that were not

reliant on trans or queer communities.

> Probably I would say one of the most important things is not necessarily the groups you find yourself interacting with, 'cause some of the best people I've found generally about my gender weren't these activists spaces or these support spaces, or weren't queer spaces necessarily, but some of the greatest support spaces was my role in the theater. Just being recognized as just a person. Having other activities, so you can just be a person who's doing something, even if it's

activism, but anti-war actors and something besides just working and the gender community was really incredible for me and really helpful. Things like self-confidence and stuff because it's like, "Oh look it's something that has nothing to do with this part of my identity." I can have other parts of my identity, and most of the time I function, mostly use it interacting with those other parts of my identity, which are a lot more important to me. (Patrick)

So while some participants described allies as active, others advice was around their ability to first listen. Allies were people who understood feedback about how they could be better allies.

So find the people who when you say - you don't necessarily need to find the people who aren't fucked up. You need to find the people who are willing to take the criticism of, "Hey listen, don't say things like that." (Patrick)

Allies were also those who saw themselves in the role of support, even if they could not fully understand the experience of being a trans person.

Make sure that you either build a good support network or make sure you have one. I don't want to say it can be hard to build a good support network, just making sure that there are people in your life that you can talk to and even if they don't understand, can at least listen. (Deciding)

Support networks were comprised of people who were worth taking a risk to come out to, in the hopes they would understand and be accepting.

Give 'em [friend groups] a chance, because I mean, honestly, I was really nervous to tell a lot of my friends and just put it out there. And they've been really, really way more supportive than I had hoped for. A lot of people are generally pretty accepting within our age group. Not like - I don't know. I feel like it's harder for older generations to get it than younger ones. (Myles)

Participants addressed an intersection of the themes *confidence* and *find allies.*

I guess what I would say is really surround yourself with people that care about you and not just care about you on a really superficial level, but actually care about your well-being. All the people that live in this house (I live with six girls and they are mostly queer for the most part) and it's been really good to surround myself with people who are like-minded … Don't surround yourself with people who are going to denigrate your person because they don't understand you. It's not worth it. So as long as you have that sort of core group, then it's so much

easier to go out and coming out to acquaintances or other people that you don't live with or coming out to your parents even. (Micah)

Overall, there was an opinion that to *find allies* would help trans men feel supported enough to feel confident to be themselves.

Research your school conveys how anyone who may identify as a trans man in college should look into various aspects of different institutions. Participants spoke of how there should be consideration of the campus climate or environment. "It's not super cheerful, but I would say I hope that they put some thought of what the environment is like before they choose a school" (Sal). Sometimes young people do not have many choices about which college or university they attend and might end up in a place where trans identities are not accepted.

> And if they didn't or if they went somewhere specifically where they know it's going to be rough, I hope that they're ready to be really ballsy or at least ready to be fake being really ballsy. 'Cause I think that's gonna make it the easiest if you're not apologizing about it. Obviously when you're victimized for something, that's not your fault, but it's a lot harder to be victimized if you don't victimize yourself, I guess. (Sal)

Participants noted that the best fit was one that was the campus that was the most comfortable, which may vary depending on needs or type of experiences sought after.

> I think my advice is to do what is most comfortable for you. There are certain environments that it's okay to be out as trans, and then there are certain environments that are not okay. And then it depends on the person too. Because some people … they would be happier being harassed all the time, and being in the closet or whatever. Or some people would rather just keep it to themselves, and their friends and not get harassed as much. (Bill)

Participants spoke about the variety or focus of communities at colleges and universities and that interest or possible need for community should be a factor in researching institutions.

But I would say also really consider what school you're going to. If you're in high school looking at colleges and look at colleges that have - That are good about trans issues, that have community, that have various communities … So, I would say really look at the community, also look at the part of the country, because if you're in a city versus in a rural town. If you're in a rural area, it matters a huge amount what the atmosphere on the campus is like. If you're in the middle of a city, it matters almost more what the city is like, than the campus itself. So there's just that of picking colleges. (Patrick)

Other participants focused on how *research your school* was about understanding the policies and bureaucracy of your chosen institution.

A lot of schools aren't as easy to go to in terms of being trans as [my college] is and having a good understanding of the system and the bureaucracy of the system is incredibly helpful because then it's easier to work within it and find those loop holes that you can get through as a trans person. (Brandon)

Overall, Myles provided a succinct suggestion for advice to trans men in or who will attend college that dealt with the core issues: resources. "Try and find the resources on campus" (Myles). *Research your school* was as much about the process prior to arriving on campus to assess the climate as it was about understanding support and advocacy mechanisms in place on campus.

Self-advocacy described how participants advised that there were places and circumstances in which trans men needed to be self-advocates. "So I think that unfortunately you have to be your own advocate. So I guess that would be my suggestion" (Jack). This theme included many ways that *self-advocacy* might be required, such as creating your own trans inclusive community.

Even if you're school doesn't have a strong queer community there's always the opportunity if it's your thing to start one or there's always gonna be some sort of network for you that's available that is so much harder to get when you're not in the college community. (James2)

At the core of *self-advocacy* was the suggestion to listen to internal needs and literally advocate for your own desire for self-comfort.

233

Because the bottom line is it's not about college, it's not about where you're at, it's where you need to be personally. I held off out of fear, and it almost cost me my head. [laughs] Today - in today's age, I would say you need to do what you need to do to be you. (Mike)

The advice on *self-advocacy* was based on being self-aware of individual needs and facing fears about rejection.

Self-advocacy included resisting internalized oppression. "Obviously when you're victimized for something, that's not your fault, but it's a lot harder to be victimized if you don't victimize yourself, I guess" (Sal). Sometimes picking battles of when to do *self-advocacy* meant understanding that in the process of identifying or transitioning that knowledge will not make the experience any easier.

Knowing that it will be difficult will not make it easier. Basically, I came into it having everyone knows. It sucks to be trans. Right? It really, really, really sucks [laughs] so it's like, I kind of - I think that you have to pick your battles with people. I've stopped worrying about pronouns, basically. If people haven't gotten it by now, that's fine. I'm going to get hormones and I'm going to do my thing. (Riley)

Within the theme was the expectation that isolation was not a sign of strength when support was available. "Pick your battles. You don't have to be all stoic and try to…'I'm a lion, hear me roar' kind of thing" (JB). *Self-advocacy* acknowledged that there were choices involved, and some of the participants noted that *self-advocacy* included knowing when and when not to engage.

Self-advocacy was accompanied with warnings about trans oppression, but participants discussed choices about how they responded to experiences of oppression or micro-aggressions (Nadal, Rivera, & Corpus, 2010).

But also, I would say, just recognize the fact that people are going to ask unfortunate questions. And at college and people are going to say unfortunate things and not realize how incredible offensive they're being. And as difficult as it is, it's not helpful to go off on them. It's not going to be good for you and it's not

going to be good for them. It will be good for you for about five seconds after you're done, and then you're going to start feeling the backlash from that. But being like, "Hey, listen, that's not cool because of this," and, "Yeah it's frustrating to have to do that," and, "No, no one should, but doing that means that that's not going" - That unless the person is truly an asshole, it's not going to keep happening, and if they are truly an asshole, then you know better than to associate with them. (Patrick)

However, participants indicated there were places for support and that seeking out those places was connected to *self-advocacy*.

And, any place, any form of support that you can get from anyone, do it. Reach out to anyone, whoever you need to reach out to if you need help. That can be hard as well, but that's what you have to do. (Riley)

Support, in general, was a key component within the *self-advocacy* theme as a mechanism to avoid isolation and to help build *confidence*.

Intersected with *self-advocacy* were the themes of *research your school* and *find allies* in how navigation and limits were assessed for understanding institutional support, such as when *self-advocacy* might be required.

A lot of schools aren't as easy to go to in terms of being trans as [my college] is and having a good understanding of the system and the bureaucracy of the system is incredibly helpful because then it's easier to work within it and find those loop holes that you can get through as a trans person. (Deciding)

Tucker offered that another part of the institutional navigation was the suggestion to *find allies* who would support *self-advocacy* and when needed, advocate on his behalf.

I think that my strategy for that [institutional navigation] has been to find someone who is friendly and knowledgeable about trans stuff and basically go through them and ask them to help for stuff - everything because if you find somebody who's willing to play that role, then it means you can have them as an adult, an established adult in the community advocate for you with people who may not be so thoughtful. (Tucker)

Tucker also included that mentorship, seeking out a mentor might be important for trans men as a form of *self-advocacy*. "Find someone who's willing to be a mentor. 'Cause

that's something that I really didn't have, and I really wish I'd had" (Tucker). Finally,

self-advocacy included institutional limits and communities with perspective taking that

college would not be the only place where acceptance could be found. "Other than that,

know that the people at your college are not the only people in the world [laughs]" (Ren).

Self-advocacy was also linked with suggestions of *self-awareness*.

Self-awareness conveyed sentiments about self-knowledge and self-understanding

as important advice for trans men who were in or were going to be in college. Self-

awareness was about the joys of self-explorations and not settling for expectations of

others, as something more tolerated in a college environment than in post-college life.

> Experiment, experiment, experiment, experiment, do not be afraid. If you reinvent yourself and you find that it doesn't work, do it again and again, every day. Just know that you are a different human being every day that you wake up and don't be afraid of that, embrace that. See it as an opportunity to grow and change and college is a fantastic place to experiment because it's so protected. You've got people fighting for you, you don't have to be in the real world yet, and you can figure that out before you go out into the real world and get a real job and have huge bosses breathing down your neck going what the fuck is your problem? So, I would just, I am all about trans kids in college. (AJ .

Self-awareness included avoidance of isolation, whether through research or finding

other trans people.

> It would have been more helpful to know more trans people because there's never, like I said, there's never been any mention of queer people in my family. I was the first trans person that I ever met, and so it would have been helpful to be able to know that there is a community out there. And not kind of think that you're the only one among all these people doing this. … But I would just encourage people to do as much research as you can and reach out as much as you can because it's something that you're not going to find a lot of other people doing easily in your everyday life. Because you probably won't even notice if they are. [laughs]. (James2)

Robert advised that it was important to be self-focused, instead of worried about the

opinion of others. "I've really had to… I'm not sure if I've succeeded, but I have to

definitely try not to care what other people think 'cause it's not worth it. You just drive yourself crazy" (Robert). *Self-awareness* was strongly connected to *confidence* about agency and comfort.

Within *self-awareness* was the suggestion to follow desires based on personal needs, which intersected with the theme of *self-advocacy*.

> In college? Well my first piece of advice, to anybody, is always just be who you are. Don't let anybody else tell you who you are or who you have to be or how you have to do something. … And so I always try to encourage people [to] like take your time. Don't feel like you have to jump into something because it's expected. (Joshua)

Self-perception was a part of this theme, as Patrick encouraged trans men to pay attention to how social interactions may or may not change based on identity perceptions.

> And recognizing… and recognizing that the more you pass in any direction or the more you present as any specific thing to other people, that will change the ways in which you need to navigate social spaces. Or even less social spaces, but even just one-on-one interactions. It will change things.

Finally, *self-awareness* included learning about trans identities and self-exploration. Mike encouraged having an understanding of the gravity of trans history and possible violence.

> But, I also caution, especially when I was going to the group up in [a nearby city], I would caution the kids, the young kids, "You don't want to be in the limelight because you're going to attract attention. You need to dress down and act down until you're sure of your footing and then once you become sure of footing you can act however you want to. But until then you need to - no bad checks." [This is a Brandon Teena reference] [laughs] People get killed over that shit in Nebraska. (Mike)

Tucker focused on how learning about trans identities was a way to engage in developing *self-awareness*. "Read everything. Read everything 'cause the more you read, the more you can see bits of yourself in what you're reading, and that really helped me to sort of figure out where I was going and what my choices were" (Tucker). *Self-awareness*

included being knowledgeable about trans identities, to build *confidence* about choices, options, and decisions surrounding trans identities.

Topics covered within the major code of *transition advice* address various suggestions participants had regarding engaging in biomedical and social transition processes. Brandon's advice focused on the legal and logistical aspects of transition.

> Check all the legal stuff. Make sure you know what you need to do because it's a lot more complicated than whatever you think it is. Check online, make phone calls, find out what you need to find out, and then make a really good chart. I think that's the major thing 'cause everything else is very subjective based on experience, like family support and things like that.

Jack's advice was focused on name change and ability to have a name that is consistent with college/university records.

> And the next thing I would say is - to if you're going to change your name, and the name change is not something that everybody might be ready for right after they come out. But if you're going to change your name, do it as soon as you feel comfortable. … Because the sooner you get it changed on your, all your college papers and everything that you need to have the sooner. It's just going to be easier. Definitely.

Transition advice also speaks to timeframe and decision-making regarding the biomedical process. Wyatt was not encouraging people to rush but also felt there was an urgency to undergo transition quickly to avoid past identities as being visible.

> If you can just get it over with and have - spend more of your college time with people knowing you as male. I mean I guess if it's easier if at that point if you can start passing and start living as male, there's less tracks to cover up behind you.

Transition advice also covered issues of social transition and specifically issues around name and chosen name strategies. "When you pick a name, make sure you can shorten it, so then it could be a nickname that could be either male or female" (Tyler). Participants also provided suggestions regarding timing of name change and pronoun usage.

238

My actually recommendation is it is easier if you get to school and start off and just start off with everyone knowing you, so you don't have to deal with making everyone switch names. That will make things a lot easier. … And it will be a lot easier on you. So if possible, viable, whatever, that makes life a lot more pleasant. (Patrick)

Along with timing, participants provided suggestions on ways and times to come out to faculty and when it did not seem as important.

But when I came back for this semester, I emailed two of my professors because the classes are smaller. But my other two classes, the classes are 150 or 80 people, so it's big classes that really no point in me coming out to them 'cause they're not ever going to know who I am. [laughs] So, I'm very practical about that sort stuff. … Both of my sociology professors have been using my name. Been really awesome about just being very open and being there for me if I need to talk to them. It's been really cool. (Micah)

Transition advice intersected with *self-awareness* and encompassed opinions about testing out what pace or directions felt most appropriate.

I would tell them to take as much time as they needed in their process. So, I mean for me, I might have been uncomfortable with my name or with pronouns, but not really wanting to say, "Oh, use this name. Use these pronouns." And I sort of wished there was something in-between I could have done. And I wouldn't want people to be forced into taking that step before they were ready. Because even in your senior year you could be like, "So about that name. [laughs] Try using this one please." I mean in the sort of process of this I've had friends who have called me I don't want to know how many different names. One of my good friends has gone, "Well, you want to try out names" [laughs]. (Ben)
Within the theme of *transition advice* were intersections, as demonstrated above with Ben's quotation, that *self-awareness* and *confidence* were part of the process in decision-making.

Participants were sometimes *uncertain about advice* in particular areas, including to those who attended a similar institutional type. "I don't know what I would say if it was a trans student at a co-ed college and even other all women's colleges" (Ben). Other participants admitted areas where they still had not figured out what course of action would work best for themselves, so were *uncertain about advice* to other people.

239

> In the classroom, I honestly, I haven't made that much changes. I'm honestly kind of not sure what I'm doing with all that because I haven't had my name changed, so I just don't really - I don't know. I'm not necessarily very confident in all that stuff, so I don't know that I necessarily have advice. (Myles)

Tyler felt that his tactic of using a nickname might be helpful for someone with a different personality.

> And as for professors, you can try to going with a nickname, but it didn't work for me, but if you're more outgoing about it, maybe it will work. I was really quiet about it, so it didn't really work for me.

Finally, *uncertain about advice* spoke to aspects of their lives in which they had not achieved any success for finding acceptance. "Sorry, as far as parents go, I have no advice. [laughs] There I have no advice" (Nate). *Uncertain about advice* was a theme that demonstrated the limitations individual participants encountered to make all aspects of their lives more comfortable.

The final theme for advice was to *work with campus administration*, which addressed how participants would advise others to work collaboratively with administrators seeking to make a more trans inclusive campus. "And for me, being on good terms with whether it's my public safety or my administration is key because it's through those good relationships that people can help you work the system" (Deciding). A number of campus offices were mentioned in which parts of administration might be of support, such as suggestions to connect with a campus LGBT resource center, if there was one.

> But as far as people in general, [they] will be supportive as soon as possible. If you have - if you know the people at your college's - if they have a LGBT center or something like that, or are supportive and knowledgeable about trans issues, then get them on your side, so you know you can go them if anything crops up. Anything at all, which is really nice. (Nate)

Participants suggested other offices that may make living on campus and using campus

resources more comfortable.

> Definitely hook up with the [LGBT Center] 'cause I mean, maybe you don't want
> anything to do with them, but they can connect you with services and can be
> generally really helpful if you're looking for help or resources. Try and talk to
> people in Res Life. There's the grad student or the GA or whatever who's in
> charge of gender-neutral housing was really cool to talk to them about that stuff
> because when I was reapplying for next fall, it was like you can - you're not
> mandated to talk about your gender identity, but if you do, it can help them be
> like, "Oh well, this person should probably get into gender-neutral housing." …
> Counseling and mental health is also really good. They have LGBTQ support
> groups and stuff. (Myles)

The collaborative relationships between offices in student affairs meant that one office

could help organize needs across offices, as well as the need to be a loud self-advocate

were indicated as reasons to *work with campus administration*.

> And I feel like a lot of that's on the university to let you know where you
> supposed to go, but it's the kind of thing if you have trouble with your housing
> and your RA is not helping you - just realizing that there's another place to go. If I
> ever have trouble, I just would go to [the LGBT Coordinator] or ask my
> counselor, but I feel like a lot of students just think there's nothing they can do.
> And a lot of times the system sets it up to make it look like there's nothing you
> can do. But it's - if you push hard enough a lot of times, you can get things to
> change. (Ren)

> There was a clear intersection between *work with administration* and *find allies* in

regards to how that may increase comfort and access to advocacy.

> Yeah, I mean I think having an ally and especially if you can find an ally who
> works at the school that makes a big difference. In terms of if you're not out and
> that's important for you to not be out, that person might be able to change your
> name on roosters or things like that, to help provide some protection, if the school
> doesn't offer that to you already. (Joshua)

Tucker also felt it was good to find someone who will be an advocate in the

administration.

> I think that my strategy for that [institutional navigation] has been to find
> someone who is friendly and knowledgeable about trans stuff and basically go

through them and ask them to help for stuff - everything because if you find somebody who's willing to play that role, then it means you can have them as an adult, an established adult in the community advocate for you with people who may not be so thoughtful. (Tucker)

The theme of *work with administration* encompassed a number of strategies and tactics to improve trans inclusion at a college or university or to work on building relationships with those who create policies and enact practices.

Table 29. Advice to Other Trans Men

	Confidence	Find allies	Research your school	Self-advocacy	Self-awareness	Transition advice	Uncertain about advice	Work with campus administration
AJ			X		X			
Ben			X		X	X	X	
Bill			X		X			
Brandon						X		
Charlie	X			X	X	X		
Deciding		X	X	X				X
Jack			X					
Jackson				X		X		X
James1		X		X		X		
James2		X	X	X	X			
JB				X	X	X		
Joshua		X			X			X
Micah	X	X			X	X		
Mike				X	X	X		
Myles		X	X	X	X		X	X
Nate	X	X					X	X
Patrick		X	X	X	X	X		
Ren		X		X	X			X
Riley		X	X					
Robert	X	X		X	X			
Sal	X		X	X				
Shawn	X	X		X				
Tucker		X	X	X	X			X
Tyler	X	X			X	X	X	
Wyatt						X		
TOTALS	**7**	**14**	**11**	**14**	**15**	**11**	**4**	**7**

Trans Inclusion Suggestions

When asked if there was anything they could do to make their campus or campus offices more trans inclusive, participants described a variety of suggestions. The major themes that covered participants' suggestions were: *administration does a good job*, *educate about trans*, and *institutional level changes*.

Under the theme of *administration does a good job* were descriptions of how there was an investment by administrators to be inclusive of trans students, which highlighted work that was already being done to make a campus more trans inclusive. Administration was collectively invested in trans inclusion and continued efforts to increase the inclusivity.

> I don't know. I think other things are already in motion. I think they're already there and I think they're a good group of people who are really committed to keeping that ball rolling and not just letting get lost, so those might be the biggest things. (Joshua)

Within this theme was the Deciding's opinion that he was lucky to end up at a school that was so trans inclusive regarding campus climate and administrative support. Deciding wasn't looking for a queer or trans friendly school, but upon becoming a student at his college, he realized that his college marketed their inclusive environment.

> There's not a whole lot from where I sit today would want to change. [My college] apparently does a lot of it's marketing of itself as a very queer friendly school, and I think I read once that it was queer friendly.… I'm glad I ended up here because in my admissions process I wasn't necessarily looking for a school that was trans or gay friendly. (Deciding)

Deciding felt lucky he had chosen the college he did, and it turned out to be a very supportive environment for him.

Shawn felt that the administration at his college did a good job, but he acknowledged that he had limited need to interact with administrative offices. "I mean

I'm not complaining. … I mean from my perspective everything seems great, but I haven't had to deal with changing my name or anything on the - so that's a whole other" (Shawn). Finally, Robert's concerns were not with the administration, which he felt were responsive but more with the social aspects of his college.

> I do think that the administration in this school does a great job of being inclusive, maybe not right off the bat, but as soon as I inquire about something, they're responsive. So that's been fine. Trans inclusion, that really in my experience here, has been a social thing rather than to do with the school itself. And the social thing that would be harder to change. (Robert)

The social aspect of campus, from Robert's perspective, was not reflective of the work of administration on campus.

Educate about trans describes how increased inclusion for trans identities would be possible if the institution provided more educational opportunities about trans identities. Overall, this theme conveyed the ways in which trans identities were invisible to a majority of the campus.

> You know, GLB issues are everywhere and, you know, safe zone stickers are for GLB, but there's not a whole lot of trans stuff. Like they've got the upside down triangle for gay men and that has come to incorporate lesbians as well and trans does have a symbol, but you wouldn't know it by looking around. 'Cause it's nowhere to be found and that bothers the hell out of me. We're just vastly under-represented and that bothers me. (AJ)

Nate described how if there were more awareness or if there were more of an effort to *education about trans,* then he would not have to endure as many questions or educate people himself.

> More awareness because then being trans would be no big deal like, "Oh you're transitioning. Cool. You're switching majors. I see!" If it's no big thing, then it would just be a lot easier. If it were perceived, it's just no big deal. That would be nice.

Education, even when it has been provided, but was not adapted into practice or was

optional, led to feelings of disappointment with services and safety.

> But I feel like having some sort of sensitivity training, whatever, especially in areas like the health services, is really important. And that's enough to make me go, besides the fact that I had to wait for 3 and a 1/2 hours. It's like, "Well, they changed my name on my chart and put a sharpie 'use male pronouns' or whatever, but still." [laughs] I don't want to go back. And the thing is, is that on the University's health website it's like, "We want to support our transitioning students." So they acknowledge. I'd rather they just didn't acknowledge that they had trans students if they're not really going to follow through on it. So, I feel like that's one of the things that, I don't know, this false sense of security that like, "Oh, we're trans friendly," but not really. And in some ways, that's more dangerous than just not trans friendly because at least, you know, that I shouldn't say anything. But if you think you're going to someone who has this knowledge, but they're just, they don't have it, it's a lot more detrimental, in my opinion (Bill)

Consistency that demonstrated educational efforts and practices that emulated those

efforts were important to participants.

> *Educate about trans* also encompasses questions about whether an institution was

providing the kind of inclusion that it advertised.

> And there's so many people at [my university] that don't even have the language to talk about it. There's trans - yeah we can't discriminate against them … But I feel like that's more of a universal problem, that it's not understood… It's like if you're going to pretend you're inclusive, be inclusive. (Ren)

Ren believed his institution had the proper policies in place but did not follow through on

the practices, which led to a feeling of disappointment regarding his experience. Other

participants felt as though even the basic information about trans identities, experiences,

and ways to support trans people were absent from their institution.

> I think that … training them on just trans issues in general would be helpful, so that they know, that if saying sir or ma'am, is not necessary, don't do it. Or if there's any even remote question in your head [laughs] that someone might not be a cisgendered man or female, just ask 'em or just don't use a pronoun. I think that they need to be trained on language a little bit more. … I don't think most people are trying to be malicious. They just honestly don't know that it hurts a little

[laughs] when it happens. And then, yeah, I mean obviously my campus is different than most, but having health services in-tune to the fact that trans people might have separate medical needs or the fact that they don't want to hear about women's health. [laughs] I think training is good [laughs]. (Jackson)

From their intake processes to their overall service, a few participants mentioned health services and their need to *educate about trans* internally, specifically as a site where there was a need to learn how to respect trans clients.

> I think just education is big and I think even the health services on campus is kind of refused to have somebody come in and educate them about trans issues because they think they already know about trans issues, but they don't, like big, they don't and I've had good and really bad. I've had mostly bad experiences on campus as far as the health care goes which is kind of how health care goes in general. But I think I wish that I could just kind of go around and educate everyone about what it means and what… Just scrape off this layer of preconceptions and just kind of educate. … And people either don't listen and don't take the time to treat people as people. And I think trans people and health care require a little extra TLC and they just don't. I think that they think their knowledgeable and they're not. (JB)

Health services was not the only location on campus where participants identified a need for more education, but it was that they talked about having explicit practices that seemed to be lacking inclusion for trans men.

> Participants also requested that trans identities be included in the curriculum.

> I guess I wish there was more coverage on it period 'cause it hasn't even brought up in any of my other classes that I can think of … It just didn't get brought up at all. It was all the stereotypical male and stereotypical female and we made lots of broad generalizations without talking about any of the caveats or I don't know exceptions, I guess. (Riley)

Educate about trans conveys desires to have faculty be educated about trans identities.

> And one of my teachers, the teacher I have this year who is in the Safe Zone, even though she … accepts it, she doesn't know that much about it. I've been talking to her about it and sending her essays that I've wrote about it and stuff. And she keeps thanking me because she really likes what I'm doing, and she's telling me how she's going to take all of my information and make her class better and focus on the issue. So in certain classes, just making that difference for her to add that in. But I want it to be something they have to add in ultimately, but right now I

can only make the little change of certain teachers who will not take it as criticism, but just be willing to do it because they realize oh that's a good idea. I never thought about that. (Tyler)

Within this theme were thoughts conveyed about the expectations around "safe space" or "safe zone" advertising and faculty roles in understanding trans identities.

> I think educating faculty is a really good place to start. Letting them know that this is something that's real and something that they will deal with at least once or twice in their tenure. And acknowledging that these - this is not to be taken lightly and that it's really something that they need to be supportive of and they need to be there. They have the triangles on doors if they're GLBT friendly space, so I think educating them more on the T part of that equation would really help. 'Cause I know a lot of professors would probably be like 'cause luckily I came out to a professor who was doing sex and social life. And also a professor who formerly taught that class. So, they were aware and they know what they are talking about. But I mean if I came out to a lot of other professors a lot of people would go, "What?" or would mess up my pronouns. Yeah, it's all about educating the faculty and then from the faculty, it kind of, sort of, trickle down to the students. (Micah)

Within the theme of *educate about trans* were expectations of who would be knowledgeable and supportive, and participants felt that faculty had some responsibility to include trans identities in course content and how they manage the classroom.

Participants expressed their disappointment when those who fell within the LGBT moniker were without information or became flustered when questions about trans inclusion were asked, pointing out that *educate about trans* is not limited to cisgender and heterosexual people.

> And also just the awareness thing. 'Cause freshman year I asked an honest question about bathrooms on campus, and the person - someone from the college [LGBT organization]. This person got all flustered. And I think just had not even been thinking about this and I sort of - I was a little perturbed by that 'cause I'm like you're from [the LGBT organization] you're supposed to be up on these things. (James1)

247

There was an intersection of issues about knowledge both inside and outside of

queer communities, thus *educate about trans* also includes education within queer

communities.

> For most people on campus, it is just lack of awareness. And once you explain it
> to them, they're okay. My dorm mates are a great example. They, a lot of them,
> were pretty conservative, never met a gay person before, stuff like that. Didn't
> know what I was. What is this person? Explained it and now I can watch *Priscilla
> Queen of the Desert,* and then the guys will still compliment me on my beard. But
> then, you still have issues within the queer community where and a lot of things
> where I don't see a way from moving past them. Like the issue of me trying to be
> in a relationship with a gay guy. Some problems there that I cannot solve, and it
> doesn't - and so, I think information is absolutely a necessity. And beyond that,
> there are just some issues that I think people will always face, no matter what.
> (Robert)

Institutional initiatives about education intersected with the next theme of *institutional

level changes*.

Institutional level changes reflects suggestions that asked for primary

consideration of trans inclusion at the college or university, instead of being pushed into a

tangential consideration For example, Tucker mentioned how trans inclusion needed to

be prioritized as equal to, not subordinate to, other institutional challenges and concerns.

> But I think that here, my biggest problem is that the administration is really not
> that willing to talk about the issues that trans people face at this college, and
> they're really interested in just sweeping it under the rug and being we like, "We
> have bigger issues to deal with and this isn't that important as our fiscal financial
> crisis." … So, more student-faculty communication would be really good. And
> one thing that's really basic, that they really haven't been doing and that has been
> talked - we've been trying to get them to do for years is have each professor be -
> go to some kind of diversity training that includes trans issues, and have them ask
> for pronouns from everyone in a private situation, every time they start a class.
> Because there are enough trans people that that's a big issues and it's so hard to
> advocate for yourself especially if you've just come out. (Tucker)

Institutional level changes included allowing students the ability to change their name

and gender marker. "[pauses] Well the probably, the number one thing would just let

people change their name and gender marker on their student stuff if they want to, which now I think it's pretty hard, now that the fixed that bug [laughs]" (Wyatt). Other issues that require broad attention by an institution include restrooms and bathrooms. "We still haven't succeeded with gender-neutral bathrooms. That would be useful" (Robert). Other issues that would benefit from *institutional level changes* included issues regarding forms and rosters.

> It's really bothersome when you're filling out forms, when there's a blank for male and a blank for female. Honestly, I feel like I run into that at the campus offices more than anything else or the Scantron sheet that you fill out for all your exams. It's just kind of a constant reminder… If they just - if you either A) didn't have to like pick something, if you could just leave that blank or a prefer not to respond or whatever… [pauses] If there was a way to have some sort of a nickname already on the roster, I feel like that would be helpful for classes. So, they would just call off your nickname rather than your birth name because then you're automatically added the first day of class. (Myles)

James1 stated his suggestion that the institution consider identities beyond a gender binary.

> A third, on these stupid little forms you have, to check a third box. I mean it would be great if there were a whole gradient, but when I was applying to graduate school in Scotland, they had a little drop down menu, it's now female other. I was delighted. I mean it's not perfect. In a perfect world they would have ten different things and then other [laughs]. (James1)

Considerations of international travel or study was also a part of this theme, such as safety issues for trans people, as well as more inclusive health and medical services provided by the institution.

> Administrative offices, recently we had a change, it's now it's easier to change your gender on your documents. … And then I think the international… 'cause there's a lot of international development that [my university] does. I think that needs to be better because if you have a passport that doesn't match and you're going to place that's like not cool to gays and lesbians, and it's especially not cool to trans people, the university needs to be helpful in some way with that; because you need to be able to do your work and not get harassed or killed. [laughs] And I

think also if universities have university led medical systems, those need to be changed too. (Nate)

Thoughtful institutional level changes were encouraged by Jack, who was unsure whether his institution had ever asked what trans student might need or want.

> Maybe if they asked more questions, they'd know more also. If they… and I know that they could go to [the LGBT student organization] and the person on the E-board [executive board] for [the LGBT student organization] who's trans is so vocal. [laughs] I'm sure they could get whatever information they wanted out of her, but I'm not convinced that they've asked. So I mean, if you ask questions, you'll get answers from somebody. (Jack)

Clarity on resources was also a part of the theme of *institutional level changes* because it was not useful to participants if they could not find the resources, policies, or services they were seeking.

> *Intentional institutional efforts* were encouraged by participants, especially at smaller colleges, to connect with or create coalitions with other small colleges or large universities, as a way to address the small number of trans people on their individual campuses.

> My school is kind of small anyway so it's a little hard to gather a big enough presence to be heard on such obscure topics. … But I guess, forming coalitions with other nearby colleges like [another university] is giant and they have the [an LGBT Center] which is pretty active or so I hear in transgender issues. (Riley)

Institutional level changes include investment in institutional forms of support, such as a trans group for students.

> Run a trans group, but I have public speaking problems, like I can't do it. So I need someone else, or I just need to get over it. … 'Cause I realize at [a nearby university] I believe they have a trans group, and they have trans groups at a lot of schools actually, and this school does not. (Tyler)

Participants requested trans specific support services, outside of lesbian, gay, and bisexual resources. Brandon also mentioned support services, along with clarity of legal and other issues to consider.

> Clarifying legal issues. [laughs] A lot of clarification on websites I'd say helps because you have to make so many phone calls and the [University] website is very in-depth with so much information, so many different groups, but it's just this one thing they're always lacking behind on. And support services. Making sure that they know what support is there and how all that is going to work out is a big thing. (Brandon)

Participants noted that there is a lot to consider regarding trans experiences in colleges, and *institutional level changes* might make navigating their institution less complicated.

Most answers for creating a more trans inclusive campus fit within the broader themes. To be fully transparent, there were participants who were unsure about ways to make their campus more trans inclusive, whether that was because they saw few areas that needed improvement or because they felt the issues were too large and struggled to come up with suggestions. Also, there was one participant who had a campus-specific remedy: to end the queer dorm on his campus. Mike felt that the practice of having queer students separate themselves was increasing feelings of fear and isolation.

> Because basically, when you allow people to segregate themselves out of fear, then they turn that fear around to hatred or everybody who has segregated them, and in reality they're the ones doing the segregating and nobody seems to see that. … And I understand the need to be around people who identify or people who have common interest. That's just human nature, but when that is all based on fear, it's unhealthy. And segregating to queer only or trans only or queer and trans only, it just perpetuates that fear. Well they don't want us, we don't want them and then it turns to hatred on both sides. (Mike)

Mike was the only participant who mentioned that housing or residence life structures of community were sites of isolation, so it is not a broad theme; however, it is important to note the specific strategy to make his campus more trans inclusive. Further, a few of the

participants lived in learning communities that were focused on LGBT students and described those as areas of support.

Table 30. Trans Inclusive Suggestions

	Administration does a good job	Educate about trans	End queer dorm	Institutional level change	Unsure
AJ		X		X	X
Ben					
Bill		X		X	
Brandon				X	
Charlie		X		X	
Deciding	X				
Jack				X	
Jackson		X		X	
James1		X		X	
James2					X
JB		X			
Joshua	X			X	
Micah		X			
Mike			X		
Myles				X	
Nate		X		X	
Patrick		X		X	
Ren	X	X			
Riley		X		X	
Robert	X	X		X	X
Sal		X		X	
Shawn	X				
Tucker		X		X	
Tyler		X		X	
Wyatt				X	
TOTALS	**5**	**15**		**17**	**3**

Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter described a variety of strategies and suggestions by participants to make their college or university more inclusive for trans men. Also provided were ways that their institutions have been supportive and challenging to their

experiences as trans men in college. The next two chapters discuss my findings in

response to my research questions.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION OF TRANS MEN'S IDENTITIES

Introduction

In the previous three chapters, I presented my findings about the experiences of trans* men in college. I offered the categories and themes I created to construct my understandings of the many nuances and dynamics that shape how trans* men in college describe their genders. I also examined how my participants' genders were shaped by their pasts, what avenues they used to learn more about trans* identities, and how they negotiated institutions of higher education. These next two chapters draw on my findings to address my research questions by focusing on two aspects in the lives of trans* men in college: identities and institutional navigation. In this chapter, I analyze and discuss data presented in previous chapters on my first research question and its sub-parts:

1. How do trans men describe their current gender?

    a. How do trans men describe their current gender expression?

    b. How do trans men describe their current gender roles?

    c. How do trans men define and describe their masculinity?

    d. What factors influence their choices about how they express or would like to express their masculinity?

    e. What factors influenced (or might influence) any choices made about the transition process?

I address these research questions in reverse order, starting with transition options because participants' choices concerning the transition process informed the ways these trans* men described their gender.

<u>Transition Status Examined</u>

In the following section I discuss the importance of biomedical transitioning as described by many of my participants[42]. Transition choice influences were various, but as the data in Chapter 5 indicates, there were some shared understandings of components and influences across participants. I specifically discuss how transition choices, status, and influences focused on embodiment, which was not a new finding (Cromwell, 1999; Devor, 1997; Rubin, 2003). The medical model provides explicit guidelines for biomedical transitioning for trans* people, and a focus on bodies is a logical focal point and measuring rod (Spade, 2003).

Embodiment

I intentionally asked my participants to share their description of transition components to get a sense of what and how they defined and conceptualized transitioning. Only one participant described no interest in accessing some form of social or biomedical transition. The 24 other participants were in the planning stage for, currently engaging in, or already completed forms of biomedical transition options, which spoke to an overall investment in biomedical transitioning. Transition choice influences were timing considerations for family reactions and support from family (*family impact*) and ability to access resources due to financial constraints, age, and other factors (*access to resources*). The access limitations that participants described were simply temporary obstacles to negotiate toward an ultimate goal of achieving some form

---

[42] I use biomedical transition in specific reference to hormones, surgical, and other transition options that impact the body, physiology, and morphology. Any other mentions of transition are meant to be broadly understood to include biomedical options, as well as social (interactions, pronoun use, name choice, etc.) and legal (documentation changes, etc.).

of biomedical transition services. The purpose of accessing biomedical transition components was the achievement of masculine or male embodiment.

Aside from a focus on biomedical transition process (*physical transition*), other components of the broader category of transition included an understanding of their trans* identity (*self-acceptance*), and the accuracy of interpersonal and legal aspects, such as pronouns and matching documentation (*social transition*). *Self-acceptance*, for those participants who named this as a transition component, was about an internal process or understanding or an aspect of coming to some type of trans identification. Charlie, in his commentary about components of the transition process, noted that his trans identity made his maleness different: "So, I think accepting the fact that you are trans and you're a different type of male is a big part of transitioning." There was an overlap between the idea of *self-acceptance* within transition components and the transition choice influences of *self-exploration*, which was about how participants gained a sense of self-understanding, motivations, and desires. Given the numerous, and for some participants significant, obstacles that limited accessing transition services, it makes sense that participants would need a good amount of internal fortitude (gained through *self-exploration*) to endure waiting required to overcome those obstacles.

Transition components were how participants described their transition status and interest by using references to specific surgeries (*chest surgery, bottom surgery, hysterectomy*) and options (*hormones, legal documents*) as demonstrative markers of plans or achievements. For example, many participants stated an interest in accessing (or have already accessed) *chest surgery* and *hormones*, while many were not interested in *bottom surgery*. An important personal issue in transition status, both for those who

already accessed and those who sought future biomedical transition options, was a desire

to pass (*need to change body*). Participant's focus on passing was about both manifesting

an accurate physical representation of self and the psychic harm their female body caused

them (Butler, 2004). JB described his decisions as about self-comfort:

> I think it's getting to a point where you're comfortable with your body, and if you're already comfortable with your body, like more power, but if you're not, I think it kind of plays around with the idea of how much it plays in psychology. But I think dsyphoria just causes so much anxiety and depression that I think just those two things along warrant that type of decision. So as soon as you're comfortable with where you're at is where it needs to be, and I think that that what's right for me.

The steps required for each participant to get to a place of self-comfort varied based on

body type and self-image, but choices about transition had roots in self-comfort as much

as external views of themselves.

Gender body norms or issues of masculine embodiment are structured around an

idealized or assumed notion of sexed bodies. Yet, one cannot deny the ways in which our

bodies display a learned conflation between gender and sex (masculinity as men and

males, femininity as women and females). In his research on FtMs, Rubin (2003) pointed

out that manhood was claimed by his participants in one of the most important ways:

through the body. "What counts as a male body is hard to pinpoint, but the FTMs in this

study articulate several crucial features including genitals, chests, body and facial hair,

straight hips, large hands and feet, tall height, muscularity, and bulk" (p. 166). Transition

status for participants that centered on a *need to change body* reflected a reality that

trans* men prioritize their identities through the articulation (self and understood by

others) of their embodiment. Even in their current gender expressions (explored later in

this chapter) participants described their efforts to pass as a form of gender expression

(*works toward passing*) heightening their personal imperative to attain biomedical transition options or a primary goal of achieving a recognizable form of masculine embodiment. Regardless of their gender identity (also discussed later in this chapter), participants described how their body communicated their gender to others. Whether a focus on the body was due to identification (Prosser, 1998), the importance of bodies as due to "social interpretation" (Dozier, 2005, p. 300), or as a downplay of gender differences (Gagne & Tewksbury, 1998) embodiment remained present for almost all of my participants. In the next section, I discuss how in-community and outside of community messages permeated participants' perceptions about biomedical transition and notions of authenticity or "realness" of trans* identities.

Trans Enough: In-Community Distinctions of Authenticity

The first mentions of in-community distinctions of authenticity of experience within literature on trans* men surfaced in Cromwell (1999) in which he asserts that transmen have always had a childhood desire, in some way, to identify as a man or with manhood. At the time, it was a side reference that went largely unnoticed and seemed merely to echo the medical model's requirement that trans* people perform a narrative of persistent gender incongruity to gain medical transition services. In the years that followed, Rubin (2003) was much clearer in his notation of a "hierarchy" existing within what was called FtM community. In his research, Rubin documented one FtM's indication that "real" FtMs were on testosterone, and those who describe their childhood as "sissyboys" are more authentically trans* because they never aligned with female

language of "tomboys." This preference for "real" FtMs emerged in my study as well, most clearly in the use of the phrase "not trans enough."

One of the ways trans* men in my research described "not being trans enough" was in discussion of biomedical transition choices.

> I think guys that have chosen hormones and surgery have this - not obviously not all of them, I'm not meaning to make a generalization, but there is a large sect or at least some sort of sect of that goes on the thought of: if you choose not to do that, and even if you're a femme boy, kind of thing, you're obviously just not trans, and you should go seek out the genderqueer community. And I think that no one can choose someone else's identity and regardless if your trans, I think the whole point is: if you think you are trans, then your trans. (JB)

JB points out that while it is not true of all trans* communities, there are widely known opinions that those who are not interested in transition options are not "really" transgender or transsexual men.[43] Messages of not being "trans enough" were linked to biomedical transition choices and influenced ideas (inside and outside of trans* men communities) about what it means to be a "real" trans* man. Claims of who is "trans enough" surfaced by participants about their perceptions of trans* community characterizations of those who use testosterone and have surgeries as the most "authentic." Those messages also presented themselves outside of trans* communities because of the dominant "wrong body" narrative that equates trans* people with biomedical transitioning. JB, as shared above, argued for more of a self-determination model, which was present in previous literature (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009; Catalano et al., 2007; Cromwell, 1999; Spade, 2003; Sullivan, 2008).

---

[43] I intentionally do not use trans* in this case because I believe under this conception of "real," there are few variations of what it means (mostly transgender or transsexual men).

The idea of not being "trans enough" was not limited to responses from questions about transition status, as Micah articulated, in his answer about negative changes since identifying as trans:

> Negative changes. I mean I can't think of changes *per se*, but negative things that have happened were definitely this idea that I wasn't trans enough. That I had to get through a lot of hurdles where I realized that it's okay to be myself, but at the beginning of that process, I was just like, "Oh my God. I'm not trans enough. People are not going to take me seriously. Oh my God." People are going to think I'm a joke and all this sort of stuff. And after a while, I actually realized that's not true, and I have every right to identify as exactly how I want to identify and nobody else can tell me different.

To be taken seriously as trans* (regardless of self-understanding) means a certain way to be viewed; to perform or embody a trans* identity means there are certain requirements to achieve authenticity (read: to not be just transgressive or going through a phase, but to be en route to being a man). Length of time utilizing hormones subverts chronological age and indicates how "transition age" is a bigger factor in establishing oneself as a "legitimate" transgender or transsexual man. Concerns of legitimation were found in words of participants, including Micah's early fears of identification, thus self-determination was ignored because those not accessing hormones have not "proven" they were serious about being seen as men.

Biomedical transitioning was not the only area where notions of being a "trans enough" were described by participants, as concern also arose regarding what it means to be a man and to express masculinity. Ren disconnected from the trans* community at his university because of their rigid notions of gender that he felt were antithetical to his trans* identity.

> So when I first started identifying as trans, I was really trying to… trying to be masculine. Doing all the things that everyone's always like, "Oh, walk this way." And like, "Sit this way and wear this clothing." And then I was just like, "Well

yeah, but why do I have to be one specific - one type of guy?" Just because I'm trans? It's like, so you're allowed to be in an effeminate guy [if you're not trans], but if I am, it just means that I'm not being trans good enough. And I feel like [my university] - a lot of the [my university's] trans community is very much like that, at least from what I've found.

Contrary to some popular beliefs about trans* identities as transgressive gender expressions, Ren's experience indicated that some trans* men experience university communities that enforce gender normative expressions among trans* students. Although some would argue the alignment with normative masculinity is meant to help trans* men pass as men, it simultaneously reasserts the privileging of gender normativity and trans* oppression (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009; Catalano et al., 2007). As Taylor (2010) pointed out, cisgender privilege is about "the energy one need not expend to explain their gender identity and/or expression to others" (p. 269). Ren's experience highlights the impact of trans* oppression by the assertion of gender conforming expectations, which is also attached to the cost of alienation from the trans* community on his campus. The importance of normative masculinities as a valid (and necessary) embodiment for trans* men sets up distinctions for authenticity and has implications for how trans* men find communities (explored more in Chapter 8). Assumptions of "authenticity" within trans* men's communities replicates ways in which oppression of trans* men evolved into internalized oppression through transnormativity (Daddy, 2010; LeBlanc, 2010; Warner, 1999).

Rubin (2003) described the paradox of male embodiment for FtMs because of what he calls "expressive errors;" he characterized FtM's "belief that their bodies fail to express what they are inside… This belief depends on the assumption that all bodies should, and usually do, *express* something about the selves that reside within in them" (p.

149). By this line of reasoning, FtM's strive to "correct" such "expressive errors" through biomedical transition that will achieve an outward recognition of the gender that is at their core, making maleness visible through biomedically achieved masculine characteristics. The intense focus on bodies and masculine expression through biomedical transition leaves little room to consider, reflect, or articulate any alternatives to hegemonic masculinity. My research supports Rubin's claims of trans* men's intense desire to express something about their gender that resides inside themselves because of the intense and/or increasing focus my participants had on their "wrong bodies" ("expressive errors"). For some participants, a desire to biomedically transition (or to pass) existed, even for those who described considerable distress and confusion about what it meant to embody masculinity.

Pressure about passing is connected to issues of authenticity of transness because of how it evoked a pressure to legitimate their core maleness, and higher value was placed on the embodiment of recognizable masculinity. On the other hand, a few participants valued gender transgression over recognizably masculine embodiment. These participants preferred a more liminal trans* identification, one that stood apart from gender normativity. Riley made apparent how his alignment with stereotypical masculinity seemed incongruent with his sense of transness—although his description reflected stereotypes of masculine embodiment and only guessed about something other than the gender binary:

> The way I see masculinity or I guess it's not something I can - that you can act really it's just kind of what you feel it's like a casual kind of thing. … So yeah, I kind of fall into a lot of male stereotypes, like my room is really messy, and I don't do laundry until I absolutely have to, and I watch football and all that stuff. So yeah, I'd call myself [laughs] pretty stereotypical. I'm supposed to be shaking

the gender binary or what have you, and I guess I'm not doing a very good job of that.

Riley was frustrated that he is "too normatively masculine," whereas Ren feared being too transgressive. Riley's understanding of "authenticity of transness" was reflective of a trans* politic focused on resisting invisibility (invisible because of passing as male), which stands in contradiction with messages Ren received that authenticity of transsess is about replication of gender normativity through transition, masculine embodiment, and passing. The in-community tensions in trans* communities about passing and embodiment versus transgressing gender norms, then pushes aside much needed conversation about limited access to biomedical transition resources (for those interested) and defeating oppressive institutional structures that make existing in a gender liminal state (for those interested). Instead, in-community conflicts over authenticity of transness center on expectations whether one is "trans enough" if they do or do not pass or look masculine, of which the former only encourages pressure to biomedically transition.

Another factor that influenced the salience and persistence of these in-community distinctions of authenticity of transness were tensions within trans* communities about who falls under the "transgender umbrella" as it is connected to embodiment (Davidson, 2007). Those who accessed biomedical transition services became more aligned with gender binary notions and internalized the medical model (Davidson, 2007). "It is not uncommon for trans communities to operate within the opposite hierarchy, valuing passing and ostracizing those trans people who do not seem to work hard enough at passing" (Roen, 2002, p. 504). Conflicts in trans* communities over distinctions of embodiment indicate further marginalization of trans* men, a form of trans* oppression, when there is assumed alignment with assumptions of what it means to be a man, and

263

affinity group identity requirements. Cisgender people are not required to demonstrate, in the same medical model structures, normative alignment with gender, sex, and their embodiment, and any desire to change their bodies (from rhinoplasty to penile enlargement) do not require psychological oversight and approval (Wilchins, 1997; Spade, 2003). Trans* people must legitimate their claims, even when those claims serve to reinforce the hegemony of the gender binary and cause doubt on those who wish to claim trans* identity but refuse to conform to the medical model and gender norms (Stone, 1997).

Participants in my research described their search for balance between internal confidence and external recognition and pressures. Participants struggled with self-confidence in their trans* identification because of the reification of hegemonic notions of gender from within and outside of their trans* community, mostly expectations of coherent and normative masculine embodiment; but a few participants also articulated the opposite pressure to perform gender transgression and incoherence from some trans* communities. "In short, the body is a participant in shaping and generating social practice, and consequently, it is impossible to consider human agency without taking embodied gender into account" (Messerschmidt, 2009, p. 87). To be a full participant in social practice, trans* men usually need to access biomedical transition services (hormones and/or chest reconstruction). In the next section, I discuss the factors that influenced how participants expressed or would like to express their masculinity, and how passing as a man was desired and confusing.

Passing: Uncertain Relationships to Masculinity

Tatum (1997) notes that identity "depends in large part on who the world around me says I am" (p. 18), and is complex, "shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts" (p. 18). Tatum built her conceptualization of identity from Cooley's (1922) concept of "the looking glass self," which connected how "other people are the mirror in which we see ourselves" (Tatum, 1997, p. 18). Tatum also turned to Erikson for a more nuanced account of "other people [who] are the mirror" and quoted the passage below:

> We deal with a process "located" *in the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture…* In psychological terms, identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him. This process is, luckily, and necessarily, for the most part unconscious except where inner conditions and outer circumstances combine to aggravate a painful or elated, "identity-consciousness." (Erikson, 1968, p. 22)

For trans* men, these distinctions, between the self and the mirror, or between the individual core and the communal cultural core, are complicated in ways that Erikson barely anticipated. The trans* men in my study described more than one "communal culture" in their accounts of their families, their college administrators, faculty, and peers, and the everyday culture they encountered in public restrooms, in shops, on the street, or campus. Participants also described more than one "core self" in their accounts of a self that had been not-female, that was male, and that was trans*—in bodies that had been female and were in transition toward male.

Accordingly, Cooley's or Erikson's formulation of how one perceives oneself in comparison to how others perceive them is described by these trans* men in my study as a constant struggle for individual and group affinity identification. Their gender expressions may not be accurately "read" by others, or they may not have a typology for others to understand. Trans* men find themselves dealing with how to align their "inner conditions and outer circumstances." The concept of the "looking glass self" becomes a kaleidoscope or multi-faceted crystal because trans* men may have trouble distinguishing how various affiliations and different "others" group them (as men, as women, as trans*).

A different metaphor for this dilemma appears in the work of Young (1990), and helps explain how trans* men also struggle with recognizing each other.

> Group affinity, on the other hand, has the character of what Martin Heidegger (1962) calls "throwness": one *finds oneself* as a member of a group, which one experiences as always already having been. For our identities are defined in relation to how others identify us, and they do so in terms of groups which are always already associated with specific attributes, stereotypes, and norms. (p. 43)

Young discusses group affinity as it relates to individual transformation, and in the case of my research how trans* men may have the potential to become men. Such a transformation for trans* men demonstrates "throwness" because

> changes in group affinity are experienced as transformation in one's identity. Nor does it follow from the throwness of group affinity that one cannot define the meaning of group identity for oneself; those who identify with a group can redefine the meaning and norms of group identity. The present point is only that one first finds a group identity as given, and then takes up in a certain way. While groups may come into being, they are never founded. (p. 43)

The transgression of gender, the biomedical transition components, and the concept of passing redefines (or at least impacts) the identity group that trans* men find themselves aligned with, even if being a man is not how they identify. They struggle to make meaning of their visibility as men, their invisibility as men (for those who do not pass),

266

their invisibility as trans* (for those who do pass), and how to connect with a forced affinity to men, a group for which they lack familiarity with the norms, social cues, behaviors, and dynamics (Sedgwick, 1990).

Passing, then is a mode of understanding how one is viewed by others in the "looking glass" or how "throwness" is experienced by trans* men. The looking glass highlights the external social world of the gender binary, but because it reflects that world, it also poses an area of contention for trans* men. Trans* men are able to see in cisgender men a physical form they may hope to achieve, but for those uninterested in passing, there are no similar reflections available. Even for those trans* men who do pass as men, the throwness they experience when they pass does not allow for the possible complexity of their past or current gender identity. Participants described the experience of passing in contradictory terms: on the one hand, passing was seen as an achievement, but on the other hand, passing resulted in silencing and invisibility. Participants described their complicated, sometimes contradictory relationships with masculinity as sometimes uncertain, sometimes aligned, and sometimes a less desirable gender expression, which only exacerbated their difficulties about passing (Sedgwick, 1990). Bill, who was working on his second bachelor's degree, struggled with invisibility because his embodied masculinity foregrounded his masculinity (making his female past hidden), and masks his transgressive identity.

> In a lot of my time in college, even though I was identified as genderqueer, I was definitely presenting as and letting people see me as a dyke, and that was a very comfortable space for me. And I don't necessarily want to disassociate myself from that and that kind of masculinity. Of the masculine, I don't know, not quite butch, but that kind of thing. I mean I was trying to - I don't know. I know I'm really effeminate, and so I was trying to just not... It's weird 'cause I didn't want anyone to figure it out, but then at the same time, I was like, "No one knows I'm trans." … But, so most of the people in my major just accepted me as a guy with

267

no question about it. And I was like, "Oh now I have to be this, no question about it, guy." Which I don't think that's maybe what I am.

Bill's words point out the complexity and confusion that accompany successful embodiment. Many of the paths to biomedically transitioning for trans* men are quests for an external expression that felt like authentic embodiment, which also meant questions about how to express masculinity or what masculinity to express. Such a reconciliation process means trans* men must sort through cultural messages that suggest they are always already abject unless they distance themselves from being trans*.

Passing as a man provided opportunities for trans* men to become more comfortable in their appearance as men. Joshua discussed how he tried out different variations of masculinity.

> Because, for me, the whole point of transitioning was to be able to be authentic and to just be myself, and I think pretty early on I spent a lot of time trying to fit a mold of what I thought a guy was supposed to be. You know, walk a certain way, talk a certain way, body posture, whatever. And now I'm a lot less aware of that or invested in it. It still comes up sometimes, you know? I fully admit when we're at the mechanic's my voice drops. [laughs] And I'm all, "Oh yeah. Okay. Yeah."

Joshua's hindsight of his masculine embodiment, as someone who passes, allowed him more time for reflection and space to consider his masculinity.

Passing causes trans* men's identity as trans* to become invisible, and they experience reabsorption into the gender binary, raising the question of whether their masculine postures reified normative masculinity (even when it felt inauthentic to themselves). To choose to come out as trans*, to impact passing by revealing a different gender history, can endanger one's claim to being a "real man" or thrust into a specific role based on their past as a female. A few participants talked about the in/visibility of

268

having their past forgotten, which demonstrates how deeply gender infiltrates all aspects of our lives.

An area that also connects with the dilemmas posed by passing and successful embodiment emerged in the language participants used to describe their current gender expression. Participants described their current gender expression as distancing oneself from clear alignment with normative masculinity, but not a rejection of masculinity (*not trying to be masculine*); alignment with a recognizable masculine spectrum (*relatively masculine*); and gender expression centered on a desire to pass as a man (*works toward passing*). Participants, in their effort to be seen as men, were also focused on not being seen as women, even if they did not identify as a man or reject their female past. Participants were invested in their own gender expression to the extent they were willing to compromise their desired gender expression for the sake of readability as men.

To be thrust into what Kimmel (2008) named "Guyland," is both an achievement and a startling reality. Jackson articulated his experience grappling with how to reconcile his comfort with masculinity and his feminist ideology. "Basically, I just… I try to exist as masculine as is comfortable for me, while still acknowledging that I should not be misogynist [laughs]" (Jackson). In the previous section on authenticity, participants ranked themselves and their peers on the basis of embodiment, transitioning, and masculine visibility. Participants' understandings of passing and masculinity were primarily posed in relation to cisgender people, and some specific concerns arose tangentially about cisgender men. The confusion and desire to understand cisgender men's relationships with each other was an area of concern for participants, as they

attempted to be seen and accepted as cisgender men, but felt a persistent disconnection from this group.

Here is where personal history is important. Cisgender men have a longer personal history, with role models, rule enforcement, and experimentation, opportunities that trans* men do not have in their personal history as references. Trans* men are left with stereotypes and assumptions about the world of "Guyland," and there are no supports to help them navigate their reabsorption into the gender binary. The complex desires and descriptions of the experiences of trans* men in college with cisgender men in college highlight that masculinity is a factor in social dynamics between men.

While trans* men may struggled to develop relationships with cisgender men, they also struggled to figure out how to develop boundaries and combat assumptions cisgender women connected to their female past. Sal explored the conflicts he experienced, as women seemed to understand and respect his masculinity and gender identity as different from their own, but then put expectations on his behavior.

> A lot of times [with women] it's like, "Oh well, you were born a girl, you must be more sensitive, right?" I'm like, "Oh, you think that, but I'm really not enjoying listening to this right now." I don't know. It's kind of ungendering. It's like, "Oh well, because you were born this way you must be able to identify with me in these ways," which is weird because I've also found a lot more validation from girl people because some of my friends can - who are girls can see me as different from them and therefore, as a guy. Whereas guy friends see me as not the same as them and therefore, not a guy. So I'm like, I don't know.

In his retelling of interactions with women, Sal exposed challenges posed to his male embodiment by his history or previous experience as female. The expectations that he would be more "sensitive" and less stereotypically masculine in his behaviors served to "ungender" Sal's masculine embodiment. He was also stuck because unfair expectations came from the group of people (women, or "girl people" as he called them) who were

most likely to provide him with gender validation because he was seen as in contrast or different from their gender as women.

Sal's situation calls the question of whether it is reasonable to assume that someone who lived in a female body for any number of years may be more sympathetic and share in understandings of the world because of shared socialization. His experience also conveyed how he felt it was unreasonable to assume all trans* men share any connection to their female past, and to expect they do so is to force a particular framework for gender identification that may be at odds with their conception of their past, as well as add another obstacle to their ability to access understandings of masculinities.

Participants may desire to be read as men, and some were living as men, but masculinity remained somewhat elusive and perplexing in its many dynamics. Participants described four different portraits of their own masculinity. The first attempted to reconcile critical (gender) theory with masculine gender expression (*masculine with a side of critical theory*). The second attempted an alternative but recognizable masculinity (*non-traditional masculinity*). The third refused connections to them but also did not reject masculinity (*not really masculine*). The fourth expressed comfort and connection to traditional notions of masculinity in gender expression *(traditional aspects of masculinity)*. Participants' various and sometimes overlapping views of their masculinity demonstrate a complicated perspective of how they reconcile their masculine embodiment with their gender expression. The influences on their masculinity and how they would like to express their masculinity (or gender expression)

connects to issues of passing and others' mirroring of their gender identity and gender expression.

Participants remarked how they expressed their gender as something done for others, which did not always reflect how they wanted to present themselves for themselves. Participants struggled with how to negotiate external pressure from the gazes of others with their desires to express their gender in a way that felt authentic. They described numerous components that influenced their expression of masculinity that included how their bodies were read and their comfort with their bodies (*body*), lack of regard for gender expectations or gender normative pressure *(express myself the way I want)*, how their other social identities such as race impacted gender expectations from others (*perceptions and identity),* peer and external pressure to look normatively masculine *(pressure to conform)*, focus on passing as a strategy to increase safety *(safety considerations)*, and lack of confidence or assurance about their relationship to masculinity *(uncertainty)*. Participants reflected that their view of their own masculinity clashed with how others perceived their masculinity or others' expectations of how they should express their masculinity.

The factors that influenced and impacted others' perceptions of participants' gender are not unique to trans* people, but there is an increased awareness (or feeling of surveillance) for those who are trans* and passing has different risks (Browne, 2004; Roen, 2002). Participants struggled with others' perceptions of their gender when they were not recognized as masculine or seen as a man (*assumed female*), as well as when they were read as feminine or queerly masculine (*feminine and/or queer*). Even participants who were passing, once they came out, were then held to a different standard

from cisgender men or others exhibited confusion as to which gender box to place them *(trans identity impacts perception)*.

The *body* was the major location to communicate or express masculinity and was a factor in whether participants felt they achieved embodiment as a man. Rubin's (2003) concept of "expressive errors" comes into play again, as it describes a clear connection between embodiment and identity, as the physical is the ultimate expression of manhood and maleness. This dependency on bodies correlated with how FtMs feel pushed to demonstrate an alignment within the medical mode. Trans* men are required to legitimate their need to transition by producing a history of more than just masculine attributes, they must also express a genuine and rooted desire to change their bodies, or they will have difficulty accessing transition related medical services (Davidson, 2007; Spade, 2003).

The connection between bodies and identities as required to achieve bodily alignment influenced notions trans* men might have about the necessity for biomedical transition. Rubin (2003) contended that the FTMs in his research,

> have essentialist ideas about what it means to be a man… They have to associate their core sense of self with the characteristics they attribute to men. They have some absolute criteria they use to define what all men are and that include themselves as men. (p. 145)

The descriptions by Rubin's participants forces connections between how they feel with the medical model criteria to make themselves authentic, which in turn creates a tension within trans* communities about who is "really" a transsexual (Davidson, 2007; Roen, 2002). Within all of these fraught tensions, there is little room to understand, explore, or embody alternative masculinities and explains why trans* men have an uneasy relationship with masculinity.

The trans* men in my research exposed how their uncertainty over their relationship to and understanding of masculinty was present, but such uncertainty was a struggle subsumed by more pressing threats to their confidence in gender identity, gender expression, and embodiment. Their ambiguous relationships with and to cisgender people demonstrated a struggle to be seen but heightened confusion about how they were seen. Regardless of whether trans* men pass or seek to pass, they are unable to be apart from and a part of the mirror of men. Yet trans* men are both marked by their transness and lack of person history has them stymied by the categories themselves, the attributes, stereotypes, and norms that already exist for the category of men (Young, 1990). The confounding relationship trans* men find themselves in with masculinity and the gender category of man, led to the possibility that they would be able to shed light about considerations of the body and gender identity, which is the focus of the next section of my discussion.

Gender Roles: Expecting Trans* Men to be Gender Theorists

In my research and professional practice, I have been influenced as much by the writings of others, as my own experiences as a trans* man. Because I was a doctoral student while undergoing my own biomedical transition processes, and because I value understanding academic trans* literature, I was under the impression that other trans* men in collegiate contexts would have an interest in and investment in gender theorizing or conversations about gender. I was confident that trans* men in college would have given at least some consideration to gender, gender roles, and gender transgression.

My confidence was supported by the work of Peetoom (2009) who took the

position, supported by Hale (1998), that transmen's framework for understanding sexism comes from a different positionality, stemming from early socialization as female or girl—regardless of identification as such, but based on discursive and biological origins. Devor's (1997) research on FtMs discussed how participants experienced a duality of identity and offered different insights about gender from those cisgender men who never lived as girls/women/female. Rubin (2003) reports that participants distinguish between sexed bodies and gender roles, focusing on the impact of testosterone because of its effects on ability to pass and gender attribution. Rubin asserts that of his participants, "twenty out of the twenty-two men interviewed distinguish between sexed bodies and gender roles" (p. 146). Yet, he then stated that "few of the men in this study conflate gender roles and sexed bodies" (p. 147).

I came into my research with expectations that trans* men might be more knowledgeable about terminology and distinctions between gender and sex, based on research they might have undertaken in their search for identity. I also had assumptions that trans* men would be more open to diverse gender roles and eschew body morphology as a sign of maleness. Given the complexity of identity terminology and the individual meanings participants ascribed to those terms, it made sense to have expectations that participants were, at least on some level, versed in concepts of gender. At the same time, I was cautious because I knew those assumptions put too much pressure on people with marginalized gender identities to be versed in their own history, academic literature, and varying cultures and sub-cultures.

To assume that trans* people have any more responsibility than cisgender people to be knowledgeable about or interested in deconstructing the sex/gender binaries is

unfair and inappropriate (Green, 2004). At the same time, I do not believe it is unfair to hope that trans* people have the opportunity for self-reflection, access to useful materials, and ability to be in conversation with other trans* people. From my interviews and data analysis, it became clear that few participants engaged in academic conversations and studied about gender in a possible attempt to make meaning of their internal sense of gender or that their studies brought them toward the possibilities of trans* identities. Yet, it also became clear that a larger number of participants did not engage in much in-depth thinking about gender, gender theory, or gender transgression.

Participants provided examples of how they were unaware of theoretical, academic, and radical notions of gender. First, some participants interchangeably used gender terms and sex terms, and this was an indicator that there was terminology confusion related to sex and gender (*female* was used as a pre-trans gender identity). Second, questions about gender roles brought up confusion for a number of participants, and even with explanation, participants' answers lacked confidence or limited conviction about their alignment with gender roles (*unclear*). Some participants resisted any notions that gender constructed any of their roles, positions, and activities (*resistant to categories*). Third, many participants' framework was situated within a binary construction of gender. For example, participants were invested in removing any limitations to gender roles but continued to remain linked to the gender in a binary of men and women (*gender equality*). Finally, some participants conceptualized gender roles as aligned with tradition gender roles of men, such as protector and breadwinner (*masculine behaviors*) or felt aligned with the language used to construct relationships, such as son or brother (*masculine identifiers*).

My review of participants' conceptualizations of gender or lack of gender-based analysis is not meant to diminish the value or insights of my participants; in fact, I mean to do quite the opposite. The relationship or understanding of gender roles for trans* men remains complicated, uncertain, and should not be assumed to be interconnected to their lives. The lives and experiences of trans* men in college, should they choose to share them with researchers, may enhance, complicate, or help construct theories of trans* identities and gender, but they need not understand or be knowledgeable of those theories to live them.

I caution against any assumptions that trans* men (or trans* people) are gender theorists or gender theorists in training, which places a false connection between gender transition and gender theorizing. Some of my participants just wanted to be men who took no issue with the gender binary, let alone any interest in dismantling, deconstructing, or resisting the binary; and others were interested in avoiding perpetuating sexism, but they were not necessarily interested in feminism, alternative masculinities, and anti-sexism as projects. The assumption that trans* people understand more about gender, terminology/language, and identity poses an unfair responsibility, since everyone is impacted and in some way colluding with the system of gender (Catalano et al., 2007). The role of education should seek to end oppression, remembering that all people (cisgender and trans* alike) internalize messages that perpetuate oppression and that education is required for trans* identified people too.

In contradiction, some of the previous literature highlights a type of "double vision" that trans* men have that "enabled them to see two sides of gender in a way that is simply unavailable to all but the rarest individuals" (Devor, 1997, p. 550). Certainly,

the experiences of trans* men who have undergone transition (or not) and live as men, trans* men, or genderqueer people, have different experiences from those who are cisgender. However, not all trans* people who fall under the broad trans* man category will reflect on, research, or make meaning of their experiences in ways that give insight into the complexity of gender. What I found were examples of how some participants were aware or might be aware of a "double vision," but had little to no interest in exploring it further.

My own positionality, as trans* and researcher, influenced my expectations of relevancy for my participants and their considerations of their female pasts. Participants have some opinions about gender, vehement in some cases, but what became apparent was how little thinking about the larger issues of gender might go into transition (or a desire to transition). In the earlier section on transitioning, the self-reflections about whether or not to transition did not require nor did it create a space for gender exploration that was beyond a binary concept of gender—the medical model actually replicates binary gender conceptualization. There were few, if any, places for a trans* man, while in process of attaining embodiment, to explore the conceptual and theoretical implications of their identities.

<u>Trans* Men's Identities</u>

Throughout this study I used several terms in reference to the population of students I interviewed: trans* men, trans men, transgender men, transsexual men, FtMs, genderqueer, trans*, and transmen. Each term has its own origins, significance, and use in academic literature, colloquialism, and institutional/administrative function or

requirement (Spade, 2011). Regardless of the language used, one thing was clear in my data, namely that identification of oneself as trans* was varied and complicated, lending itself to no single definition for all participants. In this section on trans* men's gender identities, I give attention to the dynamics of such varied language, as they indicated a liminality and permanence of trans* identification. I also give attention to the realities that trans men in college focused on their embodiment to such an extent that the body subsumed reflections about gender identity, pulling focus away from the language of self-representation.

<center>A Guy, Genderqueer, Man and Trans, and Trans</center>

Participants described their current gender identity as *a guy, genderqueer, man and trans, and trans*. While many participants identified with multiple terms to define their current gender identity, there were distinctions within each descriptor. Participants who used *a guy* described themselves as men, without any requirement to qualify or connect their identity to the term trans. However, many participants kept some form connection to trans and identified as a *man and trans* or just *trans*. A few participants used *genderqueer* as a means to distinguish themselves from and/or resisting the gender binary. Some participants who used *genderqueer* also used trans when in the company of those who were unfamiliar with *genderqueer* but had a general knowledge of trans* identities.

The distinctions within such gender identity terminology made apparent issues of visibility and context, as well as demonstrated the difficulties trans* men had in finding common language within, as well as across, trans* communities. Gender identity

variations also reference issues of liminality and permanence. For those who identified as *trans*, *genderqueer*, or *a man and trans*, there was a liminal quality to their gender on visibility and invisibility, centered identity that was apart from and a part of the gender binary; there was also permanence to their non-normative identification that resisted invisibility. Because participants focused on embodiment and gender expression more than on self-identification, their focus was on the idea of passing.

Issues of visibility were also present in Devor's (1997) research about how and when participants were understood to be men. "After all of their physical transformations were completed, participants could enjoy the full benefits of being men so long as those prerequisites were not dependent on the possession of verifiably male genitalia" (p. 419). Social congruency, or clear identification by others as men is central to medical model transition outcomes, but the legacy of their female past persists.

Few of my participants named interest in any form of genital surgery, with a significant number who outright rejected it as a future biomedical transition option, which means enduring concerns over "verifiably male genitalia" remained. Devor described them as "stranded as transsexual men. Although they had indeed ceased to bear the bodies of females, neither were their bodies exact replicas of those men who were born male" (p. 420). This characterization by Devor, framed an enduring liminality and permanence to trans* men's identification as never achieving full male embodiment (always liminal), but no longer recognizable as female/women.

My participants' relationships to their past identity, expression, or behaviors was not always clear. My data do not reveal enough reflections or speculations by my participants about their female-bodied or female identity pasts due to the focus of the

interviews and participants' focused on embodiment and passing. What was captured in the words of my participants was a struggle with the liminality of trans* as an identity, as well as the impact of the potential permanence of their transness.

The description of participants' experiences and perspectives on being a man, but not being a "regular" man may appear a contradiction, but it was reinforced by similar sentiments described in previous literature (Green, 1999; Spade, 2010). Being different from a "regular" man conveys one of the conundra of passing, as it is liberating and simultaneously causes invisibility, two parts of a precarious balancing act between safety and recognition. My participants who named their gender identity as *man and trans* made it plain that there were characteristics about them that were distinctive from and similar to their cisgender men counterparts, which supports the idea of passing as a balancing act.

The gender identities of participants may be dependent on where participants were in their process of coming to a trans* identity, as well as their ability (or desire) to pass as a man. Participants described their transition process as finished or complete, but that was not the same as leaving transsexual identity behind. "Within the spheres of their everyday lives, they ceased being transsexual and became simply men" (Devor, 1997, p. 467). Yet, the world of men, comprised of homo-social environments, such as the bathroom, remain replete with rules and physiological limitations that remind trans* men of their transsexual identity and/or a female past.

Uncontested access and initial acceptance into "Guyland" raised new or previously unconsidered issues of acclimation. Every day, potentially innocuous interactions raised issues of adjustment or disconnect because of histories in female physiology and socialization. As mentioned in the previous section on uncertainty about

281

masculinity, passing as a man led to different kinds of anxiety about living lives as men. My participants shared some similarities with Devor's (1997) participants in that, "They were finally realizing what for most of them had been a lifelong dream, yet many of them knew very little about some of the most central aspects of being men" (p. 496). The various ways my participants described their gender identities reflected a focus on embodiment and accessing transition options in the hopes to express some type of masculinity and only treads gently into concerns for future or consistent lives as someone perceived as a cisgender man. My research gives trans* men voice about how they considered and described their current gender identity, and not all of them had time to reflect on their position as *man*, *trans and man*, *trans*, or *genderqueer*. Many participants, based on their own standard of transition timeline, were early in their biomedical or social transition process, and were less inclined to reflect on the complexity of their female past, even if only in body, and how they entered the world of masculinities and cisgender men. Many participants expressed concerns about the realities of passing and masculine hegemony, but they remained anticipatory concerns.

The worlds of trans* men in college were generally more bound to their campus, which depending on enrollment size, friends, and communities, influenced their abilities to pass, embody masculinity, and interact with cisgender men in homo-social communities. Yet, the lives of trans* men were more complicated than how they were read, since there were material consequences and environmental considerations for everyday life. Gender identities are based on individual self-perceptions but are simultaneously impacted by interacting with others' views. Some trans* men desired to have their transness visible, and others desired to place their trans* identity firmly in their

past, even if their body or gender expressions are always marked as trans (Phelan, 1993). A consistent fact remains that many participants described a discomfort or caution with cisgender men and with the category of man. The relationship trans* men experienced, as a part of and apart from the gender binary and gender normativity, was too complex for a unified or monolithic grouping of identity and expression.

Returning to language and identity, it is critical to continue conversations, both in-community and with non-trans* people, about gender identity. Attention must be given to how transness is connected to some trans* men's sense of gender identity, as well as discussions that explore how the category trans* men resists coherence. Thought needs to be invested into how trans*, as an identity category, with its own meanings and significance, pressures trans* men through gender hegemony to align themselves with one side or the other of the gender binary instead of occupying a liminal space in a constellation of gender(s). There were mixed ideas from participants in my research about trans* identification, and those mixed ideas are what they have to offer trans* theory because they point out differences in understandings of embodiment, recognition, and reclaiming.

Liminality

Roen (2001) theorized that *gender liminal people* are those "who live between genders, live as a third gender, or are undergoing a transgender process" (p. 254). In a number of ways, participants in my research also identified their gender as a liminal gender identity, as a threshold or in-between that was tethered to, while also rejecting, the categories of man and woman. This liminal status was, based on their descriptions, also

283

aligned with some notions of masculinity. In this sense, trans* men, as an identity term, should be considered its own gender identity, that is defined by its disconnection from female and woman, yet simultaneously not wholly male and man. Consider how my participant Robert described his gender identity:

> Yeah. I mean what I'm grappling with right now is the fact that once I do this medical stuff, then I'm always going to be in a trans state. I can never take that back and try and be a woman in a woman's body again, not that I would want to. But I feel as though, right now I'm being seen as trans. When I do the medical stuff, then it's gonna be real. But at that point, I'm just hoping that other people won't see as clearly. It's just, I mean, I feel as though the medical procedures are a compromise for just wanting - [laughs] I mean obviously just wanting so badly to be born a guy.

Robert described a conundrum of gender that is both apart from and a part of the gender binary, where a "trans state" requires its own evolution and visibility. His struggled with being recognizable in his trans state, no longer recognizable as a woman, but wary he will not be recognized as just a guy. His body that marks him as female will be less clearly female once he undertakes biomedical transition, making him "real" and less clearly as trans* but always in some ways connecting him to a trans* identity. His desire to be seen as someone born a guy locates trans* at the site of his body, where trans* identity is both a part of and apart from the gender binary.

Similar to Robert, Patrick tried to carve out his place within the current schema of gender.

> I will occasionally identify as trans guy. … I'm not often big on identifying as a guy. I'm really not big on identifying as a man. Because one of the hardest things for me was always tackling how can I be trans. I know I'm not a woman, but I'm not also a really a man either. … I try to present more male. And I am trans.

Patrick's statement indicates his own dilemma of making his transness visible to others, but presenting as male. His body was also a significant location for his transness that

284

makes him visible as a man and invisible as trans*. Trans* man, for Patrick is both an adjective and a noun. Trans* as an adjective suggests both connection to and separation from the category of man. Trans* as a solo noun provides a separate location in the gender binary that is a part of it and apart from either end; also, as a solo noun, trans* is ambiguous as to which gender, if any, it may be harnessed to. Putting it another way, transness is a fact of Robert's body; once he obtains biomedical transition options, he will no longer be recognizably female but will never be male and possibly will always be in a state of visible transness. As Patrick becomes more easily recognized as a male because of perceptions of his body and secondary sex characteristics, that also means his transness becomes less and less visible to others. Patrick is left to reconcile if there is a way to embody or express trans* as a noun. Although Robert and Patrick may desire different locations across a complicated continuum of gender, both are tethered to the gender binary; their bodies and embodiment are central to their conceptions of their own gender identity.

The connection of gender identity for trans* men that is harnessed to body morphology is complicated for trans* men who do not distinguish any change to their internal sense of their gendered self. Nate struggled with how others perceive or would perceive changes in his gender, but he felt those were external attributions or perceptions.

> I guess I don't feel like my gender has changed at all, but how I label it and also how I allow myself to express it. Like, it's now okay for me to be assertive about, "Look I'm going to do this because it's comfortable and I'm going to freak out if I don't." So that's the way things are. I'm a lot more - I'm a lot better at paying attention to my own needs.

Nate named how he felt constricted by the expectations of other people, specifically those participating in upholding a gender binary, as external factors to his internal sense of self.

For Nate, transition means changing his affect and body as expressions of his gender, but not a change in his internal gender identity. Yet the reactions of others, in how they responded to what they perceive as his gender or the reading of his body by others was connected to how others perceived his masculinity manifesting in legible ways (through perceptions of his bodily morphology). Again, even in his assertion that his gender is internal, his body remained the site of construction, and his desire was to have it read as consistent with his internal gender. Because bodies are part of how everyone articulates their identities, trans* men are encouraged to utilize their bodies as a location to demonstrate coherence with the gender binary. This awareness of contradictions illustrates the pervasive and limiting forces of the gender binary, pushing transness into a liminal space by making it unrecognizable until aligned with one of the two binary options.

How then can trans* identity be its own location within the current construction of gender? Consider Ben's perspective of what it means to utilize trans* as a noun: "Yeah. I don't identify as male because I don't particularly feel male most times. I don't identify as female because I don't feel female. Ever. [laughs] So, identifying as trans usually works. Sometimes I say trans guy, but yeah." Ben's description of his trans* identity is distinct from the gender binary; although not outside of the binary but occupying a separate space related to the binary.

Yet, not all participants wanted to identify with trans* (as a noun or as an adjective), and not all of them identified as trans* men. The ways in which they identified as trans* depended, in large part, on their perceived alignment with men and maleness, and in all cases their transness and gender conveyed their desires about transitioning.

What I am suggesting is that trans* identities cannot be pinned down in a monolithic

grouping because trans* man as an identity is dependent on relationships between the

gender embodiment and external perception (Sedgwick, 1990); gender embodiment is

about access and interest in performing masculinity and the ability to be seen and unseen

(Halberstam, 2005). Trans* man as an identity category exists within the realm of a

gender binary, as it is impossible to be outside of it, and allows people to transgress the

binary in an effort to reach a different location. The location of trans* man is a position

that is simultaneously a part of the category of man and apart from the category of man.

　　The social components of transitioning (name, pronouns, and gender roles) were

secondary to the "realness" of the body. The materiality of their trans* identity was

primary because in their day-to-day lived experiences that was a more salient predictor of

passing than any social markers of maleness or masculinity. While these self-assessments

were based on how others viewed them, they internalized a normalized masculine

expectation and started assessing their own truth, identifying as trans*.

　　What it means to be a trans* man is contingent on body/physical morphology and

passing, which bypass any notions of self-determination, and foregrounds how others

view them and by those who uphold the gender binary. The "wrong body" narrative

tethers trans* men's identities to their body, instead of complicating the gender binary

and carving out a possible liminal space for trans* men's gender. Further, we are never

given the room to consider: At what point does a trans* man stop passing as a man and

start living as one? Such a consideration brings me to how trans* man identity is

simultaneously temporary and enduring.

<u>Temporary and Enduring</u>

Some participants described their trans* identity as a temporary state they would move through toward their final destination as a man, even as their past gave their trans* identity an irrefutable permanence. I return to Robert, who captured how transness can be temporary and enduring, in how he viewed his trans* man identity:

> So, I feel like - I mean, some people really embrace being trans and not being - not conforming to their gender that they were assigned at birth and stuff. And for me, I really feel like I understand gender variance, but I do just identify at the very core as male. And I feel like transgender is more like the set of physical circumstances I'm in. More like a medical condition rather than an identity. Does that make sense?

He expressed his male identification as primary (core) and his identification with transness as situational and temporary, not his core sense of self. The connection to any affinity group of transness is temporary in the ways it impacts his body and his expression of his maleness or masculinity.

In contrast, Joshua described his trans* identity as enduring: "I don't identify as a man, I identify as a trans man. And I'm pretty out about that." Joshua's gender identity is rooted in his history and his gender expression. Charlie had a slightly different point of view and characterized his transness as persistent because of how it made him distinctive from his cisgender counterparts.

> I currently identify as male. And I identify as a transsexual male as well. 'Cause I am. [laughs] But, yeah. Usually when people ask me I just say male 'cause it's what I am. But I also acknowledge the fact that I'm a different type of male. (Charlie)

Charlie made a distinction between how others view him (male), how he views himself (male), and how transness influenced the type of man he became (transsexual male). Joshua's and Charlie's transness endures, regardless of how their gender is perceived by others, and is distinctive from cisgender men.

The connections between embodiment and identity were explored in previous research on trans* men. Rubin (2003) focuses on how transsexual men in his research felt they were always men with female bodies, and their goal was to become recognizable as men. The temporary trans* man identification was just a way to name their bringing their morphology into congruence with what has always already been their "true" selves. Not having the bodily markers of maleness was part of Tyler's frustration and disconnection from his own body.

> I just want to like have a flat chest, and I want to be able to go swimming and be able to take my shirt off, finally, and just finally feeling like a real man. 'Cause I just like it - I want to be able to sleep with my shirt off and not feel weird. And I just don't feel like myself 'cause I always have to cover up all the time, and it's just - it's not me. And even though my girlfriend sees me with a flat chest, she says she does, I don't see myself like that. I don't know. I just don't feel normal.

Tyler conveyed his frustration with lacking appropriate embodiment and being a man *despite* that his body marked him as female. In this sense, his transness was a situational property of his body that will be deleted once he is able to remove his female appearing chest. Yet, this experience does not address the societal and bureaucratic processes that link his identity (social security number, birth certificate, financial aid forms, etc.) with his previous embodiment, which becomes a legacy that shadows his desire to have his trans* identity as temporary (Spade, 2010).

The difficulty with exploring the possibilities of trans* men's identities from a theoretical perspective, as noted in these statements by the participants in this study, emerges from the ways gender identity are contextual and temporary, reliant on how lived experiences define gender and sex through embodiment and uncertainty of what lies ahead. The life experiences of these men cause their identities to shift and change, whether they see their gender identity as only external modifications or as a shift in their

understanding of themselves. The changing itself, whether seen as external (done to their bodies) or internal (shift to their sense of identity) will always influence them and how they perceive the world and how others perceive them. Trans* men may not be any more theoretically inclined to be gender theorists, but they probably devote more time openly considering how their gender—or more specifically their masculinity—is perceived by others, especially when in a self-identified temporary trans* state. Yet, for those who consider trans* man identity as temporary, such parameters are also context dependent, since each of them agreed to be interviewed for my research, so do not deny (within a specific context) their personal history connected to transness. Trans* men who choose to use the term female to define their past gender identity may be participating in a form of dissociation with a past in a specific type of body; to say one has a female past (instead of a past as a girl/woman) is a way to limit the experience to parameters of the body and assignation, instead of connecting with gender (the social aspects), which gives a particular notion of our experiences, all of which is still dependent on self-reflection and gender knowledge that is not necessarily required to access biomedical transition options.

<u>Conclusion</u>

If trans* men see their transness as only a temporary identity, then it would stand to reason that they may discard any of their points of view from the past as they leave their previous gender behind. If the distinctions of "authentic transness" that exist within trans* communities about embodiment continue to go unexamined, then there will be greater fractures about what it means to hold onto and to ignore any past life experiences as a female/girl/woman. Furthermore, if we expect trans* men in college to have greater

insights in gender expression and gender identity, then we are again mistaken because this expectation presupposes locations where masculinity is itself examined as a site of knowledge, a conversation that may not be of interest or use to trans* men engaged with the dilemmas and questions described above. Future and more extensive research must be conducted on trans* men and issues of masculinity, without the assumption that all trans* men are invested in expressing masculinity.

CHAPTER 8

TRANS MEN'S EXPERIENCES IN COLLEGE

<u>Introduction</u>

Limited empirical data have been published about trans* students in college (see Hart & Lester, 2011; McKinney, 2005; Pusch, 2005). Research on trans* men[44] has been limited to FtMs (Cromwell, 1999; Devor, 1997; Forshee, 2008; Rubin, 2003), their sexual orientation (Dozier, 2005; Schleifer, 2006), male privilege and masculinity (Dozier, 2005), accounts of identity (T. Lee, 2001), and social work practices with FtM youth (Pazos, 1999). There is no published empirical research that speaks directly to the experiences of trans* men in college.

In the absence of research that speaks to my own research questions, I lay out my answers based on my own findings, without the ability to say whether my findings confirm or disconfirm any published research. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are anthologies that provide a platform for trans* men to name their experiences in college and general policy/practice pieces about trans* inclusion in higher education (with no specific distinctions about trans* men), but the former are narrative-based and the latter are practitioner-based, with no empirical research that focuses exclusively on trans* men in college.

In this chapter, I address issues of trans* men's inclusion in higher education by answering my second research question and its sub-questions:

2. How would trans* men advise trans* men, or potential trans men, in college about what kinds of support would be needed in college settings?

---

[44] In the literature listed, most trans* men are referred to as FtMs (female-to-male), trans men, and transsexuals.

a. What type of information would be needed about the transition process?

b. What type of information would be needed about connections to community?

c. What type of information would be needed about identity development?

I explore my participants' descriptions about their institutional experiences as well as their advice for potential trans* men, kinds of support at their college/university, information they believe institutions should provide about the transition process, and connections to trans communities.

What I found during my data analysis was that my data address a number of aspects of my research questions, but do not necessarily answer all of my initial research questions. Participants seemed particularly stymied by questions about the type of information institutions should provide about the transition process, based on their low levels of expectations for institutional support. Instead, their low expectations for support from their college or university led me to consider how trans* men actually characterize or define institutional support, an issue which is now part of my discussion in this chapter. On the sub-question concerning sources of identity development, as noted in the previous discussion chapter (Chapter 7), participants focused on their current experiences and embodiments, rather than on exploring or reflecting on identity development *per se*. To honor the participant emphasis, as distinct from my initial research questions, this chapter discusses participants descriptions of collegiate support, their sources of information about trans* identity and the transition process, and their descriptions of campus community.

Advice that participants offered to potential or current trans* men in college included encouragement to be brave and proud (*confidence),* to seek out advocates, people whom you trust and who support you (*find allies*), to examine campus climate, policies, or bureaucracy (*research your school*), to be attentive to personal needs and advocate for oneself (*self-advocacy*), and to enjoy processes of self-discovery through research or interactions with others (*self-awareness*). Their advice also included suggestions regarding biomedical and social transition options (*transition advice*). Participants also named their own areas of uncertainty or topics they felt they did not have any advice (*uncertain about advice*). Finally, participants advised others to work in collaboration with campus administration to create a more trans* inclusive environment (*work with campus administration*).

Overall, participants had significant positive experiences at their institutions and cited a number of ways they felt supported in college. Yet, the overall advice from participants was significantly influenced by an undercurrent of discomfort or disappointment with collegiate efforts to provide support. Consider how Patrick framed his advice:

> But also, I would say, just recognize the fact that people are going to ask unfortunate questions. And at college and people are going to say unfortunate things and not realize how incredible offensive they're being. And as difficult as it is, it's not helpful to go off on them. It's not going to be good for you, and it's not going to be good for them. It will be good for you for about five seconds after you're done, and then you're going to start feeling the backlash from that. (Patrick)

Ultimately, Patrick thought that trans* men in college should expect to be made uncomfortable and be offended by their peers, faculty, and staff. Patrick's advice

suggests that if trans* men lower their expectations, then they will experience more

comfort, and they will be more prepared for their actual college/university experience.

Yet, Robert stated that even with an awareness of the tough road ahead, the experience

would not be any easier, and instead turned his focused inward on his path toward

transition.

> Knowing that it will be difficult will not make it easier. Basically, I came into it having everyone knows. It sucks to be trans. Right? It really, really, really sucks [laughs] so it's like, I kind of - I think that you have to pick your battles with people. I've stopped worrying about pronouns, basically. If people haven't gotten it by now, that's fine. I'm going to get hormones, and I'm going to do my thing. (Robert)

Robert's advice was influenced by resigning himself to the idea that others will be

problematic, and self-determination would be the only place of solace, at least until he

could embody a male gender expression.

Despite these low expectations, participants did have less acquiescence-based

advice of *finding allies*, *self-advocacy*, and *working with campus administration*.

Returning to Patrick, he advised that it was important to look beyond expected

communities of support.

> Probably I would say one of the most important things is not necessarily the groups you find yourself interacting with, 'cause some of the best people I've found generally about my gender weren't these activists spaces or these support spaces, or weren't queer spaces necessarily, but some of the greatest support spaces was my role in the theater. Just being recognized as just a person. Having other activities, so you can just be a person who's doing something, even if it's activism, but anti-war actors and something besides just working and the gender community was really incredible for me and really helpful. … I can have other parts of my identity, and most of the time I function, mostly use it interacting with those other parts of my identity, which are a lot more important to me.

Patrick's advice echoes Pusch's (2005) research about trans* college students' desire to

be seen as more than their trans* identities. In the end, participant descriptions of finding

community (discussed later in this chapter) grew out of comfort for themselves as

individuals and was not linked to their trans* identities. The advice of *finding allies* was

about seeking out those who provide comfort for how trans* men want their trans*

identity known. "I think my advice is to do what is most comfortable for you. There are

certain environments that it's okay to be out as trans, and then there are certain

environments that are not okay. And then it depends on the person too" (Bill).

Participants had different comfort levels with *self-advocacy*, *working with*

administration, and *finding allies*, and these influenced their experiences at their

institution. Participants indicated that self-advocacy would be a common role for trans*

men in college, and that is accurate based on the literature that described the focus on

trans* student inclusion as limited to mostly person-to-person support (Rankin &

Beemyn, 2012).

> I would say that I know it sucks to out yourself but [laughs] in the long run it
> might be easier for you to go and just talk to the administrators 'cause a lot of
> them, it's not an issue that's even on their radar. And a lot of them would be
> willing to help if they knew. [laughs] So I think that unfortunately you have to be
> your own advocate. (Jackson)

In Jackson's view of support, there was a trade-off—endure the challenge of *continuous*

coming out was the price to be paid in order to gain visibility, recognition, and support.

The experiences of my participants at their institutions were not horrendous, but

reiteration of need for support exposes the collegiate environment as one with many

potential discomforts and invisibility, which emphasizes the need to seek out support. In

the next section, I explore how trans* men characterize and define support in college.

Supports and Challenges for Trans* Men in College

In Chapter 6, I describe a number of ways that trans* men found support at their institutions. Taking a closer look at how trans* men characterize those supports and challenges provided insights into the kinds of supports they received at their college/university. Participants named those who provided support to them as trans* men in college, such as administration (*administration/staff support*), professors (*faculty support*), *friends,* and family (*my family*). Participants referred to institutional policies and practices that created a feeling of support (*policies and practices*). Notable was that some participants felt their college was generally safe place without much concern for their trans* identity (*everything was pretty much fine*).

In contrast, participants described ways they felt challenged or unsupported as trans* men in college/university. A few participants described their experience at their institution as lacking significant challenges (*few, if any*, *challenges*), but most participants did not struggle to come up with a list or experiences of challenge. Institutional facilities, specifically restrooms, were a frequently cited challenge for participants (*bathroom issues*). Participants characterized their challenges as a number of stressors related to their negotiation of their identity: continuous decisions about when to or if to come to others (*continuous coming out*), public knowledge of their gender history (*personal history*), expectations to speak on behalf of or represent all trans* people (*tokenized*), and assorted pressures about conforming to gender expectations within trans/queer communities, financial concerns holding them back from biomedical transition options, and external pressure to conform to the gender binary (*pressures*). Participants also noted interpersonal challenges, such as an inability to make connections or finding other trans

people (*relationships*) and experiences of others using the wrong pronoun (*mis-gendering*).

In naming some of the challenges or ways they felt unsupported as trans* men in college, there was overlap with areas of support, such as lack of support in the academic realm of their experience at college (*academics*), frustrations with policies, practices, trainings that fail at trans inclusion (*campus offices/services*), and an overall failure by faculty, staff, and students to create a climate of trans inclusion (*pretend inclusivity*). These overlaps reflect how support was interpersonal, not institutional, and reflected inconsistent practices across an institution.

Inability to access restrooms, inconsistent or isolated experiences of inclusive pedagogy or practice by faculty or campus offices, and lack of policy to impact campus climate are institutional dynamics that demonstrate the precarious experiences of trans* men in college. The failure of those institutionalized support mechanisms in place (if they exist) were additional stressors for trans* men who are negotiating various pressures about identity management (*continuous coming out*, *personal history*, and *tokenized*). Given the significant number of challenges that participants described in their collegiate experiences, it is a small wonder that participants named any forms of institutional support.

Low Expectations

Regardless of how participants characterized support and challenges about being trans* men in college, I observed some trends that concerned me about their expectations of support. While not present in every story of support, I observed participants using a

298

minimal criterion for determining support. In some cases, participants seemed grateful for

small gestures or individual relationships, which were then applied to their entire

college/university. In other cases, participants described practices by the institution or

individual faculty and staff as supportive but actually are questionable forms of support,

and in some cases exploitative tactics.

AJ described situations that demonstrate what I consider nominal support and/or

recognition.

> They, the college has, the newspaper has published a few articles about being
> trans, and I get news flashes every once in a while of hate crimes going on in
> bathrooms directed at trans people and that it is not acceptable in this college. So,
> I know that things happen but at the same time, the staff seemed to be on our side,
> in general.

AJ presented a particularly low standard for recognition of trans* students being present

on campus. News releases—in some cases, sensational—with stock statements that hate

crimes are not acceptable at the college, constituted his own evidence of support. The

well-intended statement of how transphobic behavior was unacceptable was not

accompanied by efforts to educate the campus community. AJ cited that similar incidents

"happen all the time," which captured his expectation for such incidents to continue and

demonstrated the lack of impact releasing such statements had on the campus

community.

AJ described the ineffectual and consistent level of transphobia on his campus, as

an example of support, but he was distant from the incidents. James2 described support at

his institution based on his experiences of what I characterize as exploitation. James2 was

the "designated expert" on trans issues, who was called upon to educate RA staff

members and his employers, specifically to help them resolve trans-related challenges:

And they would invite [me] to RA trainings, if there was trans people coming to talk to the RAs about like how [to] deal with trans residents and things like that. They would invite me to the training, so that I could come 'cause I would help 'em out with a lot of that stuff. … [About the manager for his on-campus job who didn't know how to deal with employment paperwork for a transgender staff member]. You could tell he just never encountered that problem before and wasn't sure how to deal with it and was literally like, "Okay, well you're the trans person. What do you do in this situation?" … I've found that that's really the only problems that I run into is, whatever institution is that I'm dealing with, they just kind of say like, "Okay. What is your suggestion to fixing it?"

Most important to tease out and differentiate in James2's recollections is that what was presented as an opportunity for student voice (empowerment) was actually the exploitation of him as a student, turned designated expert (administrative abnegation of responsibility). In the roles he was asked to serve, James2 was able to give voice to and speak to his experience, which he recounted as empowering. At the same time, residence life on his campus asked him to serve as an expert based on his identity, to speak on behalf of all trans* students (*tokenizing*), and to choose to utilize his personal experience for others' edification, instead of hiring or paying someone to do such educational work (exploitation).

It is especially problematic that James2's manager took no responsibility for self-education on trans* issues. The episode reveals a lack of professionalism concerning trans* issues, as well as an expectation that a student's personal experience is adequate to guide policy or administrative response. Most troubling is the fact that James2 described his experiences with two campus student service offices as a recurring pattern for him at his institution and indicated a consistent experience of exploitation.

The experiences of exploitation and tokenization described by James2 were present in other participants' accounts. Sal described a few different locations where he received support for being a trans* man at his school. In one of the examples, he talked

300

about being invited to speak in a sexuality class where he was asked questions for about

an hour and had another class visit invitation for the week after my interview with him.

There was no evidence in his account of how these invitations were meant to contribute

to Sal's education or how they would enhance his academic future. Nor was there any

indication that the faculty member spent time distinguishing sexuality from gender, nor

did the faculty member seek out any additional readings or course work, but only relied

on the personal narrative of a student to teach about trans* identities. In the other

example, quoted directly, Sal described his experience with his campus administration.

> I went and talked to the Dean of Students, which I was able to do because
> someone in student affairs co-advises [LGBT group on campus] and was able to
> get me in to see her. And I when I talked to her and I told her about some of the
> things that were going on [harassing comments said outside his room and written
> on the white board outside his room] and about how frustrated I was and about
> how - How the only bathrooms that I can use on all of campus are in this building,
> and this building is not close to any of the buildings where any of my classes are
> and that sucks. And she was really cool, and we formed a programming
> committee, and now it meets like every other week at 9:00 am in the morning on
> … Friday's and we talk about what sucks and how we can fix it, and that's really
> cool, and I'm glad that they're doing that.

Both examples cited here required Sal to serve in a similar role as James2, as expert and

self-advocate. The initiatives were reliant on the student, not on the system. Both

participants described a gray area, opportunities to impact campus culture in ways that

benefit all and expecting that they will take these initiatives because they are the "only

one" or "one of the only" trans* people on campus. In both cases, there was no evidence

that the campus was itself proactive on trans* issues.

Tokenization and exploitation set up dynamics on campuses that depend on

students to self-advocate and initiate change. When participants described the different

kinds of information their institution should provide about the transition process, few if

301

any, expected actual transition services from their institution. Instead, participants described a desire to have more transparent and current information about college/university processes and services; there was also a strong desire that health services staff receive education as well as clarity on name or preferred name change processes. Some participants expressed concern about the necessity to provide information about biomedical transition with all first year students. Primarily, there was a desire for information to be accessible, but participants articulated that it should not require much work on behalf of the institution.

> I think just whether it's a packet of information or a list of websites or whatever just a brochure, I think it would be helpful for places, such as health services and whatever gay office [laughs] there is on campus. (Jackson)

Many participants had similar opinions that pamphlets and accurate information should be the standard for information available. "I think if nothing else, where you can go to find out good accurate information" (Patrick). For many of the participants, the use of a website, pamphlet, or location where information could be obtained seemed to meet their threshold for need, which I find to be a low standard for inclusivity.

The overall picture the participants provide in the above quotations and recollections involved support that was: a few articles in the school paper, a relatively non-adversarial relationship with administrators, requests to train other students (faculty and staff) on how to be supportive, educate supervisors with research, and direction on how to address employment administrative processes, volunteer speaking engagements in classes on sexuality (even though trans* identities are gender identities not sexualities), serve on campus committees to change campus culture regarding minimal bathroom accessibility, thankfulness for individual relationships in place of institutional

recognition, and a pamphlet on accurate resources that the institution does not provide for

biomedical transition options. Possibly these moments or actions of support were

sufficient for participants, but put in the larger context of institutional expectations, it

makes clear how these are low expectations; institutions should be doing better and doing

more. Again, my critique is not about how the participants should have higher

expectations (although I believe they should), but how participants appreciated what I

characterized as minimal and superficial support, and more significantly, they became

complicit with exploitation and tokenization. Institutions need to consider the ways they

perpetuate expectations of minimal support and encourage oppressive tactics for trans*

men in college.

<center>Finding Allies</center>

Regardless of how participants experienced institutional or individual support,

there was a clear articulation of how it was integral to develop allies and coalitions; this

was especially true if participants' research prior to institutional attendance included an

unsupportive climate or limited information about trans* inclusion.

> And specifically around college, find who your allies are. Find them. Because I
> can guarantee you even if you're at some school that has a notoriously bad
> reputation for diversity, there's going to be at least one person on that campus
> who will have your back. And that person may not be super easy to find, but
> there's always somebody. (Joshua)

Joshua's advice set a tone that finding "at least one person" to serve as an ally would be a

difficult task and that trans* men should be thankful to find even one person.

Participants defined allies as those to whom they would turn for support or when

in distress, as a form of *self-advocacy*. "Don't be afraid to tell someone if you're having

<center>303</center>

trouble" (Ren). To ask for help, to seek out support of others who trans* men can consider an ally, was part of advocating for one's own needs. The significance of the need for allies was a crucial area of advice participants provided, but the roles of allies were often muddled and individually defined. For example, Wyatt framed his advice by encouraging others to be as open about one's male identification as soon as possible. He believed this was the best way to *find allies*, since it alleviated resistance to and problems from being identified as trans*. Wyatt also noted how a trans* man's past was a challenge to be avoided. His advice was rooted in caution (and fear) because he felt it was easier if there was less for others to remember about his past gender. Allyship was about friends forgetting that Wyatt was ever anything other than a man: "As far as my friends and stuff, I mean they - all I really asked from them was to just switch pronouns and switch names and then forget about it, and they were pretty good at that." Wyatt believed that demonstrating allyship requires few questions or references to his life before he was a man and only embracing his current gender identity as a guy.

The literature on allyship reflects participants' range of meanings for the term. Edwards (2006) notes that "there is little scholarship on the differing ways individuals aspire to be allies" (p. 42-43). In social justice education, we often frame conversations about social, political, and economic change as actions brought about in concert with allies (Briodo, 2000; Broido & Reason, 2005; Edwards, 2006; Washington & Evans, 1991). There are many different descriptions of allies and allyship, but what does allyship mean?

Previous literature identifies allyship as behaviors that seek to challenge oppression, making privilege visible, and seeks to empower those targeted by oppression

(Ayvazian, 2001; Broido, 2000; Edwards, 2006; Washington & Evans, 1991). Also within this definition is the distinction that allies are "members of dominant social groups (e.g., men, Whites, heterosexuals) who are working to end the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based on their social-group membership" (Broido, 2000, p. 3). I argue that allyship should not be framed in a binary model (us/them, oppressor/oppressed) because our identities are too complicated, multiple, and intersecting to hold firm in a range of situations. Instead, we should provide tools for understanding allyship from a social justice perspective that considers allyship across and within identities.

Our framework of allyship should utilize four components (awareness, analysis, action, and accountability) described and defined by Love (2010) in *Liberatory Consciousness*. Love extends our thinking on allyship to actions that occur across and within identity groups, with a focus on coalition and alliance building, which resists the lone hero stance (Thompson, 2008). Liberatory consciousness means expanding our considerations of what it means to be aligned and supportive of social identity groups that we identify with and those with which we do not claim identification. Liberatory consciousness is described in four components: continuously engaging in learning (*awareness*), reflection (*analysis*), *action*, and connections (*accountability*). From this perspective, we can have a multilevel analysis of what it means to support trans* men in college. In this discussion, I focus on the awareness component because it addresses what participants were lacking from others. I will return to the other key components of a liberatory consciousness – analysis, action, and accountability – in Chapter 9.

Awareness requires noticing and knowing that trans* students exist and learning

more about their experiences. Support was clearly described by some participants in

educational efforts by staff. Jackson was one of the few participants who described a

supportive staff at his university's Health Services.

> And health services is great. They're [university] Health Services, all of them
> actually went to [state trans organization] conference for health care providers at
> [the university] and all of them went and got - sat through the conference and
> stuff. (Jackson)

His conceptualization of allyship demonstrated by Health Services includes awareness,

analysis, and action as well as an implication of institutional accountability to best serve

all students. Jackson was also clear that the director of his LGBT Resource Center[45] was

a significant advocate who "would bend over backwards and often does, trying to make

not just my life but any trans person's life a little easier" (Jackson). Jackson's articulation

of support that he found at his university was characterized by time, attention, and

investment in learning. He described individuals and offices that made a commitment to

developing liberatory consciousness, thus practicing trans* inclusion.

As a component in the development of a liberatory consciousness, awareness is

not always easily attained. Consider Ben's description of his campus culture (an all-

women's college) and how it demonstrated the need for awareness because of the level of

invisibility of trans* men:

> As I said, I've found some really supportive people. Res life was awesome. One
> of the deans was awesome. My boss here is awesome. Besides that, there's a lot
> of people who either don't notice trans issues on campus or are aware of trans
> issues, but they don't really bring - like because there's gender variant on this
> campus, unless you are like, "No, I'm he." They won't assume anything. So, you

---

[45] I use LGBT Resource Center to describe these offices, even if there was a different name, in an attempt
to generalize them across campus to protect participant and institutional anonymity.

have to take a lot more initiative than you might in other places. Which I suppose is not so bad, but it's annoying sometimes. (Ben)

When support can be found, such as through the individuals whom Ben described, it has the impact of diminishing the urgency to deal with a campus culture that fails to recognize any gender diversity or only offers support to those trans* students who make themselves visible to faculty and staff. Instead, the pressure is placed on trans* students to locate individuals (faculty and staff), relieving the institution of responsibility to provide pervasive support across all areas of campus.

When institutions were not perceived as satisfactorily attending to their responsibilities concerning appropriate and recognition, trans* men turned to their friends and maybe to a staff or faculty member, as was the case for Tyler.

Well, by friends, some of them are really good, and they do support me and they - before my girlfriend was my girlfriend - she brought me my first counseling session, even though that didn't go well but… She - other people, they've like - they wanted to go to groups with me, but nothing really happens, so they support me, and they want to help, but they aren't - They're saying they are going to do stuff, but they don't put it in [*follow up clarification from Tyler:* Yeah they said they would help me and stuff but when it came down to it, they didn't. They just made empty promises]. And then there's I believe one, one professor that knows about me… I found the professor's name because she is a leader of the diversity everything, all the clubs. And I contacted her, and we've been talking, and just - we just - she just talks to me about how I feel and stuff like that. She doesn't - she's never actually met someone who's trans, so she's not really educated about it, but she accepts it. So she wants to learn more about it. And she wants to be there for me, because she can be, considering she's so accepting of everything, and I wanted her help.

Tyler's description is fraught with comments about his sense isolation in his initial time at his institution. Although he was able to identify a single faculty member who expressed initial interest, his disappointment is clear that her interest never manifested into "action," and there were also serious limits to her "awareness." (She had never met nor was well educated about trans* identities.)

307

The weight remained on Tyler, as it did for many participants, to educate and serve as support for their allies. I struggle to understand how these experiences of my participants demonstrate an appropriate level of support. What I see in the experiences of my participants are continuous disappointments or expectations kept so low that they were unlikely to be disappointed. Edwards (2006) outlines three differing descriptions of allies. The first, aspiring ally for self-interest,

> are primarily motivated to protect those they care about from being hurt… These individuals may or may not identify with the term "ally" but instead will see their behavior in relational terms, such as being a good friend or sister. (p. 46)

The second, aspiring ally for altruism, lacks a measure of self-awareness of their complicit role in oppression and "see the system [of oppression and privilege] intellectually, but focus on other members of their dominant group as the real perpetrators" (p. 49). The third, ally for social justice "work *with* those from the oppressed group in collaboration and partnership to end the system of oppression" (p. 51).

From much of the concerns my participants describe, there was a number of "friends" who exhibited behaviors of "aspiring allies for self-interest," those motivated by self-interest due to a relationship with an individual, not based in a liberatory consciousness development. Friends, staff, or faculty who could be characterized as an "aspiring ally for altruism" have the potential harm because inconsistency of action, which may leave those seeking support feeling partially or superficially supported, as the "empty promises" stated by Tyler indicated (Edwards, 2006).

Participants' disappointments with their allies could be simultaneously found in their descriptions of support. These disappointments indicate that their gratitude for any

kind of allyship was connected to their low expectations for institutional support. Edwards (2006) notes that expectations from allies are formed based on the type of allies one experiences from their own marginalized identities; an overall minimal or minor level of support rewarded with appreciation indicates how consistent messages of exclusion have shaped trans* men's expectations of allies and institutional inclusion.

Overall, participant descriptions of the levels of support focused on individual staff or faculty members, so aside from LGBT Resource Centers, there were few broad claims about institutional support. Only a few participants cited actual policies (gender identity and gender expression in a non-discrimination policy or gender-neutral housing) at their institution that demonstrated trans* inclusion. The value of those individual and interpersonal interactions should be cautiously applauded, but the concern remains about whether there are any consistent dynamics of inclusivity communicated across campus. Messages students received certainly depend on institution size, student investment in seeking support, role of faculty, or access to student affairs services, all of which impact how institutions can share information and impact campus culture. Along with these factors, another reality that adds to the conundrum of support is not all participants wanted or desired to have others know of their trans* identity, and some were reluctant or uninterested in seeking any individual faculty or staff for support. In my recommendations chapter (Chapter 9), I wil address how to provide information to students who may need support but who are reluctant to make themselves known.

Institutional supports for trans* men are reliant on interpersonal relationships and fail to meet a threshold of significant support and inclusion. Jackson's account of health services and his LGBT Resource Center director as putting in time, energy, and resources

into being supportive allies are a good basis for meeting trans* students' needs but was one of the only clear descriptions of institutional investment, and even that was only about two student service offices. Other strong descriptions of action and accountability, focused on advocacy done by individuals at the institution or by most notably LGBT Resource Centers, since that is where such supports often become localized to a campus (B. Beemyn, 2002, 2003; Biloudeau & Renn, 2005; Marine, 2011; McKinney, 2005). Higher education is placing the burden of an entire institution on LGBT Resource Centers or individuals at an institution, thus failing to engage in endeavors to do enough and to be more for trans* men and all trans* students. In Chapter 9, I offer recommendations and suggestions that will encourage dialogues that require us to critical examine possibilities for creating broad-sweeping and context-specific actions that demonstrate trans* allyship.

Follow the Internet: Learning About Trans* Identities

In my exploration with participants about how trans* men find and establish communities (of support or of other trans* people), I first uncovered how trans* men came to find information about trans* identities in search of their own identity. The quest for personal identification preceded any search for a concept of community. The searches they described to learn about trans* identities suggest a process of re-socialization, from earlier rejected social identities to a new identity. The pattern of socialization, or in this case re-socialization, describes how we learn to be each of our identities through interactions with individuals, institutions, enforcements, and results (Harro, 2000).

For many people the seamlessness of gender socialization in everyday

communities (families, schools, the media) may go unquestioned, unchallenged, and

uninterrupted, but for trans* people, there are moments of dissonance profound enough to

encourage a search for other ways to identify or express their gender (Lorber, 1994).

Scholars have described the need for

> empirical examinations of social processes by which an internalized sense of self
> and identity is developed, maintained, and modified, and how the self is affected
> by hegemonic discourses. Examinations of the lives of individuals whose
> discursive practices go against the pressures of the hegemonic discourse provide a
> valuable means of gaining insight to such processes. (Gagne & Tewksbury, 1999,
> p. 60)

Both the outcome of a quest for alternative gender possibilities and the influence of past

self-descriptions were influences for the gender identity of the participants in my

empirical research.

Harro (2000) pointed out, "There are many social identity groups about which

little or nothing is known because they have not been considered important enough to

study. These are referred to as *subordinate* groups or *target* groups" (p. 47). Given a

general absence of knowledge and limited public discourse about trans* men, it is

reasonable to understand the sparse opportunities prior to college for young people (and

most people) to access information about the existence and experiences of trans* men.

My participants are a part of a generation for whom identities became accessible

on the Internet, where they were able to search, research, explore, learn, and interact

outside of the public view. Shapiro (2004) points out,

> The networking and collective identity development that the early support groups
> fostered is now facilitated online, which has meant that few trans people come to
> support groups ignorant about transgender identities and issues - most have
> already accessed basic information online. (p. 170)

The Internet removes barriers common in face-to-face interaction, such as geography,

fear, access, and safety. Information about hormone use, surgeons, financial costs,

coming out, potential family reactions, and other concerns associated with identifying as

trans* are widespread online, although often without a basis to evaluate the quality or

reliability of the advice offered. Given the expansion of social media sites, blogs, and

vlogs (video blogs), youth who are exploring and questioning their gender and trans*

identity no longer have to go outside their homes to procure information about identities,

bodies, transition, theory, and experiences.

The development of various trans* community spaces on the Internet also

provided a place where trans* men, in my study, had conversations in-community about

trans* identities. Whittle (1998) suggests that the Internet discussion sites were what

allowed discussion to surface about whether having a penis was a requirement for trans*

men to "really" be a man. Debates in chat rooms, message boards, and early blogs

allowed for questions about the focus on embodiment.

> And the body was able to be dismissed as a socially controlling mechanism that
> dictated power roles but which, in the transsexual man, was shown to be an
> inadequate mechanism which missed their authenticity. Many transsexual men
> started to view the body differently and as a faltering "sight" of "passing."
> (Whittle, 1998, p. 400)

Online conversations also included whether the penis was the ultimate sign of manhood.

The way in which such discussions happen via the Internet may have changed in the 15

years since Whittle published his article, but the impact of the Internet as a main learning

site was very present in the answers provided by the participants in my research.

Learning about trans* identities for participants was infrequently described as in-

person exchanges or support groups, instead participants spoke about powerful

connections they experienced from videos, photos, or art posted online, or about different

kinds of trans* men's identities they witnessed via a transition log (video or blog). The

Internet provided a location where participants no longer felt isolated or had to carry a

belief that they were "the only one." James2's explanation regarding how he came to

learn about trans* identities highlighted this point.

> I was really into MySpace at that point. I had a group on my MySpace that was
> for like, butch lesbians, and then I noticed that a lot of people in it were also trans.
> And so I would start talking to people on there. You know, I don't remember any
> of the specific web sites, but it was a lot of the general online website that you
> would find just by Googling the terms and things like that. It wasn't anything
> probably too medical [laughs]. It wasn't in medical journals or anything.

Information is accessible via a variety of links, whether participants were directly looking

for trans* specific information or through alternative, but potentially interconnected,

topics. When I asked participants about their connections to any kind of trans community

on their campus, 9 participants spoke about an awareness of a trans* community existing

on their campus, but only 4 participants characterized themselves as still connected to

those communities at their institution. This finding raises questions about how and why

trans* men in college seek out, become connected to, or remain connected face-to-face

rather than virtual online to trans* communities.

An impact on participants' lack of desire to connect with on-campus trans*

communities can also be connected with the tensions about authenticity discussed in

Chapter 7. The pressure to conform to a certain type of masculine embodiment certainly

impacted a few participants' willingness to engage with other trans* men on their

campus, and others may have felt similar concerns regarding embodiment peer pressure

from trans* men on their campus. In an online venue, participants were able to explore

and consider transness in a way that was did not require them to directly interact with

individuals with opposing views presented on those sites. In the next section, I continue considerations of community, beyond the influence of the Internet.

Notions of Community

Although trans* students in higher education have received attention since the late 1990s, it the use of the Internet has supplanted some of the need of face-to-face interactions and associations that can now be achieved online through a landscape of virtual interactions: 19 participants learned about transition options online and 17 participants learned about trans* identities through the Internet. The methods used in the past to signal awareness and support for marginalized and silence campus populations may no longer be successful tactics for reaching trans* (and other "new") populations because the general access and utilization of the Internet.

Based on the experiences of my participants with notions of community, I suggest a reconceptualization in how we imagine communities forming around "hidden" populations (hidden from faculty/staff and hidden from each other). Cheng (2004) summarizes what characteristics established a sense of community in higher education, which included institutional collaborative efforts, group membership, investment in diversity, out-of-class involvement, and institutional heritage and traditions (Boyer, 1990; Brown, Brown, & Littleton, 2002; Magolda, 2001; McDonald & Associates, 2002). However, Cheng also notes, "As valuable as this line of research has been, one can hardly take for granted that this is also how students perceive what a campus community should be" (p. 219). Just because the trans* men in my research were somewhat disconnected from trans* communities on their campuses does not mean there was not a need; rather,

my research did not delve into specifics about community formation, sustained

relationships, or campus dynamics.

My findings suggest larger questions concerning how students, specifically those

with trans* identities, form communities and what sustains relationships within such

communities. The continued use of LGBT as an overarching community term inclusive

of trans* students muddles any clear pictures of trans* student experiences and assumes a

positive relationship between trans* students with LGB students. Two areas of note about

the use of LGBT to understand trans* men's experiences are: how trans* men may

internalize messages of masculinity to engage in practices of self-reliance rather than to

seek support in community (Kaufman, 1999) and whether trans* men experience allyship

and inclusivity when in LGBT groups and spaces. It would be a mistake to assume that

transness is understood by LGB students, just as it would be a mistake to assume that

trans* students support or understand LGB student experiences.

Mistakenly or not, my participants for the most part expected more from people in

queer communities, to be at least supportive, if not somewhat knowledgeable. Some

participants expressed strong disinterest in being seen as trans, but others described it as a

contextual decision. Jackson noted, "If I'm just talking to an acquaintance, that is not in

the queer community, I'll just say I'm a guy or whatever." Jackson noted that there was a

higher expectation from those who identify with queerness or communities of queer

people, as well as communities where it is possible to discuss masculine transgression

and trans* visibility.

Many participants expressed greater comfort in queer than in heterosexual communities. For example, Micah, a musician and performer, ruminated about how passing as a heterosexual man would be uncomfortable.

> I think what's interesting is moving from a queer space to being completely perceived as normative, which is, I think, that's really interesting. And I think I don't know how I feel about - I don't ever want to actually be seen as a straight guy. I think that would really throw off my sort of perception, how people perceive me. [laughs] But it just seems like I think I will always do the extra, go the extra mile to make myself look kind of queer… I guess I'm kind of scared of it, 'cause like I don't ever - I work so hard to be outside of the gender and sexual binary that I don't ever want to be in that like that sort of mainframe. … Like it's good though that I'm doing it through my music because it gives me that public persona that people will associate with me, and they will know that I am openly trans, so that makes me feel a little bit better. But just walking down the street is going to be weird.

For Micah, whose life was enmeshed in queer cultures, to become "normative" would cause some dissonance in his worldview.

Of my 25 participants, 14 identified campus communities they were connected to as queer, which is significant enough to question how trans* men who come from those communities might perceive passing differently from those who come from outside of queer communities. Bill discussed how he felt like his masculinity made his transness invisible:

> I look like a frat boy, since that is how I dress, even though dressing like that before was at least somewhat transgressive. I have been putting a lot of pressure on myself to be really open about being queer and being a feminist since those things aren't as terribly obvious as they used to be.

In some ways, Bill is struggling with expectations based on his gender expression. He is forced to deal with the false assumption that masculine, cisgender-appearing men are neither queer nor feminist, regardless of the alternative masculinities and sexualities that have become more prevalent in popular culture.

316

Bill's struggle is connected to how he finds community because his embodiment precludes his ability to signal his queerness and feminism and potentially alienates him from queer or feminist communities. His circumstances are similar to how

> various groups of men have been struggling *as men* to reject at least some of the hegemonic ideas of manhood and some aspects of hegemonic male culture. The problem is that they haven't necessarily done so within an analysis of gender and sexism, or done so combined with a sympathy either for feminism or women, or with an understanding of the nature of men's social and individual power. (Kaufman, 1999, p. 75)

In this way, trans* men open up complexities about community formation, offering gender and queer theorists questions regarding their limitations and possibilities of connections within and across identities. Unless participants mentioned their gender history, were known on campus for their trans* man identity, or actively and repeatedly claimed a trans* man identity, their passing made them invisible to others. At the same time, because of their personal histories as females, trans* men are required to address the permanence of their trans* identity. The complicated circumstances of identity meant finding community connections were fraught with making decisions about outness and passing.

Even for those who pass or no longer consider themselves anything other than men or guys, participants in my study had to contend with being called not real. For example, Brandon described his experiences of being dismissed after coming out as trans*: "In some cases you come out to people and suddenly they're like, 'Oh you're not a man anymore.'" Such occurrences make trans* men visible as trans* and invisible as men. Regardless of their view of their own identities, trans* men are permanently marked by what some of them view as a "temporary" identity. The invisibility of passing, regardless of whether trans* men see themselves as permanently marked, as makes them

317

invisible to each other. As James2 noted in his advice for trans men, there are challenges

to the invisibility of trans people who pass, so self-awareness of personal needs are

important.

> It would have been more helpful to know more trans people … I was the first
> trans person that I ever met, and so it would have been helpful to be able to know
> that there is a community out there. … But I would just encourage people to do as
> much research as you can and reach out as much as you can because it's
> something that you're not going to find a lot of other people doing easily in your
> everyday life. Because you probably won't even notice if they are.

The invisibility of trans* men to each other, whether due to passing or a temporary view

of their trans* identity, complicates how trans* men are able to establish notions of

community. Some participants had to consider the risks associated with coming out as

trans* to find community, which influenced how others perceived the realness of their

identity as men. Other participants were able to find a sense of community within queer

friend groups or organizations, allowing them flexibility in their identity.

Pusch (2005), who published one of the only studies about transgender college

students, states that his participants appreciated *not* being seen simply as a transgender

person because to do so meant that they were constantly reminded of their past gender

identity. For them, the salience of a single identity (transgender) was part of the problem.

Participants in my research, when asked about the type of communities they were

connected to, also expressed how transness was not at the core of all of their community

connections.

When I asked participants what kinds of communities they were connected to at

their institution, their answers varied in the following ways: connected through their

academic major or academic programs (*academic community*), affiliation with student

organizations or campus jobs (*campus organization/job*), connections with gay and/or

queer students (*gay/queer community*), without strong social connections to campus (*not too socially connected*), and friend groups that are eclectic and not easily characterized (*random group*). Participants, when asked directly about connections to a trans* community did acknowledge a connection (*trans community*), but others mentioned how they had not engaged (*haven't engaged*). Other participants characterized their campus as having no other trans* men at their institution (*there really isn't one*) or that whether by choice or by virtue of so few other trans people on campus, they mostly connected with mostly other queer students (*mostly queer community*). Some participants also expressed a variety of reasons to disconnect or to have little interest in any connections to other trans* people, such as the in-community pressure to express a certain type of masculinity as discussed in Chapter 7.

Trans* men's community dynamics were also explored in Cromwell's (1999) research, which disputes the notion of FtMs/transmen as a homogenous group. Cromwell refutes the three stereotypes about FtMs/transmen that serve to construct a false belief of FtMs/transmen in monolithic broad strokes. The three stereotypes (the androgyny stereotype, the heterosexual stereotype, and the obsession with having a penis stereotype) spread falsehoods about FtMs/transmen in a way that limits the diversity among FtMs/transmen. Common experiences do exist for trans* men, but stereotypes cause false expectations for community building. Previous research, coupled with how my participants described their connections to trans* communities, indicate that trans* liberation strategies might be better served by exploring how some things are true for some trans* people, some of the time, and assumptions about trans* community need to be considered in the plural, not the singular (community).

Identity conceptualization is also a factor in understanding trans* communities, given how some participants described their trans* identity as temporary, which complicates expectations of intra-group connections, regardless of shared experiences of permanently marked bodies and paper trails. Mike, who described himself as an elder in the trans community, was very open about his trans identity, but offered the following advice for trans men in college:

> And I just kind of remind people that being trans unfortunately is who we are. But we don't have to stay trans. We become what we need to become, and then we are who we are. Trans is just a short version of transition.

Again, embodiment and identity were primary in Mike's assertion of trans* men's identities. The complication of finding community for an identity group in which some people do not consider trans* salient or enduring creates dynamics that highlight the preference for privacy provided by Internet-based searches and limits face-to-face interactions.

Finally, I offer the possibility that trans* communities have yet to come into the kind of development or existence as have broader queer communities on college/university campuses. The lack of development of community may be linked to a nascent awareness by institutions of trans* men on campus and characterized by somewhat recent declarations by trans* people of their presence in higher education. My position is supported by Valentine (2007) who described transgender as a category of knowing, instead of a description of a group.

> I realized that a transgender community does not exist outside the context of those very entities which are concerned to *find* a transgender community: social service organizations, social science accounts, and activist discourses… This does not mean that transgender identity and community are figments of the imagination, but rather that they are *products of an imaginary.* (Valentine, 2007, p. 68)

A collective group or cohesive political agenda are still under construction across and within groups of trans* people (Spade, 2010). The complex and sometimes contradictory definitional distinctions of trans* men's identity impact shared understandings. Added to this notion of imagined community are intra-group dynamics based on who is authentically trans*. Based on these considerations as well as the potentially small number of trans* students on any given campus influenced participants' interest in being connected to other trans* people or an inability to find trans* communities on their campus. Yet, 14 participants identified that they were connected to gay/queer communities on campus, some of which was explicitly or implicitly inclusive of trans* students. The search for trans* communities on college campuses might be a search for an imaginary something that only exists in so far as it is labeled as such by an institutional culture and may already exist in queer spaces.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The experiences of trans* men navigating and negotiating institutions of higher education are complex and contextual. Participants provided many areas unexamined about how institutions offer support and allyship that shape expectations trans* men's have about inclusion on their campuses. Participants' use of the Internet was noted as a primary way they sought information, formed their identities, and connected with others who may share their trans* identity. There were many aspects to the participants' stories that encourage areas of more direct research on the experiences of trans* men in college. In the next chapter, I provide recommendations for institutional policies, practices, and ally development that will support the lives of trans* men.

CHAPTER 9

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

<u>Recommendations for Higher Education</u>

Those seeking a step-by-step guide to creating a more inclusive collegiate context for trans* men (or trans* students in general) will not necessarily find what they seek in what follows. I do not believe that trans* inclusion can be attained through a cultural competency checklist, and inclusion is a much more complex process than following a checklist. My recommendations, influenced by participants' suggestions, my identity as a trans* man, and as a director of an LGBT Resource Center, offer ways for higher education to be more inclusive of trans* men.

At the same time, my recommendations also address how the experiences of the trans* men in my research have implications for the future of higher education, which should spark larger conversation among faculty, students, and staff about how to attain trans* inclusion on an institutional level. Critical conversations about trans* inclusion require more than good intentions; they require dialogues that can be messy and uncomfortable. The process of creating safer institutions of higher education for all trans* students means conversations are necessary to move beyond interpersonal one-on-one support and into institutional and structural inclusion for trans* students in higher education.

Liberatory Consciousness as a Framework

As discussed in Chapter 8, trans* students cannot be expected, any more than any other marginalized communities, to hold those who work in higher education to appropriate standards of professional practice; those high standards must be developed by those doing the work. Standards for inclusivity call for more than a one- or two-hour training about trans* identities, although those may be useful to get some initial content and terminology. What is most helpful is to understand and draw upon an approach to personal and institutional accountability that has been termed a liberatory consciousness (Love, 2010) that remind us, to be liberation workers, we must consider ourselves "one who is committed to changing systems and institutions characterized by oppression to create greater equity and social justice" (p. 599). Instead of a stage model, Love offers basic behaviors that are "meant to serve as reminders in our daily practice … It is to be continuously practiced event by event, each time we are faced with a situation in which oppression or internalized oppression is evident" (p. 600). The four behaviors are *awareness* (noticing), *analysis* (making meaning of events, dynamics, and power), *action* (what needs to be done for change), and *accountability* (to self and to communities for action taken or not taken). Together, these four behaviors provide a foundation to structure interpersonal development in higher education.

For staff, faculty, or other students to be seen as social justice allies, to work with and for trans* men's inclusion, requires continuous commitment. A shift to liberatory consciousness for individuals at an institution reasserts how everyone is responsible for trans* inclusion and no longer confines it to a one-time training or the work of an LGBT Resource Center. Instead, it places the onus on individuals to practice continuous self-

development, education, and communication within and across communities. Inclusivity

practices, policies, pedagogies, and engagement look different at each institution based

on location, demographics, student services, academic collaborations, institution type,

and other factors, and developing a liberatory consciousness allows for individual events

to raise awareness, to engage in analysis, to shape actions, and to examine accountability.

A liberatory consciousness encourages individuals and institution members to ask

themselves about goals for minimal expectations of support for trans* people, then asking

how they can do it better.

<div align="center">Awareness of Trans* Men on Campus</div>

Awareness is a good beginning to address the necessity to notice that trans* men

exist at institutions of higher education and that they are coping with the structures,

policies, practices, and dynamics that limit their experiences, resources, and notions of

safety. Without the awareness and knowledge to self-educate, individuals are reliant on

trans* men to provide education about themselves, which is tokenizing, exploitative, and

antithetical to the measures of providing support to student development. Awareness can

be demonstrated by naming that trans* men are on campus, offering education to campus,

and providing accessible information that is relevant to trans* men on campus.

What must be the first recommendation for trans* men's inclusion at any

institution of higher education is the reality that trans* men attend (and work at)

institutions of higher education. Higher education policymakers should involve trans*

men in their inclusion practices, policies, and climate concerns, regardless of who may or

may not be visible in classrooms or on campus. There is an intrinsic value in efforts to

creating communities of social justice allies that note all marginalized identities to spur

awareness among staff and students from all identities that trans* men are part of the

picture. Expecting and incorporating trans* identities in practices, as part of student

services, pedagogies, accountability to ideologies, institutional values, and professional

practice is a basic starting point for trans* inclusion.

Participants in my research suggested that a more trans* inclusive campus was

one with more education. Some participants articulated the interest in faculty and staff

just understanding that there are students on campus who are trans* or a desire for the

campus to understand a basic definition of trans* identities. "And also just the awareness

thing. 'Cause freshman year I asked an honest question about bathrooms on campus, and

the person - someone from the college [LGBT organization deleted for confidentiality].

This person got all flustered" (James1). Participants expected a minimal level of

awareness of trans* identities but had to search to find people with even that level of

knowledge.

Other participants were clear that there was a level of awareness but an

unwillingness to have the conversations necessary to address the campus climate.

> But I think that here, my biggest problem is that the administration is really not
> that willing to talk about the issues that trans people face at this college, and
> they're really interested in just sweeping it under the rug and being we like, "We
> have bigger issues to deal with and this isn't that important as our fiscal financial
> crisis" (Tucker).

A demonstration of trans* inclusivity means all issues are of great importance and to

address trans* inclusion as connected to other institutional "hot topics." By developing an

awareness of trans* men on campus, institutions of higher education can build the

capacity to analyze their policies and practices and develop action steps to create more

trans* inclusive campuses.

<p align="center">Provide Education About Trans* Men (and Trans* Identities)</p>

Awareness, the ability to notice or consider the experiences of trans* men on

campus, should be accompanied by intentional educational efforts. Colleges and

universities should evaluate "safe space," "safe zone," or ally training programs that

address the broad concept LGBT identities. Participants in my research pointed out that

they did not necessarily feel their trans* identities were addressed in those trainings or

educational efforts.

> You know, GLB issues are everywhere and, you know, safe zone stickers are for
> GLB but there's not a whole lot of trans stuff. Like they've got the upside down
> triangle for gay men and that has come to incorporate lesbians as well and trans
> does have a symbol, but you wouldn't know it by looking around. 'Cause it's
> nowhere to be found and that bothers the hell out of me (AJ).

AJ's frustration with the current "safe zone" on his campus, echoed by other participants,

noted a need for more specific trans* identity trainings and education. Before employing

those programs, institutions should examine the efficacy of "safe space," "safe zone," or

other ally development programs that are offered on campus, the goals of those trainings

(changing behavior or changing consciousness), and whether they encourage critical

thinking and coalition building. Based on my participants' experiences highlighted in

Chapter 8, intentional conversations must occur about how trainings incorporate or do not

incorporate student voices and whether or not those methods are tokenizing and

exploitative of students who participate.

Awareness is a good beginning to notice that trans* men exist at institutions of higher education and are affected by the structures, policies, practices, and dynamics that limit their experiences, resources, and notions of safety. Without awareness, individuals will not challenge themselves to develop needed content knowledge and efforts to self-educate and will instead rely on trans* men to provide education about themselves. As noted earlier, such reliance on those with marginalized identities is tokenizing, exploitative, and antithetical to the measures of providing support to student development.

Education about trans* identities must include opportunities to engage in *analysis* that allows individuals and groups to ask critical and important questions about the institutions policies, practices, and assumptions that impact trans* men's inclusion. Analysis also raises questions about how institutions are structured to support binary gender structures (Bilodeau, 2005). Analysis also grapples with the contradiction posed by unneeded gender identifiers on bureaucratic forms. Forms that only offer male/female or man/woman as gender choices are problematic for trans* students, but forms that allow students to name their own gender allows institutions to gather relatively accurate data of how students identify and may be interpreted by trans* students as an inclusion effort.

Action steps—the third characteristic of Love's (2010) model of liberatory consciousness—stress the importance of trans* inclusion. For example, putting college or university resources to creating at least one gender-inclusive restroom per campus building is an action that many participants in my research offered as a way to make their campus more trans* inclusive. Simultaneously, it is important to remember that actions to

address trans* men's inclusion require *accountability* —Love's fourth characteristic—

both to trans* men and to the broader institutional community. Accountability also

requires an intersectional view and acknowledgment of multiple social identities, so as to

not take action that comes at the expense of other marginalized groups. Accountability

requires continuous conversations and assessments about whether actions are meeting the

needs or anticipating the needs of trans* men. Successful education about trans* men

provides opportunities for participants to learn about and reflect on their role in trans*

men's inclusion utilizing all four characteristics of Love's liberatory consciousness.

Accessible Information

Participants in my research spoke a desire for accessible information about

institutional policies and resources for trans* men. In Chapter 8, I discussed how

participants had low expectations for support, and within those low expectations were

requests for basic information that they could not find on their campuses. Colleges and

universities should make efforts to provide as much information about trans* inclusion

policies and practices that already exist on their campus and put that information in as

many locations and media (websites, pamphlets, signs, etc.) as possible. Because my

participants described connections to various groups, organizations, as well as those who

described having no affiliations, there is no central location for information about trans*

inclusion. Some participants were connected to an LGBT Resource Center, but others

were not, so accessible information about and for trans* students must go beyond an

LGBT Resource Center on campus (if there is one).

As with the development of liberatory consciousness, the responsibility for providing information to foster inclusive environments, policies, and practices should extend throughout an institution and not be located solely at LGBT Resource Centers. Trans* men are in all areas of campus, and it is unadvisable to assume that they will contact or connect with an LGBT Resource Center, especially for those who see their trans* identity as temporary or who are stealth about their trans* identity. My participants primarily utilized the Internet for information gathering, which suggests that the best location for information is on various locations throughout college and university websites, in academic affairs and student affairs offices. In the next recommendation, I address the kinds of actions institutions of higher education should take, which can be publicized throughout their various websites and offices.

Use Tools of Analysis

The process of *analysis* allows individuals and groups to ask critical and important questions about the institutions policies, practices, and assumptions about trans* men's inclusion. Higher education has generally not questioned how embedded the gender binary is in every aspect of institutional structure, policy, and climate. "Administrators and student affairs staff can make an important difference in the lives of these [trans] students, but to do so, they will need to reconsider many of their assumptions about gender and the structure of higher education" (B. Beemyn, 2005, para 26). Analysis provides opportunity for everyone to evaluate and reflect on their knowledge and experiences. Within this recommendation, I provide topical areas of

consideration for about gender identifiers on forms and describing campus demographics that can be problematic for trans* men.

Campus Demographic and Climate Information

In a push for higher education to recognize the lives of trans* students, previous publications neglected to consider how to appropriately measure what it means to provide support and what mechanisms serve best to evaluate those supports by institutional accounts *and* by the accounts of all students on campuses. It is time for higher education administrators to reconsider the utility of the quantitative approach to diversity and inclusion when trans* students (and many queer students) are invisible in such demographic reporting (Sanlo, 2004). My recommendation echos Renn's (2010) call to higher education:

> I must repeat that the time for conducting campus climate studies—for LGBT issues, women's issues, or race—is not over. Although they may not be at the cutting edge of queer theory, they are critical for uncovering persistent, systemic disadvantages based on identities and group membership, as well as for measuring progress where it is occurring. Climate studies provide crucial evidence for holding institutions and systems accountable. (p. 136)

Policy and practice suggestions must include the use of empirical research about trans* students' experiences in and out of the classroom to achieve any depth and resonance.

A critical look at current tools used to measure campus climate should be taken, and I recommend institutions consider either *The Transormational Tapestry Model* (Rankin & Reason, 2008) or developing new tools to judge a series of indicators that measure experiences, attitudes, and behaviors through a variety of methods. Rankin and Reason argue that for campus climate to transform, it must be a goal supported by and collaborated on by members of the community at all levels of the institution with a hope

330

of cultural pluralism as the intended outcome. There must be an investment in actual institutional change, understanding that it will be difficult, messy, and complicated.

The challenges in this recommendation surround both the cost and benefit of any research that requires students to voluntarily and knowledgeably place themselves into specific and contested identity categories. The benefits of any form of demographic information of students' gender identities offer a glimpse into who is at any institution, but it comes at the cost of viewing these identities as adopted and/or stable and fixed. As I found in my data, the categories of gender identity and gender were not fixed for my participants, and they reported that these categories had shifted during their years in higher education.

Further, the reluctance for some participants to identify as trans* cautions us to consider how some trans* students may not show up on any demographic data presentations of campus populations. Finally, identity language itself is a challenge when constructing surveys or calls for participants. In my research, for 25 participants, there were 27 different sexual orientations and as a group totaled over 120 different gender identities. Identity language and definitions keep shifting and often research lags behind the trends of how students self-identify, making student affairs services antiquated before they have been experienced.

> For trans politics, an area of great concern is the ubiquity of gender data collection in almost every imaginable government and commercial identity verification system… The consequences of misclassification or the inability to be fit into the existing classification systems are extremely high, particularly in the kinds of institutions and systems that have emerged and grown to target and control poor people and people of color, such as criminal punishment systems, public benefits systems, and immigration systems. (Spade, 2011, p. 142)

331

The importance of accurate institutional demographic data presents a contradiction for any institution in higher education. Spade (2010) is critical, and rightly so, of expanding systems to include gender classifications that encompasses trans* identities because it will broaden the surveillance of all people; and instead suggests a critical look at the necessity for those mechanisms in the first place, such as reporting of demographic data. *But* on the other hand, the absences of accurate demographic data that acknowledges the presence and numbers of trans* students presents an institutional lapse higher education administrators have been slow to address.

The example provided by my participant, Ren, of how his institution puts pronouns on rosters demonstrated the potential benefit of demographic or identification information. The use of pronouns on rosters is a good example of a practice to address (and resist) assumptions about students' gender. However, Ren's example simultaneously demonstrated the cost of superficial inclusion when he stated that faculty rarely utilized the pronoun information on rosters. The act of trans* inclusion is not the problem; the education for faculty and staff about how and why to use the information is what was lacking. The mechanisms for trans* men's inclusion are important, as well as the utilization of those mechanism to embrace trans* men's existence.

Campus climate and climate indicators require an important balance that provides information about trans* men that serves as a tool for analysis and does not reduce to a focus on population size or singular measures of experience. Trans* populations are unknown in size, but at this point, they are relatively small in comparison to entire campus populations. Due to small population size, it is important to contextualize the data about trans* men to avoid resource allocation based on population size, but to make

332

allocation based on the scope of need. Trans* inclusion efforts will impact and benefit

people of all genders, not just trans* students. In the next section I discuss in more detail

the research agenda that are necessary for trans* men in higher education.

Five Faces of Oppression

Social justice education, regardless of the theoretical lenses deployed in an

analysis, offers guidance to create change for marginalized social groups, institutional

confines, and structural inequalities. An examination of the experiences of my

participants, using Young's (1990) five faces of oppression, reveals how trans* men in

college are impacted by oppression. I provide examples of how trans* men in my

research experienced the five faces of oppression to provide a framework for analysis that

can be utilized on specific college and university campuses.

Exploitation

Some of the trans* men who participated in my research described forms of

exploitation on their campus, as they were placed in the role of "campus expert" based on

their trans* identity. Faculty and staff identified these trans* men through their work at

the institution, and recruited them to do unpaid work in the form of education and policy

development. The trainings, class sessions, or committee work is done without

considering how these unpaid "opportunities" require them to use their personal

experience for public education, how the students are treated as tokens to speak for an

entire population, or how the students are not in search of developing skills or

professional credentials for teaching, facilitating, or policy development. These examples

of exploitation also excuse the professionals, who should be doing this work as part of their professional roles, from seeking the knowledge and expertise that is appropriate to their institutional roles.

Marginalization

Young (1990) describes marginalization as "perhaps one of the most dangerous forms of oppression" (p. 53). Marginalization is a term used to describe the way trans* men are kept from useful participation in society and experience severe limits to resources. Participants' low expectations of support (Chapter 8) is an example of marginalization; institutions offer little in the way of direct support for trans* men, and in turn, trans* men feel supported through superficial or minor acts of support. My participants articulated marginalization through the low expectations of acknowledgment at their institutions, the structures of material needs that exclude their presence as a gender that does not fit within the gender binary, and the constant questions of how or whether they fit within their institutions.

Powerlessness

The impact of powerlessness is illustrative by absence of avenues for the trans* men in my research to achieve sustained or broad impacts on the operations, policies, and practices of their institution. While trans* men in my research were exploited to provide one-time departmental trainings or class educational sessions about the existence of trans* identities (an effort to impact marginalization), they were powerless to make any substantial or sustained changes about the structure of their college or university. A few

participants were involved with administrators to provide policy advice, but even in those circumstances, they were relied on to provide basic education and not to affect policy or practice.

Violence

Probably the clearest indicator of oppression, violence was an ever-present concern for participants in my research. A few discussed issues of violence on their campus and reinforced their powerlessness by naming it as a campus-wide statement on how such violence is problematic. Effective or ongoing institutional efforts to curb campus violence in relationship to trans* men's identities was never addressed by any participant. Trans* men in my research discussed how fear of violence was a motivator for passing and gender normativity, which was amplified when combined with instances of homophobia.

Cultural Imperialism

For trans* men in higher education, cultural imperialism is most visible in the form of the reification of the gender binary. Trans* men, within the realm of the higher education setting, must work within a system where divisions are clearly delineated as male/men and female/women through residence halls, sports teams, activities and organizations, and other realms of college life. One might ask why institutions have not questioned the value of using gender as a primary organizing principle for higher education or to queer embedded notions of institutional construction (Bilodeau, 2009). "Queering gender—and queering the social requirement to engage in the gender

system—in higher education opens research on student identities to new perspectives and possibilities that cannot be achieved through postpositive campus climate studies or policy analyses" (Renn, 2010, p. 136). There are ways in which higher education institutions are structured around gender to support those with marginalized genders (trans* people, women, genderqueer people, etc.) or identify and prevent violence and harassment against those with marginalized genders, possibly through Title IX and Cleary Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2011) reporting, but those processes still demonstrate the centrality of the cultural imperialism maintained by an unquestioned gender binary.

Using the five faces of oppression (Young, 1990) as a process of analysis provides insight for educators and for student affairs professionals into ways in which institutions no longer need to utilize the gender binary as a culturally imperialistic form of organizing itself and how such a structure enable the other faces of oppression to manifest. Outside of higher education, gender classification is problematic for trans* people too.

> For trans people, administrative gender classification and the problems it creates for those who are difficult to classify or are misclassified is a major vector of violence and diminished life chances and life spans. Trans people's gender classification problems are concentrated in three general realms: identity documentation, sex-segregated facilities, and access to health care. (Spade, 2011, p. 142-143)

Evaluation of institutions of higher education must occur to examine how gender classification may cause diminished institutional success for trans* men (and all trans* students). In assessing institutions of higher education, a critical analysis must take place, to explore the ways institutions are structured to exclude trans* men or only superficially address trans* men's inclusivity.

Much of the policy and practice publications on trans* college students address ways institutions are failing to meet the material needs of trans* students (such as creating gender inclusive restrooms, trans* inclusive housing, and trans* inclusive administrative forms). Arguably there is value in having gender identity and gender expression as a part of an institutional non-discrimination statement (Spade, 2010), and there is a necessity to address trans* inclusion in the realms of: "health care, residence halls, bathrooms, locker rooms, records and documents, public inclusion, and programming, training, and support" (B. Beemyn, Domingue et al., 2005, p. 90). Informal and formal practices, programs, and campus traditions are a part of every college and university; examination of these events provides opportunities to further develop each person's liberatory consciousness.

One of the most common institutional changes participants in my research requested was an increase in gender-neutral or gender-inclusive restrooms. Participants sometimes had to travel across campus to access a restroom that was labeled as gender-neutral or endured potential violence from using a gendered restroom. Restrooms and bathrooms are a necessity for all people, and the increased numbers and visibility of gender-inclusive restrooms will benefit more than just trans* identified students (Chess, Kafer, Quizar, & Richardson, 2004).

The material needs of trans* men such as places to live, health services to access are action sites for campuses to practice actions supporting trans* inclusion. Areas to consider for trans* men's inclusion have been covered in prior literature (B. Beemyn, 2005; B. Beemyn, Curtis et al., 2005; B. Beemyn, Domingue et al., 2005), but they

deserve to be repeated in the hope that mentioning them will spark awareness and lead to

action. Institutions should consider the following as action items for trans* inclusivity:

- Attire requirements: from informal suggestions about interview-appropriate clothes to policies addressing student athlete travel attire

- Health services practitioners and resources

- Access to gender-inclusive restrooms and bathrooms

- Residence halls: from housing assignments to room locations and amenities

- Intercollegiate athletic and recreational team sports

- Number, type, and training of student organizations

- Gender marker and name changes for internal institutional documentation that considers legal requirements or medical provider approval

- Academic curriculum that attends to trans* identities as more than anomalous or abnormal genders

- Reflection of trans* student's name and gender on classroom rosters and other internal to campus materials

- Support in completing financial aid forms that meet government requirement guidelines and address issues of Select Service Registration requirements for males

- Legal issues must be explored about institutional requirements for documentation and identification. State institutions may have different standards from private institutions because of the various ways identification can be used beyond campus. Conversations must happen in many realms of campus about the legal dynamics of mismatching identification markers in a student record, and institutional responsibility to laws, policy, and values of student inclusion (not all necessarily in conflict)

Action also includes consideration of campus specific traditions (such as Homecoming),

and whether those events replicate exclusion or reflect an environment of trans*

inclusivity.

Actions that demonstrate trans* inclusivity in practices, policies, pedagogies, and engagement look different at each institution based on location, demographics, student services, academic collaborations, institution type and other factors. A liberatory consciousness when engaging in trans* inclusive actions encourages individuals and institution members to ask themselves about goals for minimal expectations of support for trans* people, then asking how they can do it better.

<center>Legal Implications for Action Steps</center>

Institutional changes to address the lack of inclusivity for trans* students are insufficient if they do not address the actual structural changes needed, such as putting a students' chosen name and pronoun on a roster, only to have them go unnoticed by instructors who do not understand the significance of such distinctions. Only attending to symptoms of exclusion of trans* men's experiences keeps change to a micro level of impact and fail to address the pervasive institutional practices that continue to impact the lives of trans* men. As Manning and Munoz (2011) note,

> Transgender students exercise their gender expression and identity in a variety of public and private ways. Despite this powerful self-definition, these gender variant expressions are rarely reflected, reinforced, or recognized in sanctioned, institutional ways. In other words, if a transgender student is using a preferred name and that better reflects zir gender identity than a legal name, the legal name continues to be used on class rosters, advisors' lists, and other official documents. (p. 292)

Issues of self-determination for students clash with institutional practices based upon administrative need to organize and file students (Spade, 2010).

Since every institution has different state regulations, based on public or private status and state specific laws, it is integral to do legal consultation with campus lawyers

<center>339</center>

about formal changes to policy on issues, such as name changes on internal documents. Also, there must be considerations for any requirements for federal and international laws (should students seek to study abroad).

> The institutionalized structures that govern name use are rigidly built into bureaucratic and administrative procedures, and the preferred name is not accommodated in the computer system that regulate many campus procedures. Because university systems were built on mainstream conceptions of identity, a student's world (e.g., multiraciality, gender queer, transgender) might not be represented in the institutional structures governing colleges and universities. The student is not allowed to name zir world. Rather, the world is named for zir (Manning & Munoz, 2011, p. 292).

Institutions of higher education must consider the ways they want to replicate or resist cultural practices and legal issues about names and internal documents, and these decisions must involve those with the appropriate legal advice.

Addressing the "Paper Trail"

Trans* men must also navigate their institutions follow-through on policies and practices post-graduation depending on their institution's failing or refusal to change their name on their diploma or transcript. Legal issues surrounding name usage are beyond the scope of my expertise but not beyond the implication of the recommendation for intentional action and using liberatory consciousness as a framework for developing a more trans* inclusive campus. Engaging in analysis means collaborating with those who have legal expertise to examine the laws (state and federal) that institutions must abide by internal documentation of a student name. For example, at a state institution, student identification cards might be considered a form of state identification, thus the college or university is required to utilize a legal name on the card. Colleges and universities must

conduct an informed analysis before they take actions that make them liable for legal action.

Decisions about policy and practice changes or enforcement reflect institutional values and commitment to trans* men. For example, trans* students must be informed of the potential challenges of the "paper trail" created from attending a particular college or university, such as whether a college will or will not change the name on a diploma unless accompanied by legal documentation of a name change. The inability to demonstrate one's achievement of graduating with a bachelor's degree, without outing oneself as trans*, may influence one's decision to attend that college. Instead, trans* men are left to consider possibilities in isolation or desperation about how to get their documentation to match their current identity.

<u>Returning to a Liberatory Consciousness Framework</u>

The framework of a liberatory consciousness is useful to consider the levels of awareness, complexity of analysis, impact of actions, and feedback for accountability. In my recommendations, I began with the basics of awareness, which developed into more complicated educational efforts about trans* men's identities. Next, I provided tools for analysis and used Young's (1990) five faces of oppression to explore the various manifestations of trans* oppression. Then, I explored various intentional actions applicable to higher education. Accountability is necessary as the feedback component within a liberatory consciousness framework; one must question how their (lack of) awareness, scope of analysis, and impact of action(s) support trans* men and trans* students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research on Trans* Men as a Distinct Group

There is no previous research specifically focused on trans* men in college and only limited research specifically on trans* student in college (Bilodeau, 2005; McKinney, 2005; Pusch, 2005). There is also limited data about the kinds of impact policy and practices have had on campus climate for trans* men (and trans* students) other than a number of notable projects (see Rankin, 2003; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010).

Since I began my data collection (in spring of 2010), there have been changes in terminology of trans* men and trans* masculinities and an increased presence of trans* men at colleges and universities, at least anecdotally reported by students and college administrators (Rankin & Beemyn, 2012). The increased attention can be seen in the increased numbers of trans* inclusive non-discrimination policies, a total of 623 total colleges and universities, as of December 2013.[46] To put the increased number of policies in context, according to Rankin and Beemyn, "More than 90 percent of two- and four-year institutions in the United States have not taken any of these [transgender inclusive practices] steps and remain completely inaccessible and inhospitable to transgender students" (p. 9).

There is symbolic significance to writing policies that support trans* inclusion, yet there has only been one publication on the impact of having (or not having) trans* inclusive policies for trans* students (B. Beemyn & Pettitt, 2006). As B. Beemyn and

---

[46] For more information see: http://www.transgenderlaw.org/college/

Pettitt note, many institutions have been successful with increasing trans* related programming, but otherwise results "indicated that few changes had occurred as a result of the non-discrimination policy" (para. 5). Recently, Rankin and Beemyn (2012) note that "even those colleges and universities that have implemented transgender-supportive policies and practices still remain, like the broader society, firmly entrenched in a binary gender system that largely privileges gender-conforming students" (p. 9). Given the limited empirical research, the current literature cannot adequately address or direct the future of policies, practices, student needs, and campus limitations.

A deficit in research on trans* college student populations results from a skewing of expectations because of assumed relationships those students have with LGBT Resource Centers (Rankin, 2003). Of the data available, such as a report on the state of higher education, Rankin et al. (2010) document the experiences of "over 5,000 students, faculty members, staff members, and administrators who identify as LGBTQQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Queer) at colleges and universities across the United States" (p. 8). Issues of harassment were reported as higher for trans* students than their non-trans* peers. "A significant number of transmasculine respondents (87%) and transfeminine respondents (82%) indicated their gender expression was the basis for harassment compared to 20 percent of men and 24 percent of women" (Rankin et al., 2010, p. 10). The report also disaggregates transmasculine and transfeminine people, pointing out the different experiences and struggles.

> Respondents who identified as transfeminine were most likely to feel deliberately ignored or excluded (69%) and isolated or left out (62%), while respondents who identified as transmasculine were most likely to be stared at (59%) or singled out as resident authority due to their identity (54%). (p. 10)

The different dynamics are important to understand because they impact institutional response, community experiences and expectations, and considerations for possible areas of support.

Higher education has generally not questioned how embedded the gender binary is in every aspect of institutional structure, policy, and climate. "Administrators and student affairs staff can make an important difference in the lives of these [trans] students, but to do so, they will need to reconsider many of their assumptions about gender and the structure of higher education" (B. Beemyn, 2005, para 26). Changes to policies, practices, and language can be superficial forms of inclusion if they remain words on a website without questioning what is required to move inclusion into action steps or how it is broadly related to the mission of an institution (Rankin & Beemyn, 2012).

For example, Hart and Lester (2011) note that when one women's college attempted to engage in conversations on trans* issues, community members thought the outcome was ineffective with superficial responses marked an institutionally enforced silence, via absences in discourse, policy, and practice changes.

> Furthermore, these attempts appeared to make no efforts to honestly address the needs and challenges transgender students bring to the overarching discourse of gender homogeneity. Responding to the transgender students in cursory ways has reinforced the cultural notion that transgender students need to remain invisible. (Hart & Lester, 2011, p. 205)

Although Hart and Lester had a limited sample, they found that emergent themes to trans* inclusion were invisibility, hyper-visibility, and oppression. Also, Hart and Lester point out specific challenges for women's colleges due to the structure of a single-sex enrollment, by which gender variation creates a particular disharmony based on the expectations of the student population. My point is that each institution must consider the

variables of its student populations, from gender-focused admissions to campus dynamics at single-sex institutions.

Within current research on higher education, trans* men have been subsumed into the broader category of trans*, which does not allow the complexities and experience of issues of masculinity to be explored; nor does trans* allow for trans* women or genderqueer students to be seen, only a broad category of trans*. Trans* men have also been ignored within the growing field of masculinity studies as a site of research about gender socialization, anti-sexist embodiment, masculine expressions, and inclusive masculinities. Issues of authenticity, performativity, and passing dominated much of the participants' concerns about their relationship to their gender, and I perceived limited opportunities to engage in conversations about what role, if any, masculinity played in their identity development or current concepts of masculinity.

Issues of reconciliation with their previous experiences as females, assumptions of their knowledge about gender theory, and dynamics of relationships with cisgender people require focused in-depth and specific research. Further, trans* men's conceptions of normative or hegemonic masculinity and their experiences coming into manhood should be explored to complicate the social constructions of gender and how gender identities are constructed when they are both a part of and apart from the gender binary.

Fundamentally, gender is still one of the major organizing principles in most schools (including colleges and universities) as well as larger global societies. From athletics to residence halls and from restrooms to retention conversations, institutional assessment and demographics remain firmly entrenched in the gender binary of the larger

society, and engage in trans* oppression (Marine, 2011).[47] Instead of evaluating the structure of higher education and considering if gender is a necessary organizing principle, the literature has encouraged small moments of stretching the pre-existing institutional structure to contain the possibilities of trans* students but only for those institutions who have taken interest. More pointedly, I would posit that institutions have policies and practices superficially address trans* inclusion but engage in such practices without the awareness of what that means or who they actually serve. New questions surfaced in my discussion chapters regarding trans* men's identities,[48] given the variety and diversity of how they understand, experience, and identify with their transness. In my literature review, I demonstrated how the lack of empirical research, curriculum inclusion (in student affairs) about trans* men. I also argued that the continuous use of the LGBT moniker makes trans* men (and trans* students) invisible. When these issues are combined with the ways trans* men in my research identified support at their institutions (when they described any), there is a clearer picture of how policies and practices are not enough to meet the needs of trans* men in college, let alone all trans* students.

Empirical research is needed to provide more information about trans* students' experiences. There must be opportunities for trans* students to give institutions of higher education feedback and suggestions about how to work with them, inside and outside the classroom. However, attention must also be given to those who graduate, as alumni may be able to provide hindsight recommendations about their experiences that offer more possibilities for climate, practices, and policies.

---

[47] Trans* oppression is not used in higher education literature, but is mostly referred to as genderism (Bilodeau, 2005,;, 2009; Wilchins, 2002)
[48] As well as trans* students more broadly even though that was not the focus of my research.

Research must be conducted to consider the following questions about the experiences of trans* men undergraduates:

Research about students:

- How do trans* men define support and where do they go to find that support?

- How do students conceptualize safety or community on college/university campuses?

- How do students access information in the 21st century? Do students seek face-to-face experiences? Do they seek it out via the Internet? Or is it some combination of different sources for different purposes?

- Do students access information in face-to-face experiences or do they seek it out via other methods, such as the Internet?

- Do trans* men affiliate with LGBT Resource Centers or queer communities by choice, design, default or some other reason?

Research about LGBT Resource Centers:

- What are ways that research on trans* men can utilize intersectionality to consider student needs, affiliations, and identities?

- How do campuses or campus offices assess how they enact inclusivity to avoid students feeling forced to choose between marginalized social identities and cultural centers that specifically serve those identities?

- What is the role of LGBT Resource Centers (and all cultural centers)? What is the impact of the literal and figurative geography of those centers? What are the goals of their programmatic and service structures?

- How do cultural centers align or interact ideologically with perceived and articulated institutional values of inclusion?

Research on pedagogies:

- What pedagogies work to allow trans* and other marginalized students to understand their own agency in the classroom?

- Where is the line in pedagogies to determine what is a measure to allowing students to find their voice and share their experiences, and when are they unintentionally (or intentionally) tokenized identity experts?

- When do students unknowingly (or knowingly) speak on behalf of their entire community and what is the impact of that on their collegiate experience?

- What strategies are employed to make trans* identities a part of the curriculum in a way that embraces theoretical considerations with experiential insights to ground them in the day-to-day lives of people?

- What is the cost to the trans* men who do these presentations, expose their lives, and objectify their bodies? What is the line between exploitation and education?

Conclusion

Scholarship and research on trans* men is lacking and only with the participation of trans* students will some answers be found. Trans* men must be considered in Masculinity Studies, which will excavate the underlying assumption that men are a monolithic group tied to biology and create potential for a more expansive understanding and shift in masculinities. Institutions of higher education need to seriously examine how the larger cultural expectation of the gender binary organized colleges and universities in

ways that makes them unaccustomed to thinking beyond, outside, or differently from rigid gender roles. Research is required about and with trans* men (and all trans* people) at institutions of higher education as well as research about and with those who seek to create more trans* inclusive campuses. Examinations of LGBT Resource Centers or other offices "safe zone" trainings need to be reconsidered to determine if they engage reflective practices that are sustainable for developing a liberatory consciousness. The need for more work that attends to trans* people at colleges and universities is a call to research, a call for reflection, a call to a lifelong practice of learning, and a willingness to ask questions that do not have easy answers.

APPENDIX A

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

LOOKING FOR TRANS IDENTIFIED MEN WHO ARE WILLING

TO TALKING ABOUT MASCULINITY AND GENDER IDENTITY

My name is D. Chase James Catalano, and I am a doctoral candidate in Social Justice Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I identify as trans, FtM, and as a man who would like to find trans identified men who are open to sharing their experiences about masculinity and gender identity. I have a specific focus on higher education.

Participants: I am seeking trans identified men who are currently students at a college or university OR are faculty, staff, or graduate students at a college or university.

Working Title of Dissertation: The experiences of (Trans) Masculinity in Higher Education

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of my dissertation project is to explore the ways in which trans identified men understand, experience, express, and resist masculinity. I hope to gain a better understanding of how issues of masculinity and trans identification shape their experiences in institutions of higher education. I hope to explore ways that institutions of higher education can be more supportive of trans identified men's experiences with masculinity and colleges/universities.

If you are interested in participating…

- Please contact D. Chase J. Catalano at ftmresearch.cjc@gmail.com
- After your initial email, I will send you a participant questionnaire that will remain confidential.
- After the questionnaire is submitted, you will be contacted by the researcher with further information on how you can continue to take part in the study.
- Selected participants will have the opportunity to take part in an interview (lasting from 1.5 – 2 hours) with the researcher by phone, Skype, or in person.
- Participants are free to decline answering questions they do not feel comfortable with, to ask questions about the study at any point, and to withdraw from the study at any time.

If participants wish to contact the researcher or researcher's supervisor about any

matter the contact details are as follows:

Researcher:

D. Chase James Catalano

Doctoral Candidate, Social Justice Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst

ftmresearch.cjc@gmail.com

Supervisor:

Dr. Maurianne Adams

Professor Emerita, Social Justice Education Program, University of Massachusetts

Amherst

adams@educ.umass.edu

INELIGIBILITY LETTER

Dear (Participant's Name),

Thank you for contacting me with your interest to participate within my research on trans men and masculinity. After review of your Demographic Questionnaire, I realized that you did not meet my initial selection criteria for the following reason: **(insert reason here)**.

While you do not meet the criteria for selection in *this* study, I would like to request the ability to maintain your contact information for future research that I may do. Please contact me if you are interested in possible future research by me on trans men's experiences.

Thank you again for your interest. I hope to be able to have your participation in future research!

Regards,

D. Chase James Catalano

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Social Justice Education Doctoral Candidate

Chase.catalano@gmail.com

631.662.0819 (cell)

APPENDIX C

CONFIRMATION OF INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING

Dear <Name>,

Thank you for filling out my online informational questionnaire for my dissertation research! This follow up email is to confirm that you are still interested in participating in the 1.5 to 2 hour interview. If you are no longer interested in participating, please respond to let me know to remove you from the study.

There are a couple of things I would like to cover in this email:

First, I want to confirm that you meet the participant criteria listed below. Based on your survey completion, I know that you meet a number of the criteria, but there are a two that I want to specifically be clear about for my initial research. If you do not meet these criteria, then please let me know which one(s). I may still ask you for an interview based on demographics and a decision to expand my participant criteria.

1.   Enrolled as an undergraduate student for at least two consecutive semesters

2.   Born and raised in the United States

Second, I want to begin to set up convenient dates and times for the interview. I have decided to try to do interviews based on dividing up the geographic areas of New England. Please let me know if you are available for a 1.5 to 2-hour interview on any of the following dates and what time(s) you are available:

<Date Option 1>

<Date Option 2>

<Date Option 3>

If none of these dates work with your schedule, then please let me know any days or time that would better work with your schedule in the month of <Month> or <Month>.

After I get confirmation from you about continued interest, date, and time, I will give you a quick phone call to discuss setting up a location for the interview. As I may not be familiar with your campus, I will need your help to set up a location that is an appropriate interview space.

I have also attached the consent form for the interview for your review. I will bring 2 copies to the interview, so you do NOT need to print it out. I am providing it so you can review it to determine if you have any questions about the study or the consent form prior to the interview. I am more than happy to answer any questions. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Regards,

Chase Catalano

Chase.catalano@gmail.com

(Cell) 631.662.0819

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Student Researcher: D. Chase James Catalano

Study Title: Welcome to Guyland: Experiences of Trans Men in College

Faculty Sponsor/P.I.: Dr. Maurianne Adams

WHAT IS THIS FORM?

This consent form will give you information about the study so you can make an

informed decision about participation in this research study. This form will help you

understand why this study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It

will also describe what you will be asked to do as a participant and any known risks,

inconveniences, or discomforts that you may have while participating. I encourage you to

think about this information and ask questions now and at any other time. If you decide to

participate, please sign this form. You will be given a copy for your records.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

I am inviting participants who meet the following criteria:

1. Identifies under the umbrella term of trans man. For the purpose of this study, I
    am using trans identified men - or trans man for brevity - as those men, who were
    identified at birth as female and currently do not identify as women. Trans man
    can include, but is not limited to tranny boi, trans guy, genderqueer, masculine
    identified, gender non-conforming, pre-transition, FtM, post-transition, pre-
    hormones, and pre-surgical.

2. Currently enrolled (part-time or full-time) as an undergraduate student in a non-virtual college or university within the New England Region of the United States. New England region is being defined as (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, & VT).

3. Has been enrolled as an undergraduate student for at least two consecutive semesters

4. English speaking

5. Born and raised in the United States

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to explore how trans men in college define themselves in relationship to concepts of "normative" masculinity and measures of male identity and gender roles and how trans men describe their relationship to "normative" masculinity, having formerly occupied a female body (and may or may not have previously identified as women).

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire to provide information on your identities and type of college, community college, or university. After you complete the questionnaire, I will set up a quick 10 minute phone chat to answer any questions you have about the study and set up a date, time, and location for the interview. I will travel to you to complete a 1.5 to 2 hour interview. After your interview has been transcribed (turned from audio format to text document) you will be contacted to review the document.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

By participating in this study, you will have the opportunity to share your experiences, as a trans man in college, which as of this time, has not be done before. Further, you will be able to provide your thoughts on recommendations you might have how college and university campuses could be more inclusive to trans men.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

By participating, you may be exposed to a small number of risks. You may feel emotional discomfort while discussing your experiences and thoughts.

HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

The following procedures will be used to protect your confidentiality. The researcher will keep all records and data in a secure location. Only the researcher will have access to the audio-recordings, transcripts, and other data. You will be provided with an Informed Consent form before the interview process, which will allow you to choose your own pseudonym (fake name). All digital, audio, and other data will only identify you through your pseudonym, and any specific information about your college/university will use vague descriptors, such as "a small New England College" or "a small state university in New England." Your email address and personal demographic information will never be shared with any other individual. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher may publish his findings in multiple ways, such as articles, book chapters, or presentations. To protect your identity and confidentiality, any publications or presentations about this research will only identify you through your pseudonym and vague descriptors of your college or university. Although I do not expect this to be an issue, I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of disclosures about child abuse, neglect, sexual violence, or threats of suicide or homicide.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY PAYMENT FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

You will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about this study. If you have any further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the student researcher, Chase Catalano (*chase.catalano@gmail.com* or

631.662.0819) or the faculty sponsor/principle investigator, Dr. Maurianne Adams

(adams@educ.umass.edu or 413.545.1194). If you have any questions concerning your

rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst

Human Research Office (HRPO) at 413.545-3428 or humansubjects@ora.umass.edu.

CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you agree to be in the

study, but later change your mind, you may drop out of the study at any time. There are

no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do now want to

participate.

SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above.

The general purposes and particulars of the study as well as possible hazards and

inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw

at any time.

_____

Participant Signature

_____   _____

Print Name   Date

_____

Participant's Chosen Pseudonym

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

_____ _____

Researcher Signature   Print Name/ Date

(Person obtaining Consent)

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introductory Questions about current gender identity:

1. How would you describe your current gender identity?

2. How would you describe your current gender expression?

3. Would you ascribe any gender roles to your gender?

4. How would you describe your pre-trans identified gender? Gender expression?

5. Can you tell me about how you learned about trans identity?

6. What positive changes have occurred in your life since you started identifying as trans?

7. What negative changeS, if any, have occurred in your life since you started identifying as trans?

8. Could you talk about whether you have chosen to engage with any type of trans community?

9. If you haven't been connected to any trans communities, are there any communities you have been connected with?

Questions about transitioning:

1. Do you consider yourself as someone seeking to transition? Why or why not?

2. Can you describe the components that you consider to be part of the transition process?

3. Where did you learn about transitioning? What sources did you go to for more information?

4. What factors influenced any choices you have made about the transition process?

5. What factors might influence any future choice you make about the transition process?

Questions about masculinity:

1. How would you describe your masculinity?

2. How would you describe your pre-trans identified masculinity?

3. How do you think others perceive your masculinity? What are your thoughts about those perceptions?

4. Are there any factors that influence how you express or would like to express your masculinity?

5. How do you think your previous gender identity (pre-trans identity) impacts your expressions of masculinity?

6. How do you think your previous gender identity (pre-trans identity) impacts your view of "normative" masculinity?

7. What kind of critiques do you have about normative masculinity?

8. What kinds of ideas, concepts, or images do you use to construct your current masculinity?

9. What kind of ideas, concepts, and images do you reject in constructing your masculinity?

Advising trans men or potential trans men in college:

1. How would you describe the challenges you have faced as being trans identified in college?

2. How would you describe how you have been supported as being trans identified in college?

3. After having these experiences, what advice would you give to someone who identifies as or is thinking of identifying as trans at college?

4. What do you think are the most important ways to support trans men or potential trans men in colleges and universities?

5. What type of information do you think should be provided about the transition process?

6. What knowledge do you have now that you wish you had known when you first started identifying as trans?

7. Is there anything that you wish you could do to make your campus or a campus office more trans inclusive?

Closing Questions:

1. Is there anything you think I should know to understand your trans experience in college/university or working at a college/university better?

2. Are there any thoughts about your experience that you would like to share that we haven't covered?

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

RE: Transcription Services

Client: D. Chase James Catalano for dissertation transcription

By signing this document, you agree to the following statements:

- I am a sole proprietor and work alone.
- I will only discuss any of my work with my client.
- Documents of transcribed interviews will only be shared with my client.
- I will immediately delete the audio-recording file from my computer once payment is received for the completed transcript.
- Unless requested to keep on file for a determined amount of time by the client, I will delete the Word document transcript once payment is received.
- I retain all email records for my purposes to serve as a backup for at least 30 days.
- Emails, as they pertain to completed transcripts, will be deleted once payment is received.
- The audio discs with the interviews will be returned to my client upon completed transcription of all interviews on the disc.

_____

Signature of Transcriber

_____

Name of Transcriber (printed)

APPENDIX G

MEMBER CHECK EMAIL

Dear <Participant>:

I want to thank you again for your involvement in my dissertation research on the experiences of trans men in college!

I realize it has been over a year since you participated. At the time you were interviewed, I thought I would have a much faster time line than I was able to hold to due to a variety of circumstances. I apologize for the delay.

As promised in your Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study, you have the ability to review this document for accuracy and clarification. Attached you will find the transcription of our interview, which took place on <Date of Interview>. You chose to use the following pseudonym: <Pseudonym>.

I ask that you to review the entire interview. Any text that is highlighted yellow is a place where I would appreciate any clarity, if you can provide it. Any text in brackets [ ] are my clarification notes or deletion of confidential information. If you have any points of clarification, comments, or further thoughts, please attach those in a separate document. For clarity purposes, I ask that you follow the below example in the separate document:

<Pseudonym>: Whatever the original transcription states.

Note from <Pseudonym>: I would like to expand this answer to say that….

If you have any overall comments regarding your interview, please list those as Overall Comments in a separate document.

Finally, I realized that my demographic information did not ask the following questions:

1. What was your class year at your college/university at the time of the interview (such as senior or sophomore)?

2. What was your academic major(s) and minor(s) at the time of your interview?

I would like to request that you return the transcription, separate document for clarification (if applicable), and answer to the demographic questions to me via email by July 17, 2011. If I do not hear from you after two weeks, I will utilize the original document sent to you for my research project.

Again, I thank you for your time and involvement in my research. Please email me with any questions.

Regards,

Chase

REFERENCES

Adams, M. (2014). Social justice and education. In M. Reisch (Ed.), *Routledge international handbook of social justice* (pp. 249-268). New York, NY: Routledge.

Amato, T., & Davies, M. (Eds.). (2004). *Pinned down by pronouns*. Boston, MA: Conviction Books.

Ayvazian, A. (2001). Interrupting the cycle of oppression: The role of allies as agents of change. In P. S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study* (5th ed., pp. 609-615). New York, NY: Worth.

Becker, D. (1997). Growing up in two closets: Class and privilege in the lesbian and gay community. In S. Raffo (Ed.), *Queerly classed* (pp. 227-234). . Boston: South End Press.

Beemyn, B. (2002). The development and administration of campus LGBT centers and offices. In S. Rankin & B. Schoenberg (Eds.), *A place of our own: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender services and programs in higher education* (pp. 25-32). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Beemyn, B. (2003). Serving the needs of transgender college students. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *1*(1), 33-50.

Beemyn, B. G. (2005). Trans on campus: Measuring and improving the climate for transgender students. *On Campus with Women, 34*(3). [Online]. http://www.aacu.org/ocww/volume34_33/feature.cfm?section=32

Beemyn, B., Curtis, B., Davis, M., & Tubbs, N.J. (2005). Transgender issues on college campuses. In R. L. Sanlo (Ed.), *Gender identity and sexual orientation: Research, policy, and personal perspectives* (pp. 49-60). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Beemyn, B. G., Domingue, A., Pettitt, J., & Smith, T. (2005) Suggested steps to make campuses more trans-inclusive. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *3*(1), 89-94.

Beemyn, B. G., & Pettit, J. (2006). How have trans-inclusive non-discrimination policies changed institutions?. *GLBT Campus Matters, 3*(1), 6-7.

Beemyn, G., & Rankin, S. (2011). *The lives of transgender people*. New York, NY, Columbia University Press.

Bell, L. A. (2007). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin, (Eds.) *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed., pp. 1-14). New York, NY: Routledge.

Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques in chain-referral sampling. *Social Methods and Research, 10*, 141-163.

Billings, D. B., & Urban, T. (1996). A socio- medical construction of transsexualism: An interpretation and critique. In R. Ekins & D. King (Eds.), *Blending genders: Social aspects of crossdressing and sex changing*. (pp. 99‒117). London, England: Routledge.

Bilodeau, B. (2005). Beyond the gender binary: A case study of two transgender students at a midwestern research university. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *3*(1), 29-44.

Bilodeau, B. (2009). *Genderism: Transgender students, binary systems, and higher education*. Saarbrucken, Germany: VDM Verlag

Bilodeau, B. L., & Renn, K. A. (2005). Analysis of LGBT identity development models and implications for practice. *New Direction for Student Services, 111*, 25-39.

Bono, C. (2011). *Transition: The story of how I became a man*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Bornstein, K. (1994). *Gender outlaw: On men, women, and the rest of us*. New York, NY: First Vintage Books.

Bornstein, K., & Bergman, S. B. (Eds.). (2010). *Gender outlaws: The next generation*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.

Boyer, E. (1990). Campus life: In search of community. *A Special Report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Boylan, J. F. (2003). *She's not there: A life in two genders*. New York, NY: Broadway Books.

Broido, E. M. (2000). The development of social justice allies during college: A phenomenological investigation. *Journal of College Student Development, 41*(1), 3-18.

Broido, E. M., & Reason, R. D. (2005). The development of social justice attitudes and actions: An overview of current understandings. In R. D. Reason, ,E. M. Broido, T. L. Davis, & N. J. Evans (Eds.), *Developing social justice allies. New directions for student services, 110*, 69-81.

Brown, C. E., Brown, J. M., & Littleton, R. A. (2002). A lab without walls: A team approach to creating community. In W. M. McDonald and Associates (Eds.), *Creating campus community: In search of Ernest Boyer's legacy* (pp. 93-121). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Browne, K. (2004). Genderism and the bathroom problem: (Re)matrialising sexed sites, (re)creating sexed bodies. *Gender, Place and Culture, 11*(3), 331-346.

Browne, K. (2005). Snowball sampling: Using social networks to research nonheterosexual women. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 8*(1), 47-60.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "sex."* New York, NY: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Califia, P. (2003). *Sex changes: Transgender politics* (2nd ed). San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press.

Cameron, L. (1996). *Body alchemy: Transsexual portraits*. San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press.

Catalano, C., McCarthy, L., & Shlasko, D. (2007). Transgender oppression. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed., pp. 219-245). New York, NY: Routledge.

Catalano, C., & Shlasko, D. (2010). Transgender oppresion. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, R. Castañeda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zúñiga, (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed., pp. 423-456). New York, NY: Routledge.

Catalano, C., & Shlasko, D. (2013). Transgender oppression. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, R. Castañeda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zúñiga, (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (3rd ed., pp. 425-459). New York, NY: Routledge.

Chang, R. S., & Davis, A. D. (2010). An epistolary exchange: Making up is hard to to: Race/Gender/Sexual Orientation in the law school classroom. *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender, 33*, 1-57.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Cheng, D. X. (2004). Students' sense of campus community: What it means, and what to do about it. *NASPA Journal, 41*(2), 216-234.

Chess, S., Kafer, A., Quizar, J.,& Richardson, M. U. (2008). Calling all restroom revolutionaries! In M. B. Sycamore (Ed.), *That's revolting! Queer strategies for resisting assimilation* (pp. 216-229). Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull Press.

Coleman, E., Bockting, W., Botzer, M., Cohen-Kettenis, P., DeCuypere, G., Feldman, J., Fraser, L., Green, J., Knudson, G., Meyer, W. J., Monstrey, S., Adler, R. K., Brown, G. R., Devor, A. H., Ehrbar, R., Ettner, R., Eyler, E., Garofalo, R., Karasic, D. H., Lev, A. I., Mayer, G., Meyer-Bahlburg, H., Hall, B. P., Pfaefflin, F., Rachlin, K., Robinson, B., Schechter, L. S., Tangpricha, V., van Trotsenburg, M., Vitale, A., Winter, S., Whittle, S., Wylie, K. R., & Zucker, K. (2011). Standards of care for the health of transsexual, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people, version 7. *International Journal of Transgenderism, 13*, 165-232.

Connell, R. W. (2002). *Gender*. Cambridge, England: Polity.

Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society, 19*(6), 829-859.

Cooley, C. (1922). *Human nature and social order*. New York, NY: Scribner.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241-1299.

Cromwell, J. (1999). *Transmen & FTMs: Identities, bodies, genders, & sexualities*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Cummings, M. A. (2006). *The mirror makes no sense*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.

Daddy. (2010, May 29). Transnormativity has screwed me so hard and it definitely wasn't consensual (TW, SW). [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://falconfire1379.wordpress.com/2012/05/29/transnormativity-has-screwed-me-so-hard-and-it-definitely-wasnt-consensual/

Davidson, M. (2007). Seeking refuge under the umbrella: Inclusion, exclusion, and organizing within the category *transgender*. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy, 4*(4), 60-80.

Davis, T. L. (2002). Voices of gender role conflict: The social construction of college men's identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 43*, 508-521.

Derrida, J. (1976). *Of grammatology*. (G. C. Spivak, trans.)*,* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and difference*, (A. Bass, trans.), London, England: Routledge.

Devor, H. (1997). *FTM: Female-to-male transsexuals in society*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Dey, I. (2007). Grounding categories. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz, (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 265-289). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Diamond, M. (Ed.). (2004). *From the inside out: Radical gender transformation, FTM and beyond*. San Francisco, CA: Manic D Press.

Dilley, P. (2004). LGBTQ Research in higher education: A review of journal articles, 2000-2003. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *2*(2), 105-115.

Dozier, R. (2005). Beards, breasts, and bodies: Doing sex in a gendered world. *Gender & Society, 19*(3), 297-316.

Dzmura, N. (Ed.). (2010). *Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish community*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Edwards, K. E. (2006). Aspiring social justice ally identity development: A conceptual model. *NASPA Journal, 43*(4), 39-60.

Ekins, R. & King., D. (2006). *The transgender phenomenon*. London, England: Sage.

Eliason, M. J., & Schope, R. (2007). Shifting sands or solid foundation? Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender identity formation. In I. H. Meyer & Northridge, M. E. (Eds), *The health of sexual minorities: Public health perspectives in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations* (pp. 3-26). New York, NY: Springer.

Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis*. New York, NY: Norton.

Faugier, J., & Sargeant, M. (1997). Sampling hard to reach populations. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 26*, 790-797.

Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). *Sexing the body*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Feinberg, L. (1996). *Transgender warriors: Making history from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Feinberg, L. (1998). *Trans liberation: Beyond pink or blue* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Fellabaum, J. (2011). Conceptualizing gender performance in higher education: Exploring regulation of identity expression. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education, 4*(2), 127-141.

Forshee, A. S. (2008). Transgender men: A demographic snapshot. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 20*(3), 221-236.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th Ann. ed.)(M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York, NY: Continuum.

Fuss, D. (1989). *Essentially speaking: Feminism, nature, and difference*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Fuss, D. (Ed.). (1991). *Inside/out: Lesbian theories, gay theories*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gagne, P., & Tewksbury, R. (1998). Conformity pressures and gender resistance among transgendered individuals. *Social Problems, 45*(1), 81-101.

Gagne, P., & Tewksbury, R. (1999). Knowledge and power, body, and self: An analysis of knowledge systems and the transgendered self. *The Sociological Quarterly, 40*(1), 59-83.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Green, J. (1997). Forward. In H. Devor (Ed.), *FTM: Female-to-male transsexuals in society* (pp. ix-xi). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Green, J. (1999). Look! No don't! The visibility dilemma for transsexual men. In K. More & S. Whittle (Eds.), *Reclaiming genders: Transsexual grammars at the fin de siecle* (pp. 117-131). London, England: Cassell.

Green, J. (2004). *Becoming a visible man*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Halberstam, J. (1994). F2M: The making of female masculinity. In L. Doan (Ed.), *The lesbian postmodern* (pp. 210-228). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Halberstam, J. (2003). Reflections on queer studies and queer pedagogy. *Journal of Homosexuality, 45*(2/3/4), 361-364.

Halberstam, J. (2005). *In a queer time and place: Transgender bodies, subcultural lives*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Hale, C. J. (1998). Consuming the living, dis(re)membering the dead in the butch/FTM borderlands. *GLQ : A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 4*(2), 311-348.

Harper, S. R., & Harris, F., III (Eds.). (2010). *College men and masculinities: Theory, research, and implications for practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Harro, B. (2000). The cycle of socialization. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, R. Castañeda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zúñiga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed., pp. 45-58). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hart, J., & Lester, J. (2011). Starring students: Gender performance at a women's college. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education, 4*(2), 193-217.

Hausman, B. (1995). *Changing sex: Transsexualism, technology, and the idea of gender*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Herbst, S., & Malaney, G. D. (1999). Perceived value of a special interest residential program for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students. *NASPA Journal, 36*(2), 106-119.

Hernandez, M. (2009). Holding my breath underwater. In A. L. Ferber, K. Holcomb, & T. Wentling, (Eds.), *Sex, gender, and sexuality: The new basics, an anthology* (pp. 182-185). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hill, D. B. (2002). Genderism, transphobia, and gender bashing: A framework for interpreting anti-transgender violence. In B. Wallace, & R. Carter (Eds.), *Understanding and dealing with violence: A multicultural approach* (pp. 113-136). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hill, D. B., & Willoughby, B. L. B. (2005). The development and validation of the genderism and transphobia scale. *Sex Roles, 53*(7/8), 531-544.

Hird, M. J. (2000). Gender's nature: Intersexuality, transsexualism, and the "sex"/"gender" binary. *Feminist Theory, 1*(3), 347-364.

Holton, J. A. (2007). The coding process and its challenges. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. (pp. 265-289). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hubbard, R. (1996). Gender & genitals: Constructions of sex and gender. *Social Text, 14*(46/47), 157-165.

Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer theory*. Melbourne, Austrailia: Melbourne University Press.

Kailey, M. (2005). *Just add hormones: An insider's guide to the transsexual experience*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Kane-DeMaios, J. A., & Bullough, V. L., (Eds.). (2006). *Crossing sexual boundaries: Transgender journeys, uncharted paths*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Kaufman, M. (1999). Men, feminism, and men's contradictory experiences of power. In J. A. E. Kuypers (Ed.), *Men and power* (pp. 59-83). Halifax, VA: Fernwood Books.

Kessler, S. J. (2002). *Lessons from the intersexed*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Kessler, S.J., & McKenna, W. (1978). *Gender: An ethnomethodological approach*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Khosla, D. (2006). *Both sides now: One man's journey through womanhood*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.

Kimmel, M. (1996). *Manhood in America: A cultural history*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Kimmel, M. (2000). Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, R. Castañeda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zúñiga, (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice: An anthology on racism, Antisemitism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism* (pp. 213-219). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kimmel, M. (2008). *Guyland: The perilous world where boys become men*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Kimmel, M., & Davis, T. (2011). Mapping guyland in college. In J. A. Laker, & T. Davis, (Ed.), *Masculinities in higher education: Theoretical and practical considerations* (pp. 3-15). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kimmel, M., & Messner, M. (Ed.). (1998). *Men's lives*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

King, D. (1996). Gender blending: Medical perspectives and technology. In R. Ekins & D. King (Eds), *Blending genders: Social aspects of crossdressing and sex changing* (p. 79-98). London, England: Routledge.

Kotula, D. (Ed.). (2002). *The phallus palace: Female to male transsexuals*. Los Angeles, CA: Alyson.

Laker, J. A. (2003). *Bad dogs: Rethinking our engagement of male students*. Paper presented at the American College Personnel Association Conference, Minneapolis, MN.

LeBlanc, F. J. (2010). *Unqueering transgender? A Queer geography of transnormativity in two online communities*. Master's thesis. Victoria University of Wellington, NZ.

Lee, R. M. (1993). *Doing research on sensitive topics*. London, England: Sage.

Lee, T. (2001). Trans(re)lations: Lesbian and female to male transsexual accounts of identity. *Women's Studies International Forum, 24*(3/4), 347-357.

Lees, L. J. (1998). Transgender students on our campuses. In R. L. Sanlo (Ed.), *Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students: A handbook for faculty and administrators* (pp. 37-43). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Lemert, C. (1997). *Postmodernism is not what you think*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Lev, A. I. (2004). *Transgender emergence: Therapeutic guidelines for working gendervariant people and their families.* Binghamton, NY: Haworth Clinical Practice Press.

Lev, A. I. (2006). Transgender emergence within families. In. D. F. Morrow & L. Messinger (Eds.), *Sexual orientation and gender expression in social work practice* (pp. 263–283). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Lipsitz, G. (2006). *The possessive investment in whiteness: How white people profit from identity politics, revised and expanded edition*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Lombardi, E., & Davis, S. M. (2006). Transgender health issues. In. D. F. Morrow & L. Messinger (Eds.), *Sexual orientation and gender expression in social work practice* (pp. 343–363). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Lorber, J. (1994). *Paradoxes of gender*. Binghamton, NY: Yale University Press
.
Lorber, J. (1996). Beyond the binaries: Depolarizing the categories of sex, sexuality, and gender. *Sociological Inquiry, 66*(2), 143-159.

Lothstein, L. M. (1983). *Female to male transsexualism: Historical, clinical, and theoretical issues*. Boston, MA: Routledge.

Love, B. J. (2010). Developing a liberatory consciousness. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, R. Castañeda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zúñiga, (Eds.), (Ed.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed., pp. 599-603). New York, NY: Routledge.

Mackenzie, G. O. (1994). *Transgender nation*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

Magolda, P. M. (2001, January-February). What our rituals tell us about community on campus: A look at the campus tour. *About Campus*, *5*(6), 2-8.

Manning, K., & Munoz, F. M. (2011). Conclusion: Re-visioning the future of multicultural student services. In D. L. Stewart (Ed.), *Multicultural student services on campus: Building bridges, re-visioning community* (pp. 282-299). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Marine, S. B. (2011). Stonewall's legacy: Bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender students in higher education. In K. Ward & L. E. Wolf-Wendel (Eds.), *ASHE Higher Education Report* (Vol. 37). San Francisco, CA.

Martin, J. I., & Yonkin, D. R. (2006). Transgender identity. In E. D. F. Morrow & L. Messinger (Ed.), *Sexual orientation and gender expression in social work practice: Working with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people* (pp. 105-128). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Martino, M. (1977). *Emergence: A transsexual autobiography*. New York, NY: Crown.

McDonald, W. M. and Associates (2002). *Creating campus community: In search of Ernest Boyer's legacy*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

McKinney, J. S. (2005). On the margins: A study of the experiences of transgender college students. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, 3*(1), 63-75.

McKinnon, R. (2012, August 27). On the job market as a transgender candidate. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/On-the-Job-Market-as-a/133958/

Messerschmidt, J. W. (2009). Goodbye to the sex-gender distinction, hello to embodied gender. In A. L. Ferber, K. Holcomb, & T. Wentling (Ed.), *Sex, gender and sexuality: The new basics, an anthology* (pp. 71-88). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Messner, M. A. (2000). *Politics of masculinities: Men in movements*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

376

Meyer, W., III, Bockting, W. O, Cohen-Kettenis, P., Coleman, E., DiCeglie, D., Devor, H., Gooren, L., Hage, J. J., Kirk, S., Kuiper, B., Laub, D., Lawrence, A., Menard, Y., Monstrey, S., Patton, J., Schaefer, L., Webb, A., & Wheeler, C. C. (2001). The Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association's Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders, (6th ver). Retrieved from http://www.wpath.org/documents2/socv6.pdf.

Meyerowitz, J. (2002). *How sex changed: A history of transsexuality in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Miracle, J. (2012). 2012 Annual Report of the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Professionals. Retrieved from: http://www.lgbtcampus.org/reports

Morris, M. (1998). Unresting the curriculum: Queer projects, queer imaginings. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Queer theory in education* (pp. 227-236). Mahwah, NJ: Earlbaum.

Morrow, D. F., & Messinger, L. (Ed.). (2006). *Sexual orientation and gender expression in social work practice*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Morse, M. J. (2007). Sampling in grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 229-244). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Nadal, K. L., Rivera, D. P., & Corpus, M. J. H. (2010). Sexual orientation and transgender microaggressions. In D. W. Sue (Ed.), *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestations, dynamics, and impact* (pp. 217-240). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Nakamura, K. (1998). Transitioning on campus: A case studies approach. In R. L. Sanlo, (Ed.), *Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students: A handbook for faculty and administrators* (pp. 179-186). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Namaste, V. K. (2000). *Invisible lives: The erasure of transsexual and transgendered people*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Negrete, N. A., & Purcell, C. (2011). Engaging sexual orientation and gender diversity in multicultural student services. In D. L. Stewart (Ed.), *Multicultural student services on campus: Building bridges, re-visioning community* (pp. 81-93). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Nestle, J., Howell, C., & Wilchins, R. (Eds.). (2002). *Genderqueer: Voices from beyond the sexual binary*. Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books.

Nicholson, L. (1995). Interpreting gender. In L. Nicholson & S. Seidman, (Eds.), *Social postmodernism: Beyond identity politics* (pp. 39-67). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Noble, B. (2004). *Masculinities without men? Female masculinity in twentieth century literature*. Vancouver, BC, Canada: University of British Columbia Press.

O'Neil, J. M. (1990). Assessing men's gender role conflict. In D. Moore, & F. Leafgren, (Eds.), *Problem-solving strategies and interventions for men in conflict* (pp. 23-38). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Pazos, S. (1999). Practice with female-to-male transgendered youth. In G. P. Mallon (Ed.), *Social services with transgendered youth* (pp. 65-82). New York: The Hawthorn Press.

Peetoom, K. (2009). FTM embodiment of masculinity: Towards a new feminist politics of incoherence. *A Journal of Sexual Diversity Studies, 2*, 47-59.

Phelan, P. (1993). *Unmarked: The politics of performance*. London, England: Routledge.

Prosser, J. (1998). *Second skins: The body narratives of transsexuality*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Pusch, R. S. (2005). Objects of curiosity: Transgender college students' perceptions of the reactions of others. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, 3*(1), 45-61.

Rachlin, K. (2002). Factors which influence individual's decisions when considering female-to-male genital reconstruction. *The International Journal of Transgenderism, 3*(3). [Online]. Retrieved from http://www.symposion.com/ijt/ijtvo06no01_03.htm

Rachlin, K., Green, J., & Lombardi, E. (2008). Utilization of health care among female-to-male transgender individuals in the United States. *Journal of Homosexuality, 54*(3), 243-258.

Raffo, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Queerly classed*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Rankin, S. R. (2003). *Campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people: A national perspective.* New York, NY: The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.

Rankin, S. R. (2006). LGBTQA students on campus: Is higher education making the grade? *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, 3*(2/3), 111-117.

Rankin, S., & Beemyn, G. (2012). Beyond a binary: The lives of gender-nonconforming youth. *About Campus, 17*(4), 2-10.

Rankin, S., & Reason, R. (2008). Transformational tapestry model: A comprehensive approach to transforming campus climate. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 1*(4), 262-274.

Rankin, S., Weber, G., Blumenfeld, W., & Frazer, S. (2010). *2010 State of higher education for lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender people*. Charlotte, NC: Campus Pride.

Renn, K. A. (1998). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students in the college classroom. In R. L. Sanlo (Ed.), *Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students: A handbook for faculty and administrators* (pp. 231-237). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Renn, K. A. (2010). LGBT and queer research in higher education: The state and status of the field. *Educational Researcher, 39*(2), 132-141.

Roen, K. (2001). Transgender theory and embodiment: The risk of racial marginalization. *Journal of Gender Studies, 10*(3), 253-263.

Roen, K. (2002). "Either/or" and "both/neither": Discursive tensions in transgender politics. *Signs, 27*(2), 501-522.

Rubin, H. S. (1998). Phenomenology as method in Trans Studies. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 4*(2), 263-281.

Rubin, H. (2003). *Self-made men: Identity and embodiment among transsexual men*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Sander, L. (2013, June 2). How colleges can help transgender students "be who they are," says leading doctor. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/How-Colleges-Can-Help/139595/

Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing and Health, 23*, 334-340.

Sanlo, R. L. (2000). The LGBT campus resource center director: The new professional in student affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 37*(3), 199-209.

Sausa, L. A. (2002). Updating college and university campus policies: Meeting the needs of trans students, staff, and faculty. In E. P. Cramer (Ed.), *Addressing homophobia and heterosexism on college campuses* (pp. 43-55). New York, NY: Harrington Park Press.

Schilt, K. R., & Waszkiewicz, E. (2006). *"I feel so much more in my body": Challenging the significance of the penis in transsexual men's bodies*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal Quebec, Canada. Retrieved from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p104747_index.html

Schleifer, D. (2006). Make me feel mighty real: Gay female-to-male transgenderists negotiating sex, gender, and sexuality. *Sexualities, 9*(1), 57-75.

Scholinski, D. (1997). *The last time I wore a dress: A memoir*. New York, NY: Riverhead.

Schueler, L. A., Hoffman, J. A., & Peterson, E. (2009). Fostering safe, engaging campuses for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students. In S. R. Harper & S. J. Quaye (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (pp. 61-79). New York, NY: Routledge.

Schulman, M. (2013, January 9). Generation LGBTQIA. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/2001/2010/fashion/generation-lgbtqia.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2010&pagewanted=print

Sedgwick, E. (1990). *Epistemology of the closet*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College, Press.

Seidman, S. (1993). Identity and politics in a "postmodern" gay culture: Some historical and conceptual notes. In M. Warner (Ed.), *Fear of a queer planet: Queer politics and social theory* (pp. 105-142). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Seidman, S. (1995). Deconstructing queer theory or the under-theorization of the social and ethical. In L. Nicholson, & S. Seidman (Ed.), *Social postmodernism: Beyond identity politics* (pp. 116-141). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Sennett, J. (Ed.). (2006). *Self-organizing men*. www.homofactuspress.com: Homofactus Press.

Shapiro, E. (2004). "Trans"cending barriers: Transgender organizing on the Internet. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 16*(3/4), 165-179.

Shlasko, G. D. (2005). Queer (v.) pedagogy. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 38*, 123-134.

Sloop, J. M. (2004). *Disciplining gender: Rhetorics of sex identity in contemporary U.S. culture*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Spade, D. (2003). Resisting medicine, re/modeling gender. *Berkeley Women's Law Journal, 18*, 15-37.

Spade, D. (2008). Fighting to win. In M. B. Sycamore (Ed.), *That's revolting: Queer strategies for resisting assimilation* (rev. ed., pp. 47-53). Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull Press.

Spade, D. (2010). Be professional! *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender, 33*, 71-84.

Spade, D. (2011). *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of the law*. Brooklyn, NY: South End Press.

Spade, D., & Wahng, S. (2004). Transecting the academy. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 10*(2), 240-253.

Stewart, D. L., & Bridges, B. K. (2011). A demographic profile of multicultural student services. In D. L. Stewart (Ed.), *Multicultural student services on campus: Building bridges, re-visioning community* (pp. 38-60). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Stone, S. (1997). The empire strikes back: A posttranssexual manifesto. In N. M. K. Conboy & S. Stanbury (Eds.), *Writing on the body: Female embodiment and feminist theory* (pp. 337-359). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Stryker, S. (2008). *Transgender history*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.

Sullivan, N. (2003). *A critical introduction to queer theory*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Sullivan, N. (2008). The role of medicine in the (trans)formation of "wrong bodies". *Body & Society, 14*(1), 105-116.

Tatum, B. D. (1997). *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" And other conversations about race*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Taylor, E. (2010). Cisgender privilege: on the privileges of performing normative gender. In K. Bornstein & S. B. Bergman (Eds.), *Gender outlaws: The next generation* (pp. 269-273). Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.

Thompson, A. (2008). Resisting the "lone hero" stance. In M. Pollock (Ed.), *Everyday anti-racism: Getting real about race in school* (pp. 328-333). New York, NY: The New Press.

Tilsley, A. (2010, June 27). New policies accommodate transgender students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from: http://chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Rewrite-Rules-to/66046/

Troop, D. (2011, October 23). Women's university to reconsider hard line on transgender students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* [Online]. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/Womens-University-to/129490.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. (2011). *The handbook for campus safety and security reporting*, Washington, DC.

Valentine, D. (2004). The categories themselves. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,, 10*(2), 215-220.

Valentine, D. (2007). *Imagining transgender: An ethnography of a category*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Valerio, M. W. (2006). *The testosterone files: My hormonal and social transformation from female to male*. Emeryville, CA: Seal Press.

Vanderbosch, J. (1997). Notes from the working class. In S. Raffo (Ed.), *Queerly classed* (pp. 83-94). Boston, MA: South End Press.

Wagner, R. (2011). Embracing liberatory practice: Promoting men's development as a feminist act. In J. A. Laker & T. Davis, (Eds.), *Masculinities in higher education: Theoretcial and practical considerations* (pp. 210-223). New York, NY: Routledge.

Wakefield, J. C. (1992). Disorder as harmful dysfunction: A conceptual critique of DSM-III-R's definition of mental disorder. *Psychological Review, 99*(2), 232-242.

Warner, M. (1999). *The trouble with normal: Sex, politics, and the ethics of queer life*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Washington, J., & Evans, N. J. (1991). Becoming an ally. In N. J. Evans & V. A. Wall, (Eds.), *Beyond tolerance: gays, lesbians, and bisexuals on campus* (pp. 195-204). Washington, DC: American College Personnel Association.

Watters, J. K., & Biernacki, D. (1989). Target sampling: Options for the study of hidden populations. *Social Problems, 36*(4), 416-430.

Wentling, T., Windsor, E., Schilt, K., & Lucal, B. (2008). Teaching transgender. *Teaching Sociology, 36*, 49-57.

West, C., & Fenstemaker, S. (1995). Doing difference. *Gender & Society, 9*(1), 8-37.

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society, 1*(2), 125-151.

Whittle, S. (1998). The trans-cyberian mail way. *Social & Legal Studies, 7*(3), 389-408.

Wilchins, R. A. (1997). *Read my lips: Sexual subversion and the end of gender*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books.

Wilchins, R. (2002). A certain kind of freedom: Power and the truth of bodies—Four essays on gender by Riki Wilchins. In J. Nestle, C. Howell, & R. Wilchins (Eds.), *GenderQueer: Voices from beyond the sexual binary* (pp. 23-55). Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books.

Wilchins, R. (2004). *Queer theory, gender theory: An instant primer*. Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books.

Williams, C. C. (2006). The epistemology of cultural competence. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services, 87*(2), 209-220.

Wilson, K. K. (1997). Gender as an illness: Issues of psychiatric classification. Sixth annual International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP), Houston, Tx. Retrieved from http://www.gidreform.org/kwict197.html

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.