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# Developing a Model of Transmasculine Identity

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

DEVELOPING A MODEL OF TRANSMASCULINE IDENTITY

By

Nicole L. Saltzburg

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

June 2010

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
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DEVELOPING A MODEL OF TRANSMASCULINE IDENTITY

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Traditional psychotherapy with transgender clients has focused on helping gender dysphoric individuals assume an “opposite” gender role. However, recently, there have been calls for trans-positive therapy focusing on the exploration and affirmation of alternative gender identifications. The majority of the research on transgender identity has been conducted with male-to-female (MTF) identified, or transfeminine, individuals. Comparatively little attention has been given to the experience of female-to-male (FTM) identified, or transmasculine, individuals. The primary goal of this study was to explore constructs and identify underlying themes that transmasculine people use in constructing their gender identities in order to develop a structural model of transmasculine identity. Broadly speaking, results showed that transmasculine identity may be conceptualized on a continuum from an essentialist binary perspective to a constructivist non-binary perspective. This is reflected in the language the individual uses to self-identify - including identity labels, proper names and pronouns. Individuals define, experience, and embody transmasculine identities differently depending on a number of inter-related constructs including: (1) current stage of identity development and past transmasculine identity development events, (2) conceptions of masculinity and femininity, (3) context, and (4) sexuality. Further, if one of these constructs shifts it usually influences the others. Implications for theory, practice, and future research directions are discussed.

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## Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

### *Introduction to the Problem*

Korrell and Lorah (2007) state that many therapists will see a least one transgender client during their careers and even more will work with the family members of transgender individuals. Rachlin (2002) surveyed a sample of transgendered individuals about their experiences in psychotherapy. She found that the amount of experience practitioners had working with gender issues was related to a higher number of positive client changes and higher client satisfaction with the progress in areas of general personal growth and gender-related issues. Additionally, she reported that the transgendered individuals she surveyed appreciated therapists who took a flexible treatment approach and demonstrated respect for their gender identity. Carroll and Gilroy (2002) emphasize that treatment issues with this population no longer focus exclusively on helping "gender dysphoric" individuals assume either a "male" or "female" gender, but rather, exploring alternative gender identifications and options. They go on to say that this has serious implications for counseling education, and that educators and supervisors need to model and embrace a "trans positive" approach to counseling that celebrates and affirms people with nontraditional gender identities.

Numerous studies have shown that transgender people face barriers to healthcare and social services. Sperber, Landers, and Lawrence (2005) conducted focus groups with transgender individuals and found they encounter providers who refuse to treat them, who lack knowledge and training in transgender issues, who are unable to identify when gender issues are central or peripheral to mental health treatment, and who insensitively focus on gender issues when they are unrelated to the presenting problem (e.g., referring

to trans issues while treating a broken bone). A survey of transgender college students by Beemyn (2005) echoed similar findings and indicated that transgender students have an overall negative college experience because of individual and institutional oppression, such as violence, lack of sensitivity on the part of faculty and staff, and policy issues regarding housing and restrooms. Furthermore, Beemyn found that transgender students often felt the responsibility to educate the psychomedical professionals with whom they interacted and who pathologized them. Transgender people experience health concerns such as high risk for victimization and violence, HIV infection, and suicidality (Lombardi, Wichins, Priesing, & Malouf, 2001; Kenagy & Bostwick, 2005). These authors emphasize that the obstacles transgender people face cannot be separated from the environment in which they occur. In fact, societal risk factors such as gender-based discrimination and victimization are independently associated with attempted suicide in this population, separate from individual risk factors such as depression and substance abuse (Clements-Nolle, Marx, & Katz, 2006). The previously discussed research makes clear the importance of increasing provider awareness and implementing social change to reduce the marginalization of people who challenge and seek to redefine society's narrowly constructed gender norms. One way to do this is to promote understanding about the meaning of a transgender identity as it is experienced by trans individuals. Healthcare providers and mental health practitioners would likely be able to provide more sensitive interventions with this type of insight.

### *Linguistic Conventions*

Oral and written language is an important and necessary medium for communicating ideas. The language in the area of transgender studies is evolving, and

the descriptive terms that are coming out of the transgender community are constantly changing. Further complicating the matter is that researchers use inconsistent language to discuss gender diversity. Before embarking on a discussion of sex, gender, gender identity, and transgenderism, it is important to have an agreed-upon language base. In this section I will outline terms and concepts in an effort to minimize confusion and to make the discussion meaningful.

Devor's (1997) sociological study on female to male transsexuals outlines some relevant constructs to help frame the discussion. *Identity* refers to a person's embrace of sex, gender, or sexual categorizations as descriptive of themselves. *Attribution* refers to the categorizations made by others as descriptive of peoples' sexes, genders, and sexualities. These distinctions are necessary because there may be vast differences in the identities of individuals and the attributions that others make about them while they engage in gender expression and or transition. *Sex* refers only to the physical or biological status of persons as female, male, or intersexed. It is generally assigned at birth by doctors on the basis of external genitalia. *Sexuality* refers to patterns of sexual fantasies, desires, and practices of people. *Gender* is a social standard, usually based on the convincing performance of femininity and masculinity. People may enact a diverse range of behavior as women or girls, boys or men, or transgendered. *Gender styles* refers to culturally defined and socially prescribed behaviors and beliefs that characterize people as varying degrees of feminine or masculine. The distinction between sex, gender, and gender style is very important to this discussion as the default assumption in our society is that people who are assigned male are assumed to identify as men and employ a masculine gender style. The "opposite" trajectory is expected for people born

female, in that they are expected to identify as women and enact a feminine gender style. This is known as the binary system of gender, and is an either/or paradigm. When one begins to examine diverse gender identities, however, it becomes clear that this paradigm is very limiting.

Raj (2002) provides a very useful overview of the terminology needed for clinicians to understand and appreciate the diversity within the transgender community. *Transsexuals* (TS) live and pass as the opposite sex, before or after having attained hormonal, surgical, and legal sex reassignment. This process of sex reassignment is known as *transition*. People can transition from female to male (FTM) or male to female (MTF). *Cross dressers* (CD) dress in the clothing of the opposite gender for emotional satisfaction and/or erotic pleasure. They do not wish to permanently alter their biological sex and express little or no desire for hormones or *sexual reassignment surgery* (SRS). Frequently the desire to cross dress provides an outlet for these individuals to explore feelings and behaviors associated with the opposite gender. *Transgendered* (TG) is an umbrella term for all *transpeople*, or members of the trans community, particularly those individuals who identify on a gender identity continuum in between TSs and CDs. *Transgenderists* are individuals who live in role part or full-time as members of the opposite sex. Emotionally they need to maintain certain aspects relating to both their masculinity and femininity and are frequently interested in hormones (and occasionally cosmetic surgery), but not SRS. *Genderqueer* (GQ) individuals challenge societal gender norms and live in a way that questions gender assumptions. They believe in the choice to self-identify and that identities might change over time.



Korell and Lorah (2007) use *gender variance* (GV) as an umbrella term that identifies the spectrum of gender expression. They argue that, as conceptualization of gender has moved beyond being a dichotomy, the continuum schema helps us to visualize the breadth of gender possibilities. Synonymously, Cromwell (1999) suggests the term *gender diversity* to convey non-deviance and de-stigmatization.

### *Historical Evolution of the Construct of Gender*

Before one can embark on a discussion of transgender identity, one must first understand the evolution of gender as we perceive it in society today. The concept of gender evolved out of the understanding of sex, so an examination of the construct of sex seems to be a reasonable place to begin this discussion. Meyerowitz (2002) explains how the concept of sex has changed throughout the 20th century. In the early part of the 1900's sex was thought to signify not only male and female bodies, but also traits considered to embody masculinity and femininity. At this point in time, in an effort to delineate components of sex, researchers tried to sort sex characteristics. They separated primary sexual features such as the genitals and gonads from secondary features such as breasts, beards, and other physical differences that usually appeared after puberty. Then there were the tertiary features such as erotic drives which differed from the fourth order features of traits, mannerisms, and even occupations and clothing. Most observers in that day adhered to the idea of biological determinism. They believed that the desires and practices known as masculine and feminine came from the same biological processes that divided female and male and they all converged within the broad ranging concept "sex."

According to Meyerowitz (2002), by the mid-1900's, this concept began to unravel. The term "sex roles" was used to describe the culturally constructed behaviors

expected of men and women. The term "sexual behavior" was used to explain the erotic practices of individuals. The "sex" of the body no longer provided adequate explanation of either sex roles or sexual behavior. By the end of the 20th century, the earlier understanding of sex had been broken up into three analytically distinct but culturally intertwined entities: sex, gender identity, and sexual identity.

Although biological sex, gender, and sexual identity are three separate entities analyzed and examined in academic literature, mainstream Western society still views gender (a psychological construct) as a function of sex (a biological construct). Kessler and McKenna (2006) described gender attribution as a process through which we assign a gender to every person with whom we interact. They understand gender to be socially constructed and produced through interactions with others rather than being a "natural" quality of the physical body. They found that for the most part, gender attribution is genital attribution and genital attribution is essentially penis attribution. They elaborate on this by describing a categorizing schema which is to "see someone as female only when you cannot see them as male." That is, in order for a female gender attribution to be made, there must be an absence of anything which can be construed as a male only characteristic. Wilchins (2004) echoes this idea saying that "with gender, we create the meaning of woman by excluding everything that is non-woman, and vice versa for man. We form idealized templates for what is perfectly masculine or perfectly feminine, by excluding whatever doesn't fit: the queer, the different, the mixed... because the meaning of man depends on excluding whatever is not man (i.e., what is woman), it is permanently unstable, always operating under tension and the threat of these exclusions." (p.36)

### *The Evolution of the Transgender Model*

Transgenderism is not a modern phenomenon and there is evidence of people throughout history having lived their lives in a cross-gendered manner (Feinberg, 1996). The modern concept of transgenderism began with Harry Benjamin's (1966) development of the medical-psychological model of transsexualism. In his model, transsexuals were men and women who were psychologically and socially a poor fit in their assigned sex, and who wished to belong to the other sex. He believed that a portion of these individuals could be provided relief through medical treatment, including hormone administration and sexual reassignment surgery (SRS), which enabled them to live as members of the non-natal sex. This model was primarily a medical one, and held transsexualism as a form of mental illness. Denny (2004) outlined the advantages and disadvantages of Benjamin's model. The advantages included: providing a theoretical framework for sex reassignment, framing transsexuality as a medical problem rather than a moral problem, and giving professionals a reason for treating and studying gender diverse persons. The disadvantages of the transsexual model included: treatment based on the notion that there were two and only two genders, leaving no space for a middle ground as well as the rigid restrictions placed on candidates for SRS. In order to qualify for treatment those who sought SRS had to report that their gender dysphoria manifested at a young age, that they had a history of cross gender play in childhood, that their sexual attraction was exclusively to the same biological sex (which would make them heterosexual after SRS), and that they were successfully able to pass as a member of the desired sex (Cole et.al., 2000). Because of these restrictions, transsexuals were often forced to lie in order to obtain treatment and were punished for telling the truth.

Moreover, they had to claim an identity that by definition was a mental illness and something to be cured.

While Benjamin's model had its flaws, it did provide a medical rationale for procedures to alleviate the suffering of transsexuals. It also laid the groundwork for the transgender model, which came about in the 1990s and explained transsexualism and other forms of gender variance as natural forms of human variability (Denny, 2004). This model changed the focus of pathology from the gender diverse individual to the societal system of gender. It views sex reassignment as one of the variety of acceptable choices for transsexual individuals and recognizes the need and the right of non-transsexual transgendered people to make similar choices regarding components of traditional sex reassignment, such as hormone use or surgical intervention. This is important because, as Raj (2002) explained, people who do not identify as transsexuals but do identify as transgenderists may desire hormonal treatment which would not be available to them under the traditional transsexual model. The traditional transsexual model is disempowering for people who identify as transgender or genderqueer. It does not allow them a say in what is right for them and their gender expression. In this paradigm, the psychomedical community has all the power as gatekeeper.

Highlighting the importance of access to hormonal treatment, in a survey of TS and TG FTMs, the self-identifying transgenderists who received hormone therapy reported significantly higher quality of life scores than those who did not (Newfield, Hart, Dibble, & Kohler, 2006). The authors suggest that providing hormone therapy to the FTM transgender community, when they request it, will lead to a higher quality of life. Operating from the transgender model loosens the rigid restrictions that were in

place in the transsexual model. However, Denny (2004) points out one major disadvantage to the transgender model is that it renders transsexuals invisible and goes on to say that since transsexuals identify strongly with the non-natal sex, they are likely uncomfortable in the middle spaces created by the transgender model.

### *Models of Transsexual and Transgender Identity Development*

Researchers have proposed several models of transsexual and transgender identity development. Identity models are typically either stage models or process models. Stage models and process models differ in several respects. Stage models are based on norms, or typical trajectories, have a beginning and an end, or function in a cyclical nature. They suggest that identity development is a progression based upon completing or moving through one stage to get to subsequent stages. One criticism of stage models is that they imply that someone is less than fully developed in their identity if they do not move through all of the stages. Process models are non-linear and have no beginning or end. Rather, they imply an ongoing process of meaning-making through interactions with others.

Mason-Schrock's (1996) model focuses on the process by which transsexuals engage in narrative constructions of their "true selves." This model is a process model that focuses on identity formation through interactions with others. Mason-Schrock's writing is based on observations he made while attending a transgender support group, as well as interviews he conducted with 10 transsexuals from the group (9 MTFs and 1 FTM). He focused on the interactions between self-narratives and group affirmation, arguing that transsexuals learned to tell new (different) stories about themselves (thus creating a differently gendered "true self") through the storytelling tools within the

transgender community. The process entailed reinterpretation of certain past events as evidence of transsexuality. The remaking of the self began with stories of childhood events which typically focused on (1) actual or fantasized cross-dressing experiences central to the MTFs' stories (but not the FTM's), (2) getting caught cross-dressing, and (3) sports participation. For instance, the group members that Mason-Schrock observed told stories of cross-dressing in their youth, expressing that it felt "good," "natural," or "the way it should be." They also told stories of getting caught cross dressing and being given the message that this was an unacceptable behavior, leading to feelings of shame and a desire to squelch or deny the development of differently gendered "true selves." Another common theme in the stories of the MTF participants was their ineptitude in sports participation, a signifier of masculinity in our society, while the opposite experience was true for the FTM identified participant who demonstrated athletic prowess. The remaking of the self also involved an explaining away of prior involvement in activities that signified their unwanted gender identity. Mason-Schrock (1996) described these as "stories of denial" which focused on experiences of: (1) self distractions, (2) masculinity/femininity pursuits, and (3) self mislabeling. Finally, he argued that the transgender community functions in four key ways to help individuals fashion their self narratives through interaction: (1) modeling, (2) guiding, (3) affirming, and (4) tactful blindness (i.e., affirmation through not questioning the validity or logical coherence of individuals' self-narratives).

Devor (2004) has proposed a 14 stage model of transsexual identity formation based on the concepts of witnessing and mirroring. In this model, witnessing entails having others see you as you see yourself. Mirroring means seeing oneself in the eyes of

others like oneself, or knowing that people who we think are like us also perceive us to be like them. These concepts overlap with those discussed previously by Wilchins (2004) and Mason-Schrock (1996). Devor developed the 14 stages through years of formal and informal contact with transsexual and transgendered individuals and presents this model with the caveat that people will pass through the stages differently and not necessarily in a linear fashion.

In Devor's (2004) model, the first stage is *abiding anxiety*, which involves unfocused gender and sex discomfort along with a preference for other gender activities and companionship. The next stage, *identity confusion about originally assigned gender and sex*, entails first doubts about suitability of originally assigned gender and sex and reactive gender and sex conforming activities. In the third stage, *identity comparisons about originally assigned gender and sex*, individuals seek and weigh alternative gender identities and experiment with alternative gender consistent identities. The fourth stage, *discovery of transsexualism or transgenderism*, involves learning that transsexualism or transgenderism exists. This knowledge is generally acquired through accidental contact with information about transsexualism or transgenderism. The fifth stage is *identity confusion about transsexualism or transgenderism*, during which the first doubts about authenticity of one's own transsexualism or transgenderism appear. Individuals in this stage typically seek out more information about transsexualism or transgenderism. In the sixth stage, *identity comparisons about transsexualism or transgenderism*, individuals test transsexual or transgender identity using a transsexual or transgender reference group. They start to de-identify with their originally assigned sex and gender and identify as transsexed or transgender. During the seventh stage, *tolerance of transsexual*

*or transgender identity*, individuals identify as probably transsexual or transgender and increasingly de-identify with their originally assigned gender and sex. The eighth stage, *delay before acceptance of transsexual or transgender identity*, involves waiting for changed circumstances and looking for confirmation of transsexual or transgender identity. Individuals in this stage typically seek out even more information about transsexualism and transgenderism, as well as reality test in intimate relationships. The ninth stage, *acceptance of transsexual or transgender identity*, is when an individual's transsexual or transgender identity is established and shared with significant others. *Delay before transition* is the tenth stage. This is the stage in which transsexual identity deepens and there is a final de-identification with the original gender and sex. Individuals in this stage are learning how to transition, saving money, and organizing support systems. The 11<sup>th</sup> stage is *transition*, where individuals change genders and sexes. The 12<sup>th</sup> stage is *acceptance of post-transition gender and sex identities*. At this stage the individual's post-transition identity is established and they are living successfully in this identity. The 13<sup>th</sup> stage is *integration*, where transsexuality is mostly invisible. The goal of this stage is stigma management and identity integration. The 14<sup>th</sup> and final stage of Devor's model is *pride*. In this stage, the individual is openly transsexed and engages in transsexual advocacy.

Lev (2004) proposed a developmental stage model of transgender identity development called transgender emergence. The six stage process is meant to outline a trajectory of experiences for transgendered individuals coming to terms with gender variance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first stage is *awareness*. In this stage, an internal sense of feeling different is coming in to consciousness. The second stage is *seeking*



*information and reaching out.* During this stage gender diverse people seek to gain education and support about transgenderism. The third stage is *disclosure to significant others*, which involves disclosing transgenderism to spouses, partners, family members, and friends. The fourth stage is *exploration of identity and self labeling* in which the individual seeks to articulate and become comfortable with one's gendered identity. The fifth stage is *transition issues and possible body modification.* It involves exploring options for transition regarding identity presentation and body modification. During the final stage, *integration*, the gender diverse person is able to integrate and synthesize their transgender identity.

#### *Transgender Identity– Either/or Versus Both/neither*

Boswell (1998) states that transsexuals, cross-dressers (usually heterosexual), and drag kings and queens – the three recognizable components of the transgender community through the 1990s reinforce the myth that there are only two genders. She makes the argument that transgendered people have been manifesting as their assumed opposite, motivated by the need to assimilate, rather than truly becoming who they are. She points out that once the concept of gender is freed from cultural and biological expectations of sex, the terms “masculine” and “feminine” lose their meaning.

Roen (2002) discusses the implications of the “either/or” versus “both/neither” positions that are the center of much debate within the transgender community. The assumption of the first position is that transsexuals desire to live as the opposite of their natal sex (i.e., passing), while the assumption of the latter position refers to a transgender position of refusing to fit within the categories of woman and man (i.e., crossing). The author highlights risks involved in both positions. For instance, passing may force one to

hide significant portions of his/her life history, and may also deny other transpeople role models, making them feel isolated. Crossing can risk employment stability, family relationships, personal safety, and lead to exclusion. Roen explains that while academic and activist representations of transgenderism favor crossing rather than passing, transgender communities commonly operate in the opposite direction, ostracizing those who do not concern themselves with passing. Crossing is thought of as a radical act, as it defies the gender binary and challenges our assumptions about gender. Passing is an act that reinforces the gender binary, and because of this it is the path of least resistance. This is not to imply that passing is easy, necessary, or even desirable to some. However, it explains why many transgender communities favor passing, as it allows transpeople to assimilate in a way that is more comfortable for them and for those with whom they interact. A lot of discomfort arises when people's organizing schemas (in this case, the idea that there are two and only two genders) are being challenged. It is important to understand the implications of these competing discourses and how they play into the lives and actions of transpeople. Roen found that many of the participants in her study flexibly utilized the competing discourses of crossing and passing in different ways in different contexts. For example, some chose to selectively come out while others held a position of perceiving themselves in a both/neither manner while presenting to others in an either/or manner.

Gange, Tewksbury, and McGaughey (1997) interviewed a sample of masculine to feminine individuals about their coming out processes as well as their public and private management of sex, gender, and sexual identities. Their sample consisted primarily of MTF transsexuals, as well as cross-dressers. A small portion of their sample identified as

“gender radicals” (people who cross-dressed or express themselves in ways to intentionally challenge the existing system of gender). Participants were categorized based on their self-identifications. There were significant differences among the specific transgender identities. Among the majority of transsexuals and cross-dressers in the sample, there was an overwhelming desire to pass as women. In contrast, the gender radicals’ goal was to challenge dominant conceptualizations of gender and create new possibilities. For them, presenting a convincing appearance as a woman was secondary, if important at all.

#### *FTMs and Transmasculine Identities*

Benjamin’s (1966) book *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, which ushered in the start of trans-related inquiry, devoted only one chapter to FTM transsexuals. He observed that the frequency of a FTM presentation was much lower than that of an MTF presentation in his practice, and reported a ratio of between 1:6 and 1:8. However, he recognized that this number was probably not a reliable estimate of the true proportion of FTMs to MTFs, and thought an estimate of 1:3 based on the reports of other professionals was more realistic. Pauly (1974) reported an estimate of 1:2 based on an analysis of published case studies. In the only known large scale demographic study of the US transgender population (Rosser, Oakes, Bockting, & Miner, 2007) participation by sex and transgender type could not be used to provide estimates of the size of these subgroups nationally, due to the fact that recruitment was stratified by type of transgender identity. Regardless of the numbers, it is important to note that the majority of the scholarly inquiry in the transgender community has been done with MTFs. Comparatively little attention has been given to the experience of FTMs (Green, 2005).

Cromwell (1999) explains four levels of marginalization of FTMs and transmen. First, they are made invisible by virtue of being born in female bodies and assigned to the female sex, regarded as “truly” or “really” women within anthropological, historical, medical, and psychological discourses. Second, medical and popular discourses regard FTMs and transmen as pathological women. Third, many female bodied transpeople become invisible by living as men, that is, they become invisible as transgendered people and visible as men. Fourth, FTMs and transmen who are discovered as such risk being treated as artificial and seen as women, being made invisible.

Several qualitative sociological studies have been published on FTM transsexual identities. Devor’s (1997) study is seminal in that it is the first in-depth exploration of FTM transsexuals’ experiences with family, peers, school, physical health, relationships, gender issues, transsexual identity development, sex and sexuality. Devor conducted interviews with 45 FTMs and found a good deal of diversity within this group, particularly in regards to their gender identities. For instance, a third of the participants did not find their experience of themselves adequately represented within the gender binary. Only half the participants who were living as men at the time of their interviews unequivocally pronounced themselves to be men or male. Many also spoke of blending masculine and feminine characteristics. Rubin (2002) found that bodies, especially secondary sex characteristics, are a crucial element of personal identity formation and perception for transmen - more so than other factors such as behaviors, personal styles, and sexual preferences. Cromwell (1999) examined whether female bodied transpeople (FTMs) conformed to the picture painted of them in the medical transsexual model - that of a homogenous group who were androgynous, heterosexual (attracted to femme

women), and obsessed with having penises. He found these stereotypes did not speak to the experience of many of his participants, and concluded FTMs were a much more diverse group than the discourse portrayed.

Green (2005) investigated the meaning of masculinity among a small group of transmen and non-transmen (i.e., individuals born with male bodies who identify as men) and found many similarities in the perceptions of those he informally interviewed. He recognizes at the onset of his writing that this was not a scientific inquiry, and that his sample is skewed as the non-transmen he interviewed had familiarity with aspects of gender variance, but he offers his findings as anecdotal information to further discussion. He found that both transmen and non-transmen did not think maleness and masculinity were the same thing, nor did they think masculinity depended on having a male body. He found that the non-transmen and a minority of the transmen he interviewed came to know themselves as masculine from an internal sense of feeling “different from girls or women,” while a majority of the transmen he spoke to came to know themselves as masculine because others told them they were. However, he found upon further probing that non-transmen had received messages that they were different from girls or women, by virtue of their male bodies, so that such an assumption was natural. Most of the individuals he interviewed indicated that masculinity is determined by actions or behaviors and expressed through cultural stereotypes of actions appropriate for people with male bodies. Green found the greatest difference between transmen’s and non-transmen’s responses to the inquiry of what it means to be masculine or to have masculinity. Non-transmen saw masculinity as an opposite and complementary psychic destiny to femininity. Alternatively, transmen were conscious of ways in which

masculinity is interpreted as power, how it confers privilege, and simultaneously places them at risk (of discovery and/or violence that men direct towards other men).

The works of Devor (1997), Cromwell (1999), and Rubin (2002) highlight the breadth of diverse identities within the transmasculine community, and the surface has just been scratched. Hansbury (2005) introduced a taxonomy of transmasculine identities based on his own experience as a self-identified transman and observer of the community. He arranged these identities on a continuum from a male-identified/essentialist position (Woodworkers) to a more nonbinary/constructivist perspective (Genderqueers), with Transmen in the middle of the transmasculine continuum. He describes the Woodworkers as “your run-of-the-mill, Joe-six-pack, female-to-male transsexuals” who live as men, are out to very few people, and keep their female histories hidden. He notes that they tend to be the elders in the FTM community and attributes this pre-genderstudies climate that preceded the 1990s, when blending into the woodwork was the primary goal of sexual reassignment. The Transman is someone who presents to the world as a man, but unlike the Woodworker, is more likely to let some portion of the world know about his transsexuality and female past and celebrate it to an extent. According to Hansbury, the Transman’s dilemma is “to be or not be invisible.” The Genderqueer identity, Hansbury argues, defies classification – for those who go “No-Ho” (i.e., do not use hormones), physically, there is no difference between a “genderqueer boi” and a “butch dyke” – it is a matter of self-interpretation and definition. The Genderqueer has an identity that is unrecognizable in the gender binary. Hansbury’s (2005) taxonomy is a starting point from which to begin a discussion on transmasculine identities outside of the narrow confines of the transsexual paradigm.

*Trans-positive Models of Psychotherapy*

In her book of therapeutic guidelines for working with transgender people and their families, Lev (2004) emphasizes the importance of de-pathologizing transgender clients and views gender variance as a normal and potentially healthy variation of human expression. She recognizes that the distress many transgender people experience around their gender issues, rather than being characteristic of the individuals themselves, is attributable to their struggles to adapt and cope with a society that does not make space for them. This viewpoint is essential for practitioners to conduct trans-positive counseling.

Raj (2002) outlines a proposed model of trans-positive therapy that considers the needs of both gender dysphoric (GD) and gender variant (GV) clients. He recognizes that these populations within the transgender community often have different therapeutic needs and goals. He advocates for the use of a “client directed/collaborative, self-determination, medical management model” as most applicable for GD clients (who desire/require gender-related medical intervention). For GV clients (who do not desire/require gender-related medical intervention) he suggests the use of a “client directed/collaborative, de-medicalized, self-determination, social diversity model.” Regardless of clients’ presentations, the crux of a trans-positive therapeutic stance centers on the facilitation of clients’ rights to self-determination. Raj suggests that the therapist should affirm and/or validate any form of gender or sexual variance expressed by clients and use sensitive and affirming language to empower clients. He also cautions against clinicians operating from a strictly essentialist or binary-gendered perspective as this can exclude sensitive treatment of transgenderists who might agree with a non-binary or

constructivist view, but wish to partially modify their bodies through hormonal and/or surgical intervention without “going all the way” as transsexuals (TS) generally prefer to do.

*The Purpose of this Study – Articulating Transsubjectivities*

Elkins and King (1997) discuss the limitations for social scientists of the medical categories of transsexualism, transvestism, and gender dysphoria. These categories assume pathology, limit focus to a narrow range of cross-dressing/sex-changing phenomena, and hide from view all those who are not seen as problematic or experiencing distress. As some of the previously discussed studies demonstrate, gender variance is beyond the transsexual model. There are many types of gender diverse people and many ways to express a trans identity (Green, 2004; Lev, 2004; Gange, Tewksbury, & McGaughey, 1997). Denny and Roberts (1997) reported that 25% of their sample of transgender individuals self-identified as something other than transsexual, transgenderist, or crossdresser.

Wilchins (2004) contends that gender diverse people are denied the words with which to tell their stories and that they are unable to communicate something as basic as “this is who I am, this is how I see myself, and this is how I want you to see me.” (p 39) Cromwell (1999) points out that the dominant discourses on transsubjectivity are not truly about transpeople, but rather the beliefs of medical-psychological practitioners concerning what it is to be male, female, trans, neither/nor as well as both/and. He emphasizes the importance of transpeople articulating their own transsubjectivities in order to inform a new discourse.



Some research in the area of transmasculine identity has already been undertaken (Cromwell; 1999, Devor, 1997; Rubin, 2002). These were all qualitative studies that further emphasized the idea that there is more diversity with respect to gender identity within the FTM community than is represented within the psychomedical discourse. They also indicated that while “FTM transsexual” is an identity that many on the transmasculine spectrum claim, it is one which does not fit everyone with a transmasculine identity. It is this idea that is the motivation for this study. I would like to explore how people along the transmasculine spectrum experience and describe their transgender identities. Specifically, what are the identifiable commonalities in the way members of the transmasculine community construct their gender identities?

Docter and Fleming (2001) sought, through factor analysis, to identify the components of transgenderism. Their sample consisted only of people on the transfeminine spectrum (self-identified male-to-female transsexuals and cross-dressers). They did not find a single overarching variable to account for transgender cognition and behavior, and concluded that it should be conceptualized as complex and multidimensional. They determined that transgender cognition and behavior seem constructed upon different combinations of the same variables for transsexuals and cross-dressers. They found five factors representing the most salient dimensions of transgenderism: transgender identity, transgender role, transgender sexual arousal, androallure, and pleasure. Transgender identity is interpreted as one’s view of himself/herself relative to masculine or feminine characteristics. High scores on this scale indicate less congruence between one’s biological sex and one’s gender identity while low scores indicate greater congruence. Transgender role measures social behavior

with high scores indicating extensive transgender role conduct and low scores indicating such behavior is infrequent or absent. Transgender sexual arousal is indicative of the relationship between transgender behavior and sexual arousal, where high scores indicate a strong relationship between transgender behavior and sexual arousal, and low scores indicate the opposite. Androallure is indicative of the intensity of erotic affection or attraction between a transgendered person and a male. Pleasure is associated with nonsexual enjoyment through the transgender experience. Docter and Fleming's findings cannot be applied to transmasculine individuals, as there were none included in their sample. No such inquiry has been done with this population.

Considering Cromwell's (1999) call for transpeople to articulate their subjectivities, the methodology for this study is an especially important consideration. Darcy, Lee, and Tracey (2004) highlight the differences between normative, idiographic, and idiopathic methodologies and explain the utility of idiographic and idiopathic methods in studying subjective phenomenon. Normative approaches have a group focus and examine construct amount differences. The main purpose of normative approaches is to examine how a group varies along a common conceptualization of a phenomenon. For instance, Docter and Fleming (2001) identified five components of transgenderism (transgender identity, transgender role, sexual arousal, androallure, and pleasure) and compared MTF transsexuals and cross dressers on those dimensions. That is, there was a comparison of subgroup differences on the common construct of transgenderism. Individual comparisons can also be made in normative approaches; however, these differences are based on amount or mean differences. Docter and Fleming found that scale score means for cross dressers and transsexuals differed significantly across the five

variables, and they also found range of overlap on each of the scales. In the normative approach, the researcher imposes a common structure, assuming that participants are thinking about the construct in the same way. If the participants do not think about the construct in the way the researcher prescribes, then their scores along a normative measure of the construct may not be valid. So if some of the participants of Docter and Fleming's study viewed their transgender identity in terms of behavior rather than private experiential attributes, the validity of their scores would be questionable. The normative approach has several advantages, namely the ability to generalize, compare, and develop normative principles. A major disadvantage to the normative approach is that it reveals little of the individual's own construal of the construct. The subjective experience individuals have of the construct is lost.

Idiographic approaches, which were employed in this study, have an individual focus and examine construct type differences. That is, they provide information on how individuals uniquely construe the world (Darcy, Lee, & Tracey, 2004; Goodyear, Tracey, Claiborn, Lichtenberg, & Wampold, 2005). In this methodology, a unique set of constructs is generated by each individual, so there is no comparative aspect (except of individuals to themselves on their understanding of a construct). The advantage to this approach is that it captures the subjective reality of the individual. There are some disadvantages to this method as well, as it is unable to generalize or directly compare. However, it is possible to make limited comparisons which are used as bases for hypothesis generation and further inquiry. If Docter and Fleming (2001) were to have utilized an idiographic exploration, their question instead would be: how do transsexuals and cross dressers conceptualize transgenderism? They then would not have imposed the

common structure of the five components on each of the participants, but instead would have allowed the participants to generate their own conceptualization.

The use of idiographic methodology is well suited for this study for several reasons. An idiographic approach is based on the constructivist assumption that people construe things differently. Members of this community were born with female bodies but do not identify as girls or women. However, they may or may not identify as men, the only available alternative within the gender binary (Devor, 1997; Hansbury, 2005). Idiographic data collection will allow participants to articulate their own subjective experiences and to define the construct of transmasculine gender identity as they understand it, rather than a structure being imposed by the researcher.

Ponterotto (2002, 2005) outlines several paradigms researchers can use to frame their studies and he encourages scholars to “locate” their work based on their beliefs and assumptions about ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the relationship between the knower and the seeker), axiology (the role and place of values in the research process), rhetorical structure (the presentation and language of the research), and methodology (the process and procedures of the research). He explains that many quantitative studies rely on positivist/postpositivist paradigms. These paradigms operate from both a nomothetic and etic perspective. That is, they examine phenomenon in its application to people generally, and seek to uncover behavior patterns that have a normative base. In this approach, the researcher takes a detached, objective role. Constructivism is an alternative to the positivist/postpositivist paradigm and is often utilized in qualitative research. This paradigm employs an idiographic and emic perspective. That is, it seeks to understand an individual as a unique and complex entity

existing in a sociocultural context. The goal of researchers utilizing this paradigm is to understand the lived experiences of those who experience a phenomenon day-to-day. This approach holds that meaning can be brought to the surface through deep reflection that can be stimulated through interactive dialogue between the researcher and the participant (the seeker and the knower). To that end the researcher takes an active role in engaging participants and findings are literally co-constructed through a process of dialogue and interpretation.

Recently, the field of Counseling Psychology has called for more research to be conducted utilizing qualitative methods to clarify and understand complexities of the human experience (Hill et al., 2005; Polkinghorne, 2005; Ponterotto, 2002; 2005). Qualitative data focus on naturally occurring events in natural settings, are rich in descriptiveness, are well-suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes and structures in their lives (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Ponterotto (2002) described the applicability of constructivist qualitative framework to multicultural psychology as it empowers research participants to be co-investigators in the study. Constructivist approaches cast the researcher in role of the co-investigator and reporter rather than that of the “expert” scientist. Furthermore, the lived experiences of participants are captured in their own words, rather than categorized and quantified on pre-established quantitative scales. This is an important consideration in light of Cromwell’s (1999) call for transpeople to articulate their subjectivities about what their gender identities mean to them.

As mentioned previously, the transsexual model limits possibilities for gender identity and expression, reinforcing a strict binary perspective. Coupled with a relative

lack of information on the transmasculine experience, recent calls for trans-positive therapy that focuses on the exploration and affirmation of alternative gender identifications and options outside the gender binary (Raj, 2002; Carroll & Gilroy, 2002) necessitate further understanding of a model of transmasculine identity. Since all of us (including therapists) are socialized within the confines of the gender binary, the generation of such a model could introduce or clarify alternative gender options of which we are unaware due to our socialization and biases. This could help therapists to communicate better with transpeople, and hopefully, be more effective with this population. This model may also be helpful to share or use with transmasculine-identified clients, to shed light on common themes, so there is more of an understanding of shared versus individual experiences with respect to this population.

### *Research Questions*

The primary goal of this study was to discover how transmasculine individuals think about and conceptualize their gender identity. The focus was on exploring and identifying the underlying themes they use in constructing their gender identity, by uncovering commonalities in their experiences. Identifying both commonalities and uniqueness is the first step in building a model of transmasculine identity.

Transmasculine-identified individuals' experiences, in their own words, will serve as the basis for building this model. The question this study sought to answer was: What are the underlying themes transmasculine people use in describing their gender identities? The researcher is interested in learning more about how people self-identify, and what the

terminology they use to describe their identity means (and does not mean) to them. Also of interest is how they convey their identity to others, and how they see themselves in relation to others.

## Chapter Two: Method

### *Consensual Qualitative Research*

Hill et al (2005) reviewed 27 studies that utilized consensual qualitative research (CQR) and determined this methodology is well suited for conducting in-depth studies of the inner experiences of individuals. They stated that it is especially useful for studying events that are hidden from public view, have not been studied previously, or for which no measures have been created. As mentioned in the literature review, there is a dearth of information on the transmasculine experience. There have been a few qualitative studies examining the experiences of FTM-identified individuals (Cromwell; 1999, Devor, 1997; Rubin, 2002) and these studies shed light on some of the limits of the gender binary in locating transmasculine identities discussed by Hansbury (2005). Additionally, transmasculine identified individuals may or may not publicly proclaim their identities. Lastly, to the best of my knowledge, there is no measure available to assess transmasculine identity.

Hill, Thompson, and Nutt Williams (1997) introduced CQR as a method of qualitative inquiry and analysis which incorporates elements of several prominent qualitative approaches including: grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), phenomenological (Giorgi, 1970, 1985), and comprehensive process analysis (Elliott, 1989, 1993). Briefly, the CQR method utilizes “open-ended questions in semi-structured data collection techniques (typically interviews), which allow for the collection of consistent data across individuals as well as a more in-depth examination of individual experiences” (Hill et al., 2005, p. 196). This method incorporates the use of several judges that come to a consensus about the research findings, which, assists in limiting the imposition of biases by the primary investigator (Hill et al., 2005).



Hill et al. (2005) locate CQR's philosophical stance as predominantly constructivist with some postpositivist elements. In terms of ontology, that is, the assumption about the nature of reality, it is constructivist. This methodology holds that people construct their own realities and there are multiple equally valid versions of "the truth." The goal of CQR is to uncover commonalities of individual experiences among participants, which then lead to a better understanding of the group experience of a particular phenomenon. The epistemology of CQR is constructivist with elements of postpositivism. It is constructivist in that the researcher and participants have mutual influence on each other, engaging in an interactive dialogue to co-construct findings. The researcher uses a semi-structured interview protocol across participants, to obtain consistent areas of information which is postpositivist. In regards to axiology, CQR is between constructivism and postpositivism. A discussion of researcher biases and their impact on the analysis and interpretation on data is undertaken to prevent them from unduly influencing the results. Researchers attempt to faithfully represent how participants describe their experiences, rather than interpreting those experiences based on the researchers' view of the world. The rhetorical structure of CQR is postpositivist in that the participants' words are summarized and the data are reported in the third person.

### *Participants*

Hill et al., (1997) suggest the researcher recruit participants who have significant experience with the phenomenon being studied, in this case transmasculine identity. Hill et al., (1997) also encourage researchers to consider recency of experience when selecting participants as memory for events can be distorted over time. However, the issue of recency was not relevant for this study since identity development does not have a

discrete beginning and end, rather it is a dynamic event. Therefore no considerations for recency were imposed when recruiting this sample. The call for participants (Appendix A) requested volunteers over the age of 18 and who were “born female but whose gender identity is on the transmasculine spectrum (i.e. does not identify as woman or girl)” to participate in a research study meant to “understand diverse gender identities and to develop a model of transmasculine identity.” Calls for participants were posted on a number of internet groups and list serves of interest to the transmasculine community. In addition, transmasculine-identified individuals personally known to the investigator were contacted via email and invited to participate, and were asked to forward the request to anyone else who might fit the inclusion criteria. Potential participants were offered a \$20 gift card for completing the interviews.

Forty-eight people responded to the initial call for participants. They were emailed by the investigator to obtain contact information and informed that interviewing would occur in rounds over the course of several months. They were provided with information describing the study in more detail, as well as the interview protocol and demographic questionnaire. Hill et al (1997) suggest that providing interviewees with questions ahead of time can give them an opportunity to think about their experiences and prepare their answers, which may be important when studying difficult topics where answers are not readily available. Potential participants were also asked to answer a screening question that requested they indicate the gender terminology that best described them (Appendix B).

Twenty-three people agreed to be contacted for interviews and responded to the screening question. The purpose of this question was to obtain a sample of individuals

who self-identify along each point of the transmasculine spectrum: FTM transsexual (n=4), transman (n= 5), and genderqueer (n = 5) proposed by Hansbury (2005). Additional choices included “man” (n= 2) or “none of the above – please explain/specify (n=7). This terminology represents a range from the essentialist/binary perspective to the constructivist/non-binary perspective. Hill et al., (1997), “...recommend including at least 8 to 15 participants in order to have a large enough sample so that researchers can determine whether findings apply to several people or are just representative of one or two people (p. 532).” The investigator attempted to reach saturation in the sample by randomly selecting participants in rounds based on their answer to the screening question until there was overlap in the transmasculine identities represented in the sample as well as overlap in the participants’ descriptions and experiences of these identities. After 13 people were interviewed, very little new information was presented. All of the participants who endorsed using multiple and/or “none of the above” terminology were interviewed and those who endorsed utilizing just one of the identities proposed by Hansbury (2005) were interviewed in rounds until there was overlap in the themes discussed. This allows for a heterogeneous sample in terms of claiming a transmasculine identity, but gives the researcher the ability to conduct analysis on a subgroup level. The final sample consisted of 15 individuals who identified along the transmasculine spectrum. They ranged in age from 24-46 years (mean=31.8). Fourteen identified as White and one identified as White and Native American. They reported coming from a variety of SES backgrounds, with annual income as follows: <\$20,000 (n=4); \$20,000-\$35,000 (n=5); \$35,000-\$50,000 (n=4); \$50,000-65,000 (n=2). Among participants who had medically transitioned, the time since transition ranged from <1-10 years

(mean=4.0). Educationally, 2 reported attending some college, 5 reported obtaining a college degree, and 8 reported obtaining an advanced degree. The majority of participants live in urban environments (n=8), while others live in suburban (n=5) and rural environments (n=2). A table showing the demographic information for each of the participants can be found in Appendix C.

### *Procedure*

*Informed consent.* Prior to beginning the interview, participants were informed that all information provided would remain confidential (see Appendix D). They were told that their data would not be paired with their name. Participants' rights and the consent form were kept separate from the rest of their data. All data were stored in a locked filing cabinet at the primary investigator's office and stored electronically on a password protected computer. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and if they agreed to participate, they could withdraw their consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

*Data collection.* Participants were asked to take part in 2 semi-structured telephone interviews with the primary investigator. Each initial interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and follow up interviews lasted approximately 10-20 minutes. There were 15 participants and one could not be reached for a follow-up interview, therefore, a total of 29 interviews were conducted. Again, audio recordings were kept in a locked filing cabinet in the primary investigator's private office. All of the interviews were audio recorded and the initial interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service. The follow-up interviews were not transcribed or analyzed separately as they yielded very little new information. The purpose of the

follow up interviews was to verify accuracy of the information gathered in the initial interviews, as well as to clarify any inconsistencies that became apparent after reviewing the transcripts. For this study, all identifying information was removed from the verbatim transcripts, which were assigned an identification number in order to maintain confidentiality. Copies of the transcripts were distributed to each member of a research team involved in the data analysis. Each transcript was read and compared with the original recording to check for errors in the transcription. Any isolated inaudible statements were not used in the analysis.

### *Measures*

*Demographic information.* Information was requested regarding participants' age, race/ethnicity, educational level, occupation, income level, gender identity, level of outness regarding their gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, transition methods (hormone use, surgical alteration), transition state (pre-op, post-op, no-op), future plans for transition (hormone use, surgical alteration, unsure). The demographic questionnaire was adapted from Beemyn (2007), and can be found in Appendix E.

*Semi-structured interview.* A set of interview questions meant to elicit participants' perspectives on their gender identities was developed for this study. Hill et al., (2005) recommend researchers study the literature, consult with people from the target population, and examine their experiences with the phenomenon to develop interview questions. Following these recommendations, a set of 15 interview questions was developed. The researcher piloted the interview questions with two non-participants and also shared them with several other members of the transmasculine community for feedback to ensure they pulled for descriptive information of one's gender identity. The

people who participated in the development of the interview questions were given opportunities to change or add to them. They provided feedback on the clarity of the question, the type of answer it pulled for, and the language it included. Questions focused on clarifying how participants see themselves and how they relate to others in regards to their gender identity. They were asked to “locate” themselves on the transmasculine spectrum. The questions were also meant to illicit responses about the kind of language participants use to describe their gender identity, and what the language means to them. The interview questions can be found in Appendix F.

### *Analysis*

*Analysis team.* A primary team of three judges was created to do the tasks of the qualitative analyses (domains, core ideas, categories, cross analyses) as suggested by Hill et al., (1997, 2005). A concerted effort was made to construct a team that would minimize bias by including members of various communities. The primary team was composed of: the primary investigator (NS), a 31 year-old White queer woman identified, advanced doctoral student in Counseling Psychology from the University of Miami; a 36 year-old White heterosexual woman identified advanced doctoral student in Counseling Psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University (GT); and a 35 year-old Asian gay man identified Staff Psychologist at the UC Irvine Counseling Center (JF). Each of the team members had prior experience with CQR analysis, and reviewed the guidelines laid out by Hill et al., (1997, 2005) prior to beginning the analysis. Also, one external auditor, a 30 year-old White bisexual woman identified advanced doctoral student in Counselor Education from the University of Minnesota was recruited. The auditor reviewed the work of the primary research team and offer suggestions and feedback on

the analyses. Two of the three primary research team members were in advanced doctoral level Counseling Psychology training programs and the third was a practicing clinician with a Ph.D. in counseling psychology. Hill et al. (1997) see the use of therapists and therapists in training as an advantage in that they “generally have good interpersonal skills, welcome feedback about how they come across to other people, and are motivated to work on interpersonal relationships” (p. 528). This is helpful since in the CQR method, the members of the team “need to get along, respect each other, be able to resolve inherent power differences, feel free to challenge each other, and have the ability to negotiate and resolve differences” (Hill et al., 1997, p. 528).

*Discussion of biases and expectations.* The CQR methodology, Hill et al., (1997, 2005) emphasizes a team discussion of biases and expectations in order to increase awareness and to minimize their impact on the data analysis. They explain that biases may arise from the demographic characteristics of the team (e.g. gender, ethnicity, theoretical orientation, and community membership) as well as members’ values and beliefs about the topic being studied. The primary researcher asked the team examine these as well as to respond to the question “what are your beliefs about gender and gender identity?”

The biases identified by the team as a whole included the belief that gender is a fluid concept and one’s gender identity can change over the course of their lifetime. All of the team members expressed a belief that gender is not dichotomous, but rather it is on a spectrum or continuum. Team members had varying amounts of exposure to and knowledge of the gender variant community. There was consensus among team members that one’s body does not define one’s gender as gender is an internal sense of

one's self, but the body may be used to express gender. Members recognized having different notions about what constitutes masculinity and femininity. The written reflections of the primary team member's biases are provided in Appendix G.

As the primary researcher, I think it is important to share some information about myself, as well as my motivation for doing this study since doing so will shed light on a number of my biases. I am a queer woman with a visible disability. Using a wheelchair is something that has frequently set me apart, and I have in numerous situations, found myself wondering if people treated me a certain way because of what they see when they look at me. I believe this is a common experience for people who are "different" and can be a source of significant anxiety and/or anger. A bias I have regarding gender at a very basic level is that the gender binary is very limiting, and I believe it hurts us more than it helps us. It imposes ideas about how one should and should not be a woman or a man. I believe awareness of the gender binary leads to us calling it into question. I also believe that masculinity and femininity coexist within peoples' self concept and one does not negate the other. My motivation for doing this study came mainly from speaking to transmasculine identified friends and acquaintances who shared they often "said what they needed to say" to get access to hormones or other medical interventions. However, this was not an authentic therapeutic experience for them. It is my hope that this study will help clinicians better understand diverse gender identities and further develop their multicultural competence. The reflections I kept on my perspectives as the study progressed are included in Appendix H.

*Identification and coding of domains.* After recording biases and expectations, the next step in the CQR data analysis process is to identify domains. Domains are



utilized to “group or cluster data...about similar topics.” (Hill et al., 1997, pg. 543).

Members of the team independently read each transcript and developed an initial list of domains. They met and discussed their individually generated domains to identify areas of conceptual overlap, and from this process developed the first list of consensus domains. Using this first set of consensus domains, team members identified data blocks (participant statements ranging from a phrase to several sentences) within four interview transcripts and assigned blocks of text to different domains. The initial list of consensus domains was then modified based on where there was significant overlap in the coding. That is, when statements were frequently double coded with the same two domains it indicated those domains should be combined or redefined. For example the first list of consensus domains included: language, ratings, expressions of gender identity, internal self concept, and conceptions of masculinity. These were subsumed under the domain “gender identity descriptors” after the second round of consensus domains were developed. This second set of domains was used by the team members to independently code all of the transcripts (including recoding the first four to reflect changes in the coding system). The individually coded transcripts for five cases were compared. There was 91% agreement among at least two team members when assigning blocks of text to the domains, and 65% among all three. Team members discussed their individual understanding of the coding and developed a final interpretation agreeable to all. Additional modifications were made throughout the analysis process to reflect emerging data. A table outlining the initial domains identified by the team members, as well as the subsequent iterations of consensus domains can be found in Appendix I.

*Construction and auditing of core ideas.* Hill et al. (1997, 2005) describes the process of constructing core ideas, or abstracting, in the following manner, “the aim of the abstracting process is to capture the essence of what the interviewee has said about the domain in fewer words and with more clarity” (p. 546). Team members make an attempt to distill participant statements down to their essence by removing redundancies and extraneous words (e.g. like, you know). For example, a phrase such as:

Well to me transgender has more to do with where my gender falls within a range of, um, expectations, um, I don't know, in terms of like a typical person's or just a collective peoples' like views of the many ways it's possible to be a gendered person, I fall somewhere outside of masculine and feminine – typical male, typical female. And I think that is how I identify as transgender.

is interpreted in the context of the domain “gender identity descriptors” and becomes “The participant is gendered outside of what's considered by others to be typically male or typically female which is why he identifies as transgender.”

Two of the team members (NS) and (GT) constructed core ideas independently, and then met and discussed the wording of each core idea until they reached consensus. There was a high degree of agreement between these individually constructed summaries, and much of the consensus process involved one team member supplementing the ideas of the other team member by filling in the gaps of information they might have missed. The summaries were shared with the third team member (JF) who provided feedback, which served an internal auditing function. A consensus version for each case was developed, consisting of the core ideas followed by the raw data for each of the domains. An excerpt from one of the transcripts including a consensus abstraction and its corresponding raw data can be found in Appendix J.

*Cross-analysis.* Next, a cross-analysis of the data was conducted. Domains and core ideas were compared across the individual transcripts to determine a set of common themes that emerged from the data. The primary researcher compiled all of the core ideas for each domain across cases into a new document. Then, the team members individually examined all the core ideas within domains and determined how these core ideas clustered into various categories. The team revisited the original transcripts again with the new set of categories to investigate whether any important information was overlooked and identified descriptive quotes for categories. Finally, the team met to discuss the categories and placement of core ideas into the categories using consensus to resolve discrepancies.

As part of the cross-analysis, results are characterized by the frequency of the occurrence of each category. The CQR methodology utilizes specific terminology to represent the frequencies of recurring categories. The term “general” is used when results apply to all or all but one of the cases, “typical” is used to indicate results that apply to at least half of the cases and “variant” is used when results represent two or three cases (Hill et al., 1997, 2005). This classification scheme was applied to the final set of categories.

*Auditing of cross-analysis.* The external auditor reviewed the cross analyses assessing whether each core idea fit into the specified category. Feedback was provided regarding the organization and phraseology of categories. The team met to discuss the auditor’s comments and arrived at consensus regarding the suggested changes. For example, the domain “gender identity descriptors” was ultimately divided into two separate domains – “transmasculine identities and terminology” and “gender identity

descriptors.” It was determined by the team after feedback from the auditor, that presenting the data in this manner made more sense conceptually as the reader could get an understanding of how the participants’ thought about specific gender identities and utilized terminology versus a more general conceptualization of their gender identities.

## Chapter Three: Results

### *Introduction*

This study seeks to identify the underlying constructs transmasculine people use in describing their gender identities. The researcher sought to learn more about how people self-identify and what terminology and themes they use to describe their identity means to them. Also of interest was how they convey their identity to others, and how they see themselves in relation to others.

In the following sections, the domains and categories that emerged from the data analysis are presented. Additionally, quotes representing the various categories are included to provide the reader a sense of the participants' voices. According to CQR methodology, frequencies using specific criteria are reported such that "*general* results apply to all or all but one of the cases, *typical* results apply to at least half of the cases, and *variant* results apply to at least two or three, but fewer than half of the cases" (Hill et al., 1997, 2005). There were 7 domains that emerged from the data: transmasculine identities and terminology, gender identity descriptors, context, reactions to being asked to indicate gender identity, evolution of gender identity, sexuality, and involvement in the trans/queer community. Within the domain of transmasculine identities and terminology the data were clustered into subdomains to understand how participants described different identity labels. The categories identified within each domain are reported and elaborated upon in the description of the corresponding domains. Summary tables of the domains, categories, and frequencies can be found in Appendix K. A more in depth write up of the results which includes additional quotes from participants can be found in Appendix L.

*Domain: Transmasculine Identities and Terminology*

Participants were asked to describe their gender identities and it is noteworthy that all but three utilized multiple terms to describe themselves. Appendix M provides information on how participants labeled themselves. Participants identified terminology that they use to describe their gender identities, and shared what the terminology means to them (see Table K1). The identities and terminology are presented as subdomains. The most frequently endorsed identities by participants in this sample were **transgender, genderqueer, and transman**. Less frequently endorsed were: **FTM transsexual, man, and other identities**.

*Subdomain: Transgender*

Transgender is a term that many of the participants would use to describe their gender identity, although none of the participants who endorsed the use of this term would use it exclusively. That is, every participant who would use the term transgender to describe themselves would also use another more specific term to self-identify. The most common descriptor that emerged in participants' conceptualization of this identity is that **one's gender does not correspond with their birth sex** (typical). Some participants said this mismatch allowed them to flexibly self define and transcend gender stereotypes. Lee said "[transgender] was for me to define it, open, kind of fluidly changing my gender identity and presentation." Mel shared. "In terms of a typical person's or a collective peoples' views of the many ways it's possible to be a gendered person, I fall somewhere outside of masculine and feminine – typical male, typical female." Participants also spoke of the struggle that transgender people have to be seen in a way that is congruent with how they see themselves. As Michael said, "You look

ambiguous and you're struggling to be seen and accepted in the world the way you would like to be." Adam commented "I've been myself the whole time and just made the visual and social cues a little clearer so people knew what I was. So, I didn't 'go across,' I just reminded people of what was really true."

Another common descriptor participants used to conceptualize transgender was the **inclusivity of the label** (typical). Many participants said it was an umbrella term that encompassed all gender variant identities. Dennis stated "I appreciate that it functions as an umbrella term because umbrella terms have a way of being able to be inclusive of a lot of different identity categories so I appreciate that about the term transgender." Another participant, Bert, exemplified this saying, "given an option of the whole spectrum of words to choose from, I would pick genderqueer. If I get only three options of male, female, or transgender I'm going to choose transgender."

*Subdomain: Genderqueer*

Genderqueer is another term with which many participants identified. While some identified primarily as genderqueer, others saw this as an aspect of their identity. Many participants conceptualized genderqueer as a **"both/neither" identity** (typical). This means there is a sense of being more than one gender at a time, or being in between genders. Bert explained, "I don't [reject the female part of me]... I think on some days I feel more on the female spectrum, some days I feel more on the male spectrum and some days I feel like somewhere in the middle." Mel described why he identifies as genderqueer, saying "I think I embody both qualities of masculinity and femininity that are stereotypical qualities. I don't see myself as a man or a woman, and I never really have."

**Transition** (typical) was another theme that emerged in participants' conceptualizations of genderqueer, in a variety of ways. Some said they identified as genderqueer because they have no intention or desire to medically transition. As Radclyff shared, "I'm not going to transition, I'm not FTM... I'm most comfortable in that in-between place that gender queer allows." Bert expressed a similar sentiment saying, "I'm comfortable in the body I'm in, but I don't see myself as just being exclusively female or feminine." Others like Dennis said, "sometimes there's an assumption that people won't have undergone any kinds of transformations of their bodies such as medical transition if they identify as gender queer... I have transitioned and still find that to be a really helpful category."

Participants indicated that the word genderqueer represents **inclusive terminology** (variant) that allows them a lot of space to define and express themselves. KC explained "I would say that gender queer is a noncanonical gender... I'd say that it's an umbrella term for a gender any kind of gender that's not man or woman." Some participants said that there is a **political aspect** (variant) of claiming a genderqueer identity, allowing them to feel connected to a variety of gender diverse people and also consciously challenging the gender binary in some way (e.g. presentation). Other participants shared that they recognized the political aspect to a genderqueer identity for some, but commented that they did not intentionally engage in challenging the gender binary and still claimed a genderqueer identity. Some participants shared that they claim a genderqueer identity because of the **limitation of the gender binary** (variant). Claiming this identity empowers them to challenge the socially constructed gender norms that arise from the binary paradigm. Jon spoke to this saying, "It's sort of like I almost



reinforce my male identity with the feminine things I do...I just empower myself more to let me do the things I want to do, not what culture tells me I'm not supposed to.

*Subdomain: Transman/Transguy*

When participants spoke about what it means to be a transman the two general themes that emerged were **one's gender identity does not correspond to their birth sex and transition**. All of the participants who identify as transmen were born with female bodies but have a sense of themselves as male and want to be perceived as male by others. Ben said “[transman] means a person who is internally male, but was born with a female body then subsequently took procedures to match their physical body with their internal identity.” They do this by altering physical markers and secondary sex characteristics (e.g. facial hair, lower vocal tone). They have medically transitioned in some way - all use testosterone and some have had or plan to have top surgery while others may bind their breasts to make their bodies appear male. The majority of participants who have not had top surgery said the primary reasons are the high cost of the procedure, or fears about surgery and potential complications (e.g. loss of sensation). Bottom surgery was reported by only 2 participants, while most others said they would not have bottom surgery for various reasons (e.g. no interest, too expensive, techniques not advanced enough, risks outweigh the benefits).

A few participants said that although the word transman speaks to their experience, it does not capture their identity. They related this to a sense of **limitation of the gender binary** (variant) or an essentialist **either/or perspective** (variant). That is, some participants said that transman may convey a sense that one feels 100% male, which is reinforced when one considers the gender binary, but this is not their experience

of themselves. For instance, they may appear masculine or androgynous and be male identified, but embrace aspects of femininity in their self concepts and expression. Conversely, some participants said that they see themselves simply as men with unique experiences, so while transman indicates their path, it is not descriptive of their identity. That is, they would not readily identify themselves as trans since they have gone through transition and pass as men all the time.

*Subdomain: FTM Transsexual*

Few participants used the word FTM transsexual to describe themselves, and those who did said the label was medicalized and applied to them because their **transition** (variant) included hormone usage and completed or intended surgical interventions. They all indicated that medical transition was a criteria to apply this label to oneself, whereas this is not the case for any of the previously mentioned terminology.

*Subdomain: Man*

Some participants felt the word man best described them, while others had a difficult time claiming this label. Those who used the word man to describe themselves had an **either/or** (variant) understanding of their gender identities and less connection to any label referencing “trans.” They described themselves as men with unique histories, who do not identify themselves as transgender. Or rather, they experience themselves as men with the medical condition of being born female bodied, and transgender is not part of who they are but just part of their experience. Conversely, other participants expressed **discomfort with the label “man”** (variant) because it is too monolithic and does not capture the experience of gender complexity which they conceptualize as part of their identity. As Adam explained, “For me right now, man is the word I would use if I were

talking to somebody who needed me to simplify. But it's not one that I'm finding useful for myself right now."

*Subdomain: Other identity labels*

There were other labels mentioned by some of the participants, and although they were not brought up as frequently as the aforementioned they speak to the diversity and depth of language used to construct identity in this community. Several participants showed a preference for labels that are **inclusive terminology** (variant) and allow space to self define, such as "FTM spectrum" or "queer." Lee conveyed a similar idea saying "regardless of how I present, my take on being male is entirely different. So, I guess to me the term queer is just kind of an umbrella term for my gender identity, but also my sexual identity."

Some spoke of being distinctly tied to a **both/neither** non-binary view of gender (variant), and used labels such as "transfag" or "transgender butch" to describe themselves. Maxwell said that while he will identify himself as a transman because this is the language others understand, this is not a label he finds particularly descriptive of his internal self concept. He commented that transfag is more accurate explaining, "I feel that I should have been born with a male body, but then moved away from that into something in this third gender, this non-gender binary." KC shared, "I really strong identify is a butch but I have gender dysphoria too."

Some participants said they recognize **feminine gender expression** (variant) as a distinct part of their identities and use words like "transfag" and "tranniboy" to convey this feminine aspect of identities. The label "tranniboy" was also described as conveying

a **political aspect of identity** (variant), in that those who identify themselves as transniboyos tend to be more radical and see themselves as activists.

*Domain: Gender Identity Descriptors*

This domain captured some of the ways the participants conceptualized their gender identities broadly, as opposed to being descriptive of any one specific identity label (see Table K2). All of the participants spoke in some way about their conceptions of masculinity (general) and many spoke about language (typical). Variant categories included: impact of feminine history, non-gendered activities, inadequacy of the gender binary, and feminism and politics.

A number of participants' spoke about how their conceptualization and performance of masculinity is shaped or informed by **societal gender norms**, both physically and behaviorally. Michael explained how he expresses his gender identity, saying "I guess by how I dress, or how I talk, or walk, or to some extent but not all the time I think I'm being gentlemanly by holding doors for people and that kind of thing." Many participants said that they expressed their gender in a way that is consistent with how society recognizes masculinity in bodily cues such as hair length, tone of voice, facial hair, and body shape. Another common means of gender expression participants spoke of was dress; many mentioned wearing men's clothing. Some other participants spoke about expressing masculinity through culturally sanctioned activities such as athletics. Other participants conceptualized masculinity based on interactional styles (holding the door, being dominant, forceful, assertive). For example, Tony said when he thinks about the social roles of men he considers "Stereotypical things about being

dominant assertive and you know, unemotional and strong in any context you can think of, and most of those descriptors suit me pretty well...”

Many participants also indicated that they had made a **conscious decision not to conform to hypermasculinity**. They said they feel male but do not see themselves as “stereotypically macho” nor do they strive to be. As Lee articulated, “I was very conscientious not to try to act like what our society has stereotyped masculinity to be - like hyper butch, super-macho.” KC explained, “I think of myself as androgynous and not super masculine or macho...a geeky sort of androgynous guy... who isn't really into cars or sports, sort of stereotypically macho things, and you know has more academic interests.” Some participants also spoke about how **society's conception of masculinity is limiting and harmful**. Donny articulated this saying “masculinity is extremely limiting, it's extremely harmful, there aren't full presentations of masculine gender and men when there are presentations of it, it is almost always followed up by a homophobic or sexist remark.” Many spoke of **blending masculine and feminine characteristics**, and said they felt less inhibited by gender stereotypes. Phillip spoke to this directly explaining, “I embody some aspect of both genders rather than just being like I'm a man now, but I was a woman, or I'm male now and I was female. I feel like I'm less inhibited than the average male.”

Participants indicated that language was important in conceptualizing their gender identities. One reason for this is that language creates **inclusivity and space** and many commented that part of the process in their gender identity development has been about finding a comfortable space to convey their sense of gender. Lee shared, “I guess I just like the space (transgender allows) because a lot of my experience has been about finding

a space I'm comfortable in, and it's hard to necessarily pin myself in one category or another." Bert commented that more inclusive terms allow for more self-definition saying, "I think identifying as queer or genderqueer allows you to define yourself in a more sort of, individual way." Other participants explicitly stated that they consciously used **gendered language markers** when communicating about themselves to others. As KC said, "I request masculine pronouns... I ask for a masculine title like you know Mr. instead of Ms. or boyfriend instead of girlfriend." Adam pointed out that there are specific ways he identifies his gender in foreign languages explaining, "I speak French and Spanish, and in those languages the speaker, much more often than in English, identifies his or her gender...So in those languages, I am constantly making choices as how to present my gender in words."

Some participants spoke about the impact of a feminine history (variant) on their conceptualization of gender identity. They conveyed a sense of having a unique experience from male-bodied people who identify as men. They shared that this allows them to have a flexible approach to masculine gender expression, as well as a unique understanding of male privilege. Other participants spoke about how feminism and politics (variant) inform their conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Some participants conveyed a discomfort with the societal expectations placed on women in regards to appearance (e.g. dress, cosmetics, hair), behavior (e.g. demure, polite), and role (e.g. mother). Others spoke about how they would use their access to men's spaces to combat sexism and misogyny. Some spoke the idea that they choose to consciously present themselves in a way that challenges the gender binary. Maxwell demonstrated this saying, "There is a big part of me that enjoys playing around with gender and not

conforming to masculinity in trying to make my own gender out of bits and pieces of masculinity and femininity.” In conceptualizing their gender identity several participants spoke to the inadequacy of the gender binary (variant), explaining that this paradigm limits their space for self-definition and identification. Mel exemplified this saying, “I don’t engage with the world in a typically gendered way... how I’m being in the world doesn’t make sense in the context of masculinity or femininity... but maybe even calls the whole system into question.” Several participants commented that their gender is unrecognizable in the gender binary paradigm. Finally, a number of participants said they see activities as non-gendered (variant) and they do what they enjoy regardless of how it might be gender coded because this coding is arbitrary and culture bound.

*Domain: Context*

This domain represents how participants conceptualize and experience their gender identities in relationship to a number of different settings or roles (see Table K3). When participants were asked how they relate to others in regards to their gender identities they spoke of their interactions in: the general public sphere (typical), the workplace (typical), with significant others (general), and men’s spaces (variant). Participants also indicated that how they identify themselves to others is a function of their familiarity with the gender diverse community (typical) as well as safety (variant). Finally, participants expressed a preference for non-gendered relating (variant) when interacting with others.

Many participants indicated that in their day-to-day casual public interactions **in the general public sphere they are perceived as male**, and most indicated that is their preference. Dennis shared, “I think I look just like a guy walking through the world, I’ve

been given that feedback and that's fine and good and it does resonate." Bert, who does not make an effort to pass as male, said that she is sometimes perceived as such. She commented, "partially, you can construct your own identity but I think partially it's how others perceive you... many times I've been called sir in public places and it's obviously how people perceive me."

Participants talked about **outing** and **acceptance** in the workplace. Participants spoke specifically about how or why they out themselves at work. Some out themselves to develop closer relationships with coworkers, as Lee who is generally not out at work explained. He said, "The coworker I came out to not too long ago... I wanted her to know that about me so that there are other things in my life I can share with her that would make more sense." Others do so to educate on gender diversity. Some also said they remain closeted to protect themselves from discrimination or ostracism. As Ben explained, "It was [my attorney's] experience that people who outed themselves lost their jobs. So why not just identify as biological male and leave the whole transition part out, you know?"

Some participants framed acceptance in the workplace as being perceived as male, while others said it was acknowledgement of their gender diversity. For instance, Mel shared his experience being closeted in a male-dominated work environment that caters primarily to sports enthusiasts. He explained, "I think I command a little respect just because I've learned to speak their language a bit so, I mean, respect meaning...that they recognize that I'm a guy and that for them is respecting me." Some also spoke about how their **gender identity is connected to work**, in that some portion of their job involves educating on gender diversity or advocating for gender diverse communities. A



few participants mentioned the challenges they faced **balancing personal comfort and workplace attire** at some point in their gender identity development. Radclyff commented on this explaining, “It’s very hard to dress in masculine clothing and fit into a professional environment...it’s very important that I don’t feel like I am in feminine drag while I’m at work either.”

Participants also spoke about **outing** and **acceptance** in relation to their significant others, primarily friends and family. All of the trans-identified participants indicated that they are out to their families and friends who knew them prior to their decision transition (if they had medically transitioned). All the participants who were out to their friends said they felt accepted by them. For instance, Phillip shared that he has a different level of connection openness with the friends to whom he is out. He said, “I can say to people I know well something about my childhood or something like ‘oh yeah, I used to do Girl Scouts’ or something like that in a humorous way, where I cannot be ashamed about sharing that...” Participants frequently commented friendships with others in the queer community allowed them to be open. As Lee said, “the majority of my friends I’m out to, but the majority of my friends are queer as well.” A few participants said they are not out to friends made post-transition because they either do not identify as trans and/or fear they would be treated differently. As Michael said, “In a way, it bugs me not to be able to be sort of more open about it (being trans) without feeling I will risk that the way people see me will change...” Participants reported various levels of acceptance from family that ranged from complete acceptance to complete denial. As Lee said, “[My family] have been really accepting and great” while Maxwell said, “some people still see me as a woman including my family.” Another core

idea that emerged in relation to participants' interactions with friends and family was **language variation**, particularly using the incorrect pronoun or name to refer to the participant.

Participants explained that the way they identify themselves and relate to others is based on their perceptions about the others' **extent of familiarity with the gender diverse community** (typical). For instance, several articulated that they would identify themselves in a more specific or nuanced way to members of the queer community or others who are likely to be familiar with gender diversity. Lee shared his experience of self identifying to others, saying, "I pick my terminology based on the experiences of the person I'm talking to." A few said that the degree to which they were willing to elaborate and educate others was a function of the participants' energy. As KC explained, "I think it's mostly like I try and give people as much as I think that they can process or as much as I feel like processing with them..." When disclosing their gender identities, some participants experienced confused reactions from others not familiar with gender diversity, particularly the misconception that the participants were transfeminine.

Participants commented on their **access to men's spaces** (variant) and noted differences in their post-transition interactions with non-trans men. There was a general sense of increased comfort and acceptance in groups of men, which participants described as validating. Participants considered **safety** (variant) when they described how they relate to others in regards to their gender identities. Some commented on how it was easier to be themselves when they felt a sense of safety in their setting or interactions. Several explicitly stated that they would not disclose their gender identity or they would suppress gender variant behavior if they perceived the environment as unsafe.

Ben spoke to this saying, “The reason I identify in my hometown community as man is more of a protection thing. I live in a very redneck community that is completely transphobic... it would be a disservice to me to identify as a transman.” Jon talked about how he consciously alters his behavior to fit safely into certain spaces. He explained, “If I’m trying to pass in certain spaces, I still see some remnants of things I used to do when I was trying to influence other people’s views of whether or not they were going to read me as male.”

When participants were asked how they would like others to relate to them in regards to their gender identities, some expressed a **preference for non-gendered relating and assumptions** (variant), as these assumptions are limiting and anxiety provoking. As Adam said, “I would like people not to come toward me with too rigid assumptions about what I could be. I would like room to be myself whatever that might be.”

*Domain: Reactions to Being Asked to Self-Identify*

Participants expressed a combination of reactions to being asked to indicate their gender identity as part of the screening process for this study (see Table K4). The **negative reactions** (typical) were mostly focused on a sense of limitation imposed by labels. A number of participants expressed the sentiment that one word cannot adequately describe their gender identities. Jon remarked, “I’ve always had a little dissatisfaction because there isn’t quite one word, but I’ve always dealt with it ...” Ben commented, “The only struggle I had with it was between the category of being labeled as transman or just man.” Dennis said, “I’ve always had a sense of resistance to being confined by any one particular category.” Some people reacted to being asked to check a

box on a form reminded them of how often they are invisible on an institutional level. Some also related their negative reactions to this question as related to their history of being offensively or aggressively questioned about their gender in the course of their identity development. Phillip said, “It makes me feel like I’m being cornered a little bit – like I need to choose one or the other which is always how it’s been, you know, growing up where you’re either a boy or a girl.”

Other participants had **neutral reactions** (typical), saying they were not upset by the question and did not experience any particular feelings. Lee said, “I didn’t really have a whole lot of feelings about it one way or another.” Ben said, “It was fine, I had no issues with it.” The participants who expressed **positive reactions** (variant) to the screening question attributed this to the fact that there were options listed which acknowledged or affirmed gender diversity. As Radclyff said, “Actually it’s somewhat refreshing given years of growing up and having to adhere to being a girl and feeling like, at least the circles I travel in, that I have no choice.” Lee said, “Mostly, if anything, I appreciate it when there is a good amount of variance because I realize that not everybody identifies in the same manner.”

*Domain: Evolution of Gender Identity*

While there were no questions that specifically asked about the path of individuals’ identity development, many participants spoke spontaneously about the evolution of their gender identities when conceptualizing them (see Table K5). They spoke of interactions, thoughts, feelings and behaviors in their **early experiences of gender** (typical), **coming out/prior to transition** (typical), and **after transition**

(typical). A few also spoke about how **language** (variant) has been a part of their gender identity development.

When participants spoke about their early experiences of gender some shared that they had a **sense of being a boy**, while others specifically said they did not. Tony said, “I saw myself as a boy when I was a kid.” Several participants said they **mimicked boys** around them by playing sports, wearing boys clothing, or keeping their hair short. A common recollection of participants’ early interactions involved **others questioning, invalidating or disapproving** of their gender expression. Phillip recalled, “since I was little I wanted my hair to be short, and it was and people would mistake me as a boy... my parents stopped correcting people at some point because it was just too annoying...” Some participants reported a variety of **negative feelings** associated with gender this time in their lives, including disappointment, anxiety, and guilt.

Participants shared information on their gender identity development around the time of coming out/prior to transition. The most common feeling reported by participants at this time was a **sense of anxiety**, primarily with their bodies and/or others’ perceptions of them. A few said they became aware of gender diversity and began to explore a gender variant identity through **interactions in the queer community**. As Donny articulated, “I was able to see different types of people and how they identified and what those things meant to them, and through that I was able to give myself some kind of guidance...” Many of the participants talked about **identity shifts** during the course of coming into a trans identity. Genderqueer and/or lesbian identities were the two most commonly cited identities to precede a trans identity. Kyle shared that he was only several months into hormone therapy, and had not had surgery or legally changed his

name. Therefore, he commented at this point in his identity development, “I am genderqueer, but I also strongly consider myself transgender, so it’s almost leaving one behind for the other in my mind. Where it’s like I am moving more towards that and further away from genderqueer.”

When participants spoke about their experiences after transition, most expressed a sense of **increased comfort and/or reduction in anxiety** related to gender. Some shared that this manifested in such a way that they do not think much about their gender or how they are presenting anymore. As Michael explained, “I have moved on with my life past the transitional period where [being transgender] was pretty important.” Participants also spoke about their **conceptualization of transition**. Some considered it a completed process while others framed it as an ongoing and never ending process. As Adam said, “I don’t think of transition as a one year process or a two year process. I think of it as inseparable from living. So in that sense, it’s a life-long process.”

**Language** (variant) was something several participants commented on when explaining the evolution of their gender identities. They said that as the vocabulary of gender diversity has expanded, it has allowed them to identify themselves in a more comfortable and accurate way. As Bert said, “when I was younger and didn’t have a way to sort of talk about my gender identity and now I think that the language has sort of developed, and I can identify myself in a more articulate way...” They also recognized that having a broad range of identity labels available is valuable to someone who is going through the process of gender identity development.

*Domain: Sexuality*

Sexuality was another area participants used in conceptualizing gender identity, particularly **sexual orientation** (typical) and its overlap with gender identity. The majority of participants identified themselves as queer because they are differently gendered and they do not see their relationships fitting a heteronormative paradigm. As Maxwell explained, “I wouldn’t say I am only attracted to gay men... I do tend to date more men than women, but when I’m dating women, it’s usually very queer... roles, they may be swapped... it’s just a little bit different.” Dennis commented, “I identify as queer but I’m with a woman very happily... We got together in college and we got married in 2005 after I transitioned...we’re read as a straight couple by so many... we don’t see ourselves that way...” A few of the participants identified themselves as heterosexual and indicated that their sexuality plays into their personal concept of maleness in terms of roles and behaviors. Michael said, “I am a very typical guy in lots of ways, if you look at who I am attracted to, only women, I tend to be attracted to very feminine women.”

**Perceptions of sexual orientation** (variant) was another recurring idea the participants discussed, with many saying they believe their sexual orientation is misperceived by others because of their gender expression. Finally, a few participants spoke of **partner discomfort or conflict** (variant) related to their gender identities. They shared that they believe their partners view them differently than they view themselves to attempt to minimize their discomfort.

*Domain: Involvement in transqueer community*

**Involvement in the transqueer community** was a typical theme when participants conceptualized their gender identities. They spoke of turning to the

community to connect with others like them to give and receive support and advice. Additionally, some spoke explicitly about how activism in the gender diverse community was a part of their identity. Conversely, some participants shared that they did not feel a strong connection to the gender variant community because being transgender is not a strong component of their self concept.



## Chapter Four: Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to explore constructs and identify underlying themes that transmasculine people use in constructing their gender identities. The researcher attempted to understand the meanings of the labels that people in the transmasculine community apply to themselves in an attempt to provide readers with a broad understanding of the diversity within this community. This was achieved by recruiting participants who “were born with female bodies but did not identify as girls or women” and asking them to name and describe their gender identities. Not only did participants share the meanings of various identity labels, but a number of processes and constructs arose when they were asked to conceptualize their transmasculinity. Developmental stage (or past developmental events), conceptions of masculinity and femininity, context, and sexuality influenced participants’ experiences and expressions of transmasculinity. This discussion will examine the relationships between the themes and propose a structure for conceptualizing transmasculine identity.

### *Model of Transmasculine Identity*

The themes that emerged from participants’ stories have been organized into a proposed structural model of transmasculine identity represented by the concept map in Figure 1. Broadly speaking, transmasculine identity may be conceptualized from either an essentialist binary perspective or a constructivist non-binary perspective. This is reflected in the language the individual uses to self-identify - including identity labels, proper names and pronouns. Individuals define, experience, and embody transmasculine identities differently depending on a number of inter-related constructs including: (1) current stage of identity development and past transmasculine identity development

events, (2) conceptions of masculinity and femininity, (3) context, and (4) sexuality. If one of these constructs shifts it will influence the others.

The proposed model was derived from the domains and categories (see Appendices I & K) that were identified by the analysis team; however, some of the structures within the model were consolidated and renamed by the primary investigator in the interest of clarity and parsimony. For instance, the domain “gender identity descriptors” was very much informed by participants’ conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, this terminology was chosen by the primary investigator for the model. “Involvement in the transqueer community” was subsumed under “context” as the transqueer community is a specific context. Finally, “Evolution of gender identity” was renamed “transmasculine identity development” as the model is specific to the transmasculine population. “Reactions to being asked to self-identify” was the one domain that emerged in the analysis that was not included in the model, as it was not directly related to the construction of identity.

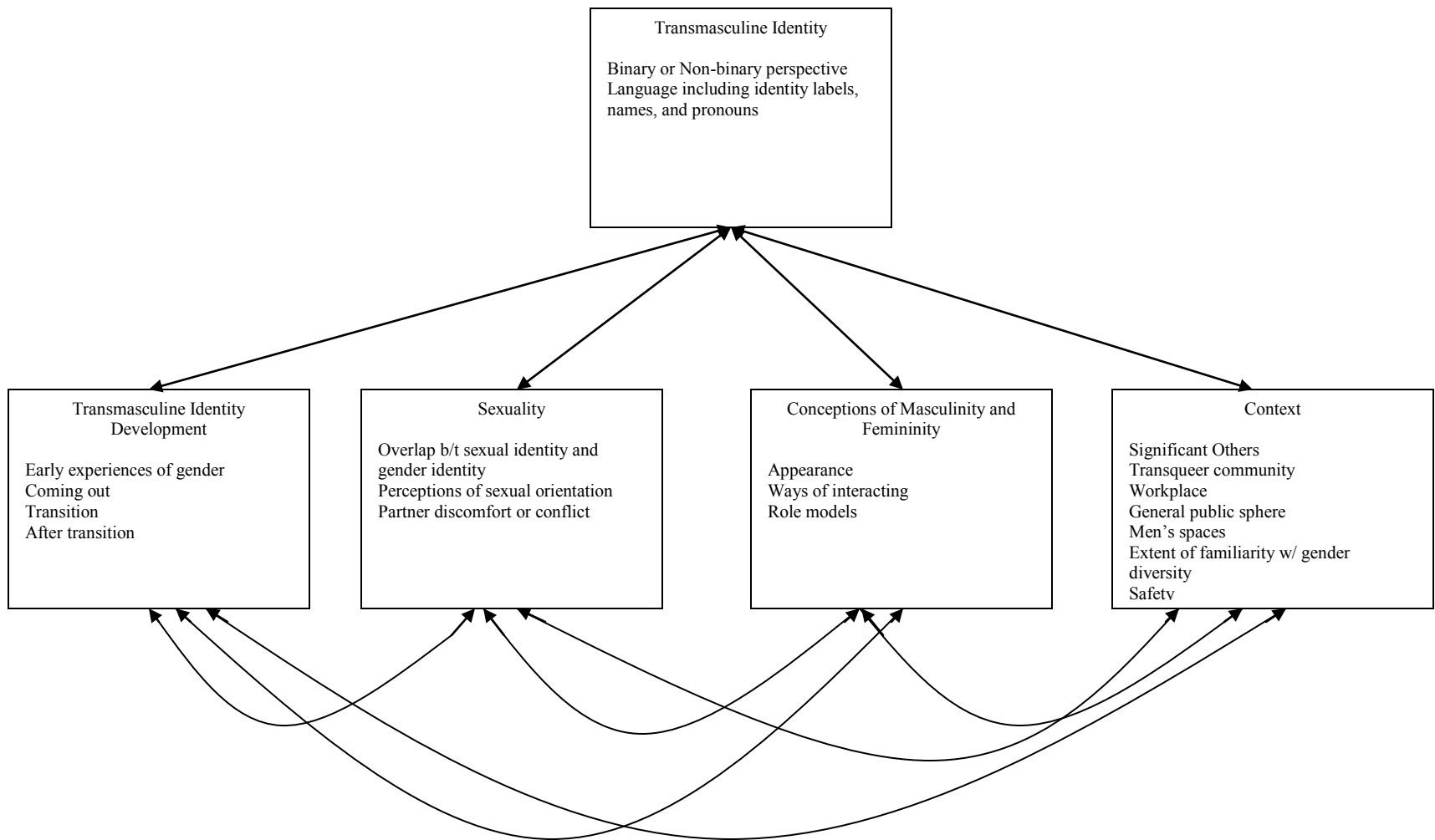


Figure 1. Proposed model of transmasculine identity

Participants in the study tended to conceptualize transmasculine identity in a way that was consistent with the continuum proposed by Hansbury (2005), from a male-identified/essentialist perspective to a non-binary/constructionist perspective. Three participants identified themselves as “just men” and described themselves in the same way as Hansbury described Woodworkers. They said that terms like “FTM transsexual” and/or “transman” described them because these terms carry the implication of transitioning from female to male, but they did not connect strongly, if at all, to a transgender identity post-transition. They tended to frame their gender variance as a medical condition, and were not out as trans to many of the people around them. Two of the three of them “went all the way” in terms of surgically altering their bodies, with the third person citing cost of bottom surgery as the primary deterrent. Interestingly, of the three people who located themselves on this end of the continuum, two were in their 20’s. This is noteworthy since Hansbury asserts that the majority of Woodworkers are elders in the transmasculine community. This portion of the transmasculine community is difficult to access since they tend to have limited involvement with the community. Hansbury’s description of Woodworkers was based on his experiences in the transmasculine community, particularly observations he made from his participation in peer support groups and attending conferences run for and by the community. Perhaps the discrepancy between the findings in this study and the literature are due to sampling strategies. This study’s participants were largely recruited through the internet and younger people tend to be more connected electronically, this could account for the younger age of the respondents. The important point here is that there are younger people who identify on the essentialist/binary side of the transmasculine continuum.

A large number of participants currently identified as genderqueer, and others commented that they had at one point in their development. They described this identity as a sense of being more than one gender at a time, or being in between genders. There is a great deal of variability in the self-concept and presentation of genderqueer individuals, particularly in regards to transition issues. While some participants who identified as genderqueer had no desire to use hormones or surgical procedures to alter their physical presentation, for others this was an important part of their gender expression. The genderqueer identity, as many participants commented, is all about self-definition. Because it is a non-binary identity, it is unrecognizable in the mainstream culture; this can lead to feelings of misunderstanding, alienation, and invisibility. The majority of Americans maintain relatively fixed beliefs about the limits of masculine and feminine behavior and approach their understanding of gender from an essentialist perspective, therefore any categories that are not male or female are unacknowledged, unacceptable, or socially inappropriate (Reid & Whitehead, 1992).

There is much literature in the field of multicultural psychology and sociology regarding the potentially negative psychological impact of stress associated with minority status (Meyer, 1995; Waldo, 1999; Williams & Williams Morris, 2000). This perspective does not view mental health issues as a result of individual psychopathology, but rather the result of trying to exist in a system that marginalizes that individual on the basis of identity. One way for the individual to cope with this is to engage in efforts to change the system. Perhaps this is why many participants framed genderqueer identities as having a consciously political aspect to them. However, it is important to mention that the degree to which each individual who identified as genderqueer engaged in consciously political

acts varied, depending on energy, safety, and context. They, along with the transmen in the sample, described a way of being consistent with Roen's (2002) findings that transgender individuals tend to flexibly utilize the competing discourses of crossing and passing in different ways in different contexts.

The participants who identified themselves as transmen situated themselves in the middle of the continuum, straddling the binary and non-binary perspectives. The people who identified themselves as transmen all indicated that they had a sense of themselves as male and wanted to be perceived by others as such. Therefore, they often altered their physical presentation, particularly their secondary sex characteristics, through medical transition. This is consistent with Rubin (2002), who found that bodies, especially secondary sex characteristics, are a crucial element of personal identity formation and perception for transmen. It is important to note that, although participants who identified themselves as transmen physically transitioned, their internal self concepts related to gender varied. For example, some held a more essentialist perspective and tended to claim the word transman while those with a more constructivist perspective sometimes preferred to claim the word transguy. This is noteworthy because, for some people, there was discomfort with claiming any label containing "man" as this conveys expectations of a masculine archetype that does not completely fit them. These people tended to recognize that they do not have a sense of being completely male and they consciously blend characteristics of masculinity and femininity. Some also identified themselves as genderqueer to represent the gender complexity that is part of their self concepts.

*Model of Transmasculine Identity: Implications for Theory*

The findings of this study highlight the breadth of diversity within the transmasculine community. They support the constructivist to essentialist continuum proposed by Hansbury (2005) as a useful way to organize transmasculine identities. However, it is important to note that participants often claimed multiple labels that occupy different locations on the continuum. That is, participants located themselves along the continuum depending on context usually going back and forth between positions at either end with movement towards the middle. This suggests a degree of gender fluidity and indicates that how one perceives and expresses their gender identity may change as a result of interactions with significant others, roles assumed (e.g. professional, familial), or spaces occupied (e.g. the general public sphere vs. men's spaces).

Hansbury also says "it is a mistake to view Genderqueer as a phase within the transsexual transition, though it often may seem to be. Before testosterone, most transsexual men never identified as Genderqueer, but always as FTM" (p. 258) However, this is exactly how some participants framed their experience of claiming a genderqueer identity - as a sort of transitional identity on the path to a more articulated trans/male identity. The results of this study add to Hansbury's work in two ways. The first is methodologically, as this study used semi-structured interviews to get a sense of transmasculine identities. Whereas Hansbury based his model on observations he made during his participation within support groups and conferences. He did not use any systematic methods of data collection and analysis. Second the results of this study show

that, for the most part, there is a fair bit of movement along the continuum as gender identity evolves and is negotiated in a variety of contexts.

It is noteworthy that this researcher did not specifically ask questions regarding the transmasculine identity development. However, all of the participants shared such information spontaneously when describing their identities including recollections of their early experiences of gender, coming out and prior to transition, as well as post-transition experiences. This suggests that an individual's gender narrative strongly informs their gender identity. However, there are some problems with framing the evolution of gender identity as we did in this study because it assumes transition is a part of that path, and it may or may not be, depending on how broadly one frames transition. For instance, the self-identified transmen in the sample talked about medical transition as an important part of their identity development. Alternatively, for those who identified as genderqueer, medical transition, particularly hormones, may or may not have been important to their identity expression. Some genderqueer individuals indicated that the absence of the desire to medically transition, while at the same time feeling disconnected or not fully identifying with social conventions of femininity is part what makes them genderqueer.

#### *Transmasculine Identity Model: Implications for Practice*

The model of transmasculine identity that emerged in this study can be utilized in a number of ways. The preceding section discusses this model from a categorical perspective in order to provide the reader with a broad overview of the diverse identities encountered in the transmasculine community. However, the clinical applications of this model will be discussed from a developmental perspective. This perspective was chosen



because, as participants in the study explained, their relationships to various identity labels, experiences and embodiment of transmasculinity changed as their gender identities evolved. Clinicians will encounter clients at various points in their identity development and the relevance and characteristics of the constructs represented in the proposed model may differ depending on where clients are in the process.

Lev's (2004) model of transgender emergence outlines six developmental stages that will frame the discussion of the clinical implications of the proposed model of transmasculine identity. The first stage is *awareness*. In this stage, an internal sense of feeling different is coming in to consciousness. The second stage is *seeking information and reaching out*. During this stage gender diverse people seek to gain education and support about transgenderism. The third stage is *disclosure to significant others*, which involves disclosing transgenderism to spouses, partners, family members, and friends. The fourth stage is *exploration of identity and self labeling* in which the individual seeks to articulate and become comfortable with one's gendered identity. The fifth stage is *transition issues and possible body modification*. It involves exploring options for transition regarding identity presentation and body modification. During the final stage, *integration*, the gender diverse person is able to integrate and synthesize their transgender identity. The majority of the participants in this study appeared to be in the fifth and sixth stages of development, but they often recalled experiences at earlier stages.

Transmasculine individuals may come to awareness of gender identity concerns through exposure to or involvement with the LGBT community in adolescence or adulthood. For example, most participants said they came to know themselves as "transmasculine" through connections with queer communities, and many identified as

lesbians before they claimed genderqueer or transman identities. However, many also reported awareness of being “different” early in life, recalling experiences of varying degrees of gender dissonance in youth. For instance, the typical early experiences of gender among participants were either an explicit sense in childhood that one was a boy, or the recollection of tomboyish behavior and style (e.g. playing sports, short hair, wearing boy’s clothes or disliking wearing girl’s clothes). Another common experience of participants’ early interactions involved others questioning, invalidating or disapproving of their gender expression.

Coming to the realization that one may be transgender can be simultaneously liberating and terrifying. It can help a person make sense of confusing and painful past experiences related to gender and reduce feelings of isolation, while concurrently forcing him or her to actively acknowledge internalized transphobia, and grapple with stigma and misinformation. Psychoeducational interventions such as providing examples and stories of different gender narratives and introducing the client to the language of gender diversity and transmasculinity will help normalize gender identity issues. Helping someone articulate a potential transmasculine identity begins with processing their experiences of awareness. Lev (2004) suggests therapists seeing clients at this stage create a holding environment that allows space for repressed emotions and forbidden thoughts to emerge. Clients ought to explore all of their thoughts and ideas, perhaps including transition, but interpretation of meanings or determination of therapeutic directions should be avoided at this time.

After individuals become aware that they might be transmasculine they begin seeking information and reaching out. According to Lev (2004), the task of this stage is

to start to say “this is who I am.” Language becomes increasingly important as person seeks to define and communicate their transmasculine identity. Exploration of early and current experiences of dissonance and responses to those experiences can help transmasculine people reframe and empower their gender expression. When participants talked about typical experiences coming out and prior to transition, they shared having feelings of anxiety with their bodies and/or others’ perceptions of them. Some conveyed a strong sense of dissonance with their bodies, others conveyed dissatisfaction with the expectations placed upon female-bodied people in mainstream definitions of femininity, and some identified with both of these positions. Examination of these experiences, as well as identification of masculine role models can begin to shed light on individual conceptions of masculinity and femininity, and will help transmasculine people try on ways of embodying masculinity that feel comfortable to them. Consistent with Green (2005), participants in this study recognized that while masculinity and maleness are not the same thing, masculinity is primarily perceived by others through visual cues. These include secondary sex characteristics such as breasts - or rather the absence of breasts, facial hair, and vocal tone as well as tertiary sex characteristics such as dress and mannerisms.

Therapeutic interventions at this stage involve helping clients identify and try different ways to express their identities and shifting from internal recognition to external expression. This will likely begin to take place in particular contexts and safety considerations are important, as people at this stage of development have not typically utilized hormonal or surgical interventions. For instance, initial public experimentation and identity disclosure might occur in LGBT friendly environments or events, including

support groups, drag shows, or perhaps the therapist's office. The transmasculine community is a rich source of information regarding tips for passing (e.g. ways of dressing, applying fake facial hair, binding breasts). Considerations of embodying and negotiating a transmasculine identity in other contexts may begin to become important at this point, particularly in general public spheres and in relationship to significant others. For instance, someone in this stage of development may present themselves as transmasculine in queer spaces by dressing in men's clothing, going by a masculine or androgynous name, and/or using masculine pronouns. Perhaps they may also present themselves this way when going to the grocery store. However, at a family function they may dress in a more androgynous style, go by the name their parents gave them and use feminine pronouns.

The next stage of identity development is coming out to significant others. Therapeutic interventions at this point may include helping the transmasculine individual develop a coming out plan. The extent of others' familiarity with gender diversity becomes an important consideration in planning this process, and can impact the language one uses when disclosing. For instance, a word like transgender will probably be more recognizable than genderqueer or transfag to someone with limited knowledge of gender diversity. Transmasculine people at this point of their development may experience varying degrees of acceptance from individual family members upon disclosing, leaving them opportunities for validation and acknowledgement as well as rejection. Significant relationships need to be renegotiated, and some may be lost. Helping clients communicate effectively about their identity and educating their loved

ones is an important undertaking, while simultaneously helping them cope with the potentially confusing or hurtful reactions they might initially encounter from significant others.

Lev (2004) emphasizes the need for clinicians to integrate partner and family issues and concerns into the client's process. By the time transmasculine people come out to their families, they have often lived decades of their lives as women – they have been daughters, sisters, nieces, girlfriends, wives or mothers. Therefore, special attention to questions about roles and relationships with significant others is important in this stage. Family or couples therapy may be indicated at this point and therapists may need to advocate both for their transmasculine clients and their significant others. Sexuality is another important component in this stage due to the need to renegotiate relationships with partners, who may be experiencing discomfort and conflict around meaning for their own identity which can continue as the transmasculine person's identity development progresses.

After transmasculine people come out to significant others, they continue to examine their identity in more depth and consider transition possibilities. Involvement in the transqueer community is a valuable resource for dialoguing, modeling, and feedback during this time. Questions about the meaning of gender as well as issues of social convention are particularly salient here and the therapist's role is to assist the client in their exploration of various transgender identities and the resolution of a sense of authentic self as a cross-gendered person (Lev, 2004). Participants indicated that masculinity is determined by actions or behaviors and expressed through cultural stereotypes of actions appropriate for people with male bodies, which is consistent with

prior literature (Green, 2005). People's conceptions of masculinity will have an impact on the labels they claim. For instance, many participants who identified as transguys or genderqueer commented that the common view of masculinity projected in our society is limiting and restrictive, promoting sexism and homophobia. Most said they were conscious not to behave in a hypermasculine way and indicated that this was informed by their feminism and politics. However, some who identified as transmen or men in particular acknowledged that they found "traditional" concepts of masculinity really fit how they experience themselves.

The next stage of gender identity development involves more fully exploring transition and possible body modification. The primary issue to attend to here is consolidation of gender presentation and making informed decisions about body modification. Attention to conceptions of masculinity may strongly inform this decision making process. Secondary sex characteristics were particularly salient to participants who identified as transmen and/or men consistent with Rubin (2002), while tertiary sex characteristics were salient to participants who identified all along the continuum. So for transmen, being perceived as male is important, because feeling male is a core piece of their identity. Therefore, access to medical interventions such as hormones or surgery to minimize or erase female characteristics is particularly important for this subgroup of the transmasculine community. This may or may not be the case for genderqueer people. They might best be described as having a sense that they are not female or exclusively feminine, but they do not necessarily experience themselves as male or exclusively masculine. Because of this, the way they physically express their identities could differ from transmen. For instance, they may feel most comfortable wearing masculine

clothing or a mix of masculine and feminine clothing on a visibly female body. They may also consider hormonal or surgical interventions to masculinize their bodies and allow them to express their identity in a way that is most comfortable for them.

For those who choose to transition medically, considerations of handling this process within the context of significant relationships, the workplace, the general public sphere, and men's spaces all have to be addressed specifically. Maintaining physical and emotional safety is a primary concern. Involvement in the transqueer community can be an invaluable support at this point. Clinicians may also serve as important supports, advocating for their transmasculine clients in legal, occupational, and family systems. Transition may be accompanied by shifts in language as well as sexuality. For example, someone who identified as genderqueer prior to transition may claim the label of transguy post-transition. Although many participants said they were perceived as heterosexual after transitioning, they self-identified as queer because that label captured the (perhaps) invisible complexity of their relationship histories as well as their current relationships with partners. For instance, a number of participants shared that they identified as lesbians prior to transition, and continued to be attracted to women after transitioning. In this case, those who conceptualized their gender identities from a more essentialist position tended to identify as heterosexual while those who took a more constructivist position identified as queer. One participant identified himself as a gay man, and he was in a relationship with another transmasculine-identified person who did not identify as a gay man. These examples illustrate the diversity of sexual identities in the transmasculine community and it is important to acknowledge this.

While there is a relationship between gender identity and sexuality, one cannot assume sexual orientation based on gender expression. As Gainor (2000) explains, sexual orientation as we understand it assumes a fixedness about gender roles and sexual attraction. That is, people's romantic attractions are based on their perceptions of another's expressed gender identity. Without fixed gender roles, the construct of sexual orientation changes, a common theme in participants' experiences. This requires individuals whose gender identities are shifting to renegotiate romantic relationships, which may be a significant stressor throughout this process. Sexual orientation may also come into play when transgender people seek treatment at gender clinics, as those who do not identify as heterosexual are often refused services (Green & Brinkin, 1994).

The final stage of identity development is integration and pride. Participants typically reported a sense of increased comfort and reduced anxiety after transition, as well as less thought about one's gender. Those with genderqueer or other non-binary identities tended to frame transition as ongoing whereas those with essentialist self-concepts tended to frame transition as discrete. At this point, transmasculine individuals' involvement in the transqueer community may shift, sometimes becoming less important or relevant and sometimes serving as a venue for activism, empowerment, and mentoring others. For instance, some participants said they first came to the transmasculine community for peer support and ultimately they took on community leadership roles to serve as supports and advocates for others. They saw this as a way to reinforce their own identities and maintain a sense of connection to people like themselves. Conversely, a few participants conveyed a sense of detachment from the community after transition because being transgender was not a strong component of their identities after they



transitioned. Nonetheless, they mentioned maintaining at least casual community connections through friends or the internet.

The person may be working to further integrate their transmasculine identities differently into various contexts, making choices about language and masculine appearance and ways of interacting. Genderqueer or other transmasculine identified individuals who do not want to or cannot medically transition have the challenge of being perpetually misperceived or met with confusion, which can cause feelings of alienation. Helping them find identity-affirming venues and allies may be especially important in mitigating these negative feelings. Sexuality may continue to be redefined as relationships develop post-transition, and others' perceptions of transmasculine individuals' sexual orientation may conflict with reality, potentially causing tension or discomfort for them or their partners. Decisions about how to communicate and embody transmasculinity continue as individuals interact with new people throughout their lives.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

An integral part of CQR methodology is recognizing the biases of the research team and how they might influence the findings. Biases may arise from the demographic characteristics of the team, as well as members' values and beliefs about the topic being studied. There were several team biases that influenced the way data was understood and interpreted. First, all of the team members were cisgender. That is, none self-identified as transgender or genderqueer. Having this perspective would have enriched the process, particularly in the sense of helping the other team members recognize and check their cisgender privilege. The research team was comprised of members with varying amounts of knowledge about and exposure to the transgender community and the literature on

transmasculinity. The values and beliefs identified by the team as a whole included the belief that gender is a fluid concept and one's gender identity can change over the course of their lifetime.

All of the team members expressed a belief that gender is not dichotomous, but rather it is on a spectrum or continuum. There was consensus among team members that one's body does not define one's gender as gender is an internal sense of one's self, but the body may be used to express gender. Several believed that participants would be able to easily articulate their experiences of gender. However, this was not the case as many participants commented that their gender identity is something they feel, making it difficult to describe. Members recognized having different notions about what constitutes masculinity and femininity, as well as varying experiences of questioning and enacting these constructs in their own self concepts.

The process of data analysis was challenging, and the team struggled with differentiating nuances and making sense of constructs that are highly interconnected. The way the data are currently organized is dependent in some ways on the gender binary, which feels unsatisfying, particularly since a number of participants talked about how limiting it is. This may be necessary, however, since the gender binary is one of the primary ways we categorize others, and ourselves. One cannot begin to understand how to affirm non-binary identities without first understanding how they relate or do not relate to our current system of gender classification. Most of society conflates sex and gender, making assumptions, having particular expectations of behavior, and granting privilege based simply on the perceived presence or absence of body parts. This puts into perspective how arbitrary and limiting the binary can be, for transpeople and non-

transpeople alike. There is a need for the proposed model of transmasculine identity if for no other reason than to raise awareness of how the gender binary impacts one's sense of self as well as others' perceptions of them in relation to various constructs within the model. The model proposed leaves room for refinement and redefinition as gender norms change.

Sample characteristics were also a limitation of this study as there was virtually no representation of people of color, and there was skew in level of education in that all of the participants had at least some college education and half had advanced degrees. This was likely due to recruitment process, as people were primarily recruited through internet listserves and convenience sampling methods. Additionally, targeted recruitment of transmasculine people of color was not attempted. Inclusion of more people of color may have significantly changed the results. For instance, transmasculine people in the African American community may be less likely to apply the label "transgender" to themselves and more likely to use a label like "stud" (Wilkinson & Gomez, 2004). Also, people of color may define masculinity and femininity differently than each other and White people (McAuliffe, 2008). Thus, more research is needed on how transmasculine individuals of color construct their identity in order to examine the extent to which the results of this study apply to the whole population.

A limitation of all qualitative research is the question of whether saturation has been reached. The investigator attempted to reach saturation in the sample by randomly selecting participants in rounds based on their answer to the screening question until there was overlap in the transmasculine identities represented in the sample as well as overlap in the participants' descriptions and experiences of these identities. All of the participants

who endorsed using multiple and/or “none of the above” terminology were interviewed and those who endorsed utilizing just one of the identities proposed by Hansbury (2005) were interviewed in rounds until there was significant overlap in the themes discussed and no new themes were emerging. While this accounts for saturation with respect to how individuals may answer questions regarding their transmasculine identities, it does not necessarily address the issue of saturation in regards to participants’ experiences. The fact that participants were chosen based on their responses to an initial screening question about their preferred gender terminology is a limitation because an assumption is being made on the part of the researcher that everyone defines these labels similarly. While this was the case within the sample, it is unknown how adding additional participants who identified outside of the options provided for self-identification would have impacted the results.

#### *Future Research Directions*

The results from this study suggest further lines of inquiry into the transmasculine experience. One suggestion would be to test the proposed model and its applicability to subgroups within the community. In terms of using this model to further the study of interventions with transmasculine individuals, questions about significant positive and negative life experiences in relation to each construct may be a place to start. Also, recruiting transmasculine people who have gone through therapy for gender identity issues and questioning them about what they found helpful or not, validating or not, or what they would have preferred based on what they know now may suggest helpful interventions. Therapists may be experts in clinical work, but transmasculine individuals are the experts in their own life experiences and this should inform therapeutic work.

Another avenue for exploration is to examine the relationship between each of the constructs and mental health outcomes for transmasculine people.

Another research consideration is how to acknowledge and integrate gender diverse identifications into studies that are not solely focused on gender identity issues. That is, researchers should be mindful when designing demographics questionnaires that some persons in the subject pool do not fit into the male or female “boxes.” Therefore, at a minimum, they should include the additional inclusive options of genderqueer and transgender (specify FTM or MTF) so potential participants can self-identify in the way that best captures their self concept. Complicating matters is the fact that two people may identify with the same gender terminology, yet have two very different self concepts as previously discussed. This underscores the importance of allowing a research participant to define oneself in an open-ended way, rather than checking a box. A researcher has her/his own connotation of these and any words and will assume that they know what the participant means by the same word, but the participant’s meaning may be different. This is why it is important to pilot research assessments.

There is no perfect solution to this problem, because while allowing people to describe their identities is the least restrictive way of gathering information, researchers often look to group participants by categorical variables such as male and female. One way to reconfigure this categorization schema is to separate out sex and gender. That is, to ask participants to identify their natal sex and describe their gender expression linguistically, as Factor and Rothblum (2008) did. They categorized participants in their study comparing the experiences of FTM, MTF and genderqueer individuals based on their responses to questions about their assigned sex at birth and comfort with pronouns.

Participants who indicated their birth sex was female and they felt most comfortable with the pronoun “he,” and felt “very” or “extremely” comfortable with the pronoun “he” were categorized as FTM. Those who indicated that their birth sex was male and felt most comfortable with the pronoun “she,” and felt “very” or “extremely” comfortable with the pronoun “she” were categorized as MTF. All other participants were categorized as genderqueer.

There are issues with this categorization schema because it still requires researchers to impose a structure and create “boxes” however it broadens the options for representing both binary and non-binary identities. Regardless of how the question is asked, the most important consideration to take into account when designing a study is the intention behind asking participants to identify their gender. For instance, this study asked participants to indicate their gender identities and offered a variety of options for doing so (including an open-ended option) for the purpose of including a range of identities along the transmasculine spectrum.

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Appendix A  
Call for Participants

University of Miami  
Developing a Model of Transmasculine Identity  
*Volunteers Wanted for a Research Study*

*The purpose of this research is to understand diverse gender identities and to develop a model of transmasculine identity. It involves a 45 minute telephone interview with participants as well as a short follow-up phone call. Upon completion of the interview and follow-up, there will be opportunities for further involvement in the study.*

In order to participate in this study, you must be an adult over the age of 18, who was born female but whose gender identity is on the transmasculine spectrum (i.e. does not identify as woman or girl).

It is possible that you will benefit from this study by gaining further insight into your conception of gender identity. However, no benefit can be promised to you. The study is also expected to benefit gender diverse communities by expanding the dialogue and providing psychomedical practitioners with a model to think about gender identity and diversity, and thus better serve the community.

Participants who complete the interview and follow-up will be given a \$20 Amazon.com gift card.

To learn more about this research, call Nikki Saltzburg, M.S.Ed. at 305-725-3270 or email [n.saltzburg@umiami.edu](mailto:n.saltzburg@umiami.edu).

This research is conducted under the direction of Dr. Margaret Crosbie-Burnett from the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies at the University of Miami.

Appendix B  
Screening Question

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your interest in my dissertation study!

There are several phases to the study - the first phase involves phone interviews and follow-ups and the next phase involves online surveys. I have received an enthusiastic response to my first call for participants and will begin scheduling interviews in rounds - this will take place over the course of several months. I may ask you to participate in the interview phase of the study and/or the online survey phase.

To facilitate this process would you please provide me with your preferred email address and phone number and best days and times to call you? Please also let me know which state you are in so I can be mindful of different time zones!

As a precursor to the interviewing phase to my study please answer the following question:

What is the gender terminology that best describes you? (mark w/ an X)

FTM Transsexual

Genderqueer

Man

Transman

None of the above (please explain/specify) \_\_\_\_\_

This information will not be shared with anyone and you do not have to share anything that would make you uncomfortable. I have attached the informed consent and the interview questions for you to review if you wish to do so. I will go over them again when we speak on the phone. Thank you again for your time and interest.

Sincerely,

Nikki Saltzburg

Appendix C

Table C1

*Participant Demographic Information*

Name <sup>a</sup>	GenId	Gen Term	Age	T	Race	SES	Edu	Env	Occupation	Sex Or
Maxwell	TG	Transguy	24	2	Wh	20-35K	Adv	Sub	Resident hall director	Qu
KC	TG	Butch	24	N/A	Wh	20-35K	Col	Urb	Unemployed	Qu
Kyle	TG	FTM Transsexual	26	<1	Wh	20-35K	S col	Sub	Store manager	Qu
Mel	TG	TG person	26	5	Wh	35-50K	Col	Sub	Graphic artist	Qu
Dennis	TG	Transman	35	7	Wh	20-35K	Adv	Urb	Priest/ lecturer	Qu
Donny	TG	Transman	37	<1	Wh	<20K	Col	Urb	Program director	Qu
Adam	TG	Genderqueer	40	1	Wh	50-65K	Adv	Urb	Professor	Qu
Ben	TG	Transman	46	10	Wh	50-65K	Adv	Rur	Code enforcement	Het
Lee	Man/ TG	FTM	34	8	Wh	<20K	S col	Urb	Vet assistant	Qu
Jon	Man	Genderqueer	24	2	Wh/Nat	<20K	Col	Urb	Research assistant	Qu/Pan
Tony	Man	Man	25	6	Wh	20-35K	Col	Urb	Child care worker	Gay
Phillip	Man	FTM	26	1.5	Wh	<20K	Adv	Sub	Unemployed	Het
Michael	Man	Man	27	4	Wh	35-50K	Adv	Sub	HS teacher	Het
Radclyff	GQ/ Wo	Genderqueer	43	N/A	Wh	35-50K	Adv	Rur	Professor	Qu
Bert	GQ	Genderqueer	40	N/A	Wh	35-50K	Adv	Urb	Student affairs admin	Het

*Note.* Gen Id=gender identity, Gen Term=gender terminology, T=years since transition, Edu=education level, Env=environment, Sex Or=sexual orientation, TG=transgender, GQ=genderqueer, Wo=woman, Wh=white, Nat=Native American, Adv=advanced degree, Col=college degree, S col=some college, Sub=suburban, Urb=urban, Rur=rural, Qu=queer, Het=heterosexual, Pan=pansexual.

<sup>a</sup>pseudonym

Appendix D  
Verbal Consent Script  
*Developing a Model of Transmasculine Identity*

Hi, my name is Nikki Saltzburg and I am involved in a research study called Developing a Transmasculine Model of Identity with Dr. Margaret Crosbie-Burnett at the University of Miami. We received your name from [*insert source*] who told us that you are a member of the transmasculine community.

**PURPOSE OF STUDY:**

We are asking you to take part in a research study because we are trying to learn more about gender identity in the transmasculine community. The study will involve a telephone interview containing questions about your perspectives on gender identity. The interview will be recorded.. You will also be asked questions related to demographic information as well as information regarding your gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, and transition (if applicable). Once the initial phone interview is completed, the researcher will review the recording and identify themes that emerged. The researcher will then contact you and share the themes that were generated, asking for your input as to whether these themes accurately capture your perspectives on gender identity.

After completing the follow-up interview, the researcher will ask you if you are willing to serve as a rater in the next stage of the study. Raters assist in categorizing the information collected in the interviews.

It is anticipated that the phone interviews will last 45-60 minutes. The follow-up to the phone interview is expected to last 15-30 minutes. The total amount of time expected of participants in the interview stage of this study should be no more than 90 minutes. If you are chosen as a rater, it is anticipated that the sorting of themes and naming of the categories will take an additional of 60-90 minutes.

We do not anticipate you will experience any personal risk from taking part in this study. However, you will be asked personal information related to your gender identity, which may cause discomfort. You may decline to answer any question at any time during the interview with no risk of reprimand

No benefit can be promised to you; however, it is hoped that the information gathered will benefit gender diverse communities by expanding the dialogue and providing psychomedical practitioners with a model to think about gender identity and diversity, and thus better serve the community.

Paper records and audio recordings will be secured in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher will have access to individually identifiable information. Interview participants will be provide with a pseudonym for publication purposes and this pseudonym will be known only to the participant and the researcher. The linkage file will be kept in a separate locked file cabinet in the researcher's office.

The recordings will be transcribed and kept until the study is completed. Upon completion of the study, they will be erased.

If you participate as a rater in the study, you do not need to reveal your name during the conference call. Although it is anticipated that no personal information will be shared during the rating process, if this were to occur participants must agree not to reveal anything they learn about each other in the rating process.

Participants who take part in the interviews will be given a \$20 Amazon.com gift card. Participants who serve as raters will be entered into a separate drawing for one of two \$20 Amazon.com gift cards. The drawings will take place once all of the interviews and ratings are completed.

Your participation is voluntary. You can decline to participate, and you can stop your participation at any time, if you wish to do so, without any negative consequences to you.

Do you have an hour to participate in this research study? Would you like to participate now or at a later time? If so, let's schedule it for [*state when, if appropriate*].

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Nikki Saltzburg at 305-725-3270 or Dr. Margaret Crosbie-Burnett at 305-284-2808. They can also be reached via email at [n.saltzburg@umiami.edu](mailto:n.saltzburg@umiami.edu) or [mcrosbur@miami.edu](mailto:mcrosbur@miami.edu).

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the University of Miami, Human Subject Research Office at (305)243-3195.

**By you answering the survey/interview questions that I will ask, this means you consent to participate in this research project and be audio recorded. The recording of the interview is mandatory. Do you have any questions?**



Appendix E  
Demographic and Background Questions

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What is your race/ethnicity? (check all that apply)  
White, non-Hispanic  
Hispanic  
African descent  
Asian-Pacific Islander  
Native American Indian  
Middle Eastern  
Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What kind of environment do you live in?  
Urban  
Rural  
Suburban  
Other
  
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?  
Grade School/Primary School  
Middle School/Junior High School  
High School/Secondary School  
GED  
Some College  
Two-year College, AA, or technical degree  
Four-year College (BA or BS degree)  
Advanced/Professional Degree (MA, MS, MD, PhD)
  
5. Are you currently employed?  
Full-time  
Part-time  
Seasonal  
Volunteer Only  
Unemployed
  
6. What is your current occupation or profession? \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. What is your yearly individual income?  
Less than \$20,000  
\$20,000-\$34,999  
\$35,000-\$49,999  
\$50,000-\$64,999  
\$65,000-\$79,999  
\$80,000-\$100,000  
Greater than \$100,000

Prefer not to answer

8. What was the sex assigned to you at birth?
  - Male
  - Female
  
9. What is your gender identity?
  - Woman/Girl
  - Transgender
  - Man/Boy
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
10. What is the gender terminology that best describes you?
  - Genderqueer
  - Man
  - FTM Transsexual
  - FTM
  - Transman
  - Transguy
  - Biological female with male persona (drag king, cross dresser, dual identity, etc.)
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
11. Please specify from what age have you identified as (your answer to question #10) to yourself \_\_\_\_
  
12. Do you identify yourself as (your answer to question # 10) to others?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Sometimes
  - Not Sure
  
13. How out are you to *friends*?
  - Out to all friends
  - Out to most friends
  - Out to some friends
  - Out to only a few friends
  - Totally closeted
  
14. How out are you to your *nuclear family*?
  - Out to all family
  - Out to most family
  - Out to some family
  - Out to only a few family
  - Totally closeted
  
15. How out are you to your *extended family*?

Out to all family  
Out to most family  
Out to some family  
Out to only a few family  
Totally closeted

16. How out are you to your *colleagues*?

Out to all colleagues  
Out to most colleagues  
Out to some colleagues  
Out to only a few colleagues  
Totally closeted

17. Are you currently using “T” (testosterone)?

Yes  
No

18. If yes, how long?

19. If no, do you plan to use testosterone in the future?

Yes  
No  
Unsure

20. If you have not used testosterone is it because...

You just don't want it (it's no big deal)  
You can't afford it (lack of money)  
Other reason (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

21. Have you had chest surgery (chest reconstruction)?

Yes  
No

22. If yes, how long ago?

23. If no, do you plan on having chest surgery in the future?

Yes  
No  
Unsure

24. If you haven't completed chest surgery is it because,

You just don't want it (it's no big deal)  
You can't afford it (lack of money)  
You fear surgery  
You have not been able to identify an identity-affirming medical professional to operate

Other reason (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

25. Have you completed lower surgery? (please check all that apply)

Hysto (hysterectomy)

Metoidioplasty (clitoral release)

Phalloplasty

Testicular Implants

Other surgical procedure \_\_\_\_\_

26. If you haven't completed lower surgery is it because,

You just don't want it (it's no big deal)

You can't afford it (lack of money)

You fear surgery

You have not been able to identify an identity-affirming medical professional to operate

Other reason (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

27. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Gay

Lesbian

Bisexual

Queer

Questioning

Heterosexual

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix F  
Interview Questions

1. What was the screening question like for you to see?
2. What kinds of feelings does someone asking you to choose bring up?
3. How do you describe your gender (identity)?
4. What does that (term) mean to you?
5. How do you express it to other people?
6. How do others see you in regards to your gender identity?
7. How would you like others to relate to you in regards to your gender identity?
8. How do you relate to others in regards to your gender identity?
9. What activities do you engage in that reinforce your gender identity?
10. Given that definition (from question 2), on a scale of 1-10 (1 being not at all \_\_\_\_\_ and 10 being very much \_\_\_\_\_) How do you rate yourself?
11. If a 10 is a \_\_\_\_\_ then how would you describe a person who is a 1 \_\_\_\_\_?
12. Some people in the gender diverse community refer to themselves as “transman, transgender, genderqueer, or man.” Do you identify with any of these, and if so, which one?
13. How would you describe/define your answer to question 10?
14. Given that definition, on a scale of 1-10 (1 being not at all a \_\_\_\_\_ and 10 being very much a \_\_\_\_\_) how do you rate yourself?
15. If 10 is a \_\_\_\_\_, how would you describe a person who is a 1 \_\_\_\_\_?

## Appendix G Team Member Biases

One of the suggestions for this type of research is to record and discuss our biases, "personal issues that make it difficult for researchers to respond objectively to the data." Biases may arise from the demographic characteristics of the team (gender, ethnicity, theoretical orientation, community membership etc). They may also come from the members' values and beliefs about the topic - so in this case I think one question to consider is "what are your beliefs about gender and gender identity?"

### Biases NS

I am a woman with a visible disability that I have had my entire life. I am white and Jewish (culturally but not religiously) and come from a middle class background. I identify as a lesbian, a queer bisexual lesbian. I am a young adult, a student, an early professional.

I believe queerness has a quality of standing out rather than fitting in, because queerness is about difference.

I believe I look at the world primarily through the lens of my disability – I have known myself as a person with disability my whole life. Using a wheelchair is something that has frequently set me apart, and I have in numerous situations found myself wondering if people treated me a certain way because of what they see when they look at me. How many people make it a point to stop their cars and run up to you to assist when you're carrying a piece of luggage to your car (clearly not struggling with it, I might add)? I am used to being a mechanism others use to feel good about themselves, and this is not extrapolation – people state that it will make them feel better to help me when I am not asking for help. I see myself as a strong independent woman, and while those who know me probably do to, those who do not see me as someone who is broken, needs help, and is incapable

I have always had an interest in gender and consider myself a feminist. I have always identified as female and at various points in my life my expression of femininity and masculinity has varied. A bias I have regarding gender at a very basic level is that the gender binary is very limiting, and I believe it hurts us more than it helps us. It imposes ideas about how one should and should not be a woman or a man. I believe awareness of the gender binary leads to us calling it into question.

"what are your beliefs about gender and gender identity?"

- Gender identity is fluid, one's concept of their gender identity can change over time and situation
- My motivation for doing this study came mainly from speaking to transmasculine identified friends and acquaintances who "said what they needed to say" to get access to hormones or other medical interventions, however this was not a authentic therapeutic experience for them

- Masculinity and femininity can co-exist in the same person and one does not negate the other – I have always identified as female and at various points in my life my expression of femininity and masculinity has varied.
- Gender identity is personal but also tied to others because we do not exist in a vacuum, we learn through interactions how to be a man/woman/transperson
- Discrepancies between how we see ourselves and how we think others see us cause anxiety, anger, fear, sadness
- Society is more accepting of women expressing masculinity than men expressing femininity
- The way people perceive you influences how much power you have in any given situation or space
- The body does not define one's gender, gender is an internal sense of ones self, but the body may be used to express gender
- Participants will have varying degrees of identification with the trans community
- Participants will conceptualize their gender identities either within the confines of the gender binary (either/or) or not (both/neither)
- People who are genderqueer and/or conceptualize their gender identity as both/neither, will have a more difficult time being recognized by others

#### Biases JF

Things that may impact my participation and my response to the interview data:

- A desire to be perceived as multiculturally competent.
- My professional experiences (e.g., mentoring, clinical work) with individuals that do not conform to traditional gender norms have been primarily with individuals born male and identify as women/girls.
- My staff status vs. intern status.
- Enjoying being male and identifying with being male
- Benefitting from my male privilege
- My own notions about what constitutes being a male or being masculine.
- Occasionally, questioning whether or not I am masculine “enough”
- A preference for an MBTI “J” rather than “P”
- A belief that gender is not dichotomous, but a spectrum/continuum. One's location on that spectrum/continuum is not necessarily fixed. It is dynamic.

#### Biases GT

- Gender is a fluid concept
- One's gender identity can change over one's lifetime
- Females can possess a masculine gender identity
- People who are trans-gendered experience discrimination from many people including family, colleagues, friends, etc.
- Participants will be able to easily articulate their experiences of gender

## Appendix H Reflections of the Primary Investigator

I was reading back over my biases reflecting on the fact that when I identified myself as a queer woman with a physical disability all I talked about was the experience of being different based on what people see. This is important to note because it informs the way I thought about things at the start of this project, at least it's the way I'm more aware of in the day to day. It's a way of relating and interpreting based on what I see – I believe this is the most common way people make attributions about others, they base them on what they see when they look at them. This was articulated by many participants when they talked about how they express their gender to others (e.g. Radclyff, Phillip, Michael).

There are things that I take for granted about what people see. As much as I hate being treated differently in some respects it has its perks, which when I think about it, are **institutional** (disabled parking spaces and permits, not having to wait in line at the amusement park because the queue is not wheelchair accessible) and also **attitudinal** (people go out of their way to open doors for me, they tell me how inspirational it is that I can pop my wheelchair off a curb as simple as they might step down... they also yank their often staring children out of my path while telling them it's rude to stare - my assumption is they've never seen a person on wheels before... On the more extreme end I once heard a mother tell her child to be good or god would punish her like he punished me)... I guess the take away message I get from the assumptions most people place on folks with disabilities is that we're broken or less than in some way, and any success we may have is an exceptional feat because we have so much working against us...

I CAN DO IT MYSELF! Is my motto, but then there's something that happens that reminds me that I have a disability. That is, the world wasn't made with me in mind – I encounter a flight of stairs next to a broken elevator, or the airline accidentally leaves my wheelchair clear across the country... I have to assimilate or work like hell to change the system (I owe a lot to the disability rights activists who pushed for laws to protect my right to move through the world that wasn't designed with me in mind)... And then, even when the system does change and there are laws in place to make the world a little more friendly, a little more open to your right to exist by say, making accessible bathroom stalls - even without the institutional barrier of a bathroom door that's too small there is often an attitudinal barrier of ignorance (I can't tell you how many times I go into a public bathroom to find all of the stalls except for the accessible one vacant and 95% of the time the occupant has no apparent need for the increased door width, extra space within the stall, and/or grab bars) ... funny, or maybe ironic how so much can be dictated by a bathroom! Bathrooms are one of those reminders to trans folks that they're gender variant (in case they forgot! Or rather, it's not something that is on the forefront of their minds) Michael and Donny spoke to this as did Bert.

When I think about what it means to be queer there is so much more than meets the eye as one of the participants (Lee) said. When I remember to consider what queer means in my life, or what it has meant I reflect on the interactions between my sexual identity and gender identity. These I can choose to keep private should I not have the energy to go



into it, or feel the need to do so (e.g., it's unimportant or irrelevant to our relationship, safety, protection). I identify myself in everyday conversation (should I feel the need to share my sexual orientation) as a lesbian. But, queer, bisexual, and lesbian are all words that accurately capture aspects of my self-concept. I'm queer if I think about how I conceptualize my sexuality in relationship to the partners I've had throughout my life. I'm bisexual if I conceptualize my sexual identity by who I'm attracted to physically. I'm a lesbian in my day to day life in that I'm attracted to, in love with, and sharing my life with another woman. We're even married which makes me feel like I'm not "queer enough" to be queer sometimes, a sentiment echoed by Mel. Additionally, I wear my engagement ring and wedding band so now more than ever before people feel compelled to inquire about my husband, which is a reminder of the heteronormative assumption queer folks contend with. Usually I tell people I'm a lesbian. That is, if they assume I'm heterosexual I will correct them if for no other reason than by outing myself I can remind them of other possibilities and reinforce that alternative sexual identities do exist. It is my personal belief that this is one way to reduce stigma associated with an LGBTQ identity. I have at various times, roles, and settings in my life presented in varying degrees of masculine or feminine appearance with a distinctly readable female body. There have been times when I've chosen to or felt free to present myself in what participants have described as a genderqueer way, but I would not claim the identity of genderqueer

There's a difference between being transgender and identifying as transgender, in the same way there's a difference between being queer and identifying as queer or being disabled and identifying as disabled. I think about it as the difference between being labeled and labeling yourself, or perhaps having a condition versus identifying with a condition. This is an important distinction. It reminds me of a time when I was sitting across from a young man in my office who had been born with a female body and I asked him how long he had identified as trans. He quickly corrected me saying he did not identify as trans, but considered himself a man with a medical problem. I realized in that moment that I had made an assumption based on my biases about the gender binary and what it meant to be transgender. One of the biases I put forth at the start of this project was that the gender binary is harmful and limiting, but I recognize after talking to some of the participants in the course of this study, it is a helpful way for them to organize themselves and make sense of the incongruence between their birth sex and their internal sense of themselves as male.

Gender performance has to do with meeting other people's expectations of what it means to be a man or a woman. Any performance is an interaction with people's expectations.

## Appendix I

**Table II**  
*Developing the Domains – Team Process*

NS Initial Domains	JF Initial Domains	GT Initial Domains	First Round	Second Round	Final Domains
Language (gender terminology, inclusive labels)	Terminology and language	Gender identity descriptors (or referents)	Language	Gender Identity Descriptors	Transmasculine Identities and Terminology
Locating self/ratings		Terminology ratings	Ratings		
Self expression	Gender identity expression	Expressions of gender identity	Expressions of gender identity		Gender Identity Descriptors
Self concept			Internal self concept		
Social learning (reinforcement of behavior, social role expectations)	Conceptualizations of masculinity		Conceptions of Masculinity		
Binary vs. non-binary paradigm					
Degree of male identification					
Context (time/place/role)	Context		Context	Context	Context
Attributions/Recognition (labeled by others)	Experiences of being labeled by others	Experiences of being classified			
Balancing comfort to self and others	Friendships	Issues relating to others	Interactions with others		
Community Involvement	Activism and participation in the transgender community	Engagement in transgender community	Involvement in the transgender community	Involvement in Transgender Community	Involvement in the Trans/queer Community
Activism					
Relationship between gender identity and sexual identity	Romantic relationships	Partner choices	Romantic Relationships	Sexuality	Sexuality
Influence of partner					
	Identity development over time	Evolution of gender identity development	Evolution of gender identity	Evolution of Gender Identity	Evolution of gender identity
	Influence of transitioning	Experiences before transition	Transitioning		
	Reactions to screening question	Reactions to screening question	Reactions to being asked to declare your gender	Reactions	Reactions to being asked to identify gender
Male privilege/sexism			Other	Other	

*Note.* Reading the table left to right shows the narrowing of domains while reading it right to left indicates the content areas subsumed by the final domains. Similar ideas proposed by team members are clustered within the table

Appendix J  
Transcript Excerpt - Example of Developing Core Ideas

The following is an excerpt of a transcript showing the domain, the original abstraction, and the raw data associated with that domain. The abstract is underlined and summarizes the interview text which follows it. The bold text within the transcript text is that which is relevant to the domain.

**Domain: Gender Identity Descriptors**

AB: Labels self as a transguy, sees gender identity as a queer, gender non-conforming, biologically born female to male. Is a year into transition and does not see himself differently other than his physical appearance. He has been making sense of how his external body did not fit with his internal sense of himself. Having to assert that he's male is not as important to him, By transitioning, he is able to integrate pieces of himself (e.g. socialization and attractions) so that they made more sense.

[Depending on the group I am with, if everyone uses the language transman, then that's the language I'll use as well, as opposed to I guess consider myself a queer, non-heterosexual guy. So I think that that's different]. **Everyone has a different way of defining themselves, so I guess that's just me. But if have to be labeled, I guess I'm a transguy**

*That kind of goes into my next question about how would you describe your gender.*

**My gender. Well, non-biologically male. I guess trans. . .more masculine than feminine, not typically the way society sees masculine, so I see my gender identity as queer, gender non-conforming, biologically-born female to male.**

*One of the things you said a moment ago was that depending on who you are with, you might identify differently. You might use different words to describe yourself? Can you speak a little bit more to that?*

[Well, um, and I guess if I am with a bunch of transguys here, I say , well we're a bunch of transman here, and so that's the language that they use.] **Because oftentimes people are at different stages of their transition, and I'm just a shy a year into it, so I don't see myself very differently except for my physical appearance of who I have always been in my life, so it's not such a cross over to the other side. It's not this level of hormone in me that makes me this different person has definitely impacted my life, but it's not . . . I wasn't clawing my way out of my skin, I was looking for a way to make more sense of who I was internally and how it didn't match with my external body. So for me having to reassert that somehow I'm male and it makes me whole isn't so important to me. To me, it's more of I feel like the pieces of who I was and how I was socialized and where my attractions lie made more sense**[now I've been transitioning and accepted and read as male which is how I always thought of myself anyway without really understanding what that meant until I came into the trans world and that culture of gender variance and what does that mean? It means I can be anything I want to be.]

AB: He identified as genderqueer before he began taking hormones. When he started physically transitioning he went from genderqueer to gender variant. Now identifies with transman because his goal is not to be pure male by medical or social standards. Does not identify with heterosexual male culture. He is trying to be himself in the physical state he wants to embody.

*What does transman mean to you?*

**Well, for me it just means that I'm not. . . I identified as gender queer for a while before I started taking hormones because I kind of thought I wasn't going to do**

that, and then the more I investigated myself I was like oh yeah, there are more steps on the journey for me. So, I mean I started getting physically transitioned so that's for me that's where I went kind of gender queer to someone who was just gender variant and you know, the same person I always was and but then started thinking about the physical transition and what that would feel like and mean for me both emotionally and physically. And so, now that I have taken steps to physically transition, you know, I feel that the transman is more of what I identify with because I don't identify with or participate as a full-fledge heterosexual biologically-determined male because that is just not who I am and that's not how I feel. That's not the goal to be pure male by medical or societal standards. That's just not who I am as a person and a lot of those characters in that culture is not the culture I necessarily think I'm trying to buy into or fit into. I'm just trying to be myself. But in the physical state I want to embody or see myself in.

*Your identity shifted from gender queer to transman... and in that shift, is your physical transition the turning point for that shift or shifting?*

.... I started to drift towards a more defined masculine identity, both internally and externally, but not to the point where I want to be a true biological guy, with all the socialization that comes with that is, because that's not who I am.[I come from an experience that's is not that experience and I want to leave who I am and what brought me through the path of my life as who I am, and so a transguys is sort of a subset of the queer community somewhere between male and female to me.]

Appendix K  
Results Summary Tables

Table K1

*Categories and Core Ideas in the Transmasculine Identities and Terminology Domain*

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
<b>Transgender</b>			
One's gender does not correspond with their birth sex	Flexibly self define	"Able to define, open and fluidly change"	Typical (5/9)
	Transcend gender stereotypes	"Ambiguous and struggle to be seen" "Not being constrained by gender stereotypes"	
	Struggle to be seen congruently	"Making the physical cues more in line with how I've always seen myself"	
Inclusive terminology	Umbrella term encompassing all gender variant identities	"Inclusive of many identity categories" "It encompasses transsexual, genderqueer, butch women, or feminine men" "Someone who is gender variant in any way"	Typical (5/9)
<b>Genderqueer</b>			
Both/neither	A sense of being more than one gender at a time, in between genders, or neither	"Sense of hybridity" "I don't want to feel boxed in to having to say I reject the female part of me" "I don't see myself as a man or a woman, and I never really have"	Typical (6/9)
Transition	No intention of altering body	"I'm not going to transition... I'm most comfortable in that in-between place"	Typical (5/9)
	Identify as GQ in spite of transitioning	"I have transitioned and still find [genderqueer] to be a really helpful"	

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Inclusive terminology	Transitional identity	category” “Previous to my actual decision to transition, I considered myself gender queer”	Variant (4/9)
	Allows a lot of space for self definition and expression	“An umbrella term for a gender any kind of gender that’s not man or woman” “Catchall term that has enough room in it that surely at least I’ll fit there”	
Political aspect of identity	Claiming this identity connects individuals to broader gender diverse community	“I feel more united with other people who are also gender variant in some way” “Rebelledd against this idea that to be properly expressing your gender as a female you have to adhere to certain standards.” “My gender identity is less of a political statement and more of just being myself”	Variant (3/9)
Limitation of the gender binary	Conscious challenging of the gender binary		Variant (3/9)
	Some do not connect to political piece and still claim GQ identity Rejecting binary notions of dress and behavior	“Not fitting the socially constructed binary of gender” “I just empower myself more to let me do the things I want to do, not what culture tells me I’m not supposed to”	
<hr/>			
Transman/Transguy			
One’s gender does not correspond with their birth sex	Born with female bodies but have a sense of themselves as male	“A person who is internally male, but was born with a female body” “Born with a female body but moves through the world as a man” “Born female and is transitioning and identifying as male”	General (8/8)

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Transition	Altering physical markers and secondary sex characteristics	“I’m just trying to be myself, but in the physical state I want to embody or see myself in”	General (8/8)
		“A lot of it is hormonal now with my voice, and facial hair, just kind of my shape” “Has the element of transition and change” “I took steps to make my outside match my insides”	
Either/or	Men with unique experiences, trans is a condition and not an identity	“I see myself as a man with a unique history from many other men”	Variant (2/8)
Limitation of gender binary	Do not have a sense of being completely male	“In a lot of ways I move through the world as a man, even though I may not identify as such”	Variant (3/8)
	Blend characteristics of masculinity and femininity	“Some people will use transman to say ‘I am not just a man’”	
<b>FTM Transsexual</b>			
Transition	Medicalized terminology Hormonal and/or surgical intervention	“It does have some connotations of the surgery and hormones being a part of it”	Variant (3/3)
<b>Man</b>			
Either/or	Do not identify with trans Consider self as a man with the medical condition of being born female-bodied	“I don’t really see myself as being different from other men” “Due to having a very specific medical problem, I had a specific experiences”	Variant (3/7)



Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Discomfort with the label “man”	Claiming this identity does not adequately capture sense of gender complexity	“Man is the word I would use if I were talking to somebody who needed me to simplify” “It cuts through a lot of history it isn’t simple”	Variant (3/7)
<b>Other Identities</b>			
Inclusive terminology	Preference for labels that allow space to self define (e.g. FTM spectrum, queer)	“There are a lot of ways of doing gender” “‘FTM Spectrum’ leaves enough room to be a decent fit”	Variant (2/5)
Both/neither	Third gender (e.g. transfag, transgender butch)	“Transgender butch can mean someone coming from the female side of [the sex spectrum] but they’re expressing their gender in a more masculine way. They don’t completely identify as women and they would more identify as transgender” “I feel that I should have been born with a male body, but then moved away from that into something in this third gender”	Variant (2/5)
Political aspects of identity	Activism is a core piece of transniboy identity	“People who identify as transniboy are usually more active or radically inclined”	Variant (2/5)
Feminine gender expression	Use labels that convey a feminine aspect to gender identity (e.g. transfag, transniboy)	“Transniboy are more femme in some aspect of their identity”	Variant (2/5)

<sup>a</sup>General: applicable to all cases; Typical: applicable to at least half of the cases; Variant: applicable to 2 or 3 cases

Table K2

*Categories and Core Ideas in the Gender Identity Descriptors Domain*

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Conceptions of masculinity	Masculine gender expression is conveyed through cues such as secondary sex characteristics, dress, interactional styles, activities	<p>“How I dress, or how I talk, or walk”</p> <p>“I have very stereotypical masculine things I do”</p> <p>“Stereotypical things about being dominant, assertive...unemotional and strong in any context”</p>	General (15/15)
	Society’s conception of masculinity is limiting and harmful	<p>“Rejecting ritualistic feminine activities like shopping and girls night out”</p> <p>“It is extremely limiting, it’s extremely harmful, there aren’t full presentations of masculine gender”</p>	
	Conscious decision not to conform to hypermasculinity	<p>“A guy who can talk to different folks about difficult things, not an unable to deal with emotions kind of guy”</p>	
	Blending masculine and feminine characteristics	<p>“I embody some aspect of both genders rather than just being like I’m a man now”</p> <p>“I’m not very masculine or macho”</p>	
Language	Masculine pronouns or other gendered language markers	<p>“I just like the space (transgender allows)”</p> <p>“Identifying as queer or genderqueer allows you to define yourself in a more individual way”</p>	Typical (9/15)
	Development of vocabulary to articulate identity in comfortable and recognizable way	<p>“I request masculine pronouns”</p>	
Impact of feminine history	Flexible approach to masculine gender expression	<p>“I understand much more closely the issues that women go through...I also have a unique perspective of male privilege.”</p>	Variant (5/15)

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Feminism/politics	Unique understanding male privilege	“There is a lot of pressure on men to conform to a very narrow notion of what their masculinity is, and I am not willing to do that”	Variant (6/15)
	Discomfort with and opposition to the narrow societal expectations of masculine and feminine behavior	“I’m transferring my feminism to an alter concept of masculinity” “Feminine monikers... feel so much more laden with all sorts of expectations”	
	Use access to men’s spaces to combat sexism and misogyny	“I might be wearing men’s jeans, and an A-tank and a bra, so I can really be seen as either gender”	
Inadequacy of the gender binary	Consciously present self in a way that challenges binary expectations		Variant (5/15)
	The gender binary limits space for self-definition and identification leading to feelings of invisibility	“How I’m being in the world doesn’t make sense in the context of masculinity or femininity” “Butch should also be a gender that can be recognized like [man and woman]”	
Activities non-gendered	Gender coding activities is arbitrary	“I cook, I do art - I don’t think I necessarily have activities that reinforce one thing or another”	Variant (7/15)
	Participate in enjoyable activities regardless of how others may code	“I’ve done some things that strike people as guy things, but I think it’s arbitrary and silly to classify activities by gender”	

<sup>a</sup>General: applicable to all cases; Typical: applicable to at least half of the cases; Variant: applicable to 2 or 3 cases

Table K3

*Categories and Core Ideas in the Context Domain*

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Significant others	Increased connection and openness when out to friends	“My close friends, they are typically the ones who truly understand my gender identity “	General (15/15)
	Friends with queer community members	“The majority of my friends I’m out to, but the majority of my friends are queer as well” “With people who are closer to me I think there’s a level of acceptance if not necessarily understanding... whereas with strangers there’s a lot more confusion...and sort of, discomfort”	
	May not come out to friends post-transition because do not claim a trans identity or fear being treated differently	“I feel like I have to compromise between people actually being able to relate to me as a man and me being able to talk in a more honest way”	
	Acceptance from family members ranges from complete acceptance to complete denial	“There’s people who may have thought of me as 100 percent male and found out I am female to male, and then they’re like “oh, he’s not real.” “They [my family] have been really accepting and great”	
	Friends and family may use incorrect pronoun or name	“My family sees me as weird and confused or something... I’ve tried to keep them informed but they haven’t been very receptive” “With people like my parents... they get extra time to get used to it... my friends, who are my chosen family, have pretty much gotten used to it.”	
General public sphere	Perceived as male when walking through the world	“I think I look just like a guy walking through the world” “Everyone sees me as a man”	Typical (10/15)

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Workplace	<p>Out self to develop closer relationships with coworkers, educate on gender diversity</p> <p>Remain closeted for fear of discrimination or ostracism</p> <p>Acceptance framed as acknowledgement of gender diversity or being perceived as male</p> <p>Gender identity connected to work</p> <p>Challenges in balancing personal comfort and workplace attire</p>	<p>“Use my information and what I have to offer to help educate...”</p> <p>“I’m a professional queer so I basically can be very open with my colleagues and my students”</p> <p>“I wanted [my coworker] to know ... so that there are other things in my life I can share ... that would make more sense”</p> <p>” My coworkers who I haven’t been out to ...either see me as like a very tomboyish straight girl or just very confusing”</p> <p>“I think it’s very important that I don’t feel like I am in feminine drag while I’m at work”</p>	Typical (12/15)
Extent of familiarity with gender diverse community	<p>Self-identify in a more specific or nuanced way to members of the queer community</p> <p>Choice to educate those unfamiliar with gender diversity is a function of energy</p> <p>Those not familiar with gender diversity may have misconception of transfeminine identity</p>	<p>“I pick my terminology based on the experiences of the person I’m talking to”</p> <p>“I think it’s mostly like I try and give people as much as I think that they can process or as much as I feel like processing with them”</p> <p>“At some point you get tired of trying to educate folks... in my everyday life I just am who I am and I just do my thing”</p> <p>“If it is someone I know is knowledgeable with trans issues, or is trans himself, I usually will go into the more lengthy explanation, but usually I just say I’m a transguy or FTM”</p> <p>“I’m getting that more and more... people who are sort of like ‘what do you mean you’re transgender . . . are you saying that you want to</p>	Typical (9/15)

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Preference for non-gendered relating and assumptions	Feeling of anxiety and limitation as a result of others' expectations of how they should act	<p>be a girl?"</p> <p>"Some folks are really ignorant of trans issues, some of them think I'm a transwoman instead of a transguy because they know I'm a trans"</p> <p>"I would hope that people are just comfortable with me and accept me as I am, rather than trying to push me into more conventional expressions of feminine identity that isn't comfortable for me"</p> <p>"I would like folks to not assume anyone's gender... it's really hard to know...because even though someone is presenting that way, it doesn't necessarily mean that's the gender they feel comfortable with..."</p> <p>"I would like to be able to just feel no anxiety – no expectations of how I'm supposed to act."</p>	Variant (5/15)
Safety	<p>Does not always feel safe to behave naturally particularly for more feminine transguys</p> <p>Do not disclose identity because it does not feel safe</p>	<p>"I might do things like consciously watch the way I'm talking... it's kind of hard for me not to pass as queer but I want to be a little less queer maybe because I feel unsafe or something"</p> <p>"I live in a very redneck community that is completely transphobic among other things, and so it would be a disservice to me to identify as a transman."</p> <p>"I also try to not put myself in situations where that's going to be an issue - I live in a big city... a very queer friendly neighborhood... I don't spend a lot of time... where I would feel unsafe."</p>	Variant (5/15)

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Men's spaces	Increased comfort and acceptance in groups of men	“As a female-bodied person, men didn't share these things I now talk with them about at all...”	Variant (6/15)
	Noticeable difference in treatment from biological men	“Bio men are more willing to interact with me presuming I am also a man, a biological man”	
	Acceptance in groups of men is validating	“I guess it reinforces my gender identity for me to hang out with guys or talk to other guys, which is something I didn't used to get to do”	

<sup>a</sup>General: applicable to all cases; Typical: applicable to at least half of the cases; Variant: applicable to 2 or 3 cases

Table K4

*Categories and Core Ideas in the Reactions to Being Asked to Self-Identify Domain*

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Negative	Limitation	“The only struggle I had with it was between the category of being labeled as transman or just man.”	Typical (9/15)
	Invisibility	“I’ve always had a sense of resistance to being confined by any one particular category.”	
	Discomfort	“It is annoying in that one is forced from an institutional level to continue to choose one or the other.” “A lot of times there is this anxiousness about... Do I tell them the true answer? What will they think?’ So usually there is frustration and anxiety.”	
Neutral	Unbothered by the question	“It doesn’t really bring up a whole lot of feelings...” “It does not bother me, I don’t know if it brings up any feelings.” “I thought it was a fine question because there’s a lot of identities on the FTM spectrum and asking that seems like a logical thing when you’re researching that spectrum”	Typical (11/15)
Positive	Grateful for acknowledgement of gender diversity	“I appreciate it when there is a good amount of variance because I realize that not everybody identifies in the same manner...” “I’m glad I have choice that is different from the binary I was used to choosing from. Having a more diverse level of options to choose from is better.”	Variant (4/15)

<sup>a</sup>General: applicable to all cases; Typical: applicable to at least half of the cases; Variant: applicable to 2 or 3 cases



Table K5

*Categories and Core Ideas in the Evolution of Gender Identity Domain*

Category	Core Ideas	Supportive Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Early experiences of gender	Sense of being a boy (or not)	“Going back to childhood, what made me most happy was being able to feel free running around and in my head, I was a boy until somebody told me I wasn’t...”	Typical (8/15)
	Mimic behavior of boys	“I listened to the messages that were intended for boys... I don’t think I could have articulated that when I was very young. But that was what I did...”	
Coming out/prior to transition	Others questioned or disapproved of gender expression	“I don’t have a sense of, you know, that I was always a boy” “I found out very early on that my mother disapproved of me being a tomboy... very rarely did I surrender to pressure that I had to conform... I was disapproved of, but never really beyond verbal disapproval” “Since I was little I wanted my hair to be short... people would mistake me as a boy, and my parents stopped correcting people at some point because it was just too annoying to correct people”	Typical (12/15)
	Sense of anxiety with their bodies and/others’ perceptions of them	“I know that before I transitioned I just had this profound sense of frustration, of constantly being really misunderstood...”	
	Awareness and exploration of gender variant identities through interactions in the queer community	“I did go through a time where I looked very “what is this person”, you know, “is this person male or female”? You know, people looked at me all the time and that was the most uncomfortable part of this whole process for me.”	

Category	Core Ideas	Supportive Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
	Shifts from genderqueer and/or lesbian identities to trans identity	<p>“Hanging out in the queer community...I was able to see different types of people and how they identified and what those things meant to them... so just by having different conversations and really examining myself and what made me happy”</p> <p>“I identified as gender queer for a while before I started taking hormones because I kind of thought I wasn’t going to do that...”</p> <p>“At this point I am a gender queer, but I also strongly consider myself transgender. . .It’s almost leaving one behind for the other in my mind...I am moving more towards that and further away from gender queer”</p> <p>“Before transition I was identified as a lesbian”</p>	
After transition	<p>Increased comfort and reduced anxiety</p> <p>Do not think much about gender anymore</p> <p>Transition was conceptualized as either an ongoing or a discrete</p>	<p>“I felt just so much more comfortable in my skin, and that’s kind of when I stopped worrying about it”</p> <p>“A big shift from feeling very anxious and always feeling people were looking at me and wondering if I was a guy or a girl and having a lot of stress, anxiety, and depression from not feeling like I fit in the world ...”</p> <p>“Now I’m really comfortable and it’s just all that was a matter of the hormones doing their job”</p> <p>“I don’t think of transition as a one year process or a two year process. I think of it as inseparable from living. So in that sense, it’s a life-long process”</p> <p>“I’ve completed my transition”</p>	Typical (12/15)

Category	Core Ideas	Supportive Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Language	Vocabulary of gender diversity has expanded, allowing identification in a more comfortable and accurate way	“I just feel really lucky that I’ve made it to the point... where I finally feel like the language is there,...for me to talk about who I am because for a long time I just felt very isolated”	Variant (4/15)

<sup>a</sup>General: applicable to all cases; Typical: applicable to at least half of the cases; Variant: applicable to 2 or 3 cases

Table K6

*Categories and Core Ideas in the Sexuality Domain*

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Overlap between sexual identity and gender identity	Many identified as queer because their relationships do not fit a heteronormative paradigm	“I wouldn’t say I am only attracted to gay men, but I’m very queer in my relationships. I do tend to date more men than women, but when I am dating women, it’s usually very queer”	Typical (10/15)
	Those who identified as heterosexual indicated that this speaks to their personal concept of male roles and behaviors	“I identify as queer in the sense of my chosen sexual and romantic partners being of multiple genders” “Sexuality and my gender identity are pretty closely married... when people who are maybe differently gendered are together and maybe the world sees them as just a regular heterosexual couple...It’s different - there’s more than meets the eye” “I am a very typical guy in lots of ways, if you look at who I am attracted to, only women, I tend to be attracted to very feminine women” “I think I pretty much relate to women the way I always did, except... after transition I am much more likely to take initiative.”	
Perceptions of sexual orientation	Sexual orientation is frequently misperceived by others	“We’re read as a straight couple by so many... we don’t see ourselves that way” “I got called a dyke all the time but that was not my identity... I don’t identify as a lesbian” “I’m a feminine person, but they see me as male, it automatically makes me a gay guy... then, when they find out that I date women, it confuses people more.”	Variant (7/15)

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Partner discomfort or conflict	Partners of participants may view them differently than they view themselves in an attempt to minimize their discomfort	“But I think it makes it easier for her if people just think that I’m just a regular guy” “I’ve had men that I’ve dated say that [I’m feminine]... I think that’s more about them and their fear of like ‘uh-oh, what does it mean if I’m with a masculine female?’”	Variant (4/14)

<sup>a</sup>General: applicable to all cases; Typical: applicable to at least half of the cases; Variant: applicable to 2 or 3 cases

Table K7

*Categories and Core Ideas in the Involvement with the Transqueer Community Domain*

Category	Core Ideas	Supporting Quotations	Frequency <sup>a</sup>
Extent of engagement with the trans community	Involvement in community reinforces identity and allows them to give and receive support and advice  Some participants choose not to be involved in community because being transgender is not a strong component of their self-concept	“I have several friends who I email with... a website that we interact on, and we occasionally have meetings that I go to. I have attended some of the conferences and seminars like that on legal issues”	Typical (8/15)

<sup>a</sup>General: applicable to all cases; Typical: applicable to at least half of the cases; Variant: applicable to 2 or 3 cases

APPENDIX L  
Expanded Summary of Results

*Domain: Transmasculine Identities and Terminology*

Participants were asked to describe their gender identities and it is noteworthy that all but three utilized multiple terms to describe themselves. Appendix K provides information on how participants labeled themselves. Participants identified terminology that they use to describe their gender identities, and shared what the terminology means to them. The identities and terminology are presented as subdomains. The most frequently identities endorsed by participants in this sample were **transgender, genderqueer, and transman**. Less frequently endorsed were: **FTM transsexual, man, and other identities**.

*Subdomain: Transgender*

Transgender is a term that many of the participants would use to describe their gender identity, although none of the participants who endorsed the use of this term would use it exclusively. That is, every participant who would use the term transgender to describe themselves would also use another more specific term to self-identify. The most common descriptor that emerged in participants' conceptualization of this identity is that **one's gender does not correspond with their birth sex** (typical). Some participants said this mismatch allowed them to flexibly self define and transcend gender stereotypes. Lee said "[transgender] was for me to define it, open, kind of fluidly changing my gender identity and presentation." Mel shared:

In terms of a typical person's or a collective peoples' views of the many ways it's possible to be a gendered person, I fall somewhere outside of masculine and feminine – typical male, typical female and I think that is how I identify as transgender.

Participants also spoke of the struggle that transgender people have to be seen in a way that is congruent with how they see themselves. As Michael said, “You look ambiguous and you're struggling to be seen and accepted in the world the way you would like to be.” Adam commented “I've been myself the whole time and just made the visual and social cues a little clearer so people knew what I was. So, I didn't ‘go across,’ I just reminded people of what was really true.”

Another common descriptor participants used to conceptualize transgender was the **inclusivity of the label** (typical). Many participants said it was an umbrella term that encompassed all gender variant identities. Dennis stated “I appreciate that it functions as an umbrella term because umbrella terms have a way of being able to be inclusive of a lot of different identity categories so I appreciate that about the term transgender.” Another participant, Bert, exemplified this saying, “given an option of the whole spectrum of words to choose from, I would pick genderqueer. If I get only three options of male, female, or transgender I'm going to choose transgender.”

#### *Subdomain: Genderqueer*

Genderqueer is another term with which many participants identified. While some identified primarily as genderqueer, others saw this as an aspect of their identity. Many participants conceptualized genderqueer as a **“both/neither”**

**identity** (typical). This means there is a sense of being more than one gender at a time, or being in between genders. Bert explained:

Genderqueer makes sense to me because I don't want to feel boxed in to having to say I reject the female part of me, because I don't... I think on some days I feel more on the female spectrum and some days I feel more on the male spectrum and some days I feel like somewhere in the middle.

Mel described why he identifies as genderqueer, saying "I think I embody both qualities of masculinity and femininity that are stereotypical qualities. I don't see myself as a man or a woman, and I never really have."

**Transition** (typical) was another theme that emerged in participants' conceptualizations of genderqueer, in a variety of ways. Some said they identified as genderqueer because they have no intention or desire to medically transition. As Radclyff shared, "I'm not going to transition, I'm not FTM... I'm most comfortable in that in-between place that gender queer allows." Bert expressed a similar sentiment saying, "I'm comfortable in the body I'm in, but I don't see myself as just being exclusively female or feminine." Others, like Dennis, said they claim a genderqueer identity in spite of the fact that they have medically transitioned:

I think sometimes there's an assumption that people won't have taken advantage of or undergone any kinds of transformations of their bodies such as medical transition if they identify as gender queer... I have transitioned and still find that to be a really helpful category.



Some participants spoke of genderqueer as a kind of transitional identity, explaining that they identified as genderqueer prior to beginning medical transition but see themselves drifting away from that identity as they go through the process. As Donny said:

I identified as gender queer for a while before I started taking hormones because I kind of thought I wasn't going to do that, and then the more I investigated myself I was like oh yeah, there are more steps on the journey for me.

Similarly, Kyle commented:

I guess previous to my actual decision to transition, I considered myself gender queer because I was one of the guys, but I was perceived as female... I still would consider myself gender queer, but I also strongly consider myself transgender... It's almost leaving one behind for the other in my mind.

Participants said indicated that genderqueer is **inclusive terminology** (variant) that allows them a lot of space to define and express themselves. KC explained "I would say that gender queer is a noncanonical gender... I'd say that it's an umbrella term for a gender any kind of gender that's not man or woman." Adam recognized the inclusivity while commenting on the ambiguity and complexity of the term:

The word genderqueer is both useful and aggravating because it is so vague. Because it leaves so much elbow room that people aren't quite sure what it means...in my own gender I don't feel compelled to keep

things too unitary, too simple. . .dumbed down. So if there's a form with a box that says gender queer, I am likely to check it because it is a catchall term that has enough room in it that surely at least I'll fit there, if I don't necessarily fit somewhere else.

Some participants said that there is a **political aspect** (variant) of claiming a genderqueer identity, allowing them to feel connected to a variety of gender diverse people and also consciously challenging the gender binary in some way (e.g. presentation). Jon conveyed this idea saying that although he is “technically” transgender or a transguy because he was born with a female body and is male-identified, he usually identifies himself to others as genderqueer:

Because it is more all encompassing and I feel more united with other people who are also gender variant in some way, not just people who are on the masculine spectrum or feminine spectrum, but people who are all in between too... I present in a very gender queer kind of way, like I have pink hair and I wear nail polish sometimes, and I'm a very feminine person.

Bert commented:

For me partially, it's personal, it's just who I am, but it's also political, right? It is a more articulated kind of conscious expression that rejects the traditional binary of gender expression...so part of it like I said is natural to me, but part of it is a conscious thought. I just always rebelled against this idea that to be properly expressing your gender as a female you have to adhere to certain standards. Like you know, have a certain hair length

and you have to wear a certain clothing type...so it's that kind of expression on a superficial level but it also goes to how women are socialized to be in society – that they need to be polite and deferential and all the stuff that comes along with it. I just rejected that, like intellectually, personally, politically... you know I didn't want to be put into that narrow box that confined, that continues to confine women. So in my most personal sort of private moments I think that genderqueer expresses who I am, but also in a public, political way expresses who I am.

Other participants shared that they recognized the political aspect to a genderqueer identity for some, but specifically indicated that they did not relate to that piece. Mel articulated this saying:

I think of [gender queer] more as somebody who is like a radical . . . somebody who is actively calling gender systems into question and trying to actively engage with them in their everyday lives in how they try to present their gender... I don't feel qualified enough to be gender queer. Yeah, yeah, in a way, I don't feel like I'm not, not as actively engaged in questioning gender and like stuff like that... I think there's an archetype going on in my head of a gender queer person. Which is very funny because I also think of it as one of the most open-ended kind of identifiers, but for some reason, I feel like I'm either not worthy of it, or I just am not completely embodying that...I feel like my gender identity is less of a political statement and more of just being myself.

Some participants shared that they claim a genderqueer identity because of the **limitation of the gender binary** (variant) and the socially constructed gender norms that arise from that paradigm. Kyle conveyed this idea, defining genderqueer as:

Not fitting the socially constructed binary of gender, and not fulfilling the norm. As far as a general societal standard of, what is male, what is female and who falls under what. I think it has a lot to do with paralleling androgyny and just kind of like testing the gender lines, I suppose, as they've been set forth by society.

Radclyff talked about rejecting binary notions of dress and behavior saying:

I don't make any attempt. . . A lot of it, a lot of the gender expression today is really how you look and how you talk, and I don't use a lot of overtly feminine... anything, to be quite honest. Although I do like to throw in the occasional 'sweetie, it's ok.' On the other hand, I don't think I make any overt attempts to be masculine either. I mean, I wear a lot of men's clothing, but when you put them on a female body it sends mixed messages, as well."

Jon commented:

It's sort of like I almost reinforce my male identity with the feminine things I do. I guess it's... I think it's like I just empower myself more to let me do the things I want to do, not what culture tells me I'm not supposed to. So I want to wear nail polish, I'll say, "well, I'm going to wear this because it makes me feel pretty and I can feel pretty even though

I'm a boy.” I just don't really think about the fact I have a male identity and that's going to stop me from doing things.

*Subdomain: Transman/Transguy*

When participants spoke about what it means to be a transman the two most prevalent themes were *one's gender identity does not correspond to their birth sex* and *transition*. All of the participants who identify as transmen were born with female bodies but have a sense of themselves as male and want to be perceived as male by others. Ben said “[transman] means a person who is internally male, but was born with a female body then subsequently took procedures to match their physical body with their internal identity.” They do this by altering physical markers and secondary sex characteristics (e.g. facial hair, lower vocal tone). They have medically transitioned in some way - all use testosterone and some have had or plan to have top surgery while others may bind their breasts to make their bodies appear male. Phillip explained:

I am on hormones, so I look more masculine just in general and I had top surgery. But as far as what I do - a lot of it is my dress, I guess . . . I'm very - I dress pretty preppy, pretty typical masculine and I always have, but now I feel much more comfortable doing that because it's acceptable if I look male to sort of be wearing a polo shirt, or a shirt and tie, or whatever it is that I always like to wear. So, a lot of it is in my clothes, a lot of it is hormonal now with my voice, and facial hair, just kind of my shape, um, and I guess um, you know, just expressing my gender to people on the street, you know that's pretty much what comes into play.

The majority of participants who have not had top surgery said the primary reasons are the high cost of the procedure, or fears about surgery and potential complications (e.g. loss of sensation). Bottom surgery was reported by only 2 participants, while most others said they would not have bottom surgery for various reasons (e.g. no interest, too expensive, techniques not advanced enough, risks outweigh the benefits).

A few participants said that although the word transman defines their experience, it does not capture their identity. They related this to a sense of **limitation of the gender binary** or an essentialist **either/or perspective**. That is, some participants said that transman may convey a sense that one feels 100% male, which is reinforced when one considers the gender binary, but this is not their experience of themselves. For example, Maxwell said:

It isn't that I am a transman, it's a trans- I want to have a masculine body and to move away from masculinity but not necessarily into femininity or being a woman. I guess technically I could be a transman because I use testosterone and in a lot of ways I move through the world as a man, even though I may not identify as such because it's simpler than "oh here's my gender identity" as a two page answer.

Conversely, some participants said that they see themselves simply as men with unique experiences, so while transman indicates their path, it is not descriptive of their identity. As Michael explained:

I think people use it [transman] in different ways. If I used it, it would be that I was trying to clarify for someone that I am FTM basically, that I am

female to male. I assume that most people use it, but I think that people have different levels of identification with that kind of transgender aspect to them... I think that some people will use transman to say "I am not just a man," to hold on to that a little bit to like differentiate themselves from biologically male-born men. Whereas I can imagine other people using transman to clarify the situation, that they're a man who is female to male... I kind of logically recognize that people might use that word in a category that should include me. I guess I would respond to other people's use of that word as though it would include me. I guess I wouldn't call myself that.

*Subdomain: FTM Transsexual*

Few participants used the word FTM transsexual to describe themselves, and those who did said the label was medicalized and applied to them because their **transition** (general) included hormone usage and completed or intended surgical interventions. They all indicated that medical transition was a criteria to apply this label to oneself, whereas this is not the case for any of the previously mentioned terminology. For instance, Phillip said:

FTM transsexual is along the same lines of born female, identifying as male. For me, I think it does have some connotations of the surgery and hormones being a part of it...when I think of FTM transsexual, I do think about my top surgery and my hormone usage.

Kyle talked about how limited resources impact his ability to claim an FTM transsexual identity:

I do plan to have surgery once I can afford it...because of it not being covered by insurance and all that fun stuff, it will be a while. Also at this stage of my life because of the same issues, I don't intend to have bottom surgery until it becomes a better financial option for me. I feel like if I were close to considering bottom surgery or being able to have top surgery, I would be higher in that scale.

*Subdomain: Man*

Some participants felt the word man best described them, while others had a difficult time claiming this label. Those who used the word man to describe themselves had less connection to any label referencing "trans." They espoused an **either/or** view of gender put forth by the gender binary and described themselves as men with unique histories, who do not identify themselves as transgender. Tony articulated this explaining:

The people who I've met who identify as trans, all of them seem to identify as something, even if they're early in transition, were they seem to identify as like a third gender or as like you know a man or a woman but with you know they sort of qualify it as to their experiences transitioning means that their gender is somehow very different from other men are other women... I don't really see myself as being different from other men I mean I have a different experience from most men but you know everyone has totally different experiences growing up so I don't know that mine is so extraordinarily different that it's made me a completely different kind of man from every other man out there.



As Michael explained:

I don't feel like people who don't know I am transsexual or transgendered, or whatever word you want to use, don't know me. Whereas I imagine that if you believe that transgender part of you is part of who you are, if someone who doesn't know that about you, they don't know you... Me, I feel it is part of my experience. I have had an experience that is not the experience of most men which is that I was in a female body and I was treated as a woman, and I have done these things medically. I consider it to be a medical, like I had very specific type of medical problems and due to having a very specific medical problem, I had a specific experiences. Just like you would undergo a very different experience if you grew up in another country and returned to the United States or if you had some other kind of medical problem where you were in a wheelchair you would have a different experience than other people. Where I consider it part of my experience, I think other people consider that part of their identity.

Conversely, other participants expressed **discomfort with the label "man"** because it is too monolithic and does not capture the experience of gender complexity which they conceptualize as part of their identity. As Adam explained, "For me right now, man is the word I would use if I were talking to somebody who needed me to simplify. But it's not one that I'm finding useful for myself right now." Dennis conveyed a similar idea saying:

I have a harder time claiming [man] than I do having it attributed to me... when people will say, 'this man blah blah blah, this guy,' you know that's

great and I don't have any sense of flinching or anything like that but for me to actually say it feels a lot more, somehow, difficult or something.

For me it cuts through a lot of history it isn't simple.

*Subdomain: Other identity labels*

There were other labels mentioned by some of the participants, and although they were not brought up as frequently as the aforementioned they speak to the diversity and depth of language used to construct identity in this community. Several participants showed a preference for labels that are **inclusive terminology** and allow space to self define, such as "FTM spectrum" or "queer."

Adam said:

There are a lot of ways of doing gender and there are a lot of ways of being masculine or performing masculinity or letting it show through or identifying with it... I'm not sure I can give you a rigorous definition (of FTM spectrum).

Lee conveyed a similar idea saying "regardless of how I present, my take on being male is entirely different. So, I guess to me the term queer is just kind of an umbrella term for my gender identity, but also my sexual identity."

Some spoke of being distinctly tied to a **both/neither** non-binary view of gender, and used labels such as "transfag" or "transgender butch" to describe themselves. Maxwell said that while he will identify himself as a transman because this is the language others understand, this is not a label he finds particularly descriptive of his internal self concept.

Probably the best term as far as a one word identifier, I most closely relate to the word transfag because I feel like that... I mean the word fag in and of itself has a lot of connotation as far as a man being more feminine and I think that when you have that trans piece it really it starts to get at my gender identity. Because I feel that I should have been born with a male body, but then moved away from that into something in this third gender, this non-gender binary.

KC explained:

One of the things about why I sort of specify transgender butch as opposed to just butch, which people just assume you're woman identified and that you're female, is that if you're also transgender and you're butch you might be really unhappy with some parts of your body that are female and that you have because you're female and you might change them and you might not but it's just a very different relationship to your sex characteristics as non-butch woman or even some who strongly identified as a woman and a butch would have... I mean it's sort of like I really strong identify is a butch but I have gender dysphoria too I guess.

Some participants said they recognize **feminine gender expression** as part of their identities and use words like “transfag” and “tranniboy” to convey this distinctly feminine aspect of their transmasculine identities. The label “tranniboy” was also described as conveying a **political aspect of identity**, in that those who identify themselves as tranniboys tend to be more radical and see

themselves as activists. Jon spoke about how he understands the transniboy identity:

In my experience I found that people who identify as transniboy are usually more active or radically inclined whether it's activism or the way that they live in the community or things like that. Also, in a lot of cases, but not all, are either, more femme in some aspect of their identity or just very comfortable with their trans and/or gender queer status if you will, and so, are more willing to just either acknowledge it or play with it or whatever... I feel like I fit in better with people who identify as transniboy or transguys also, as opposed to people who call themselves transmen, because I mean, also the word men or man has a lot of you know, a lot of catch to it, um, plus on top of it, I'm not a very masculine person. To call myself a man, is always very strange, and so maybe because in society men are more masculine than boys are, so it's easier to attach trans to boy, then it is to man.

Another participant mentioned an **either/or** identity label, "MTM," when describing someone who does not identify as FTM, explaining someone who is MTM has always claimed a male identity and would not identify as "trans" post-transition. Lee said:

I've heard the term MTM for female bodied people who transitioned to male but never necessarily ever identified as female or never acknowledged that female side. . . maybe that would be more of my definition for [someone who is not at all FTM].

*Domain: Gender Identity Descriptors*

This domain captured some of the ways the participants conceptualized their gender identities broadly, as opposed to being descriptive of any one specific identity label. All of the participants spoke in some way about their **conceptions of masculinity** (general) and many spoke about **language** (typical). Variant categories included: **impact of feminine history, non-gendered activities, inadequacy of the gender binary, feminism, and political reasons.**

Participants' spoke about how their conceptualization and performance of masculinity is shaped or informed by **societal gender norms**(general). Michael explained how he expresses his gender identity, saying "I guess by how I dress, or how I talk, or walk, or to some extent but not all the time I think I'm being gentlemanly by holding doors for people and that kind of thing." Many participants said that they expressed their gender in a way that is consistent with how society recognizes masculinity in bodily cues such as hair length, tone of voice, facial hair, and body shape. Another common means of gender expression participants spoke of was dress; many mentioned wearing men's clothing. As Ben explained:

Physically, if you want to go by societal norms, the way I present myself is masculine. I have very stereotypical masculine things I do, things I'm interested in... I call myself male. I refer to myself with male pronouns. People refer to me as male with male pronouns. My presentation clothing wise, look wise is male. My mannerisms are male-identified. I speak, act, and do typical masculine things.

Some other participants spoke about expressing masculinity through culturally sanctioned activities such as athletics. Bert said:

I'm pretty naturally athletic which I think then puts you into different gender role where men are more respectful of view they don't condescend to you they see you as an equal and not just a girl who's on the team just because we need girls... so that I think changes the dynamic as well you know where I'm sort of treated with more respect than a lot of females would be so I find that really comfortable.

Other participants conceptualized masculinity based on interactional styles (holding the door, being dominant, forceful, assertive). For example, Tony said when he thinks about the social roles of men he considers:

Stereotypical things about being dominant assertive and you know, unemotional and strong in any context you can think of, and most of those descriptors suit me pretty well and I just terms of the way that I see other men interacting with people I would classify my interaction patterns closer to that than to the sort of more talkative community people oriented way that women seem to interact with each other.

Participants also spoke about how society's conception of masculinity is limiting and harmful. Donny articulated this saying:

Masculinity is defined by way more than the images we get of what we socialize our men in this country to be. It is extremely limiting, it's extremely harmful, there aren't full presentations of masculine gender and men when there are presentations of it, it is almost always followed up by

a homophobic or sexist remark. And so that's frustrating because in other cultures, there's no such thing as a weakness attached by showing compassion or showing your emotion, empathy, or affection.

Some participants explained their conceptualization of masculinity in relation to how they thought they were **perceived by others as masculine**, again based primarily on societal gender norms. For instance, Dennis commented:

I think [others] don't see me as an especially manly man. I think I just kind of have some of that sort of intellectual guy thing going on... I don't know, I mean I think people get something of a guy who can talk to different folks about difficult things no unable to deal with emotions kind of guy.

Radclyff shared:

You know, I'm not one of those super butch mechanic fixes cars type folks, so off the top of my head, I also as I don't see myself as overtly gendered a lot, I don't see my activities as overtly gendered activities, I guess. I can do things, like you know like fix things in the house because I lived in Germany for a while and in my apartment there were skills one has to have like I can install lights and install cabinetry and such that one would consider perhaps incredibly butch, but I don't .

Many participants also indicated that they had made a **conscious decision not to conform to hypermasculinity**. (typical) They said they feel male but do not see themselves as "stereotypically macho" nor do they strive to be. As Lee articulated, "I was very conscientious, when I was taking hormones, I was very

conscientious not to try to act like what our society has stereotyped masculinity to be - like hyper butch, super-macho.” KC explained:

I think of myself as androgynous and not super masculine or macho and so I would also at the same time identify sort of as a geeky sort of androgynous guy... who you know isn't really into cars or sports, sort of stereotypically macho things, and you know has more academic interests.

Many spoke of blending masculine and feminine characteristics, and said this allowed them to feel less inhibited by gender stereotypes. Phillip spoke to this directly explaining:

I embody some aspect of both genders rather than just being like I'm a man now, but I was a woman, or I'm male now and I was female. I feel like I'm less inhibited than the average male, let's say, to say something like 'I like shopping at Pottery Barn,' you know and just not feeling like that's a social . . . you know, it makes me gay or more feminine because some of that stuff I brought with me from being socialized as a female.

Tony commented, “I don't know that masculinity should necessarily be correlated to maleness because I definitely know a lot of very feminine men.”

Language is a common construct that participants used in communicating their gender identities. The **inclusivity and space** (typical) to self define was an important aspect of language identified by participants. They commented that much of the process in their gender identity development has been about finding a comfortable space to convey their sense of gender. Lee shared, “I guess I just like the space (transgender allows) because a lot of my experience has been about



finding a space I'm comfortable in, and it's hard to necessarily pin myself in one category or another." Bert commented that more inclusive terms allow for more self-definition saying:

I think identifying as queer or genderqueer allows you to define yourself in a more sort of, individual way. I think that most people would say "I don't really want to have one label assigned to myself," but you know given the opportunity to sort of have a more broadly defined word that goes along with your identity I think is more comfortable than just saying "I'm this one narrow thing."

Other participants explicitly stated that they consciously used **gendered language markers** (variant) when referring to themselves. As KC said, "I request masculine pronouns... I ask for a masculine title like you know Mr. instead of Ms. or boyfriend instead of girlfriend." Adam pointed out that there are specific ways he identifies his gender in foreign languages explaining:

I speak French and Spanish, and in those languages the speaker, much more often than in English, identifies his or her gender. Like happy, the word happy is coded with the gender of the person who is speaking. So in those languages, I am constantly making choices as how to present my gender in words.

Additionally, participants discussed the impact of the **development of vocabulary** (variant) in conceptualizing their gender identities. They recognized that as terminology develops it offers people more options for self-definition,

allowing them to articulate their identity in a way that is comfortable for them and recognizable to others. As Bert explained:

That identity [genderqueer] has become more articulated in the last couple of years, partially because I am older and the language wasn't there, you know when I was a young sort of whatever... when I was younger and didn't have a way to sort of talk about my gender identity and now I think that the language has sort of developed, and I can identify myself in a more articulate way

Some participants spoke about the **impact of a feminine history** on their conceptualization of gender identity. They conveyed a sense of having a unique experience from male-bodied people who identify as men. They shared that this allows them to have a flexible approach to masculine gender expression, as well as a unique understanding of male privilege. As Ben said:

I understand much more closely the issues that women go through, and somewhat of their experience even though it was as a man experiencing these things, and that lends a certain spin to things. But, it alters my view of the world from your typical man born in a male body. I see things differently from them... men who just want to, again we're being stereotypical, but it is very true, who are out there to get what they can get. I also have a unique perspective of male prerogative. Prerogative is not the word I'm looking for – privilege, male privilege. You know, people always debate about this. I know for a fact that it does exist because I've experienced both sides of this.

Other participants spoke about how **feminism and politics** inform their gender identity. As Adam said:

In America, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century so far, there is a lot of pressure on men to conform to a very narrow notion of what their masculinity is, and I am not willing to do that. It would be ridiculous for me to go to this much effort to transition in a small town in south Louisiana just to have to conform to something that was really limiting. So, in some ways I'm transferring my feminism to an alter concept of masculinity.

Some participants conveyed a discomfort with the societal expectations placed on women in regards to appearance (e.g. dress, cosmetics, hair), behavior (e.g. demure, polite), and role (e.g. mother). Radclyff demonstrated this saying:

I am more comfortable with the moniker boy than with feminine monikers. Just because they feel so much more laden with all sorts of expectations... the options are clear, I mean, that people carry around with them of what femininity is. For example, when I moved to the town where I live currently, I don't have a washer and dryer where I live, so I went to a Laundromat, and there was a woman there who started talking to me. And why I engaged with this woman or continued to talk to her, I don't know why I did. At some point the question of children came up and I said I wasn't interested in having children, again I pretty clearly look the role I am, I think... well at that time I still had hair and now I have more of a shaved head... even where I live which is sort of the back end of nowhere people more than easily work out, gee I'm not your typical girl,

for someone who is going through this grand effort to convince me, that I should have kids. And I should go through the joy of giving birth after I clearly told her I wasn't interested in that.

Some spoke about how they would use their access to men's spaces to combat sexism and misogyny. As Donny said:

I want to be the guy, when two guys are making a sexist remark or joke, to say 'hey that's not cool, do you think that makes you a man? It doesn't.' And actually have credibility with other men because you're the kind of guy who says, 'wait you're a knucklehead,' as opposed to having been just some dyke telling us to cool off because they are feminist crazy.

Some spoke the idea that they choose to consciously present themselves in a way that challenges the gender binary. Maxwell demonstrated this saying:

There is a big part of me that enjoys playing around with gender and not conforming to masculinity in trying to make my own gender out of bits and pieces of masculinity and femininity... Like I might be wearing men's jeans, and an A tank and a bra. So I can really be seen as either gender, and or I have long hair, so potentially I can try and present as more feminine or more masculine or just try to blur it all together which is what usually happens. So, I might be wearing women's pants, but have a man's top on or vice versa sort of thing.

In conceptualizing their gender identity several participants spoke to the **inadequacy of the gender binary** (variant), explaining that this paradigm limits their space for self-definition and identification. Mel exemplified this saying, "I

don't engage with the world in a typically gendered way... how I'm being in the world doesn't make sense in the context of masculinity or femininity... but maybe even calls the whole system into question."KC commented that his gender is unrecognizable in the gender binary paradigm. He said "I want butch to be a more legitimate gender, like man and woman are genders that everyone can understand and recognize - butch should also be a gender that can be recognized like that."

Finally, many participants said they see **activities as non-gendered** (variant) and they do what they enjoy regardless of how it might be (gender) coded. As Lee said:

I cook, I do art. I don't think I necessarily have activities that reinforce one thing or another. You know, I'm not very handy, I don't go out and work on cars, and I don't like to watch football. You know, as far as things that are my interests, or things I'm passionate about, none of it changed once I started transitioning. So I don't know that what I do. . .I guess what I do in my life activities, I don't feel I need those to reinforce how I identify, I just do the things that make me happy.

Adam commented on how gender coding activities is culturally specific and arbitrary. He said:

I've done some things that strike people as guy things, but I think it's arbitrary and silly to classify activities by gender. And again, it varies, for example, if I cook a nice meal in Louisiana, I probably have that in common with the men who live in my neighborhood because a lot of them

cook, and they're really into cooking and food especially barbequing and cooking meat outdoors, it's a very southern male thing. Whereas, if I cooked the same big meal in California, it might be perceived as a feminine activity, especially if I do it indoors. So I think a lot of that is arbitrary.

*Domain: Context*

Categories in this domain represent how participants conceptualize and experience their gender identities in relationship to different settings or roles including: **the general public sphere, the workplace, interactions with significant others, and men's spaces**. Participants also indicated that how they identify themselves to others is a function of their **familiarity with the trans community** as well as **safety**. Finally, participants expressed a **preference for non-gendered relating** when interacting with others.

Many participants indicated that in their day-to-day casual public interactions they are **perceived as male** (typical), and most indicated that is their preference. Dennis shared:

I don't think people look at me when going through the world and think 'gender complexity,' I think I look just like a guy walking through the world, I've been given that feedback and that's fine and good and it does resonate...

Michael said, "Everyone sees me as a man. People don't know or want to know that I was biologically female when I was born. Everyone sees me as a cisgender man." Bertwho does not make an effort to pass as male said that she is sometimes

perceived as such. She commented, “partially, you can construct your own identity but I think partially it’s how others perceive you... you know many times I’ve been called sir in public places and you know it’s also obviously how people perceive me.”

Participants talked about **outing** and **acceptance** in the workplace.

Participants spoke specifically about how or why they out themselves at work.

Some out themselves to develop closer relationships with coworkers, as Lee who is generally not out at work explained:

The coworker I came out to not too long ago, I really wanted her to know. I wanted her to know that about me so that there are other things in my life I can share with her that would make more sense.

Others do so to educate on gender diversity as Donny explained:

I feel blessed and lucky working in that community and being able to relate to people, and being able to use my information and what I have to offer help educate and engage with people who don’t know what transgender is or gender identity. I feel like I’m in a position where I am lucky that I’m confident enough with my own identity and am not worried about what people think about me or that I can be somebody they have faith enough that I can engage outwardly with the media and publically out.

Some also said they remain closeted to protect themselves from discrimination or ostracism As Ben explained:

I had my attorney tell me, because I was telling her that I might out myself just for the ability to help other trans people. She said, ‘Oh heavens, no! That’s for people who can’t pass.’ It was her experience that people who outed themselves lost their jobs. So why not just identify as biological male and leave the whole transition part out, you know?

Some participants framed acceptance as being perceived as male, while others said it was acknowledgement of their gender diversity. For instance, Mel shared his experience being closeted in a male-dominated work environment that caters primarily to sports enthusiasts. He explained:

I got this job just as I was kind of weaning myself off of testosterone, but it was the first time I had really been around men and not completely out to them. I just kind of tried to act like them. I feel like I kind of learned a lot of their behaviors and use them when I’m at work. Like, I don’t know, they only say what’s necessary, speaking lower, I guess, and more forcefully. So I try to be really sure of what I’m saying and then just say it like I’m sure. I tend not to wear some like, I don’t know. . . I have shirts that are like more feminine cut or something. I don’t wear those to work. I mean, most people wear dirty tee shirts and ripped pants. So I tend to go with that. Yeah, but I think that certain extent. . . How do other people see me? Probably like as a young teenage boy who is probably queer.

Although I think I command a little respect just because I’ve learned to speak their language a bit so, um, I mean, respect meaning I don’t know.



Probably that they recognize that I'm a guy and that for them is respecting me.

Dennis said that he openly identifies himself as a transman in his work roles as an educator and a priest, and:

I think sometimes, especially in my church context, I think people sometimes choose not to think about it because they just can't quite wrap their heads around it but I do know that people know and every now and then something comes up that makes it apparent that people have thought about it.

Some also spoke about how their **gender identity is connected to work**, in that some portion of their job involves educating on gender diversity or advocating for gender diverse communities. For instance, Bert works for a university student affairs division that serves LGBTQ students and she said:

You know I'm pretty clear, and part of it has to do with the job than I do. I'm a professional queer so I basically can be very open with my colleagues and my students and you know just the people who I interact with in a professional way about who I am and what I do.

A few participants mentioned the challenges they faced **balancing personal comfort and workplace attire** at some point in their gender identity development. Radclyff commented on this explaining:

The way that I dress is mostly masculine. On the other hand, on the job, in an attempt to look reasonably professional - It's very hard to do that. It's very hard to dress in masculine clothing and fit into a professional

environment, so I feel like I'm sort of having to walk a line between those two things. I don't know if it's a mixture of gender and clothes, but I think it's very important that I don't feel like I am in feminine drag while I'm at work either, so it took me a while when entering a clearly professional space for me to find something that works for me.

Participants also spoke about **outing** and **acceptance** in relation to their significant others, primarily friends and family. The majority of the trans-identified participants indicated that they are out to their families and friends who knew them prior to their decision transition (if applicable). All the participants who were out to their friends said they felt accepted by them. For instance, Phillip shared that he has a different level of connection openness with the friends to whom he is out. He said:

With the people I know well I can relate as having had, you know, having aspects of both male and female and everything in between. Like I can say to people I know well something about my childhood or something like "oh yeah, I used to do Girl Scouts" or something like that in a humorous way, where I cannot be ashamed about sharing that, and they already know and it's kind of interesting for people to hear that. Like one of my friends said something about her being raised as a girl, as if I wasn't, and she sort of caught herself and was like "Oh my God, I wasn't even thinking that you were raised as a girl too."

Participants frequently cited friendships with others in the queer community allowed them to be open. As Lee said, "the majority of my friends I'm out to, but

the majority of my friends are queer as well.” A few participants said they are not out to friends made post-transition because they either do not identify as trans and/or fear they would be treated differently. As Tony, who does not claim a trans identity, shared, “At this point you know, my partner knows and a few friends from college and before I transitioned but none of the friends I’ve made since college have any idea that I’m trans.” Michael said he struggles with whether or not to out himself to new friends. He explained:

In a way, it bugs me not to be able to be sort of more open about it (being trans) without feeling I will risk that the way people see me will change... I moved in August... Friends I know here and friends at my job, don’t know. I’ve been in situations where people don’t know and I don’t mention it. In a way, I’m still trying to figure out how I feel about that. I think I kind of go back and forth.

Participants reported various levels of acceptance from family that ranged from complete acceptance to complete denial. As Lee said, “[My family] have been really accepting and great” while Maxwell said, “some people still see me as a woman including my family.” Michael recalled an incident that showed him that his father was accepting of his gender identity. He explained:

I am originally from the South. In my family, my dad, when my dad is getting into the car with my mom, and he used to it with me and my sister, but he doesn’t do it with me anymore – which to me is like ‘ooh that means you’re there!’ - he will open the door for my Mom and close it for her and then go get in the car.

Another category that emerged in relation to participants' interactions with friends and family was **language variation**, particularly using the incorrect pronoun or name to refer to the participant. Phillip commented on this, saying:

The longer people have known me, the harder it is to change how they think of me, my family, and older friends, definitely, I don't know exactly what they're thinking or how they see me. But I know that even if they look at me and listen to me and I sound and look 100 percent male, they still have this vision of me as female and you know they can mess up the pronoun, or they can say something accidentally because they have known me for so long.

Participants commented on their **access to men's spaces** (variant) and noted differences in their post-transition interactions with non-trans men. There was a general sense of increased comfort and acceptance in groups of men. Ben shared:

As a female-bodied person, men didn't share these things I now talk with them about at all. You know, I'm the intruder, I'm the other side. Now as a male-bodied person and somebody they only know as male, men have these conversations in my presence concerning females and male activities and the underhanded comments men make about women are all out in the open and obvious to me.

Kyle commented how biological men relate to him differently since he's transitioned. He explained:

Bio men are more willing to interact with me presuming I am also a man, a biological man. A good example would be like if you're at a bar. It's like, "oh, you're cool for a chick. You know what I'm talking about, you know you like the things that I like, that's cool." Now it's like, "oh dude, you know we're like the same." It's like "you're a dude, I'm a dude, and we're into the same stuff," where before it was like "oh that's awesome that we're into the same stuff, but you're a cool chick." Like, there's always that hesitation of "oh wow, we can be bros, but you're still a chick." It's so different. It's an interesting line, it's interesting to me the slight thing like that, just because you have proven I'm a bio guy that you treat me differently, you know."

Michael commented that it was validating to be accepted into groups of cisgender men. He said:

I guess it reinforces my gender identity for me to hang out with guys or talk to other guys, which is something I didn't used to get to do. I still, to be honest with you, there are male teachers I am sort of friends with who I teach with and they are really sort of the first male friends I have had. So that does for me I guess... I don't know if it reinforces it for me. It doesn't change my idea of who I am or how comfortable I feel about myself. But it's nice.

Participants explained that the way they identify themselves and relate to others is based on their perceptions about the others' **extent of familiarity with the gender diverse community** (typical). For instance, several articulated that

they would identify themselves in a more specific or nuanced way to members of the queer community or others who are likely to be familiar with gender diversity.

Lee shared his experience of self identifying to others, saying:

I pick my terminology based on the experiences of the person I'm talking to. You know, if it's someone that may already somehow be in a queer community or also identify queer, then I don't necessarily feel the need to identify myself as queer as well. A lot of times that's when I would just say I'm trans.

As KC explained:

I think it's mostly like I try and give people as much as I think that they can process or as much as I feel like processing with them... so if I get a job at a supermarket or CVS next week I'm not going to ask for masculine pronouns because they'll be like 'what?' and I don't feel like dealing with that. If somebody is like gender queer and has this really complicated gender I'd be like yeah I here is my whole paragraph of gender explanation and it'll be cool, you know, here's my paragraph on gender explanation...so those are kind of the extremes...I try and work it out based on important person is to me and how much nuance the sort of see in gender."

A few said that the degree to which they were willing to elaborate and educate others was a function of the participants' energy. Radclyff commented:

At some point you get tired of trying to educate folks, right? So in my everyday life I just am who I am and I just do my thing, so it is nice to be

able to have contact with people who do understand that your gender identity is somewhat fluid and is not in a static place defined by society... If someone asks me how I see myself being gendered, then I will tell them, but if it doesn't occur to them to ask, I don't feel the need to lead with that either. If someone asks, then I will tell them I'm genderqueer, if they don't know what that means, I'm happy to explain it to them. But if they get that "caught in the headlights" look, then I'm ok with just letting them mull it over as well.

When disclosing their gender identities, some participants experienced confused reactions from others not familiar with gender diversity, particularly the misconception that the participants were transfeminine. Phillip shared that this is becoming a common experience for him. He said:

I'm getting that more and more, you know, about people who are sort of like "what do you mean you're transgender . . . you act masculine and you look masculine and you dress masculine. You know, are you saying that you want to be a girl?"

Participants considered **safety** (variant) when they described how they relate to others in regards to their gender identities. Some commented on how it was easier to be themselves when they felt a sense of safety in their setting or interactions. Mel spoke about this contrasting his experience trying to fit in at work where there is significant gender policing, to his experience in other settings. He said:

If I'm going in the grocery store, I'm not making such an effort to appear as a guy. So how is that different (than at work)? I think people see me as more queer – more effeminate. But, I think also I have a much easier time relating to people if I'm not trying to act a role. So, they might see me as more outgoing and more friendly. Um, and in that case, I think also they might not concentrate so much on my outside gender signifiers 'cause it's easier to kind of get beyond that first impressions barrier and relate more person to person.

Several explicitly stated that they would not disclose their gender identity or they would suppress gender variant behavior if they perceived the environment as unsafe. Ben spoke to this saying:

The reason I identify in my hometown community as man is more of a protection thing. I live in a very redneck community that is completely transphobic among other things, and so it would be a disservice to me to identify as a transman. I think in another community that was more accepting, as long as a person did not treat me differently. In other words they treated me as a male and not as a female-male or a female, I have no problems identifying as transman.

Jon talked about how he consciously alters his behavior to fit safely into certain spaces. He explained:

I catch myself if I'm trying to pass in certain spaces, I still see some remnants of things I used to do when I was trying to, I guess, influence other people's views of whether or not they were going to read me as male



or not. Or, certain ways I would be, or certain ways I sit or the way I'm standing. If I am really uncomfortable, I might do things like consciously watch the way I'm talking or not move my hands so much because I don't want to pass, as, either as . . . it's kind of hard for me not to pass as queer but I want to be a little less queer maybe because I feel unsafe or something, and I feel the need to be reinforcing my gender identity for other people and I become very conscious of it then, it's like, "well, no, I'm a boy – it's ok, like I'm a boy." Or in bathrooms and things, I also become very conscious of it then. I'm like, well, you know, 'boys don't do this, or I'm not supposed to look at you, or I'm not supposed to talk to you,' which is very - comes very unnaturally to me.

When participants were asked how they would like others to relate to them in regards to their gender identities, some expressed a **preference for non-gendered relating and assumptions** (variant), as these assumptions are limiting and anxiety provoking. Mel recalled an incident at work that was particularly anxiety provoking for him, saying:

One of my bosses at work, I mean I, there was this one incident where, it was within my first year of working there and I just burst out and said 'oh, I'm just a silly head' and he looked over at me and said 'no, don't ever say that again,' and, and I, I just kind of looked at him like 'well, why?' I don't think I even asked him, like it was just one of those things, there is very overt gender policing sometimes. I don't even know if these guys are really aware of just how strange that seems to me, and how unnatural it is

really. I mean, to expect to kind of push anybody else into what they should or shouldn't be expressing.

Adam said:

I think things work best when people don't assume too much and don't judge too much, but they just pay attention to where they are and who they're with and take things as new. And I don't mean that for just me, but I mean in a general way, with an open mind. See what's here, see where this person seems to be coming from, and accept it... I think things are contextual and flexible, and I'm not saying my gender is necessarily particularly flexible, but I would like people not to come toward me with too rigid assumptions about what I could be. I would like room to be myself whatever that might be.

*Domain: Reactions to being asked to indicate one's gender identity*

Participants expressed a combination of reactions to being asked to indicate their gender identity as part of the screening process for this study. The **negative reactions** (typical) were mostly focused on a sense of limitation. A number of participants expressed the sentiment that one word cannot adequately describe their gender identities. Jon remarked, "I've always had a little dissatisfaction because there isn't quite one word, but I've always dealt with it because there isn't just one word that works for me, but it's good enough." Ben commented, "The only struggle I had with it was between the category of being labeled as transman or just man." Dennis said, "I've always had a sense of resistance to being confined by any one particular category." Some people

reacted to being asked to check a box on a form reminded them of how often they are invisible on an institutional level. Radclyff conveyed this when she said:

It is annoying in that one is forced from an institutional level to continue to choose one or the other. I find it abhorrent, for example, that when kids are born intersexed that there is a push for a decision to be made...if there is no solution for these people who are born with a certain or more uncertainty regarding gender, there's a definite push for them to identify, there's certainly not a lot of room for somebody who is 43 years old who is sitting here saying "I'm just not feeling it, I'm not just feeling very feminine today... I'd really rather not have to mark that box or I really get kind of miffed when I get Ms or when I get called Mrs." But there's no solution there so where do you go? I definitely feel disengaged from that everyday society that I have to deal with. But it just is what it is.

Some also related their negative reactions to this question as related to their history of being offensively or aggressively questioned about their gender in the course of their identity development. Phillip said:

It makes me feel like I'm being cornered a little bit – like I need to choose one or the other which is always how it's been, you know, growing up where you're either a boy or a girl. So, if you're really asking, you know, just choose one of them, um, I think you know I get some of those feelings like well I'm going to have to choose. Which one of am I going to choose? And why? And, I sort of feel like not just one describes me.

Other participants had **neutral reactions** (typical), saying they were not upset by the question and did not experience any particular feelings. Lee said, “I didn’t really have a whole lot of feelings about it one way or another.” Ben said, “It was fine, I had no issues with it.” The participants who expressed **positive reactions** (variant) to the screening question attributed this to the fact that there were options listed which acknowledged or affirmed gender diversity. As Radclyff said, “Actually it’s somewhat refreshing given years of growing up and having to adhere to being a girl and feeling like, at least the circles I travel in, that I have no choice.” Lee said, “Mostly, if anything, I appreciate it when there is a good amount of variance because I realize that not everybody identifies in the same manner.” Michael commented:

I thought it was a reasonable question. It also made me feel like you knew what you were doing, to be honest with you. Just because you asked me up front and knew that it would matter, and knew those terms.

*Domain: Evolution of Gender Identity*

While there were no questions that specifically asked about the path of individuals’ identity development, many participants spoke spontaneously about the evolution of their gender identities when conceptualizing them. They spoke of interactions, thoughts, feelings and behaviors in their **early experiences of gender** (typical), **coming out/prior to transition** (typical), and **after transition** (typical). A few also spoke about how **language** (variant) has been a part of their gender identity development.

When participants spoke about their early experiences of gender some shared that they had a **sense of being a boy**, while others specifically said they did not. Several participants said they **mimicked boys** around them by playing sports, wearing boys clothing, or keeping their hair short. A common recollection of participants' early interactions involved **others questioning, invalidating or disapproving of** their gender expression. Some participants reported a variety of **negative feelings** (variant) associated with gender this time in their lives, including disappointment, anxiety, and guilt.

Participants shared information on their gender identity development prior to transition/coming out. The most common feeling reported by participants at this time was a **sense of anxiety**, primarily with their bodies and/or others' perceptions of them. A few said they became aware of gender diversity and began to explore a gender variant identity through **interactions in the queer community**. As Donny articulated:

When I started work and hanging out in the queer community in Boston, which is very diverse, I was able to see different types of people and how they identified and what those things meant to them, and through that I was able to give myself some kind of guidance, 'well if I'm not this because I don't feel like this, maybe I'm this' so just by having different conversations and really examining myself and what made me happy."

Many of the participants talked about **identity shifts** during the course of coming into a trans identity. Genderqueer and/or lesbian identities were the two most commonly cited identities to precede a trans identity. Kyle shared that he was

only several months into hormone therapy, and had not had surgery or legally changed his name. Therefore, he commented at this point in his identity development, “I am gender queer, but I also strongly consider myself transgender, so it’s almost leaving one behind for the other in my mind. Where it’s like I am moving more towards that and further away from gender queer.” Dennis commented:

I came out as trans after I’d been out as a lesbian for nine years and I wouldn’t go back and say that it was somehow a mistake that I came out as a lesbian and that my gender identity was - yes I had a lot of discordant experiences in that period but I don’t think - I think that I’m always going to be trying to find more, authentic ways of being in the world and I think that the choices that are out there. I don’t think it’s simply a matter of manifesting what’s inside, you know I think that gender identity becomes able to be understood in part through the world and through relationships that we have in the world, and also just cultural shifts.... I first came to the gender queer identity earlier, I claimed that earlier than I claimed the transman and the man identities and that I came to identify as gender queer in the mid-to-late 90s and it became an important category for me to find my way into the trans community.

When participants spoke about their experiences after transition, most expressed a sense of **increased comfort and/or reduction in anxiety** related to gender. Some shared that this manifested in such a way that they do not think much about their gender or how they are presenting anymore. Participants also

spoke about their **conceptualization of transition**. Some considered it a completed process while others framed it as an ongoing and never ending process.

*Domain: Sexuality*

Sexuality was another area participants used in conceptualizing gender identity, particularly **sexual orientation** (typical) and its overlap with gender identity. The majority of participants identified themselves as queer because they are differently gendered and they do not see their relationships fitting a heteronormative paradigm. As Maxwell explained:

I wouldn't say I am only attracted to gay men, but I'm very queer in my relationships. I do tend to date more men than women, but when I am dating women, it's usually very queer. You know, it's not like I'm the man with the woman and we're going to get married and have babies. You know, that's not usually the relationship. Like usually, roles they may be swapped... it's just a little bit different.

Dennis commented:

I identify as queer but I am with a woman very happily, we've been together since we were babies. We got together in college and we just, we got married in 2005 after I transitioned...we're read as a straight couple by so many, I mean understandably...but I, we don't... I and I know my partner also doesn't, you know we don't see ourselves that way so I feel like that's a way in which, at least for me a sense of queerness in terms of sexuality is still part of my gender identity – It's always been wrapped up and connected with that.

A few of the participants identified themselves as heterosexual and indicated that their sexuality plays into their personal concept of maleness in terms of roles and behaviors. Michael said, “I am a very typical guy in lots of ways, if you look at who I am attracted to, only women, I tend to be attracted to very feminine women.” Ben commented:

I think I pretty much relate to women the way I always did, except for I’m probably much more sexually aggressive now. You know, before I would play the female game of well I get to know you and that sort of thing...of course before transition I was identified as a lesbian. So I was interested in women sexually then as well. And, uh, now after transition I am much more likely to take initiative. Women are much more interested in me now that I have transitioned.

**Perceptions of sexual orientation** (variant) was another recurring idea the participants discussed, with many saying they believe their sexual orientation is misperceived by others because of their gender expression. Lee commented:

It can get a little bit sketchy, ah, tricky when people who are maybe differently gendered are together and maybe the world sees them as just a regular heterosexual couple. Maybe they look like two butch dykes but one is a transman, one is a butch dyke. I guess queer is just pretty much queer. It’s different. There’s more than meets the eye.

Bert shared:

Most people, gay and straight, would assume that I’m a lesbian based on my gender expression. So you know I also have to have that conversation,



which is easier now than it used to be, ”well I’m a heterosexual masculine female.”

Finally, a few participants spoke of **partner discomfort or conflict** (variant) related to their gender identities. They shared that they believe their partners view them differently than they view themselves to attempt to minimize their discomfort. Bert commented:

Some people have said to me “I see you as being very feminine” and I’m like “Based on what? Based on the fact that I have a female body?” I don’t feel like I express myself in a way that would be typically feminine...I think it has more to do with men... I’ve had men that I’ve dated say that to me I think that’s more about them and their fear of like “Uh-oh, what does it mean if I’m with a masculine female?”

KCshared:

I think that my boyfriend mostly sees me as a gay man, well he wishfully thinks of me as a gay man. He sees me as a man who is also trans and he knows people are going to see me as young or a woman or whatever but he always refers to me as a man or a guy, his boyfriend. So I think it’s easier for him because when he tries to think of me as transgender he just gets very confused and we both end up getting very upset.

*Domain: Involvement in gender diverse/queer communities*

**Involvement in the gender diverse community** was a typical theme when participants conceptualized their gender identities. They spoke of turning to

the community to connect with others like them to give and receive support and advice. As Maxwell said:

When I look to find community, I look to transmen communities because there are not a lot of folks who go on to medically transition and still identify someone in the middle. I mean that I don't know that many people who identify as such, but I can find that if I go to the transmen community.

Donny commented that in order to reinforce his gender identity:

I go to a transguys social support group...I do a lot of trans political work in trying to bring that kind of thing, so I can kind of hang out with the queer community and the transqueer community a lot. I help to facilitate a trans youth group...I do a lot of mentoring. This is definitely making me feel more connected to the community and not so alone and not so disjointed.

Additionally, some spoke explicitly about how activism in the gender diverse community was a part of their identity. As Jon commented:

In my experience I found that people who identify as transniboy are usually more active or radically inclined whether it's activism or the way that they live in the community or things like that...it's taking that sense of community and identity and, I guess recognition, that I think is important.

Conversely, some participants shared that they did not feel a strong connection to the gender variant community because being transgender is not a strong component of their self concept. As Tony explained:

I think in the trans community there's this real split between, you know sort of, people who identify more on the trans or genderqueer spectrum and people who identify as just men or just women .... There are some people who are like me who've had a male identity their whole life who sort of fit the whole textbook definition, and then there are other people who have sort of more nuanced genders and I don't know if it's the same thing or if we're just lumping people in the same group for no reason ... those different types of transpeople aren't necessarily the same concept I guess, or like the same community even particularly... I think most people who are like me probably don't... I mean I know most people like me probably aren't out and I don't think they're nearly as vocal... I think the people who are most vocal are the people who are sort of on the genderqueer end of the spectrum because they need to be, they're not accepted in our society.

## APPENDIX M

Table of Participants' Gender Identities

Participant <sup>a</sup>	TG	GQ	Trm/Trg	FTM TS	Man	Other	T	Surgery
Ben			(X)		X		10	Ch, Hys, Met, TI
Lee	X		X	(X)		Queer	8	Ch
Maxwell			X	(X)		(Transfag, Tranniboy)	2.5	None
Dennis	(X)	(X)	(X)				7	Chest
Donny		X	(X)				<1	Hys
Bert		(X)					N/A	None
Michael	X		X	(X)	(X)		4	Ch, Hys, Met, TI
Jon	X	(X)	(X)			(Tranniboy)	2	None
Kyle	X	X	(X)	(X)			<1	None
Mel	(X)	(X)					2 <sup>b</sup>	Ch
Phillip	X		(X)	(X)			1	Ch
Radclyff		(X)					N/A	None
KC	X	X			X	Transgender Butch, Andro guy	N/A	None
Tony					X		6	Ch
Adam	(X)	(X)				FTM spectrum	1	None

*Note.* TG=Transgender, GQ=Genderqueer, Trm/Trg=Transman/Transguy, FTM TS=FTM Transsexual, T=years of testosterone, Ch=Chest, Hys=Hysterectomy, Met=Metoidioplasty, TI=Testicular Implants, (x)=identified at screening. <sup>a</sup>Participant pseudonyms; <sup>b</sup>Participant discontinued testosterone use after 2 years