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The double bind theory and gender non-conforming identity development

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to qualitatively investigate the double binding effects of gender oppression on the lives of persons that self-identify as masculine-spectrum gender non-conforming. The qualitative interview used was designed to illuminate early memories of an individual's family of origin and the ways in which parents, siblings, and other primary support systems reacted to gender non-conforming behaviors in a child. The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: Is the identity development of a masculine-spectrum gender non-conforming person built on a relational foundation that is intra-psychically located within a double bind?

The definition of a double bind that was used for data analysis is taken from Seikkula and Olson's (2003) interpretation of a double bind in the context of a family system, "people caught up in an ongoing system which produces conflicting definitions of the relationship and consequent subjective distress." This study sought to excavate the double binds that might be experienced in a family system when one person in the system is, by nature of developing a gender non-conforming identity, unable to meet the interpersonal expectations of the remaining members of the family. Understanding how the double binds of gender oppression, starting from the earliest stages of identity development, affect an individual's attachments and coping skills is critical in working therapeutically with adults and children who are considered gender non-conforming by societal standards.

THE DOUBLE BIND THEORY AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING IDENTITY

DEVELOPMENT

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What is gender identity? This question marks both the beginning and, in some cases, the end of an often unspeakable and indescribable struggle for some individuals. Unspeakable because most people living in present-day social systems have never considered language-ing their arguably a priori comprehension of their own gender identity. Indescribable because that which is perceived as "having always been" for a person finds its expression in aesthetics, behaviors, and choices—not words. Perhaps the answer can be found in the words strung together to describe those expressions and through studying the awareness that constructs and derives meaning from those expressions.

The societal and cultural construction of the gender binary in Western ideology and practices is the foundation of many types of insidious oppressions prevalent in the world today. Arguably, an adherence and devotion to a gender binary in Western culture has created intrapsychic and systemic oppression that affects each individual at every stage of identity development. Yet to recognize, with the imposition of a gender binary, that all people are oppressed by the need to adhere to one fixed gender or another is only the beginning for certain populations of people.

The aim of this study is to qualitatively investigate the double binding effects of gender oppression on the lives of persons that self-identify as masculine-spectrum gender non-conforming. The qualitative interview being used is designed to illuminate early

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memories of an individual's family of origin and the ways in which parents, siblings, and other primary support systems reacted to gender non-conforming behaviors. The purpose of this study is to answer the following question: Is the identity development of a masculine-spectrum, gender non-conforming person built on a relational foundation that is intra-psychically located within a double bind?

The definition of double bind that will be used for data analysis is taken from Seikkula and Olson's (2003) interpretation of a double bind in the context of a family system, "people caught up in an ongoing system which produces conflicting definitions of the relationship and consequent subjective distress." This study seeks to excavate the double binds that are experienced in a family system when a person in a system is, by nature of developing a gender non-conforming identity, unable to meet the interpersonal expectations of the remaining members of the family system. Understanding how the double binds of gender oppression, starting from the earliest stages of identity development, affect an individual's attachments and coping skills is critical in working therapeutically with adults and children who are considered gender non-conforming by societal standards.

What then is a gender non-conforming identity on the masculine spectrum, exactly? This is a difficult question to answer, primarily because gender is a construct formed within the cultures of familial origin that deepens in definition as a person is subject to multiple and layered societal landscapes that greatly affect identity development. Perhaps one way to approach this question is from the place of the "observer", or the "parent(s)", in order to understand the possible implications of the double bind on such an identity within a family system.

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How would parents know if they had a daughter who was developing a gender non-conforming identity on the masculine spectrum? Would they know because their daughter was drawn to physical actions, behaviors, and aesthetics that were more culturally normative and acceptable for a boy? Would their daughter's teachers, coaches, and friends mention that there was something different about her? Would complete strangers identify the daughter as a son and use male pronouns when speaking with or referring to her? Or might they know because their daughter "told" them, possibly even before she could speak full sentences? The answers to these questions are complex and often unclear during a time when "tomboys" are seen as understandable adaptations to less restrictive gender norms and expectations.

How will double binds in a family system be identified if there is not a measurable standard for gender non-conformity? Thus far, there is no research in the social work field that has explored the affects of the double bind on gender non-conforming identity development. Therefore, through interviews, this study will look for evidence of double-binding communication, both verbal and meta-communicated, that is illuminated in themes and patterns of behaviors, reactions, and perceptions in gender roles and expression from a generational perspective within the family systems.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter analyses related literature supporting the design of this study of masculine-spectrum, gender non-conforming identity development and the theory of the double bind. The discussion that follows is meant to build a framework, or scaffolding, for this author's qualitative investigation, as well as clearly emphasize the unique nature of the identity development in a child presenting gender non-conforming behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. Although this chapter will review relevant literature, no research or writing has yet addressed the specific connection between the double bind theory and masculine-spectrum, gender-non-conforming identity development. For this reason, the literature offers a theoretical foundation and justification for this author's study.

The review is divided into two sections. The first section is an exploration of the therapeutic practices and treatment approaches that have developed around the notion of the double bind theory. The second section is a preliminary attempt to understand masculine-spectrum, gender non-conforming identity development through an alternative theoretical lens, with the incorporation of the double bind as a consideration in the developmental process. A short case study is utilized in the second section of the review in an effort to concretize the possibilities that these theories illuminate regarding the double bind within family systems.

The article "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia", written by Gregory Bateson in 1956, has proven to be controversial in the field of social work, since it attempts to define the experience of schizophrenic onset as a mentally ill defense against a specific type of poorly attached parenting style. The criticism of this article is important to understand because in attempting to explain the schizophrenic "ecology of the mind" through a theory call the double bind, Bateson suggests that a primary caregiver's communication style can increase the likelihood of schizophrenic development in a child. It is widely accepted in the fields of psychology and social work that the presence of a double bind in the early developmental stages of a child's identity does not, in fact, cause schizophrenia. Still, Bateson identified an important theory of human related-ness, a formula that can be applied to the developmental processes of other oppressed and marginalized populations.

The double bind theory is based in communications theory and, more specifically, in the theory of logical types. Bateson's controversial article nevertheless presents important logistical criteria for a double bind: there must be two or more people; the experience must be a recurrent theme in the person's life; there needs to be a primary negative injunction (communication); and lastly, a secondary negative injunction that conflicts with the primary at a more abstract level (Bateson, 1972). A double bind can be inflicted on a micro, mezzo, or macro level depending on the extent and level of communication a "victim" is having with the surrounding environment and community.

In her article "The Double Binds of Racism", Vanessa M. Mahmoud (1998) offers a clear and concise understanding of how a double bind can be inflicted on an entire community or population of individuals by a larger macro level of socially influenced

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thought schema. Mahmoud applies the double bind to race theory by investigating explicit instances in which an entire culture can develop in the context of a double bind. "A double-binding relationship is one in which a more powerful person tyrannizes and victimizes a less powerful person, communicating in a mystifying way that binds the victim and leaves him or her no room for safety. The mystification operates through subtle, covert messages that contradict the overt messages, but the victim can neither comment on the discrepancy nor leave the relationship" (Mahmoud, 1998).

Mahmoud identifies possible escapes from a double bind: passive acceptance; verification of the accuracy of perception by a powerful other; physical escape from the field of conflict; and the decision to risk punishment by direct confrontation. These concepts stem from the same relevant theory that Bateson originally articulated in 1956 and act as evidence that aspects of his formulation of the double bind make it applicable to developmental processes other than schizophrenia, such as gender non-conforming identities.

This study proposes that Bateson's double bind theory is applicable to the production of pathology for a gender non-conforming person, beginning in the earliest stages of a child's development within a family system. This proposal is based on the hypothesis that as a gender non-conforming person moves through the developmental stages of life, the double bind will become exponentially more powerful with exposure to complementary institutional and ideological binds. These binds build a matrix of oppressions that shape interpersonal relationships, intrapsychic conceptions, and worldviews.

Bateson's double bind theory emphasizes the origins of communications and learned languages, both verbal and nonverbal, in the early stages of a child's identity development. Understanding attitudes, learned beliefs, and attachments of children exhibiting gender non-conforming behaviors is critical to their early identity development because familial awareness of gender difference in the child is often acknowledged through unspoken meta-communications. To unravel the double binds that are produced within the family system, it is important for families to give expression to these nonverbal communications and understandings. For this reason, many of the terms used in this study have specific origins and intentional meaning, and they represent an effort to support the process of redefining and enriching the languages of gender.

"Gender non-conforming" is a term that was coined by TRANSLATE, a national non-profit that is an advocacy and education project, co-founded by Shannon Sennott, Hadley Smith, and Rebekah Heilman. TRANSLATE provides informational, training, and awareness-raising services to institutions and the general public to raise awareness about gender identity issues relevant to transgender, transsexual, and gender non-conforming individuals. The term "gender non-conforming" is being used to define the criteria for the self-identification of the participants in this study because it was specifically created by TRANSLATE to include a wide range of gender variations in individuals, while avoiding terminology that some argue is mired in a medical and pathological discourse. In a clinical setting, a person who self-identifies as "gender non-conforming" might be *labeled* by mental and physical health providers as having gender identity disorder. This study also recognizes that there is a spectrum within gender non-conformity that ranges from more feminine to more masculine, and that this identification

can only be truly named by the individual who is claiming the identity. A selection criterion for participants in this study was *self-identification* as gender non-conforming on the masculine-spectrum.

In the article "Transgender Emergence: Understanding Diverse Gender Identities and Expressions" (2004)*,* Arlene Istar Lev addresses the specific concerns of transgender and gender non-conforming identities within the mental-health community. The purpose of this article is to increase understanding of gender identity and transgenderism in the social-work community, as well as comfort levels in working with transgender, transsexual, intersex, and other gender-variant individuals. It is also an attempt to develop and enhance specialized skills for the provision of services to transgender individuals and their family members. Lev explicitly addresses the definitions of, and differences among, terms such as *sex*, *gender identity, gender role, and sexual orientation* by breaking down the dominant cultural assumptions that are expressed through language and meta-communications.

Lev (2004) states that the first component of human identity is the biological (or natal) sex, which is a complex physiological amalgam of genetic, hormonal, morphological, chromosomal, gonadal, biochemical, and anatomical factors. The second component of human identity is gender identification, or the internal experience of gender—how one experiences a sense of self as a gendered being. Lev acknowledges that typically gender identity is "experienced as a core identity, a fundamental sense of belonging to one sex or the other. The sense of being a 'man' or 'woman' is an essential attribute of self and many people would have trouble identifying their sense of 'self' outside of the parameters of gender" (Lev, 2004).

The third component to human identity is the gender role, which is the expression of masculinity or femininity, more commonly referred to as a "sex role." Gender role is the socialized aspect of gender that influences appearance, behavior, and personality. The fourth component to human identity is sexual orientation, which is the self-perception of a person's sexual and/or emotional desire, which determines both sexual preference and emotional attraction. Some people experience sexual orientation as an unchanging and essential part of their identity and personality, and others experience it in a more fluid way. Lev recognizes the particular importance of these differences and definitions when considering treatment plans or the ecologies of family systems with individuals that are gender non-conforming.

Lev's emphasis on the separation and identification of different personal identities is useful when working to build a language within a family system that has a gender non-conforming member. Without the creation of communication that incorporates these specific identifications, caregivers can inadvertently place a gender non-conforming child in a perpetual double bind within a family system. Treatment possibilities arise once awareness has developed in a family system about the existence of double binding communications.

In the book *Family Therapy an Intimate History*, Lynn Hoffman explores types of treatments that are used as a response to and in working relation to the double bind. In chapter nine, "The Reflecting Team," Hoffman addresses the double bind in a family therapy setting by giving the history of Tom Andersen's adaptation of the reflecting team, and by demonstrating the usefulness of this therapeutic process in the creation of new language paths for family members that can be employed as alternatives to double

binding interpersonal communication. Hoffman emphasizes how radical this style of therapy felt: "Suddenly it was clear to me what a conspiracy of silence our profession rests on. I found I began to shun not just clinical words but clinical thoughts, and psychological language, which came so easily during backstage exchanges between colleagues, now began to seem like a form of hate speech" (Hoffman, 2002).

Hoffman utilizes the concept of "experience-near language" in the writing of this chapter as a way to deconstruct the paradigm of expert verses patient, and to highlight what Andersen described as "usual-ness" which provides a connective force between the reflecting team and the family within a therapeutic session. Hoffman illuminates, in *usual* language, a concept that Andersen adapted from the English poet John Keats called "negative capability": "Keats had defined this as 'the ability to be in the midst of doubts and uncertainties without any irritable reaching after facts and reason'" (Hoffman, 2002). The ability to maintain a stance of understanding that was grounded in a tolerance of uncertainty encouraged a climate of "reality" pregnant with meta-communicative possibilities.

Bateson's theory of the double bind as it relates to the identification of an internal impasse in an individual's psychic development has also been observed and treated in the context of Finnish family therapy with the use of Tom Andersen's reflecting team model and a therapeutic approach that he developed out of this model called open dialogue (Hoffman, 2002, pp. 152). Open dialogue is a network-based language approach to psychiatric care, and consequently, as a result of the open dialogue treatment meeting format, adaptable for family therapy in cases where there are multiple medical and mental health care providers. This approach was developed in Finland as a response to

Bateson's concept of the double bind, "if this pathology can be warded off or resisted, the total experience may promote creativity" (Seikkula & Olson, 2003).

Open dialogue is a promising treatment model for families with gender non-conforming membership because this approach seeks to dismember the "pathological being" of an individual by building instead a transformative dialogue within a larger social network of providers and family members. In an open dialogue session all individuals within the comprised system have either a professional or natural relationship with the person(s) in crisis. The article "The Open Dialogue Approach to Acute Psychosis: Its Poetics and Micropolitics", by Jaakko Seikkula and Mary Olson, provides a historical and experiential understanding of the approach.

Seikkula and Olson (2003) liken the treatment meeting to a "conversational loom" where a dialogical conversation within the system can give rise to words that are needed in order to communicate, both verbally and meta-communicatively, about the "unspeakable dilemma(s)" of the crisis in the family that is creating the double bind.

The open dialogue approach incorporates Bateson's revised formulation of the double bind theory, "The most useful way to phrase double bind description is not in terms of binder and a victim but in terms of people caught up in an ongoing system which produces conflicting definitions of the relationship and consequent subjective distress" (Seikkula & Olson, 2003, pp. 34). A "problem" within a family system is a circumstance or position that does not have an alternative existence or articulation. It is common for a family system with a gender non-conforming member to experience this child as a "problem" or "crisis" that does not have an alternative existence or articulation.

This definition can be understood as a double bind in a family system as there are two messages being sent linguistically to the child that is experiencing the "crisis" of gender non-conformity. The first negative injunction is a verbally named problem, for example, "You are not a boy, you are a girl. Therefore, you must dress and behave as a girl". The second negative injunction is the meta-communicated awareness that there is no alternative to the problem. These non-verbal communications accompany the command to "behave as a girl" and commonly will express despair, confusion, and hopelessness on the part of the caregiver. The open dialogue approach works to strengthen communication within family systems by opening up the double bind inherent in western understandings of *crisis* by allowing an original family-specific language to develop through treatment.

As an instinctive reply to the call of a crisis within a system the open dialogue approach appears to treat *like* with *like*. It is an adaptation of Andersen's reflecting team model which encouraged echoing of system processes in a "therapeutic setting" between a family and a professional team. With the reflecting team the literal mirror disappeared and the professional team becomes a constructed family system in reflection to a biological family system, the beginning concept of treating like with like. Anderson's reflecting team approach encouraged realistic friendships using more usual and familiar fashions of relating (Hoffman, 2002). However, the open dialogue approach familiarizes and usual-izes the meta-communications of a crisis even more by responding to it inside the junction or location of its origin, the family home. This approach utilizes the notion of *patterning* by returning day after day to meet with the family in its location. By familiarizing the family with a context that opens binds, the reflecting team format

questions patterns and imprints these openings to serve the meanings and relations of the system.

The term "poetics" references part of the theoretical foundation of the open dialogue. Specifically poetics refers to language and communication exchanges and patterns in "face-to-face" encounters (Seikkula & Olson, 2003). This type of exchange, face-to-face, is a forward, or preface, that is symbolically representative of an assumption about an authentic therapeutic climate in western culture. However, the meta-communication of this relation in western culture is a "setting" that is professional-to-patient. In open dialogue the poetics are re-introduced, re-established, and re-defined in order to open up the internal therapeutic bind and treat like with like, face-to-face, familiar, usual, and reflective team to family system.

In open dialogue the tolerance of uncertainty, as a branch of its poetics, replaces, or at the least acts in direct oppositional response to, "assessment tools" and "hypothesizing". The use of dialogism during crisis establishes symbolic communication, these newly constructed conversational patterns within the system frees the language binds. With new paths opening for communication the system no longer pathologizes the crisis, but understands it as an opportunity to create and weave new notions and meanings inside the stories, identities and relationships of the system, as it is wholly located in the world (Seikkula & Olson, 2003). The poetics prescribe a language for suffering that is born out of the "dialogical borderlands", this in turn allows for the silence to break open and the multiple voices to share knowledge.

The narrative approach to therapy is also designed to unravel the double bind within family systems. Michael White's book *Re-authoring Lives* (1995) is an explicit expression of the theoretical foundation of narrative therapy. Narrative theory proposes that human beings are interpreting beings and that it is not possible to interpret human experience without access to some frame of intelligibility that will provide a context for understanding. The stories that are created and expressed in a therapeutic setting are believed to constitute this frame of intelligibility in the narrative approach. A narrative approach to therapy works on the assumption that there is a dominant *story* in western culture that pictures what it means to be a person of moral worth in society. This dominant story emphasizes self-possession, self-containment, and self-actualization. It is posited for the purpose of this study that another emphasis in the dominant westernized storyline is gender conformity. Therefore, being gender conforming means to be a moral worthy person in society. The autonomous independent gender conforming individual is the preferred cultural construction of being in western society. These stories of what a life should look like if it was lived "right" requires certain operations on our lives, much of which are gender specific. These operations allow us to govern our thoughts, our relationships to others, our relationships with ourselves, and our relationship to our bodies.

These governing operations all serve to assist in the reproduction of the "privileged form" or dominant way of being in a culture. The narrative approach attempts to provide a therapeutic climate that thickens the plots of the subordinate storylines of life by exploring other ways of living and thinking. By facilitating the expression of lived experiences that have previously been neglected, alternative frames of

intelligibility are able to surface within the life story of a person. Theoretically this approach to therapy could open the door to working with families that have children with gender non-conforming identities. By allowing alternative frames of experience to surface therapeutically it is possible to loosen the double bind that the family unconsciously utilizes as an operational system for membership cohesion and survival.

Feminist approaches to the double bind are similarly compelling and prudent in practice. Nancy Chodorow introduced the definition of identity formation for women as *maturity*, after differentiation from the mother that is reached through an intrinsic *attachment* and not a *separation.* A female child's psychic development and structure is characterized by a relation to the mother that is "just like her". This relation is understood to be an inherent intra-psychic attachment to the mother and the internalized interjects created in a positive, or like breeding like mentalization. This study intends to explore the implications for early maternal attachment of a child who is designated female at birth and begins to exhibit gender non-conforming behaviors, attitudes and core beliefs because, suddenly the notion of "just like her", is challenged by a psychically structured separation characterized by difference.

Chodorow suggests that a male identity constructs itself through the psychic internalization of *difference* from the mother. The "just like her" attachment that a daughter and mother experience is most commonly not achieved for a son with his father because of the strict gendered roles and norms of western culture. The lack of this equivalent relationship defines the knowing and learning of masculinity as the "not – feminine" and is the difference that cultivates a separation intrinsic to male identity development (Sheinberg & Penn, 1991). This study will question how a gender non-

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conforming masculine spectrum child might develop a cohesive identity in light of Chodorow's observations of western society's exclusive (rather than inclusive) binary (rather than spectrum-ed) criteria for gender identity development.

Inspiration for the questions that are used in the interview process of this study came from the Ackerman Institute's Gender Questions. The interview guide that this author created is used in a narrative approach interviewing style with participants. This style of questioning is specifically developed to obtain narrative data that illuminates the double binds of family systems. The Ackerman Institute developed the gender questions as a forum for processing the most unacknowledged societal gender assumptions. These questions compare the gender relationships within family systems to the ideologies of gender in a cultural context. The questions serve to identify interpersonal definitions and norms of gender and then encourage individuals to reflect on how their behaviors are constrained and constructed to be in concurrence with specific societal definitions (Sheinberg & Penn, 1991).

The questions that are asked in the interview are specifically designed to explore and address past, present, and future understandings of gender roles, expressions, and identities of the gender non-conforming participants. The language developed through these narrative style interviews might serve as a new pronunciation that would be sounded out by spooling together different meta-communications related to gender. Starting with expressions of the histrionic gender norms of a system, then excavating through ideas about the relational consequences that the presences of a gender non-conforming member creates *inside* the system, and the third thread, after the family can

consider different possibilities in gender behaviors, the manufacturing of alternative communications to give meaning to not yet identified norms.

It could be speculated that the newly language-ed norms achieved through this adapted approach of the gender questions would allow for the development of a more complete gender identification for the membership of the entire family system. The individual that is gender non-conforming might come to understand a gendered identity of "self" that would foundationally develop with both of Chodorow's gender identity characteristics, *attachment* and *difference*.

Theoretical and Developmental Considerations in a Case Study

This section of the literature review is an exploration of the diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder (GID) in a masculine-spectrum child through the theoretical lenses of D.W. Winnicott, Erik Erikson, and Peter Fonagy and Mary Target. This brief analysis is a preliminary attempt to understand the object relations, contextual environmental stressors, and psychic traumas that are experienced by a child that is gender non-conforming and more specifically, on the masculine-spectrum of identification.

The rational for specificity in the gender spectrum arrangement is based in the understanding that gender identity, roles, and expression are inextricably bound to, and a construction of, cultural and community perceptions of persons in the world. Therefore, the *treatments* of persons by those that care for them beginning in infancy are inherently imbedded in these same societal assumptions of gender activity. Consequently, it is posited in this section that the identity development of a gender non-conforming person will be environmentally situated in extremely different contexts depending on what "end"

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(or area) of the gender spectrum a person intrinsically corresponds. Following is a short

case vignette describing the presenting problems of a mother with a daughter who

displays symptoms of the diagnosis gender identity disorder.

> In the case of Samantha/Samuel (age 4) mother, Jenny (age 34), initially seeks treatment for her daughter because she is presenting with "disturbing" gender behavior. Jenny reports that the concerning behavior started six months previous to her coming in for therapy. Samantha recently started becoming agitated and aggressive when she was asked to wear certain more "girly" clothes. Samantha has an uncle named Samuel and has recently demanded that Jenny refer to her by this name. Jenny states that when she does not use the name Samuel to refer to Samantha she is met with extremely upsetting fits of anger that make her feel like she is a bad mother. Jenny reports that she has tried to talk with Samantha about her preference for a new name and has offered to call her anything that is still a girl's name. Samantha's common response to conversations around her "being a girl" is overt denial of her gender and even denial of her designated birth sex, stating clearly that she knows she is a boy. The two have recently agreed to call Samantha Sam, for short. This adjustment has made Sam much happier but Jenny is worried that it will not, and does not, end there. Jenny is incredibly concerned about Sam's bathroom behaviors. Sam is standing with both feet on either side of the toilet bowl in order to urinate. When Jenny has witnessed this she becomes scared that Sam with fall and hurt herself but she is also not able to understand why she will not sit down on the seat. When Jenny asked Sam why she chooses to use the toilet this way she says that she is "just doing what daddy does". Jenny is worried that she has let Sam watch both herself and her husband in private situations for too long and wonders if she has participated in Sam's confusion about her gender. Jenny reports that she tries to "remind Sam that she is a girl" but that she "just gets quiet and wanders away". Sam has an older sister, Teresa, who is six years old and is also starting to ask Jenny questions about the things that Sam says and does relating to her gender. Jenny admits that it was Teresa asking her if Sam was "a boy inside her body" that made her finally seek out a therapist. Jenny reports that Sam's father "does not think it is a big deal" and he says that Sam " will grow out of it".

D.W. Winnicott might suggest that Sam's beginnings with her mother,

specifically Jenny's ability to provide "quality management" of her baby's needs, are

crucial to Sam's eventual articulation of her gender identity. However, Winnicott's

theory of false-self disorders is pertinent to Sam's case. There is a significant chance of

false-self development if Sam begins to understand her uniqueness, vibrancy and gender

variance as a threat to her family system. Sam's interpretation and compliance with

familial and cultural cues could ultimately halt her process of true-self development;

Winnicott describes this as an "environmental deficiency disease" (Winnicott, 1952).

Sam's experiences with her mother, and family system, could be characterized by

Winnicott's notion of impingements.   Impingements could occur if Jenny does not allow

Sam to spontaneously and creatively express her gender identification through her

actions, emotions, and activities. Without acknowledgment Sam might feel misread

and/or ignored and the development of her authentic personhood will be suspended until

a holding environment that can nurture a genuine subjective experience is produced

(Mitchell & Black, 1995).

Winnicott's understanding of a baby's experiences in a good-enough holding

environment is termed *subjective omnipotence*. Sam's subjective omnipotence, the

experience of feeling the all-powerful center of all being, might be identified during the

time in her life before she began to display gender non-conforming behaviors. Sam's

mother would deliver, in customary responsiveness, "the world" unto her. This would

create a *moment of illusion* for Sam, the belief that her desires for an object were created

solely through the act of wishing for it (Mitchell & Black, 1995).

Winnicott might have believed that a healthy child, as she matured, would begin

to parallel her subjective omnipotence with the development of an *objective reality*. The

experience of objective reality arises from the feeling of looking outward, an a posteriori

movement that incorporates "finding" understandings into the now dialectic relationship.

One does not replace the other, they are not understood as stages, but rather, together they

inform both subjective and objective experiences. It may be speculated that Sam's

increased awareness and vision of herself in a more masculine context could significantly

disrupt her subjective omnipotence when placed against a backdrop of environmental and

familial impingements. Sam might find that the formation of a false-self would allow her

to survive her relationships without being exposed and damaged by these impingements.

Erik Erikson's theory of development was termed *the eight stages of man,* which

situates a subject from infancy through adulthood, within a larger social construction.

Erikson measured maturation by observing the successful mastery and negotiation of

psychosocial stages for the ego to develop within, this included interactions with larger

social institutions, social values and cultural expectations (Berzoff, Flanagan & Hertz,

2002).

Erikson's understanding of the effect of environment, culture, community and the

family system on the ego development of a person is relevant to Sam's diagnosis.

Erikson might agree, in light of his perceptions of ego development, with Winnicott, that

Sam's deficiency in her development could be interpreted as a disease of Sam's

environment. According to Jenny, Sam moved quietly through the stages of

trust/mistrust (0-18months) and autonomy/shame and doubt (18 months to 3 years). It

might be argued that, because of Sam's new behavioral developments, she is showing

signs of arrest or regression in this second early childhood stage of autonomy/shame

because of the familial reaction that she is receiving regarding only this aspect of her

identity development. It is during this stage that a child will ideally develop an identity

based on social experiences of cooperation and self-expression (Berzoff, Flanagan &

Hertz, 2002). If, as is the case for Sam, the subject's community and family experience

negates her gender identification and expression over an extended period of time the

subject cannot develop the virtue of will. The absence of determination, built on the

foundation of doubt that has been reflected back to Sam by her mother and family, can

insight shame in Sam.

There is also the notion that Sam cannot extract herself from the field in which

she is being reared. In this way Gregory Bateson's theory of the double bind is

appropriate to incorporate into the environmental context of Sam's gender identity

development. The double bind is a theory that is based in communications theory and

more specifically, in the theory of logical types.   The logistical criteria for a double bind

are as follows: There must be two or more people; the experience must be a recurrent

theme in the victim's life; there needs to be a primary negative injunction

(communication); and lastly, a secondary negative injunction that conflicts with the

primary at a more abstract level (Bateson, 1956). A double bind can be inflicted on a

micro, mezzo, or macro level depending on the extent and level of communication a

"victim" is having with one's environment and community.

The double bind theory is applicable to the production of pathology, starting from

the earliest stages of individual development, for a child who is gender non-conforming.

In western culture gender identification is inherent to social perceptions of others and is

intrinsically linked to the internal representations and relations of the subjective self. It is

for this reason that it might be perceived as incongruent with cultural norms, even absurd,

if Jenny introduced herself as, "I am a woman named Jenny". However, imagine if, as

with Sam, verbal recognition and conversation related to gender expression was taking

place. To use the language of Bateson, the primary negative injunction that Sam is

experiencing is the verbal communication that she is "a girl and must dress and act as a

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girl should". The secondary negative injunction that conflicts with the first on a more abstract level is meta-communicated (not spoken but expressed through systemic norms and assumption including body language and care management). This unspoken secondary negative injunction is "you are really a boy, because I would never have to tell you to act like a girl and *be* a girl in this society if you really *were* a girl."

The last criteria to this double bind is that Sam cannot leave her "field" of awareness, in this way, at the age of 4, she is entirely reliant on her family system for survival and must adapt to the double binding communication of care and criteria for love and acceptance within her family. As a gender non-conforming person moves through the developmental stages in life the double bind will become exponentially more powerful as exposure to complementary institutional and ideological binds build a matrix of oppressions that shape that person's existence and worldview.

Peter Fonagy and Mary Target theoretically illuminate the registration of both the verbal and meta-communications of the double bind in their notion of *reflective functioning*. "Reflective function is the developmental acquisition that permits the child to respond not only to other people's behavior, but to her *conception* of their beliefs, feelings, hopes, pretense, plans and so on. Reflective function, or mentalization, enables children to 'read' people's minds. By attributing mental states to others, children make people's behavior *meaningful* and predictable" (Fonagy &Target, 1997, pp. 679-680). Sam's mentalization process might be severely compromised if her conceptions of Jenny's beliefs and intentions surrounding her gender non-conforming identity development are inconsistent with the care or treatment that Sam receives.

Fonagy and Target name *representational mapping* the vehicle that moves an

infant through from teleological to mentalizing models of mind. This is the phenomenon

of matching emotional self-states of the caregiver by the child. Mentalization occurs for

Sam when Jenny reflects, or mirrors, Sam's self-states. "The mother's representation of

the child's affect is represented by the child and is mapped on to the representation of her

self-state" (Fonagy & Target, 2003, pp.683). If Jenny's mirroring of Sam's self-state

relating to her gender identity is not accurate enough the representational mapping is

considered "unavailable, or, contaminated with the mother's own preoccupation". The

consequence of this unavailable and inaccurate mirroring is a compromised self-

development for the child.

The system of attachment, for Fonagy and Target, is intimately linked with both

the representational mapping and the reflective functioning of a child. Sam may have

started out her life experiencing appropriate mirroring from Jenny, allowing her to

develop mentalizing models of mind that were congruent with her evolving self-states.

Once Sam began to display gender non-conforming behavior, the representational

mapping, or vehicle for matching her behavior to her mothers, might become

compromised. Sam's experiences of remoteness in the mirroring that she receives from

Jenny, as she journeys farther down the masculine spectrum, could be metabolized in

different ways.

It would be safe to speculate, from all three theoretical lenses, that the outcome

for Sam's gender identity development is highly dependent on the incorporation of her

environmental and family system relations into her self-schema. If the resources that her

family system can offer are reflective and responsive to the specific needs that she

presents as a gender non-conforming person, then Sam's ability to adapt to the societal constructed double binds will be immense. However, if her environment and her family are not able to appropriately mirror her gender expressions so that she can incorporate a cohesive mentalized understanding of herself, she will experience isolation and self doubt. Sam's questioning self might find it difficult to tolerate the uncertainty of her intuitive gender identification and lead her to try and subscribe to the gender prescriptions of society in order to remain connected to her family system. It is useful, when working clinically with a case such as Sam, to keep in mind that either are possible developmental routes for gender identity formation.

Summary

It is the aim of this study to collect qualitative data about the earliest memories of gender identity recognition in people that self-identify as masculine-spectrum gender non- conforming. If evidence of double binding communications, both verbal and non-verbal exist in the beginning stages of identity development for these people, it might be suggested that clinical treatment include the use of alternative therapeutic orientations and interventions. The suggested alternative models of treatment, open dialogue, narrative approach, and reflecting teams, offer processes that act to unbind the double binds within family systems.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to answer the following question: Is the identity development of a gender non-conforming person built on a relational foundation that is intra-psychically located within a double bind?

In order to answer this question, an exploratory design was utilized with a mix method approach of both a questionnaire (Appendix D) and a qualitative interview (Appendix C). A flexible method of research with a strong emphasis on the qualitative interview was used in the analysis because there does not currently exist any known research on this study question. The exploratory design structure will use induction, a process where the data collection and analysis lead to the theoretical development process. Anastas (1999) notes, "What such studies [flexible method] offer are often characterized as 'rich,' 'thick,' or 'experience-near' depictions of social and psychological phenomena in context" (Anastas, 1999, p.61). A qualitative study with a flexible method will hopefully provide engaging and complex narratives that can be used for further quantitative study.

The inspiration for the questions that were used in the interview process of this study came from the Ackerman Institute's gender questions. The questions that I created were used in a narrative approach interviewing style with study participants. This style of questioning is specifically developed to obtain narrative data that illuminates the double binds of family systems. The Ackerman Institute developed the gender questions

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as a forum for processing the most unacknowledged societal gender assumptions. These

questions compare the gender relationships within family systems to the ideologies of

gender in a cultural context. The questions serve to identify interpersonal definitions and

norms of gender and then encourage individuals to reflect on how their behaviors are

constrained and constructed to be in concurrence with specific societal definitions

(Sheinberg & Penn, 1991). The questions that were created for this study are specifically

designed for a person who self-identifies as gender non-conforming and could help to

pronounce gender fluidity and bring communication and language to relations within

family systems that might be double binding.

   I conducted thirteen in-person, semi-structured interviews, approximately 1 hour

in length. During the interviews I recorded data by tape recording and note taking. The

questions that were asked in the interview are specifically designed to explore and

address past, present, and future understandings of gender roles, expressions, and

identities of these gender non-conforming participants. The questions are as follows:

Gender Questions

   The first category examines the "norm" that the individual aspires to and the

relational consequences of changing it.

   What are your ideas about masculinity? About femininity? As a gender non-

conforming individual how do you believe you should behave toward men/women; how

do you expect them to behave toward you?

   Do you believe that men should feel sad? Afraid? Worried? Unsure? In need of

approval? Dependent on their wives for comfort?

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Do you believe women should feel angry? Assertive? Competitive? Entitled to put themselves first?

These questions are followed by hypothetical questions: ideas about the relational consequences of changing these norms.

If you were to show how angry you feel, how do you think those close to you would feel and react?

If you were to show how much you need protection, how do you think those close to you would feel or react?

If you are frightened or dependent, can you show it to those closest to you without risking a loss of self-esteem?

If you show the feelings you keep silent, how do you think those closest to you might feel or react?

Following are questions that identify norms to which the gender non-conforming individual's parents aspired and how those affected both the individual and the parents.

Did either one of your parents have a hard time meeting their parents' expectations about femininity/masculinity?

If your mother/father had different ideas about masculinity and femininity, how might it have changed their relationship?

What effects did your parents' norms have on your ideas of masculinity and femininity?

If your father or mother disapproved of the manner in which you are a gender non-conforming person how would you have known that growing up?

Once there has been consideration of the different possibilities of gender behaviors, questions about the future address the potential for establishing new norms as well as altering how the problem continues.

If you have a daughter or a son, would you like him/her to feel differently than you do about his/her masculinity/femininity?

Would your parents disapprove if you raised your children with different ideas from theirs about being a man or a woman in the world?

Where there any people in your life growing up that affirmed your gender identity, even in subtle ways? Are there currently any people in your life that affirm your gender identity?

Narrative data was collected from these interviews and combined with the data collected from the questionnaire (Appendix D), which was completed prior to the interview. These two methods aim to target the location of double binds in the relational quality of the family systems of gender non-conforming individuals and produced findings that suggest evidence of the effects of these binds on the development of gender non-conforming identities starting from ages of earliest memory.

The data for this study was analyzed through the grounded theory method. This method involves making meaning of each open-ended answer, comparing and contrasting participants' responses, and compiling narrative themes. The constant comparison method was used to create topic codes for each theme that was identified in the responses to questions. Data analysis and coding was done for each group of questions. For each question a two-column grid was used with imported quotations and phrased into one column and then topic codes and memos were identifying markers for data in the other

column. The columns were cross-sectioned by participants. After a question was

completely coded for each participant it was clear how many participants responded

similarly during each question of the interview. This method allowed for data to be

compared from participant to participant and then eventually across the theoretical

components that emerge. It was also possible to more carefully identify possible

evidence for double binding relational features within families with this method because,

if needed for coding and analysis, an entire response that a participant gave to a question

could be imported into the quotation column.

This study was constructed in order to identify and document the influence of

family systems on the development of gender non-conforming persons with an aim to de-

pathologize gender non-conforming identities and enrich definitions of the developmental

stages of gender non-conforming persons. Ultimately this richness of definition in the

developmental stages will allow for more considerate and appropriate therapeutic

treatment that is based in a knowledge that is not mired in a medical discourse, but rather,

originates within the family history of an individual that is gender non-conforming. This

research and data will be used for the MSW Thesis, presentation, and publication.

Characteristics of the Participants

I interviewed thirteen individuals characterized by the following inclusion

criteria. Since the study focused on uncovering the double binds in masculine-spectrum

gender non-conforming identity development it was required that the interviewees be

designated the sex of female at birth, and, presently self-identify as masculine-spectrum

gender non-conforming. Participants had to be at least 18-years-old but there was no

other age criterion in this study as it was a qualitative exploration of situational and relational recollections of family systems starting with earliest memories and moving into adulthood. It was my intent to interview as diverse a population of participants as possible with consideration to age, ethnicity, geographical location, and race. Since I currently live in the Northeast part of the United States, I attempted to locate a sample of participants living in this area.

The Recruitment Process

I am a co-founder of a non-profit named TRANSLATE, located in Brooklyn, NY, that advocates for both policy protection and awareness/visibility of gender non-conforming persons within institutions and organizations in the United States. I recruited participants through personal contacts that I have made over the last two years through my work with TRANSLATE. I identified 15 different individuals that showed an interest in being participants through brief conversation via TRANSLATE email correspondence and/or at conferences that center around issues related to gender non-conforming identities. I did not need to use any kind of recruitment letters, screening questions, talking points or flyers because I carefully chose individuals that I do not have a personal relationship with but that fit the participant criteria in that they self-identify as masculine-spectrum gender non-conforming. The questions that I created and used were emailed to participants a week before interviewing along with an in depth questionnaire (Appendix D) that was used to gather some personal and demographical information. All the participants that I preliminarily contacted believed that they were able and prepared to be interviewed for this study, many of them have been interviewed for articles or have sat

on panels that relate to their gender identity/expression and are well versed in communicating about this subject matter.

The Nature of Participation

After the HSR was completed I re-contacted the 15 people that I had previously briefly corresponded with to participate in the study. The individuals still able to be a participant in the study were mailed one copy of the Questionnaire (Appendix D), the interview guide (Appendix C), and the resource referral list (Appendix F). I also mailed them two copies of the informed consent (Appendix B). I scheduled a date and time to meet them at a mutually agreed-upon location that was both private but in a public setting, such as a library or other quiet area of campus. I requested that participants be prepared to fill out a hard copy print of the questionnaire before the interview takes place but *after* they have signed the two informed consent forms, this way the participant was not giving any personal data without my having seen a signed consent form, but, they would be familiar with the questions because it was sent to them prior to the in-person interview. If the participant forgot to bring the consent form and questionnaire, I provided copies for the participant to sign and take home. I also had copies of the referral sources for them to take home if they needed them at that time.

In addition, participants were asked to devote some of their personal time to this study—the time involved in completing the questionnaire before the interview, the interview itself, and in travel to and from the interview site. The total amount of time that each participant was asked to commit to was the length of the one-on-one hour interview and travel time.

Participants in this research study were asked to take part in a one-on-one interview with me to explore the values and understandings that their family system had of gender roles, and, more specifically, how their family first came to have knowledge of their gender non-conforming behavior. I conducted these interviews for approximately an hour at a mutually agreed-upon location. I audiotaped these interviews. I either transcribed my interviews or employed a transcriber to transcribe these interviews.

The study collected pertinent demographic information about participants through questions that were asked in the questionnaire (Appendix D). Demographic data that was collected includes, but is not exclusively, the age, educational history, and ethnicity of the participant, what age the participant first remembers their parent(s) acknowledging their gender non-conforming behavior, how many members exist in the family, and, the gender identification of participants.

Risks of Participation

By engaging in this study, participants may have experienced some distress while reflecting on this topic including emotional upset and difficult or buried memories that could cause sadness both in the interview and following. It is for this reason that I decided to interview individuals who are active in their communities regarding issues pertaining to their gender identity and who are more experienced at communicating about this subject. Due to my unique position of being a member of the gender non-conforming community through my advocacy work with TRANSLATE, as well as, being a Smith School for Social Work student, I believe that though the demographic or physical criteria that each participant must have is very open, I chose my participants very

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carefully. The gender non-conforming population is at high risk in the field of mental

health, that is why this study is being conducted. The possible emotional and mental

health risks of this interview were carefully monitored by myself, as the interviewer, and,

it was made clear to participants that the interview could be terminated at any time during

the hour if the participant so choose.

In order to combat the risk of possible emotional and mental upset I sent the

interview guide to participants prior to meeting in person in order to give them an

opportunity to review the questions and think about their responses. Some of the

questions pertained to family history and relationships with family members, and could

have caused discomfort. The chance to review the questions may have eased this

discomfort. After the interview, if it felt needed, I would go over the referral list I sent

them. In those instances I made sure it is clear how they could access the information on

this list. I will keep confidential all information gathered through this study.

Benefits of Participation

Benefits of participating in this study included the opportunity for participants to

give voice to their experiences, personal concerns, and perceptions of how their gender

identity has developed in accordance with the gender roles, conclusions, and practices of

their family of origin. Participants did not receive compensation for their participation in

this study. All participation was voluntary and I informed participants that they may

withdraw from this study without any penalty at any time before, during, or after the

study until March 31, 2008.

Informed Consent Procedures

I emailed or mailed an informed consent form to participants at least a week prior to our interview, so that they could review the study's purpose and its potential risks and benefits prior to our meeting time. If there was not enough time to allow for a week's review of the consent form, I would fax or email the consent form at least the day before the scheduled interview. I requested that participants sign two informed consent forms when we met in person before the interview. I gave participants a copy of the informed consent for their records.

Precautions Taken to Safeguard Confidentiality and Identifiable Information

I am the sole researcher of this study. I employed a transcriber to transcribe the audiotapes. I asked that the transcriber sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix E). I used code numbers for the data and the audiotapes so that participants' names did not appear on them. All data that will be presented in publications and in presentations will be done in the aggregate. When I used illustrative vignettes and quoted comments, I disguised the sources of this information. My research advisor had access to the data after I removed identifying information.

I will keep all of the notes, transcripts and other raw data in a safe and secure place for a period of three years according to federal guidelines. I will store informed consent forms separately from all other data collected to protect confidentiality of the participants in this study. After the three-year period, data will continue to be kept locked and secure until it can be physically destroyed.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter contains findings from the interviews conducted with thirteen

individuals that self-identify as masculine-spectrum gender non-conforming. The

interviews were conducted in a narrative approach interviewing style with participants.

This style of questioning is particularly effective when trying to lend language to

memories, visions, and concepts that have yet to be articulated. In this study the narrative

approach was utilized to obtain narrative data that would illuminate possible evidences of

double binds within family systems through the lenses of less explored subordinate

storylines traced back through personal histories.

 The inspiration for the interview questions developed for this study came from

the Ackerman Institute's gender questions (Sheinberg & Penn, 1991). The Ackerman

Institute developed the gender questions as a forum for processing the most

unacknowledged societal gender assumptions. These questions compare the gender

relationships within family systems to the ideologies of gender in a cultural context. The

questions serve to identify interpersonal definitions and norms of gender and then

encourage individuals to reflect on how their behaviors are constrained and constructed to

be in concurrence with specific societal definitions.

Before participants were interviewed each person filled out an extensive

questionnaire that included demographic information, as well as two questions that asked

participants to write what in their lives they valued most and what in their lives they held most precious to them. It seems important to note that many participants had never been asked these types of narrative questions before and there was often a long moment of reflection in answering. The findings that follow are just those that seemed clinically significant to the question of this thesis, however, there existed a wealth of meaningful narrative data uncovered and explored throughout all thirteen interviews.

Demographic Data

Demographic data was collected before the interview after the participant signed the consent form. The criteria for participation was that the interviewee be 18 years or older and that they identify as a masculine spectrum gender non-conforming individual.

There was a wide range of age, ethnicity, and identification of gender identity. Ages ranged from 21 to 45 with seven participants (54%) being 26 years old or younger, and six participants (46%) being 28 years old and older, one participant (8%) did not respond. Eight participants (62%) identified their ethnicity as Caucasian/white, one participant (8%) identified as "half black/half white", one participant (8%) identified as "1st generation Chicana", one participant (8%) identified as "Mexican American", one participant (8%) identified as "German/Irish/English/Native American", and one participant (8%) did not identify ethnicity. Identifications of gender identity ranged widely with four participants (31%) identifying as "gender-queer", two participants (15%) identifying as "Gender non-conforming (GNC)", two participants (15%) identifying as "male", and one participant (8%) each identifying as "tomboy",

"transgender", "trans", and "transman". One participant (8%) did not respond to the question of gender identity.

Participants were asked how old they were in their first memory of gender non-conforming behavior. Four participants (31%) said their first memory was at the age of three, three participants (23%) said the age of five, two participants (15%) said the age of four, and one participant (8%) each said, "seven", "eight", and "puberty". One participant (8%) did not report an age for their first memory of gender non-conforming behavior. Participants were then asked how old they were when their mother first noticed their gender non-conforming behaviors. Three participants (23%) each said the ages of three, four, five. One participant (8%) each said, seven and twenty-one. Two participants (15%) did not recall an exact age but both stated on their questionnaire that their mothers "knew before (them)". Lastly, participants were asked at what age their father first noticed their gender non-conforming behaviors. These ages were a wider range; two participants (15%) each reported three, four, and seven. One participant (8%) each said five, ten, fifteen, and twenty-three. One participant (8%) recorded paternal death when interviewee was six years old. Two participants (15%) could not identify an age but both noted that their fathers "never noticed".

Participants were asked about the location of their up bringing and also their current place of residence. Though most participants were recruited from the New England area in order that face to face interviews could be conducted there was a wide range of locations of upbringing, including Texas, New Hampshire, Long Island New York, Wisconsin, California, Massachusetts and one participant (8%) who was born in Greece. Three participants (23%) had at least one parent who had immigrated to the

United States, one each from Germany, Mexico, and Greece. Twelve participants (92%) had at least one sibling growing up. Eight participants (62%) identified one or both of their parents as Catholic and three participants (23%) identified one or both of their parents as Christian. Other religious affiliations of participant's parents included Jewish, Greek Orthodox, Protestant, Methodist, and United Church of Christ. Twelve participants (92%) were raised according to their parent's religion. Presently, six participants (46%) have no religious affiliations, three participants (23%) identified themselves as "spiritual", and one participant (8%) each identified as "agnostic" and "United Church of Christ".

Participants were asked to identify both their class status growing up and their current class status. Five participants (38%) identified their class status growing up as "working class". Three participants (23%) each identified their class status growing up as "middle class" and "upper-middle class". One participant (8%) each identified their class status growing up as "low class" and "working-class poor". Twelve participants (92%) identified themselves as having stayed in the same class or moved up in class. These same twelve participants (92%) attributed this to their higher levels of education in adulthood.

Participant's educational history was varied in type but was relatively high across measures. Eleven participants (85%) had attended a four-year college and received an undergraduate degree. Four participants (31%) had received a master's degree in social work. One participant (8%) each received bachelors of fine arts and PhD in neuroscience.

Present occupations of participants also ranged widely. Four participants (31%) worked in the field of "social work". Two participants (15%) each worked in "service industry jobs" or were "students". One participant (8%) each said they were a tattoo artist, university lecturer, lighting designer, musician, and administrator in a non-profit.

In the last two questions participants were asked to identify that which is the most important and/or held the most dear to the participants. When asked "what do you give value to in your life?" eleven participants (85%) said relationships. Nine participants (69%) identified characteristics and/or ideas that they valued, such as strength, loyalty, knowledge, truth, faith, expression of art, and activism. When asked "what do you hold most precious to you in your life?", seven participants (54%) said family and nine participants (69%) said partner/friends. Other things that participants said they held precious were: ideas, life, happiness, self, expression, and opportunity.

Norms and Perceptions of Masculinity and Femininity

The first category of questions in the face-to-face interview examined the "norms" that masculine spectrum gender non-conforming persons aspire to, and the possible relational consequences of changing or shifting perceptions. These questions asked what an individual's "ideas" are about masculinity and femininity. Participants were asked how they believe they should behave towards gender conforming men and women in society as a gender non-conforming individuals, and, how do they expect men and women to behave towards them.

There were significant findings with the question of "ideas" of masculinity and femininity. Twelve participants (92%) stated they believed their concepts and

perceptions of masculinity and femininity to be learned and constructed through socially

regulated norms. In recognizing and identifying the norms of family systems and the

messages that were both verbally and non-verbally, or meta-communicated, during

childhood, one participant stated:

> Well…the rules of engagement are put out there for us, and, depending upon
> where you live they're going to look a little bit differently, but, they really matter,
> ideas of masculinity and femininity matter in terms of your gender assignment.
> So, when I think about my ideas of masculinity, so…I was assigned female at
> birth, and, though I grew-up on a farm and I grew-up working and, um, it was
> really valued to be strong and sort of be masculine. So in that sense growing-up in
> my family on a farm having to do a lot of labor, physical labor, my ideas about
> masculinity in those moments were really connected and positive. Um, it would
> flip some because if I was then back in the house I was the girl and was supposed
> to be doing the things that girls did and doing dishes and what not. And so those
> things were also assigned to me. So, there was a little bit of kind of some crazy
> making in terms of you needed these bodies to go out there and do work in the
> fields and I could do it and I was sort of praised for what I could do at a very
> young age but at the same time it was very quick that flip of the switch to
> suddenly have me back in sort of the ideas of femininity and how I should be and
> behaving outside of those roles for labor and production on a farm if you will.

The idea of masculinity and femininity being a socially constructed binary that

influences unconscious definitions and perceptions was a theme among twelve

participants (92%), and, six participants (46%) articulated a belief that masculinity and

femininity are "not separate", "not a binary", and are in fact, "on a spectrum". Nine

participants (69%) stated that masculinity and femininity are defined through a

"difference" in body language and in social behavior, one participant stated:

> Masculinity and femininity for me have to do with how you present yourself to
> the world, it's more about how people see you or how you present yourself to
> other people. Masculinity deals with like, kind of, a hardness that you present to
> other people. I don't like to think of it as a dichotomy, maybe like a spectrum, but
> certainly not a dichotomy, femininity maybe more like, ah, paying more attention
> to how you hold yourself, just a difference in how you behave I guess.

The same number of participants (69%) felt their definitions of masculinity and femininity were directly tied to, or a result of, parental representations of gender expression and roles. Ten participants (77%) stated that they developed their personal identification with masculinity through messages they received, behaviors that they witnessed, and expressions of roles from their father. One participant stated:

> I was definitely closer with my dad growing-up than with my mom. Like we um, we would like play outside and play with the Legos and I don't know…we had a pick-up truck and we used to play in the back of the pick-up truck all the time. So, I feel like I sort of aligned myself with him for some reason I'm not sure, if it was… it was probably something gendered I guess. I remember one time, he had just come in from mowing the lawn and we had like pricker bushes around one side of our backyard and he had a bunch of scratches on his arm and they were bleeding and ya know this is when I was like…. I don't know how small I was. But it was small enough that like if there's blood, you know that you're supposed to throw a big fuss, I was like "your bleeding and dying", and, I watched him just come in with this blood on his arm and not think anything of it and just like eat his lunch or whatever. And I just remember being like, ugh, you don't have to like cry in front of me because it's okay if there's some blood on your arm. Ya know, there was like this moment of like, oh, maybe I'll try that. So, I think to that extent I was, um, definitely influenced by him.

Seven participants (54%) stated that they personally defined femininity as representative of "emotional" characteristics in a person. One participant compared femininity to masculinity by saying:

> I think that femininity feels very much emotional and intellectual in a lot of ways. Like kind of, smarter, kind of thinking further ahead, and, um, using more of their senses to establish their direction, whereas, I think that sometimes masculinity is just a lot of power driven, a lot of need oriented, I think there's more of a driving force there on some levels.

All participants (100%) stated that "traditional" gender perceptions, presentations, roles, behaviors, and activities in their childhoods did not feel comfortable and/or inline with their internal understandings and feelings of themselves.

I didn't really think about it until I got to like, go through puberty and then I think when sexuality started coming on I was trying to think about like, do I… like boys, do I like girls…or, what people do I like and then how do I have to dress or change my body in different ways in order for those people to like me back, and I realized I didn't wanna do that and that felt really uncomfortable in ways. I also realized that I was really different than a lot of other people, where I never really realized that before. Like I wasn't like all the other girls that liked boys. I took classes like car mechanics and I was the only girl in that class and did a lot of things, which no one else was doing. And I played a lot of sports; the other girls did not do that.

Six participants (46%) stated that the question of what ideas one has about masculinity and femininity was "difficult to answer". One participant expressed:

Ideas of masculinity and femininity…I would say that that is a difficult question to answer mostly because… well, I've never been asked that too specifically and also because I don't really feel like I think about that at all… not on those terms. So, it's, so I actually would have to sit and like think for a while about it and that's, that's actually surprising because it seems like a pretty straight-forward question.

When asked how participants believed they should treat gender conforming men and women eight participants (62%) expressed an "ideal or hope" and seven of the eight participants stated that this "ideal/hope" was to treat others and be treated with "respect and/or human respect". One participant stated:

I expect, ideally, men to treat me as a peer, as a friend. Whether or not that is the case, it's not always the case but that's what I expect. Um, and I suppose I treat them the same. I approach them with…um, respectfully, but it's not always… that's not the way it's always returned I suppose.

Eleven participants (85%) offered what could be termed a "realistic" expectation of treatment by gender conforming men and women. The themes that arose from the idea of interacting with gender conforming people included "not being understood", "being judged", "not having expectations so (I) won't get hurt", and to approach (men and women) with caution and/or slowly. One participant who has transitioned from being female-bodied to male-bodied stated:

Okay, um (sighs) I try really hard to live my life without expectations because I find that they just always end up hurting when eventually expectations don't get met in some way. And the irony about before I transitioned is, well, I was so butch and so visibly gay that I never had to come out, and now (after transitioning) like I kind of… I'm experiencing for the first time the feeling…the struggle of the harbor and safety of being closeted. And the struggle to, to come out (as a trans person), to really feel free, so that somebody can completely or more completely know me.

Of specific notice for twelve participants (92%) were the perceived risks that are associated with personal interactions with gender conforming men. These participants described men's reactions and/or perceptions as "possible threats" and "risks". Risks included "not being/acting/appearing masculine enough (to pass as a man)", "being too masculine in attire/clothing/behavior (as a perceived female-bodied person)", "being too small in size", and, "being judged at work by men". One participant stated:

When I'm with mostly men and when I'm with mostly women there are changes because with women I'm not really afraid of how they perceive me and with men I have to be really masculine, I have to fit in and I'm always worried that they're perceiving me not masculine enough, not like them. I think there's more risk if men think I'm not masculine enough than if women do. And I mean its never been physically threatened but there's certainly…I mean men just expect you to be masculine if you're a man. I think my size has to do with it a lot and I think a lot of it is how I perceive people perceiving me instead of how they actually do. I know the first few times that I used the men's restroom in public I was just totally freaking out. How are people… are people watching my every movement and am I doing this right, and, no one actually cares, men don't actually care or they don't notice, so when I'm with a group of men I just kind of observe and mirror what they do.

Eight participants (62%) cited examples of changing their gender expression and/or behavior throughout their lives to adapt to perceived risks in their families, work places, and interpersonal relationships. One participant stated:

I'm always expecting that maybe people are thinking certain things about me or sometimes I feel like I have to act certain ways that I don't feel comfortable acting around men, I've worked in places that aren't so open-minded, that I was the only person that was gender non-conforming out of like 200 people.

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All participants (100%) noted that their own parents had, at some point in their childhood and/or young adult history, been a perceived "threat or risk" to them due to issues of gender non-conformity. Nine participants (69%) currently perceive one or the other or both of their parents to be an "emotional" risk, "not accepting", or "not understanding". One participant expressed:

> I expect them (people in general) to not really understand me or know where I'm coming from. That is why maybe I make a lot of judgments on them I think. Um, I mean I think like even with my parents… I think with my mother especially, my dad always has conversations with me and is like well I really want to try to understand this, I think he's more, he's both accepting and inclusive and I think that my mother is more tolerant and tries to be accepting but it's really hard for her.

Nine participants (69%) stated that their father was currently an "accepting and/or supportive" person in their life and two participants (15%) stated that their mother was currently an "accepting and/or supportive" person in their life.

Ten participants that went to college (77%) stated that they felt "safe" in that environment to express their gender non-conformity and six participants (46%) of those that attended college went to a women's college. In discussing the experience of coming out as trans identified in a women's college one participant stated:

> We talked a lot about male privilege when I was coming out as trans. Like, I came out in college. So, there's a lot of "okay, you're a guy and you're at a women's college what does that mean?" So, it was a little of like what does it mean to be a guy at a women's college, and, what does it mean to be a guy in the world, and, what does it mean to be a white upper-class guy moving into… ya know, with my educational background etc, etc, etc. So, I feel like, to that extent I think that I try to be really conscious of the amount of space that I'm taking up… um, when I'm interacting with people. I try not to fall victim to these kind of "manly" games. Like, my dad does that all the time. And ya know, I see men do it where there's this sort of like mean, joking, or misogynous joking kind of thing that guys do when they are among themselves and I try very hard to stay separate from that or speak out against that if I feel safe enough to do so. I also try to remain emotionally present in a way that I think a lot of straight guys in our culture aren't

taught to be like. Ya know, like I watch my dad and he's pretty much only comfortable being happy or angry like in terms of the emotional range. It's kind of cool. I've become really active with the UCC Church, which is about 70% lesbians and, um, the rest is sort of enlightened straight families from the area. And so, I've met a lot of guys there and, I actually just started getting involved with planning to do a men's lay led service every year. Um, and I've never really been in like only, like a group of only men before, having gone to a women's college.

Twelve participants (92%) acknowledged that their closest relations and most comfortable interactions were with people that were inclusive and accepting of gender non-conformity. One participant discussed the desire to spend time with people who are aware of their position as a gender conforming person because with that awareness comes the possibility of being able to understand gender non-conformity:

I feel more comfortable around people who either feel less gender conforming in some way or just people who don't buy into the gender binary. Or, people who totally recognize that it exists and they're like, well, "I'm gender conforming". 'Cause then it's kind of like you're completely recognizing everything that's happening and see it as really ridiculous and I feel more comfortable around, um, those people and I expect them to be respectful I guess, maybe because they understand that piece more, and because there's more understanding of what gender conformity is and therefore what gender non-conforming would potentially mean.

Participants were then asked two questions, the first was whether or not they believed that men should feel sad, afraid, worried, unsure, in need of approval, and dependent on their wives for comfort. The second was whether or they believed women should feel angry, Assertive, entitled to put themselves first, and competitive. For both of these questions all participants (100%) responded that "yes" they felt men and women should feel these emotions.

One participant discussed the belief that men should feel sad, afraid, worried, unsure, in need of approval, and dependent on their wives for comfort:

Yes, (this belief comes from) I guess seeing people not do it, not express it, and what happens when men don't do that, I guess like with my dad, upholding this spear of rigid views of masculinity and how it kind of boils over. I mean at least that's how I perceive it. Boiling over until like rage or violence.

Another participant discussed the social consequences of men and women feeling and showing emotions that do not traditionally coincide with the gender binary:

I think that if women want to feel those things they should be able to feel them. And if men want to feel those things, they should be able to feel them. But, I think the problem is that when women feel these things then they're considered jealous and when men feel these things it's okay because they're a man and they're allowed, in society, to feel these things and so especially like being competitive, but I mean… if a woman feels angry I think there could be a lot of stereotypes like, oh, that woman is moody or angry or…and a man could feel the same thing but men sometimes are allowed to feel angry feelings.

Eight participants (62%) answered that men and women should be able to feel a "range of emotions" and/or "everyone has all those feelings". One participant stated:

I would answer that the same way I just answered the other. I mean that's liberation right… we all can access the range of feelings and emotions and again it's some level of dependency and independence and interdependency, ah, then, I think we'd look very different.

Relational Consequences of Differences in Norms

This section of questioning asks participants to speak to their personal experiences and emotional understandings of how they, as gender non-conforming individuals on the masculine spectrum, have learned to metabolize emotions in light of their perceptions of masculinity and femininity.

Participants were asked to describe how they thought those closest to them might feel and/or react if they showed anger. Twelve participants (92%) stated that they "do

not express anger often". One participant discussed the differences in his expression and other's perceptions of anger after transitioning:

> I think now it's given a lot of less validity, like… when I am angry a lot of times people blame it on all this other stress that maleness is… I don't know, I don't think I express anger a lot so…

> So I don't know that it's an issue but, yeah. In general, I kind of internalize all my emotions. And I don't know if that's a male thing or just a "me" thing but, um, I mean I have anger but never like explosive anger.

Seven participants (54%) stated that those close to them have a negative and/or un-accepting reaction to the expression of anger. Four participants (31%) reported that showing anger leads to a deep feeling of discomfort and/or vulnerability, and the same number of participants (31%) stated that they internalized "most" emotions and feelings including anger. One participant stated:

> I was definitely raised in a household that we didn't talk about our feelings whether they were positive or negative and so if we were angry or frustrated, um, or upset we didn't share that with each other. But it's also curious because…well, living in society and being raised female, um, ya know I would say… it was influential being raised female, to not show anger, but in a sort of twist, that showed weakness, showing any emotion was equated to showing weakness. So in an effort to never be seen as weak, being a huge tomboy and always being mistaken for a boy when I was younger, um, already having such a visible mark, I didn't want any more attention. I didn't want anything else that could show a weakness 'cause clearly me not looking like a girl, I couldn't hide… um and so I think by not showing emotions or reactions was part of being gender non-conforming at such a young age, like, I learned really quickly like if somebody's giving you shit about looking like a boy, the last thing I do is cry and the last thing I do is get angry, because that just rawls them up more and that's just going to hurt me more in the end.

Lastly, eight participants (62%) reported "avoiding" the feeling of anger and half of those that said they avoided anger (31%), when asked how they show anger if they cannot avoid it, stated that they were "not good at that". One participant talked about how his father's expression of anger is tied to his own:

Anger is one of the things I'm not very good at. Um, it probably has to do with being socialized as female. I'm kind of… I mean my dad, when he's not being happy and jokey and easy going will occasionally explode and then he's like really scary. Um soo, yeah.. And I think that because I saw his rage as like this really terrifying out of control thing; it was something that I was like, almost too much…. Like I talked about it in therapy like, um, to the extent that it's really hard for me to do deal with anger in myself and with other people, ya know, it's like the worst thing that you can tell me is that you're mad at me.

The next question asked how participants believe those close to them would feel and/or react if they showed a need or desire for protection. Nine participants (69%) stated that they do not "often" ask for protection from those close to them. The same number of participants (69%) reported that they do not trust even those closest to them to protect them. And again, nine participants (69%) said that those close to them have a negative and/or unsupportive reaction to them showing a need for protection. One participant expressed all three themes:

I think that's unfortunate that I don't have that many people in my life that I feel comfortable um saying that I need to feel that way or that I do feel that way. Um… and I don't think that I'm very good at saying when I do. Even if there might be people in my life that would probably um respect that and be present for that. Um… I don't know if I do it so well.

Eight participants (62%) differentiated between physical protection and emotional protection, and of those that differentiated six participants (46%) stated that it was easier to show a need for physical protection as a gender non-conforming person than to show a desire for emotional protection. Six participants (46%) said that they had "always learned to protect myself". One participant discusses these themes from the prospective of a "passing" transman:

Ask for protection? It's not something I've done very much at all. I can probably count on one hand the number of times in my life where I've let somebody take care of me… in more of an emotional sense, not like I got sick or I'm puking and need somebody to hold my hair back…what's left of my hair! Um, but that was

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another sort of survival mechanism of mine… that if I don't let anybody take care of me than I can never be disappointed when they can't take care of me. Also, pretty…. Pretty easily tracked back to being the child of an alcoholic and the disappointment factor and the being hurt factor. Um, and so it's really kind of been a struggle for me but I feel like… I feel like now presenting as male (pause) is kind of… it kind of allows me to let myself be taken care of more because I feel like it's still so important for me to be seen as queer and as gender non-conforming and I'm in such a male body now that I choose specifically feminine characterized things so that I can still kind of float back into that gender non-conforming way of life, whereas, when I was a butch dyke there was no way on earth I was letting anybody take care of me. I was not letting anyone protect me. I was tough as nails. And now that I'm a guy, I kind of want to let myself move into that gentler sort of area so that I can still feel as queer as I feel. So, that's really me anyway, and others can now see me and read me. And whereas, my body was, was in direct opposition to a safe harbor as a butch dyke, now my body is it's own protection.

Four participants (31%) made a distinction between asking for protection from "those close to you" and "parents", stating that showing a need for protection to family members was different than showing a need for protection in relationships with partners and friends. One participant describes how he believes his relationship with his father has evolved through his transition and how he would feel protected by him now:

Mm-hm, to the people I'm close to. Um, if… it's a little bit weirder with family, my dad and I are trying to figure out our relationship right now because um my parents have just, kind of in the last year, made this complete 180 around, which before that they were not very accepting and now they're like super, dooper, dooper, dooper accepting and it's a little… it's kind of overwhelming because it's still almost takes me by surprise every time that they ya know call me (subject states name) or call me he or … I mean, they got me this cheesy, cheesy shirt for Valentine's Day that on the front it's got like this little cartoon guy and it's like, "You might picture what you want in a perfect son.." and there's all these little arrows that are pointing to "really smart," "good sense of humor," "kind", ya know pointing to this guy and then on the inside it says, "Here's our individual mirror." Right? And I was like cheesy, perfect! I still can't believe it ya know… So, my dad and I are sort of working out what it means now about our relationship, because he's almost like…. Not overdoing it, because I certainly appreciate it, but he… in some ways, he keeps telling me how to be a guy. And I keep having to sort of be, well, I'm not trying to be a guy like you dad. I'm trying to be a guy like me. And so, maybe I don't want to…I don't know, wear certain clothes or ya know… he keeps, I mean, he's joking but he's always like come

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watch football and drink beer! And I'm like none of those things are appealing to me. Even though, they are in fact gendered in my life, that is what guys do, I don't drink and I think that football's boring. So, but, I think that if I… I mean, I know if I needed him to come into the locker room with me or something, you know…he would be there for me.

Participants were then asked if they felt frightened or dependent, could they show it to those close to them without risking a loss of self-esteem. Three participants (23%) reported that they could feel dependent or frightened and shows these emotions to those close to them without risking a loss of self-esteem. In discussing the ability to express feelings of dependence and fear one participant stated:

Yes, I do. Some people can just hold that in and feel like they gotta take it wherever… I'm not very good at that. I'm kind of transparent. If I'm a mess people tend to know it, or how to treat me. Yes and when… well I've also been in therapy for a very long time. So let's throw that out there too.

Ten participants (77%) expressed that they would be risking a loss of self-esteem if they showed those close to them feelings of fright or dependence. Reported results of expressing these emotions were loss of self-esteem, fear of losing loved ones to "stronger" partners, appearing less "attractive" to others, and not fitting the socially prescribed "gender roles of masculinity". One participant stated:

Show dependence, I don't think so. I think I try to not be dependent on anyone. I think I turn it into something else. If it's actual fear than I definitely internalize it and if it can be turned into anger or action than I do that instead, outwardly. I would lose self… a certain level of self-esteem to show dependency or fear.

The last question in the section that targeted the relational consequences of perceived gender norms for masculine spectrum gender non-conforming individuals focused on feelings that one may keep silent. Participants were asked to describe how those close to them might react if they showed feelings that they keep silent or private. Nine participants (69%) reported that they either do not show, or rarely show, feelings

that they keep silent.   One participant shared why he is not usually comfortable sharing

feelings he keeps silent:

> I guess I'm worried they won't understand me or know who I really am, or um,
> I'm worried about loosing people, people leaving.

Three participants (23%) stated that they express most feelings and/or have few

silent feelings. One participant linked his occupation as a social worker to his ability to

speak opening with people in his life:

> I think because of my profession and how I'm able to talk and I'm always put as
> the mediator in between most situations, I'm not expected to keep things quiet.
> So, I wouldn't know how to answer that question really. Because they would be
> like why wouldn't you say something? (Laughs) 'Cause they are so used to me
> being a professional, even in my personal life.

Four participants (31%) said that their transition from a female-bodied person to a

male-bodied person was a silent feeling and/or a secret from others that were close to

them, and, nine participants (69%) said that their feelings of gender non-conformity in

childhood and adolescence was a feeling that they keep silent from others close to them.

One participant identifies a fear of being rejected as a reason for keeping feelings of

gender non-conformity silent:

> I mean definitely, in times before I transitioned it was a huge secret that I was
> thinking about it at all, and so, there was a huge fear of rejection and I was pretty
> young then, it was before the whole trans thing really took off, it was rarely
> understood.

Parent's Norms and The Affects of Family System Functions on Gender Non-Conforming

Members

This section of questions is aimed to identify the norms to which the gender non-

conforming individual's parents aspired and how the norms affected both the individual

and their parents.   Participants were asked if either one of their parents had a difficult time meeting their own parents' expectations of gender roles and/or masculinity and femininity. Ten participants (77%) believed that their parents met the expectations of their own parent's ideas of masculinity and femininity. Two participants (15%) said that they thought their fathers did not meet their family expectations of how a man should be perceived in society.

They were then asked if their mother and father had different ideas about masculinity and femininity how might that have changed their marriage and/or relationship. Six participants (46%) believed that if their parents had different ideas of masculinity and femininity it might have increased the happiness and/or value of their relationship and/or connection between their parents. One participant discussed differences in the traditional gender roles and how he imagined that might have affected his parent's connection:

> Maybe then my dad would be cooking dinner sometimes. Which would be pretty cool. Um, and… yeah, I really wish my mom would say, ya know what, if you don't like what I'm cooking, you can cook sometime. Or ya know something like that just to… I would like to see my parent's relationship be more of a partnership and less of like a… if he does all the work in the yard and she does all the work in the house… it just seems rude to me that if someone else is cooking for you that you would… like… be insulting.

Four participants (31%) said they "could not imagine" what their parent's relationship would have been like if they had different ideas of gender roles, masculinity, and femininity. The same number of participants (31%) stated that they did not think their parents would have gotten married to each other if their ideas had been different. Often both of these themes were found in relation to each other as one participant stated:

I mean I can't even imagine what that… they probably would've never gotten together I suppose, ya know? My dad wouldn't be looking for someone that he could control and my mom wouldn't have been looking for someone who she felt safe and protected by. Um…I can't imagine, yeah, I can't imagine.

The next two questions that participants were asked in this section related to the inter-generational transmission and/or effects of parents' norms and values on the participants ideas of masculinity and femininity. They were also asked if their father or mother disapproved of the manner in which they were/are gender non-conforming, how might they have known that growing up. Eleven participants (85%) reported that their parents did not talk openly about their gender non-conforming behaviors and identities but rather focused on their clothing choices and preferences when they were children. One participant narrates a story that was a theme with strikingly few differences from one participant's story to another:

> Well fighting back then was about clothing… I was not going to wear those clothes to school that she wanted me in. I couldn't do it. I wanted to want what she wanted to get for me… and she picks out these things and in the moment we're like…we're like mother and daughter! And it's beautiful right, I'm a little kid but…I get home and have these things now that I can't wear. Now the reality hits like oh my God I can't wear any of this stuff! And I'm just, again I'm in elementary school, but I know I can't do it! I can't pull that off. I can't wear these dresses to school and be seen in this. I can't do it. And so we fight about it. So, I get up on school mornings and I'm dressed in something else. From the summer. And she wants me in something else! I would pack a separate bag and I had quite a walk to get to my school bus, we were in the country, and I would jump into the woods prior to getting to the school bus stop where I was the only one waiting there. It was like no big deal. We were like isolated, and I changed my clothes. So I'd start out in the s---- that she'd put out for me and she'd go off to work and my grandfather would see us off. And my brother and I were staggered 'cause he was two years older and we went to a different school and whatever, whatever… and I'm changed. And so I'd go to school and before she'd get home I could be in those clothes because they were the after-school clothes anyway. And so this went on and on and on all through school and then even there after in my adult life. I'd go home for Christmas and she'd have these gifts for me that would be these clothes and that's as recent as when I was at Smith (all women's college).

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Nine participants (69%) stated that they tried to fit into their parent's, peers, siblings, and society's ideas of gender roles but believe they were not successful. One participant gives a narrative that touches on many of the feelings that other participants experienced as well during later adolescents:

I guess that when I was so miserable by the time I was in my senior year of high school I just felt so uncomfortable, even now having my parents be like, oh, well high school wasn't that bad for you…or, like, it wasn't that bad for you when, ya know, you were in New Hampshire and whatever. That they couldn't see how awkward I looked even in my class photographs… like how awkward and uncomfortable I looked. Like, come on! If I'm your only child and you're really like totally focused on me you have to know that I look f---ing weird in my pictures (laughing) like really ya know? I felt totally invisible. Like completely invisible. I mean and it wasn't even like I was trying to express myself and my parents were wigging out necessarily because I felt like I couldn't… it's like I was just getting by almost. And it was also hard because both of my parents are public school teachers where I went to high school so it was like…and it's a small town… so it was like everyone kind of had these preconceived notions of who you are before you even get to your developmental (chuckles) years so it's like I'm always going to be this person and I was trying really hard to fit in and the second I left it was like an explosion of myself basically.

Six participants (46%) said that they wanted to make their mother, father, and/or entire family "happy" and "wanted to be accepted" by their parents. Again, sic participants (46%) did not want to "embarrass" their parents and/or family. Four participants (31%) said that they felt "ashamed" and/or "guilty" for not wanting to wear the clothes that their parents made them wear. One participant stated:

Mm…. I think I felt guilty, ya know? I think that they… they were pretty traditional so I think I felt guilty about not being such a feminine girl or ya know? I think I tried to conform sometimes earlier on and then as I just felt more comfortable with myself I got less able to conform. Um, they did disapprove of it on some levels. Ah, they hated the way I dressed. It was constantly a point of argument. Why do you have to dress like that? Can't you put on something nice? Can't you… ah… can't you just act like a girl?

One participant describes the feelings of wanting to please his parents and the feelings that arouse from the conflict of not wanting to disappoint them:

> I definitely feel like I need to please my parents. Like, I never really got in trouble growing-up, I always got really good grades, I was always a good kid and so it was hard for me to feel like I was disappointing them in some way? If I had been really adamant and just been kind of a brat about it and was like whatever this is what I'm wearing screw you, I'm sure that they would've been like alright, okay, ya know and been fine with it but… I mean, it was more like…I felt like I wasn't… like I felt personally kind of sad that I wasn't… that I was disappointing them in a way because, it sucked, it wasn't something that I felt like was my choice ya know? I don't think I consciously thought about it in the way of having a choice or not…I was just like these are the clothes that I want to wear.

Three participants (23%) reported feeling supported in their gender non-conforming identities and behaviors as a child and they believe they were accepted because their parents did not have traditional ideas of gender roles, masculinity, and femininity. One participant describes the "contrary" messages he received, even though he felt he was raised in an accepting environment as a child, after his sexual orientation became linked, in his parent's minds, to his gender identity and expression:

> I actually was really fortunate because um… I mean it was…. it was understood when I was a kid that I was a girl, ya know, it wasn't like um…. It wasn't like they let me, I don't know, live like a gender-free childhood but they both firmly believed that girls could do anything they wanted to do and so within that, when I decided at age 12 that I never wanted to wear another dress they were like "okay", and when I wanted to wear ties it was okay and it really didn't become a huge issue until I came out to them as a lesbian when I was 17, when I was a senior in high school. And then all of a sudden, it was weird. I had a very a typical childhood because I… I was a really good kid. And um, so the first time that my parents and I really clashed fundamentally because we both believed something was totally different was when I was like hey, I think I like girls and they were like no, you don't, you can't. Which was really contrary to the way that they were raising me to say that I could do anything that I wanted.

The last question from the relational consequences section asks participants to recall their earliest memory of being acknowledged by their parent(s) as gender non-

conforming. One participant recalls the process of coming out as a lesbian to his parents

as the first time they were un-accepting of his gender non-conformity, and then, how that

created concern for him to later come out as trans:

> Well, basically what happened was, I came out at as a lesbian and my relationship
> with my parents totally fell apart 'cause they were like… like my dad didn't talk
> to me for a couple days and I mean we were like best friends kind of tight, and
> then, he didn't talk to me. And my mom did the whole like, oh God did this to
> punish me and my life is over and… and you're another burden I must bare. And I
> was kind of like, okay, always about you. And then they were like ya know what
> if somebody found out and you could endanger our jobs and I was like you work
> at women's colleges in the valley! Like, having a gay kid is going to get you
> promoted not… I didn't say that clearly but ya know in retrospect it's like I
> understand that for some people that's a reality but I just don't think that was
> realistic in their case…They went back and forth on whether they were going to
> let me go to college, I mean it was…
>
> They were like we don't want you to go to Smith because then you'll just decide
> that this is true and then you'll never… basically, they decided that my youth
> group was brain washing me and that I couldn't go to a women's college 'cause
> then I'd just keep being brain washed in the head and so I should go somewhere
> else or take a year off or do something to get my act together and they sent me to
> a therapist
>
> The therapist? She was great! She was like, ah, yup, sounds like your gay and
> tried to tell my parents that and they were like oh, we don't want you to see that
> therapist anymore…so by the time I came out as trans, I mean I was… I figured
> out I was trans pretty soon after getting into Smith I think because all of a
> sudden… like in high school I was one of the only out gay kids on the campus so
> it was all about gay, gay, gay. Like, ya know, this is my identity. It was all that I
> was attracted to whereas at Smith you can't… everybody is gay or slightly gay or
> questioning or just happens to have a girlfriend. Ya know, like, I mean it really
> wasn't a character defining type of thing so instead of looking outward, I started
> looking inward at what I was. And I started to like really meet other trans people
> and I realized that this was kind of a thing that existed in the world. Um, but I got
> really depressed my first year in part because I realized that I was going to have to
> come out to my parents again and it sucked so much the first time that I was like I
> really don't want to do this again… it sort of became like the big 'ole elephant in
> the room. We stopped talking about it. Um, we just didn't, didn't talk about it…
> didn't really acknowledge it and it was just really painful and awkward every time
> that I saw them. I remember winter break my first year of college was like the
> longest eleven days of my life. Like, just waiting to get back to Smith and back to
> where I was me and safe and normal.I think it was just always watching every

word that I was saying, ya know, and making sure that I didn't bring up anything queer and making sure that ya know nothing that I … just sort of like walking on egg shells around, around that. And just feeling like really off balance because I didn't know where I stood with them and I didn't know how they felt about me and I didn't… and I'm a people pleaser, ya know, and I'm especially a parent pleaser, um, and my parents were pretty hard on me. My friend always used to say that there are two types of queers, there's the "apologetic" queers and the "fuck-off" queers…So, it's like either you're like I can never please you so I'm not going to bother or it's like I'm going to do everything that I can possibly do so that maybe you'll love me in spite of this big gapping flaw in my reality. So, I would definitely be an apologetic queer.

Eight participants (62%) stated that their earliest memory of being acknowledged as "different" by their parents was an incident(s) around the participant's choice of clothing and/or attire. One participant stated:

I was just kind of playing but definitely they would say "act like a girl" ya know. I should be calm, I should be wearing dresses, I should try to be pretty, ya know. I didn't even have a choice; she would make me wear them. I mean I would, like on the way to Church, in the parking lot, I would like hide between cars I was so embarrassed. And it wasn't like… it was like ruffly dresses they were horrible.

Eight participants (62%) said that currently in their lives they avoid/dread social situations and/or events with parents and family because of anxiety around clothing choices. Ten participants (85%) stated that they were made to wear dresses/feminine attire to social events on a regular basis after reaching puberty. One participant describes his earliest memory of being acknowledged by his mother as gender non-conforming and then discusses the impact that his family's awareness had on him over his childhood and teenage years, including how he deals with family social events in the present:

I remember when I was really, really little probably like four… three or four… and I was taking a bath with my brother and I… cause he's three years older than me. So I asked my mom do I get a penis when I grow-up cause I thought like that's what you got when you get older because he's older than me. Um, and she was very flustered about how to answer that. And like, "no only boys have those." And I was really confused about that 'cause I didn't really know the difference between boys and girls. Um… so that's definitely a vivid memory for me but I

don't know if my mother would even consider it, but it's definitely my first memory of someone telling me I was a girl, which was reinforced over and over again. You just believe you're a girl and you learn how to be a girl. Probably like high school or the beginning of high school, I mean, they started insisting that I wear dresses to like…whatever, Bar Mitzvahs or weddings and other events we had to go to. Um, when before that they didn't care what I wore. I think it's cuter when you have a tomboy little kid but once they're a teenager..they were just tired of being asked if I was their son. I mean I would wear a shirt and tie to events and I'd be with them and they'd be like, "Oh is this your son?" and they got really embarrassed. I don't know. I think it's just a… social taboo. And I don't know why it wouldn't just be natural to be like, "no this is our daughter, she's wearing tie."

 Q: What would have been the most natural reaction for them to have for you? What would have been the most helpful?

I think I never wanted it to be made an issue or to be a point at all. Instead of getting embarrassed or flustered or having to explain just be like, "yes," or, "no" or whatever they wanted to say. I don't like being topic of conversation…it made me really embarrassed too. It was just uncomfortable for everybody and… I think I was, I mean it made me uncomfortable but I was sort of happier to just wear dresses when they told me to because then it wouldn't have to be an issue. Like that's a definite gender marker and no one would question… people would say… they'd either make a really big point of "you look so pretty!" and like that or… I mean I basically dreaded any of those situations no matter what I was wearing but I do… (Pause) try to play up the feminine part more, I'm not going to wear a dress or do my hair or anything or wear make-up but I try not to like be outwardly masculine. I don't like wear a tie, I'll just wear a plain button-up shirt or whatever. And… I don't know, I try to avoid those situations. I think it was only when other people point anything out. (My parents) never thought of anything themselves they just always thought I was like their masculine daughter or their tomboy or whatever. And I think they were okay with it… it's like them being uncomfortable with other people not being okay with it. I don't think I have reconciled it, I think (pause) I wish I could take my family out of society 'cause they'd be totally okay with it on their own. But it makes them uncomfortable to have to explain any or…. see me in the outside world. I think it would, they would have wanted me to transition years ago if they didn't have to… if they didn't know I'd have to deal with society. I think it's almost an instinct to protect me. But they show it as disapproval.

Seven participants (54%) reported that their parents were accepting of their

gender non-conforming identities and behaviors before puberty when they believed their

child to be a "tomboy". One participants describes a common experience regarding a

connection and likeness with the mother in this stage of life as a tomboy:

> I had these tendencies to wear boys clothes and I was a tomboy. But like my mom
> was a tomboy when she was little. And really she would talk about that when I
> was younger, so, I don't think that that was necessarily them recognizing that or
> really having any red flags go off or anything like that. I think that it was much
> slower for them to realize that it was more a part of who I was.

Another participant describes a shift at puberty with a mother's perceptions of

what behaviors are gender appropriate:

> Yeah… and even growing-up like her toys like… she got me a jungle gym, which
> was so nice. Like I never really had like many… like I had some dolls but I never
> played with them. It was kind of… my parents knew I liked to be outside and do
> stuff like that and so, they got me like tool kits and like trucks and like…
> whatever. A sandbox and, I don't know…it was really allowed. I didn't even
> realize it was different. But when I went through puberty and it was like oh when
> are you going to start wearing dresses? And then my mom kind of realizing that
> other kids were not like me.

Five participants (38%) recall their choice to cut their hair short as a moment

when a parent acknowledged and/or became acutely aware of the participant's gender

non-conformity. One participant stated:

> Um, when I was 13 my sister took me to go cut my hair and she was like 20 and
> she took me to cut my hair so that was…my mother before that would never have
> allowed it. She couldn't do anything about it afterwards. I mean, it was the style
> then, like it wasn't like she was helping me be a boy or anything like that… it was
> like… stylish for girls to have short hair. There was something that I was attracted
> to but I, I mean I definitely remember having long hair and then like… when it
> was wet in the bathroom like combing it down and ya know parting the side and
> making it look like, I mean I would dress in my dad's clothes sometimes and um I
> knew that I was… I (sighs) it's like I knew, but I didn't know you know what I
> mean? It was too much of a secret.

Four participants (31%) reported having a deep desire to please their parents,

wanting to make things "ok", "smooth it over", and/or "not make a big deal out of it".

The same number of participants (31%) recall memories of making clothing concessions

with parents in order to detract attention from their gender non-conforming presentations.

One participant stated:

> It was almost like she (mother) was asking me to do everybody a favor and just ya know, kind of deal with it ya know? And I remember really wanting to be able to please everybody and really wanting to be able to ya know, um, not make a big deal out of it. I didn't want to…I wasn't interested in causing a scene at all so it was… at the same…I remember when she said to me, "well I'm not going to make you wear make-up", I thought to myself well why not? Why don't I get to do these things ya know? And like, kind of a reaction to… because wanting to be… just like I remember thinking why can't I be like (subject's sister's name), why aren't I like my sister? And why can't I be this way? It was really upsetting to me. I desperately just wanted to be normal. I desperately didn't want to be different, I wanted to feel like a girl. Well it was awful. On one hand I was always trying to be… I was always trying to be… like my sister. Or I always wanted to be and then being told that yeah we expect you to do that but you're not this way anyway… it just felt, I mean it's really, it feels really isolating. It feels really, um, it makes you feel like you don't have an identity, you don't have an expression of identity, you don't know who you are and who you are as a person or how this works it's… um… it's isolating. I spent a lot of time, ya know being alone, not wanting to talk to anybody. I didn't even want to have friends because it's like, there's this difference that's apparent but at the same time it's also I have to pretend to be this way but everybody knows that I'm not ya know? So, it doesn't feel good, it's sort of… ya know and I suppose at the same time it's kind of like I'm almost… I was almost grateful in a weird way … there's almost a feeling of affection for my mom that's like… it's conflicting. There is a little bit of affirmation at the same time there's none because you still don't have a choice. It's like "I know but you still have to be this way".

Six participants (46%) have early memories of their parents being ask, "Oh, is this your son?" and their mother/father getting "fluster", "embarrassed", and/or "horrified" in having to explain that "No, this is my daughter". One participant describes the experience of having his father be understanding of his gender non-conformity but still feeling the "shame" and other difficult feelings in relation to other people's reactions to him:

> When I was little I was confused for a boy all the time like… every single time up until I started transitioning and then I wasn't confusing anyone anymore, and, I was also a really shy little kid. And so if we were out in public and some, some

customer service type of person was like "oh, hello this must be your son"… I was never the one to stand-up and be like no, I'm a girl! But I was also like really ashamed, and my dad would always just politely correct them. Like, um, no this is my daughter. Ya know then we got through that whole slow embarrassment of like, oh I am just made a mess, without even doing anything. My sheer presence has confused and upset people. And, ya know…it was clear that it was an uncomfortable situation for everyone involved. And my dad would joke about how he should just, um, get a little Velcro thingy and then sew it onto my head so that whenever we went out in public he could just Velcro a little pink bow onto my head to not confuse people. Um, but he told me that it was something him and my mom had talked about like… I think before my sister came along, that they were pretty sure I was going to be gay when I grew-up and that they were both accepting and understanding of it. Trans? Um, that was a surprise to my dad. But like, his reaction was you do what you need to and I'll love and support you 100%. So, um, yeah… and he joined P-Flag.

One participant links the feelings of questioning his gender identity as a response to receiving praise for looking "pretty" when he was presenting to please family members:

It's all about the clothing, really. But it's the clothing and these moments where we'd run into people she knew "Is that your son?" And I was like ohhh, something ain't right. So those two, kind of those two, ongoing things… both those things happened all the time. In those moments right out, so she would say "oh no, this is my daughter" and she'd be red and I could tell in her reaction and her posture. And her…the stumbling, ya know. It, it I mean it was a look of horror… over and over and over it was … this isn't my son, this is my daughter and oh… ya know. Then she'd try to shove me into some other dress so like to present me… but it wasn't working because it just wasn't … I wasn't going out like that. And the clothing struggle was much more direct. That was when I'd be told, "If I wanted another son, I would've had another son!" Then (if I wore a dress) it would be like "ohh look how pretty!" because if you're not somebody who wears dresses and then all of a sudden you wear one to appease your parents… it's still being, you're still being called-out.

Q: And when people would tell you "you look so pretty" what was the internal response that you would have?

Oh! Horror again! Then I'd have my own horror. It's like first of all, like.. they're only remarking to me when I'm in this thing that I … that isn't in line with me in anyway, and, 'cause I'm only remarked to when I'm in this thing but this is not me. So now I'm receiving this positive kind of gratuity in a moment where I'm not me. So what does that mean about me? Who am I then right?

Establishing New Norms for Future Integration

Once consideration of the different possibilities of gender behaviors have been explored, questions about the future address the potential for establishing new norms as well as altering how problems might continue. This section asked participants to project into the future and imagine how they might influence their own children, as well as, how might their parents perceive and interpret these influences.

The first question participants were asked was, if they had a child, would they like that child to feel differently than they do about masculinity/femininity? All participants (100%) expressed in a variety of ways that they hoped their own child would feel able to interpret their own gender identity in what ever way they felt most comfortable. One participant spoke hypothetically about this theme of openness for a child because he did not plan on having one:

> I don't think that I'm, I don't plan on having any kids, at least not now, but I definitely would want them to feel like they can be whoever they want to be.

Another participant discussed the possible feelings of having a gender non-conforming child himself:

> Ideally; I would want them to have as clean a slate as possible. I would want to give them a kind of more gender… like non-gendered name I think. And then just do like what my parents did and present them with all options and however they want to express themselves just let that happen while still totally recognizing that we exist in a world where that's not always okay with everybody and if it is someone who is designated male at birth, and ya know, my child was like I need to wear dresses, ya know, I'd be totally, totally cool with that, at the same time, making sure my child is safe. I guess like, whether that means enrolling my child in a very specific school where that wouldn't be an issue, um, I would want my child to be in school that is as open as possible but also being realistic about the world and culture in which my child would be living.

Another question asked in this section was if participants felt their parents would disapprove if they raised children with different ideas from theirs about being a man or a woman in the world? Eight participants (62%) said that at least one parent would disapprove with the way that ze chose to raise a child. One participant predicted how his parents might feel differently about his parenting with a feminine spectrum gender non-conforming child than a masculine spectrum gender non-conforming child, he also expounding on where his notion about this prediction came from:

> I think at this point they would be okay with that. I mean, I think that they would… I'd like to think that they would try to be supportive. I mean, they might not be able to like… I mean, I don't know that I would raise a child completely gender neutral or whatever. I don't know how I would specifically do that. I definitely would want to raise a child to not, to be as unconstrained by gender as possible and try to raise them to be both assertive and emotional. Um, but, I think my parents would have a harder time doing that if my child was biologically male. Um, than if my child was biologically female. Because, um, my dad always said oh, I'm so glad I didn't have boys because I don't like boys and I used to be a boy and boys are so annoying. And my mom never said it explicitly that way but um she definitely interacts with men way different than she interacts with women so, I just…well, I mean, he hasn't said it recently (laughs). Recently he's said like, I'm so glad that it's us guys now 'cause it balances things out. I guess growing-up it was communicated to me that in some ways it's better to be a girl than a boy. And so I guess wanting to be a boy in that context is… a little weird and hard…it's like you can be any kind of girl you want to be except for a boy (chuckles).

Four participants (31%) said that either they did not concern themselves with how their parents might feel about how they would raise children or that they felt they were currently in a place in their relationship with their parents where they believe that they would be supported by them. One participant touched on the meta-communication that might be experienced in such an instance saying:

> I don't think it would at least be as direct (chuckles) if they disapproved.

Another participant touched on a theme of mixed messages from his mother

regarding empowerment:

> No. No, I think they'd be supportive. They've always been like empowering. I
> mean like ironically, my mom's always telling me to be self-empowered and like
> take control and stand-up for myself yet whenever I stand-up for myself to her she
> yells at me (chuckles) so I mean it's like… but I think they'd be completely
> supportive of however I wanted to raise my child.

The last question in this section asked participants if there was anyone in their life

growing up or presently that they felt affirmed their gender identity, even in subtle ways.

The responses to this question varied greatly but all participants could recognize at least

one person, or group of people, that either affirmed them in their gender identity and

expression or mirrored back to them an identity that felt inline with their own.   One

participant was able to recognize his father as that person growing up:

> I think of my dad, and, I think he never questioned me and he's not embarrassed
> of me but I don't know if he ever saw me like… oh there's something different
> about this kid and their gender non-conforming…. I think he just saw me as his
> child and would never be embarrassed of me.

Three participants (23%) cited college, both co-ed and all women's college, as the

first time they felt a sense of affirmation and a true mirroring of their gender identity.

One participant said:

> I think (not receiving affirmation growing up) definitely affected my process…
> like not having anyone that I could talk with, not knowing anyone that was like
> me… or anyone older that I could look to and be like oh, okay, I can be like that
> person. But I think that definitely made it really hard for me to feel comfortable,
> um, with myself. For like any kind of queer teenager growing-up in a pretty
> conservative town (inaudible) is pretty extreme but it was especially bad I think,
> ya know… So… college. Yeah, college was amazing. College was like… yeah. It
> was very special in my life. And like I went to college and felt like sort of a
> different person. I mean, it still took me a little time to like figure it out but it was
> like… an amazing experience to have to go free like that.

Another participant discussed the mirroring process that occurred with a fraternal twin sister and how she unknowingly served as a source of support and affirmation of his gender identity:

> I think that, I think having a twin was probably the best thing that ever happened to me in those ways, I mean, I was always her brother. I mean she'll tell you. Like, that she never… I was never anything else to her. So now, it's just so funny, like I never asked her to use masculine pronouns with me and I never asked her to do half the things that she does, in her own right. And she just takes it upon herself to, ya know, educate her friends and, ya know, me and my sister argue with people, not having such a stable home like we were forced to… or like in, in a really grateful way like go out and make our own families. So, like, she's having these conversations about gender and my gender with people who we've known for since we were like ten and stuff. And I wouldn't even have this type of conversation with them. I just really respect her in that way. And she's going to war everyday for me, over me, and, um, for herself ya know? And our life together, so… yeah. Having a twin and having a twin with you has been my saving grace.

Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from 15 open ended narrative questions asked to 13 individuals who self-identified as gender non-conforming on the masculine spectrum. Of particular importance to this study, 100% of participants stated that at some point during their life their parents were a perceived "threat" or "risk" to them because of their gender identity and expression, and, 100% of participants stating that traditional gender roles, behaviors, and expressions for a female-bodied person did not feel in line with their gender identity growing up. These two findings are significant in that they suggest strong evidence of double binding communications during the early developmental stages of a gender non-conforming person's identity.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The objective of this qualitative study was to explore the question: Is the identity development of a gender non-conforming person built on a relational foundation that is intra-psychically located within a double bind?   It was the aim of this qualitative investigation to find evidence of the double binding effects of gender oppression on the lives of persons that self identify as gender non-conforming on the masculine spectrum. This chapter discusses the findings in the following order: 1) key findings, 2) implications, 3) limitations, 4) future directions and 5) conclusion.

Key Findings

The key findings of this study will be broken down into sections that correspond with those in the findings chapter. The first section of key findings relate to the "norms" that masculine spectrum gender non-conforming persons aspire to, and the possible relational consequences of changing or shifting perceptions. Notable findings in the second section illuminate personal experiences and emotional understandings of how participants have learned to metabolize emotions in light of their perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Key findings from the third section aimed to identify the norms to which participant's parents aspired and how those norms affected both the

individual and their parents. The last section addresses the participant's expectations for the future and the potential for establishing new norms.

It is important to note that though this study was designed to interview participants who were self-selecting, due to the considerations of studying a high risk and marginalized population, participants were carefully screened. This initial screening process insured that each participant was comfortable speaking openly about difficult memories from their childhood in an effort to lower the risk of uncontainable affect and/or triggering memories of physically abusive traumas. The participants in this study ranged in age, ethnicity, religious history, gender identity, and class. However, there seems to be correlative findings in the demographic data that suggests that all of the participants in the study are currently highly functioning members of society. Evidence for this finding is that all participants (100%) had, at least, a bachelor's degree, all participants (100%) had, at least, stayed in the same socio-economic class bracket that their family was in, and five participants (38%) had actually surpassed the class status of their family of origin.

In light of the finding of high functionality of all participants within social and educational settings, the analysis of the qualitative data will include suggested evidence for what might be termed "un-binding" communications, perceptions, norms and situations, as well as "double binding" interactions and communications. By identifying the presence of "un-binding" evidence it is more possible to define which communications may have been "double binding" during the early stages of one's gender identity development.

Norms and Perceptions of Masculinity and Femininity

Arguably the most significant finding in this study came from this section of questions that explored the participant's norms and perceptions of masculinity and femininity. In searching for evidence that might suggest the presence of double binding communication in participant's families of origin a unique discovery was made. All but one participant (92%) stated that they believed their concepts and perceptions of masculinity and femininity to be learned and constructed through socially regulated norms. The idea of masculinity and femininity as a socially constructed binary that influences unconscious definitions and perceptions was a theme throughout all but one interview. The twelve participants (92%) shared a rare theoretical awareness that "gender" is both a social construct and that it is located within a binary, the socially constructed binary being that sex (male/female), prescribes gender (man/woman), which then prescribes expression (masculinity/femininity). This level of theoretical gender awareness is hardly a commonly characteristic for gender conforming children and adults. The reason that this is not a widely held knowledge in society is that those individuals that conform to the gender binary have no reason to question or consider that which they fit into. However, for individuals that do not fit "naturally" or "essentially" into the gender binary this awareness is critical for their identity development and is considered in this study to be evidence of an un-binding communicational perception. Based on this finding it could be posited that the awareness of gender construction in western society is a critical understanding, or stage of development, in the identity model of a gender non-conforming person.

The outlier in the curve of this finding, one participant (8%), did not verbally articulate the knowledge that gender is a social construct. This individual was the second oldest participant that was interviewed and was raised in an extremely religious and geographically isolated environment. Even still, though there were not words that described this consciousness, his choice of occupation and current geographical location act as evidence to suggest that he had a non-verbal understanding of the gender spectrum that served to un-bind his early childhood experiences of being forced by his parents to conform to the gender binary.

A significant cluster of findings in this section of questions was: 1.) All participants (100%) reported that "traditional" gender perceptions, presentations, roles, behaviors, and activities in their childhoods did not feel comfortable and/or inline with their internal understandings and feelings of themselves in the world; 2.) All participants (100%) noted that their own parents had, at some point in their childhood and/or young adult history, been a perceived "threat or risk" to them due to issues of gender non-conformity; and 3.) Nine participants (69%) currently perceive one or both of their parents to be an "emotional" risk, "not accepting" of them, or, "not understanding" of them.

These findings suggest evidence to support the presence of double binding meta-communication in the non-verbal societal and familial messages that participants received throughout childhood. The working definition of the double bind that is being used for this study is Bateson's revised formulation of the double bind theory, "The most useful way to phrase double bind description is not in terms of binder and a victim but in terms of people caught up in an ongoing system which produces conflicting definitions of the

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relationship and consequent subjective distress" (Seikkula & Olson, pp. 34, 2003). With the double bind definition in mind this particular finding in all thirteen participants suggests that the messages they were receiving from society about what was gender appropriate was perceived as a primary negative injunction because "traditional" gender roles, behaviors, and expressions did not feel in line with their internal sense of self. The secondary negative injunction is found in the re-enforcement and re-articulation over the course of childhood by persons in power (usually parents and larger institutional influences) that in fact, participants should want to, will have to, and must try to, fit into these "traditional" gender expressions that are in accordance with the male/female binary. It is posited that were these negative gender messages not repeatedly communicated throughout childhood then all thirteen participants (100%) would not possess an awareness of the message itself.

As noted in chapter II, Vanessa Mahmoud describes the double binds of racism, which are rooted in an oppression model of identity development. In analyzing the finding that all participants growing up felt uncomfortable intrapsychically with "traditional" gender roles Mahmoud's definition might be useful, "A double-binding relationship is one in which a more powerful person tyrannizes and victimizes a less powerful person, communicating in a mystifying way that binds the victim and leaves him or her no room for safety. The mystification operates through subtle, covert messages that contradict the overt messages, but the victim can neither comment on the discrepancy nor leave the relationship" (Mahmoud, 1998). Mahmoud takes the double bind one step farther than Bateson's revised interpretation when she identifies the possible "escapes" from double binds: passive acceptance, verification of the accuracy of

perception by a powerful other, physical escape from the field of conflict, and the decision to risk punishment by direct confrontation. It could be posited that the escapes from the double binds of an oppressive gender binary are similar and that the categories of escapes could be understood also as the "un-binding" actions taken by a gender non-conforming person.

Though there were many more subtle yet still significant findings in this section on norms and perceptions of masculine spectrum gender non-conforming individuals the last key findings that could be correlated to one another were that ten participants (77%) stated that they developed their personal identification with masculinity through messages they received, behaviors that they witnessed, and expressions of roles from their father, and nine participants (69%) stated that their father was currently an "accepting and/or supportive" person in their life.

The analysis of these two findings begins with a review of the rational for choosing masculine spectrum identities in this study. As noted in chapter II, this choice was a response to the understanding that gender identity, roles, and expression are inextricably bound to, and a construction of, cultural and community perceptions of persons in the world. Therefore, the treatments of persons by those that care for them beginning in infancy are inherently imbedded in these same societal assumptions of gender activity. Consequently, it is posited that the identity development of a gender non-conforming person will be environmentally situated in extremely different contexts depending on what "end" (or area) of the gender spectrum the individual intrinsically corresponds. Evidence suggests in the finding that ten participants (77%) believe they developed their personal identification to masculinity through messages they received,

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behaviors that they witnessed, and expressions of roles from their father, and that these participant's knowledge of gender began early in childhood through mirroring interactions with their fathers. Even though a participant was understood by their parents to be a "daughter", intrapsychically, that child was receiving affirming mirroring messages from simply observing the father's performances of masculinity in the world.

In suggesting a correlation with this finding and the finding of a high number of participants (54%) who felt their father was currently "supportive and/or accepting" of their gender identification, it is helpful to return to Peter Fonagy and Mary Target's notion of reflective functioning, "Reflective function is the developmental acquisition that permits the child to respond not only to other people's behavior, but to his conception of their beliefs, feelings, hopes, pretense, plans and so on. Reflective function, or mentalization, enables children to 'read' people's minds. By attributing mental states to others, children make people's behavior meaningful and predictable" (Fonagy &Target, pp. 679-680, 1997). It could be posited that the first finding, of gender affirming mirroring, is the connective tissue in the process of a participant's reflective functioning. Both findings suggest evidence that a participant's feelings that his father is accepting and supportive of his gender non-conformity is due to a mentalized mirroring connection between himself and his father. It could be speculated that in turn, this creates a sense of "mind reading" that leads him to understand his father to be a consistent character in his developmental process of attachment.

Relational Consequences of Differences in Norms

There was a distinct theme throughout this section of questions that suggested evidence for learned styles of communication that can be double binding. The thread that runs through the findings regarding emotional and relational consequences is that participants were significantly more likely not to express difficult and/or conflicting feelings in their family and intimate relationships. This finding was true for emotions that are traditionally linked to masculine expressions of feelings and for emotions that are traditionally linked to feminine expressions of feelings. This finding, of a generalized lack of expression of emotions, is evidence of a learned communication style that is double binding.

When participants were asked to detail their experience of the emotion anger twelve participants (92%) stated that they "do not express anger often", and eight participants (62%) reported "avoiding" the feeling of anger all together. When asked how they show anger if they cannot avoid it, four participants (50% of those that avoided it) stated that they were "not good at that". This finding suggests that in the past there have existed expressly real consequences for showing anger that are costly to the person's sense of identity. This type of anti-communication of anger might fall into the category of "passive acceptance" in Mahmoud's suggested escapes from double binds.

Another significant finding that suggests evidence for double binds in communication during childhood is that ten participants (77%) expressed that they would be risking a loss of self-esteem if they showed those close to them feelings of fright or dependence. When participants were asked what they felt the result would be of expressing fright or dependence to those close to them their reported concerns also

suggests evidence for the presence of double binding gender roles and constructs, such as, fear of losing loved ones to "stronger" partners, appearing less "attractive" to others, and not fitting the socially prescribed "gender roles of masculinity".

The suggested evidence from this finding helps to illuminate the double bind of being a person designated female at birth but feeling internally that ones gender identity is on the masculine spectrum. Beginning from a young age, female-bodied children are socialized by their caregivers to believe that showing feelings of fear or dependence is egosyntonic, and an appropriate expression of oneself. Traditionally in society, male-bodied children are raised from an early age to believe that the expression of these emotions should feel egodystonic, and that these expressions are not appropriately inline with socially prescribed masculine gender roles. In the quotation for this finding the participant feels that to express fear or dependence would inevitably lead to a loss of self-esteem. This suggests the presence of a intrapsychic gender double bind where even though these feelings might have been encouraged in (him) because (he) was raised as a girl, the expressions of these feelings is actually egodystonic for him.

Another significant cluster of findings in this section that suggests more evidence of double binding communication in rearing is that nine participants (69%) stated that they do not "often" ask for protection from those close to them. The same number of participants (69%) reported that they do not trust even those closest to them to protect them. And again, nine participants (69%) said that those close to them have a negative and/or unsupportive reaction to them showing a need for protection. These high percentages may suggest that participants were not comfortable while growing up to report a need for protection from parents based on their gender identity development and

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their early tendencies to orientate towards masculine on the gender spectrum. Namely, social norms dictate that articulating a need for protection is a feminine expression of feeling and may not feel intrinsically in line with the gender identity development of participants.

It seems critical to note that eight participants (62%) differentiated between physical protection and emotional protection, and of those that differentiated, six of the eight participants (75%) stated that it was easier to show a need for physical protection as a gender non-conforming person than to show a desire for emotional protection. Also significant in the data was that six participants (46%) stated that they had "always learned to protect (myself)". These findings suggest evidence that most participants have been in a position of being forced to consider their physical safety and the levels of protection that they have access to in their families and communities. A double binding message may result when a participant both experiences an intrapsychic awareness that asking for protection from others may risk a loss of self-esteem, and also, experiencing a keen awareness that their physical safety is a concern for them as a gender non-conforming person.

With the understanding that double binding communications, both verbal and nonverbal, can cause a rupture in a person's ability to effectively express oneself for fear of punishment, isolation, and/or shunning, from a community, the significance of findings that illuminate that which is not spoken or kept secret is incredibly valuable in the detection of what could be termed specifically "gender-binding" communications for participants in childhood. This in mind, nine participants (69%) said that their feelings of gender non-conformity in childhood and adolescence was a feeling that they keep silent

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from others close to them, and, four participants (31%) said that their transition from a female-bodied person to a male-bodied person was a silent feeling and/or a secret from others that were close to them. These finding suggest the presence of double binding communication about gender behavior and gender identity starting from an early developmental stage.

Parent's Norms and The Affects of Family System Functions on Participants

In this section there were specific questions about family and child/parent relationships with participants regarding gender non-conforming behavior and identity development. The most significant findings highlight a silence on the part of parents, and the meta-communicated messages of gender appropriateness within the participant's families. Eleven participants (85%) reported that their parents did not talk openly about their gender non-conforming behaviors and identities but rather focused on their clothing choices and preferences when they were children. Eight participants (62%) stated that their earliest memory of being acknowledged as "different" by their parents was an incident(s) around the participant's choice of clothing and/or attire.

Nine participants (69%) stated that they tried to fit into their parent's, peers, siblings, and society's ideas of gender roles but believe they were not successful. Six participants (46%) said that they wanted to make their mother, father, and/or entire family "happy" and "wanted to be accepted" by their parents; this same percentage said that they did not want to "embarrass" their parents and/or family. Four participants (31%) said that they felt "ashamed" and/or "guilty" for not wanting to wear the clothes that their parents made them wear. This data is strong evidence for the presence of

double binding communications within the family systems of the participants. These findings suggest that the participants experienced little to no verbal "language-ing" within their families about their gender difference, however, a sense of parental disapproval of their gender identity was communicated through a hyper-vigilance around their gendered behaviors, presentation, and choices (attire/play/affect).

An example of gender-binding communication is when a person is made to behave or aesthetically present in a way that is not syntonic, or intrapsychically inline, with their gender identity. Ten participants (77%) stated that they were made to wear dresses and/or feminine attire to social events on a regular basis after reaching puberty, and eight participants (62%) said that, currently in their lives, the meta-communicated messages they receive about their clothing choices create anxiety that causes them to avoid and/or dread social situations and events with parents and family. The anxiety that is produced due to the gender-binds around clothing and presentation are crucial to understanding the long term effects of double binding communication on a gender non-conforming person's identity development.

An example of un-binding communication is also found in this section but has an exclusive position in the socially constructed gender landscape of western culture. Seven participants (54%) reported that their parents were accepting of their gender non-conforming identities and behaviors before puberty when they believed their child to be a "tomboy". The exclusive position of this un-binding communication is pre-puberty, during the latency stage of a female-bodied child's development. It could be posited that the acceptance that the participant's remember receiving during a time in their development when tomboyish qualities were mentalized and affirmed by parents acts as

an internalized transitional object in their adult life. This evidence suggests that the ability to call upon any memory of being accepted by parents while displaying masculine spectrum behaviors will aid in unraveling the double binding narrative of a gender non-conforming childhood experience.

New Norms for Future Integration

All participants (100%) expressed in a variety of ways that they hoped their own child would feel able to interpret their own gender identity in what ever way that child felt most comfortable. This finding suggests evidence for an un-binding view of the future for participants. Again, for participants to have an awareness that gender identity is not a "natural" or "essential" characteristic that is prescribed by the designated biological sex of person, but rather, something that one interprets in the most comfortable way possible, suggests that part of the developmental process of a gender non-conforming person's identity development is to be able to question western society's construction of the gender binary.

Implications for the Field of Social Work

In light of the implicit assumption in modern society of the categories of man/woman, how can a treatment approach be adapted for work with gender non-conforming identities? This study explored in chapter II the possibilities for clinical treatment using the open dialogue approach with a reflecting team, as well as feminist and narrative approaches for entire family systems that have gender non-conforming member(s). Using these approaches with an awareness of the socially constructed gender

binary will relieve double binding communications in therapeutic sessions with families and individuals, and create a space for a perceptual shift from the context of man/woman language into masculinity/femininity identifications. The importance of this approach to the gender non-conforming identity language and development could be profound. The questions used for this study could be a clinically useful assessment tool when beginning to work with a person who is gender non-conforming as they help to pronounce gender fluidity and bring communication and language to relations within family systems.

Another important therapeutic implication of this study is the discovery that the father of a masculine spectrum gender non-conforming individual may serve as a much larger support and resource during the early stages of that individual's gender identity development than was previously known. Clinically, it would be useful when working with gender non-conforming individuals to explore the early memories and connections created in this relational dyad.

Lastly, given the findings in this study, it could be posited that any therapist with an awareness of the socially constructed gender binary could do clinically competent and strengths based work with gender non-conforming clients and their families. This implication is critically significant in that it begins to chip away at the pathologizing treatments of gender non-conformity by "gender experts" in therapeutic and clinical contexts, and, creates a much larger pool of therapeutic orientations and approaches for gender non-conforming individual's to choose from when looking for therapy.

Limitations

The major limitation in this study was that the findings cannot be generalized because participant's were self-selected, the sample size was relatively small, and, though there was a diverse sample of geographical location for participant's rearing, all participants currently live in the North East area of the United States, which is a less diverse geographical pool to draw from. Also, since this researcher designed the interview questions, there may be a certain amount of bias in their development stemming from this researcher's personal beliefs and experience in gender activism, and therefore the reliability and validity of measurement must be taken into consideration. Lastly, the interview process might be considered intrusive in design and in the manner of obtaining data, which could have potentially elicited painful recollections for participants.

Future Directions

Future directions that were beyond the scope of this study are numerous. It is the hope of this researcher to more thoroughly explore evidence in this study that supports the importance of the relational foundations built and connections between fathers and their masculine spectrum gender non-conforming children. Another future direction beyond the scope of this study is a quantitative analysis of depressive and anxious symptoms in adult masculine spectrum gender non-conforming individuals. The production of this quantitative study might best be grounded in adult attachment theory in order to address the double binding relational causes for the presence of depressive and anxious symptoms. Lastly, a replication of this study with feminine-spectrum gender

non-conforming people, and with the parents of gender non-conforming children, would substantially legitimize the suggested evidence found in this study and would increase the generalibility of findings.

Conclusion

This study sought to excavate and uncover the double binds that are experienced in a family system when a member of the system is, by the nature of developing an identity that is gender non-conforming, not able to meet the interpersonal expectations of the rest of the membership in the family system. Understanding how the double binds of gender oppression, starting from the earliest stages of identity development, affect an individual's attachments and coping skills is critical in working therapeutically with adults and children who are considered gender non-conforming by societal standards. This study was the first of its kind, however, it can be understood as a jumping off point for other explorations and investigations into gender non-conforming identity development and the effects of the double bind on the intrapsychic processes that occur in gender non-conforming children and adults.

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Human Subjects Committee Approval Letter

January 8, 2008

Shannon Sennott

Dear Shannon,

Your second set of revisions has been reviewed and all is now in order. The Feds are very fussy about the signed Informed Consent. You can really see why because being informed is really the major issue in participant protection. We are glad to now approve your very interesting project.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your study.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Jill Clemence, Research Advisor

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Letter

October 2, 2007

Dear Research Participant:

My name is Shannon Sennott. I am conducting a study that will explore the early childhood relationship between persons who are masculine spectrum gender non-conforming and their families. Participants in this research study will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview with me to talk about the understandings that their parents/siblings had of gender roles, and, more specifically, how their family first came to have knowledge of their gender non-conforming behavior. I will be asking participants to talk about their past and present experiences and memories of their family's first awareness and reactions to their gender non-conforming behavior/identity. The study is being conducted as a thesis for Master of Social Work degree at Smith College School for Social Work. In addition, the data collected here may later be used for presentations at professional meetings, or publications in scholarly journals.

 Those asked to be in the study are individuals, 18 years or older, designated the female sex at birth and who presently identify themselves as masculine spectrum gender non-conforming at present. If you agree to participate I will ask you to fill out a questionnaire prior to the interview, this questionnaire will be emailed to you and can be emailed back to me after it is complete. If this is not possible there will be questionnaires provided at the interview for completion. The interview will be conducted in person, will be tape-recorded, and will last approximately one hour.

The risk of participating in this study may be that some interview questions could elicit disturbing thoughts, feelings, or memories. Enclosed in this mailing is a list of psychotherapy resources for the New England area that you may refer to if you experience psychological distress as a result of participation in this study.

The benefits of participating in this study are that you have the opportunity to contribute to an area of research that has been neglected and to offer a voice in understanding the experience of the early identity development of masculine spectrum gender non-conforming individuals. This understanding has social, cultural and clinical implications in the process of de-pathologizing gender non-conforming identities. Unfortunately, I am not able to offer you payment for your participation.

Your participation in this study is confidential. I will label audiotapes and interview notes with a numerical code instead of your real name. After information has been labeled with a numerical code, my research advisor will have access to the data collected. I will lock consent forms, audiotapes, and interview notes in secure location during the thesis process and for three years thereafter, in accordance with federal regulations. After such time, I will either maintain the material in its secure location or destroy it. In the written thesis, I will not use identifying information to describe any individuals. When brief illustrative quotes or vignettes are used, potentially identifying data will be carefully disguised. Finally, if an additional data handler, transcriber or analyst is used in this study, I will require her/him to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question(s). You may withdraw from the study at any time during or after the study without penalty until March 1, 2008 when I will begin writing the Results and Discussion sections of my thesis. If you wish to withdraw you may email me at ssennott@smith.edu or telephone me at 347-546-3504. At that point, all material pertaining to you will be immediately destroyed. Should you have concerns about your rights or about any aspect of the

study, you are encouraged to contact me using the above contact information or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Signature of Participant	Date

Signature of Researcher	Date

Again, if you have any further questions about this study, participation, your rights as a participant, or this consent form, please feel free to ask me at the contact information given above.

Thank you for your time, and I greatly look forward to having you as a participant in my study.

Sincerely,

Shannon Sennott

Interview Guide

What are your ideas about masculinity? About femininity? As a gender non-conforming individual how do you believe you should behave toward men/women; how do you expect them to behave toward you?

Do you believe that men should feel sad? Afraid? Worried? Unsure? In need of approval? Dependent on their wives for comfort? Un

Do you believe women should feel angry? Assertive? Entitled to put themselves first? Competitive?

If you were to show anger that you may feel, how do you think those close to you would feel and react?

If you were to show a need or desire for protection, how do you think those close to you would feel or react?

If you are frightened or dependent, can you show it to those close to you without risking a loss of self-esteem? What does that look like?

If you show feelings you keep silent what do you think those close to you might think of you?

Did either one of your parents have a hard time meeting their parents' expectations about femininity/masculinity?

If your mother/father had different ideas about male/female behavior, how might it have changed their relationship?

What effects did your parents' norms and values have on your ideas of masculinity and femininity?

If your father or mother disapproved of the manner in which you are a gender non-conforming person how would you have known that growing up?

What is your earliest memory of being acknowledged by your parent(s) as gender non-conforming?

If you have a child, would you like that child to feel differently than you do about his/her/hir masculinity/femininity?

Would your parents disapprove if you raised your children with different ideas from theirs about being a man or a woman in the world?

Were (are) there any people in your life that affirmed your gender identification growing up, even in subtle ways?

Appendix D

Questionnaire

Numerical Code:

Date of completion:

1. How do you identify your gender identity?

2. How old were you in your first memory of gender non-conforming behavior?

3. How old were you when your mother first noticed your gender non-conforming behaviors?

4. How old were you when your father first noticed your gender non-conforming behaviors?

5. How many members are there in your family? Please give present ages and gender identifications for each person.

6. How old are you?

7. What is your ethnicity?

8. What is your educational history?

9. Where did you grow up, where are the significant places you have lived, where do you live now?

10. Where did your mother and father grow up?

11. What, if any, are your parents spiritual/religious affiliations/background?

12. What, if any, are your spiritual/religious affiliations/background?

13. How would you best classify your class status growing up? In the present?

14. What is your occupation?

15. What do you give value to in your life?

16. What do you hold most precious to you in your life?

APPENDIX E

Transcriber's Assurance of Research Confidentiality

STATEMENT OF POLICY:

This thesis project is firmly committed to the principle that research confidentiality must be protected. This principle holds whether or not any specific guarantee of confidentiality was given by respondents at the time of the interview. When guarantees have been given, they may impose additional requirements, which are to be adhered to strictly.

PROCEDURES FOR MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY:

- All volunteer and professional transcribers for this project shall sign this assurance of confidentiality.
- A volunteer, or professional transcriber should be aware that the identity of participants in research studies is confidential information, as are identifying information about participants and individual responses to questions. Depending on the study, the organization participating in the study, the geographical location of the study, and the hypotheses being tested may also be confidential information. Specific research findings and conclusions are also usually confidential until they have been published or presented in public.

It is incumbent on volunteers and professional transcribers to treat information from and about research as privileged information, to be aware of what is confidential in regard to specific studies on which they work or about which they have knowledge, and to preserve the confidentiality of this information. Types of situations where confidentiality can often be compromised include conversations with friends and relatives, conversations with professional colleagues outside the project team, conversations with reporters and the media, and in the use of consultants for computer programs and data analysis.

- Unless specifically instructed otherwise, a volunteer or professional transcriber upon encountering a respondent or information pertaining to a respondent that s/he knows personally, shall not disclose any knowledge of the respondent or any information pertaining to the respondent's testimony or his participation in this thesis project. In other words, volunteer and professional transcribers should not reveal any information or knowledge about or pertaining to a respondent's participation in this project.
- Data containing personal identifiers shall be kept in a locked container or a locked room when not being used each working day in routine activities. Reasonable caution shall be exercised in limiting access to data to only those persons who are working on this thesis project and who have been instructed in the applicable confidentiality requirements for the project.
- The researcher for this project, Shannon Sennott, shall be responsible for ensuring that all volunteer and professional transcribers involved in handling data are instructed in these procedures, have signed this pledge, and comply with these procedures throughout the duration of the project. At the end of the project, Shannon Sennott, shall arrange for proper storage or disposition of data, in accordance with federal guidelines and Human Subjects Review Committee policies at the Smith College School for Social Work.
- Shannon Sennott must ensure that procedures are established in this study to inform each respondent of the authority for the study, the purpose and use of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, and the effects on the respondents, if any, of not responding.

PLEDGE

I hereby certify that I have carefully read and will cooperate fully with the above procedures. I will maintain the confidentiality of confidential information from all studies with which I have involvement. I will not discuss, disclose, disseminate, or provide access to such information, except directly to the researcher, Shannon Sennott, for this project. I understand that violation of this pledge is sufficient grounds for disciplinary action, including termination of professional or volunteer services with the project, and may make me subject to criminal or civil penalties. I give my personal pledge that I shall abide by this assurance of confidentiality.

_____ Signature

_____ Date

_____ Shannon Sennott, Researcher

_____ Date

Referral List

The LGBT Community Center – New York City

208 West 13th Street

NY, NY 10011

Email: www.gaycenter.org

Phone: 212-620-7310

The Brien Center Community Mental Health Center

333 East Street

 Pittsfield, Mass. 01201

Phone: (413) 499-0412

Choices Counseling and Consulting

321 Washington Ave

Albany, NY 12206

Email: info@choicesconsulting.com

Phone: 518-463-9152

Boston Glass Community Center

93 Massachusetts Ave, 3rd floor

Boston, MA 02115

Email: glass@jri.org

Phone: 617-266-3349

<u>GLAP: Gay and Lesbian Affirmative Psychotherapy</u>

A division of the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy

1841 Broadway @ 60th street

NY, NY 10023

Email: glap@icpnyc.org

Phone: 212-333-3444