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The Embodiment of Masculinity among Trans* Identified Men

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By

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Abstract

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Within masculinity studies, the majority of the literature focuses on the perspectives of cisgender men. The current research project aimed to explore the concept of masculinity further by including the perspectives of trans* identified men. I conducted in-depth interviews with trans* identified men in order to answer three research questions: *How do trans* identified men (FTM, transsexual, transgender, transguys, genderqueer, or gender variant) embody (incorporate and express) and perform masculinity? How do trans* identified men recount their experiences of gender socialization?* And finally, *how, if at all, do trans* identified men experience transphobic discrimination?* I asked the first two questions to cisgender men in the form of an online survey. My interview participants focused on the idea that masculinity as a concept is socially constructed and they cited societal pressures, male role models, and the either/or dichotomy of gender as sources of their perceptions of what masculinity is and how they embody it. All of my interview participants expressed masculinity through clothing style and how they carried themselves. The cisgender men in my survey also showed masculinity through their appearance and noted that masculinity does not depend on specific behaviors or actions. All participants in my interviews recalled having

experienced transphobic discrimination, whether in the workplace, the bathroom, medical/legal arenas, or in school. By analyzing the juxtaposition of trans* and cisgender men's ideas of masculinity, I have contributed to the study of masculinity, especially in terms of its lack of inclusion of trans*men. My research aids in the continuation of the attempt by many trans* theorists to show how our society enforces a gender binary and how this strict binary is harmful in terms of how it dictates what is and what is not considered masculine.

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Introduction

Masculinity studies, especially in relation to masculine identities, rarely discusses how individuals with biologically female bodies develop their ideas of masculinity (Vegter, 2013). The majority of literature on men and masculinity focuses on cisgender men and their embodiment of masculinity (Vegter; Gardiner, 2013, Vidal-Ortiz, 2002). Often, in masculinity studies, gender is blended together with sex, "assuming that gender identity emanates from one's body, biologically or chromosomally" (Vidal-Ortiz, p. 183). Female-to-male (FTM) trans* men are the least studied individuals in masculinity studies and male-to-female (MTF) trans* women are rarely included in research about masculinity (Green, 2005). Influential masculinity scholar Michael Kimmel (2008) describes the qualities of masculinity as "enormously valuable: indeed, qualities such as honor, respect, integrity, doing the right thing despite the costs- these are the qualities of a real man" (p. 270). What Kimmel fails to note is that the qualities that he deems masculine are actually gender neutral (Gardiner). By taking gender neutral characteristics and marking them as masculine, Kimmel upholds the values of traditional masculinity, a masculinity that excludes anyone other than cisgender men (Gardiner). The cissexism within masculinity studies is apparent and more research on masculinity needs to include the perspectives of transgender individuals. Masculinity studies is not the only form of scholarship that needs more trans* voices. Within transgender studies, the main focus has been on trans* women, with relatively little research devoted to trans* men (Vegter, 2013; Forshee 2006, Vidal-Ortiz, 2002). There have been some exceptions to this, including Henry Rubin's 2003 book *Self-Made Men*, Jason Cromwell's 1999 book *Trans* men and FTMs*, and Aaron Devor's 1997 work

entitled *FTM: Female to Male Transsexuals and Society*. This is not to say that there is an abundance of available literature on the lives and perspectives of trans* women. With the emergence of transgender studies occurring in the early 1990s, research including trans* men and trans* women is still altogether lacking.

I decided to research trans* men and masculinity for two reasons. First, because of the gap in literature in both transgender studies and masculinity studies in regards to the lived experiences of trans* identified men. I wanted to see whether or not the available literature on cisgender men's masculinity was comparable to how trans* men described their masculinity. The second reason I have decided to research trans* men and masculinity is the emergence of more literature on discrimination against trans* men, especially in regards to the U.S. legal system. The focus of gender identity and masculinity within my thesis relies on the work of theorists such as Henry Rubin, Griffin Hansbury, Katrina Roen, and Jason Cromwell. When exploring trans* politics, I rely on the influential work of trans* activist Dean Spade.

Trans* rights activists note that our legal system sets up a strict binary in which you must either identify as a man or a woman, hence reinforcing the heteronormative and essentialist identities that transgender and queer theorists question (Spade, 2011). Trans* rights activists assert that this strict binary in legal terminology such as laws may harm transgender individuals, especially those who are in the processes of transitioning from one gender to another, or those who do not wish to identify with a female/male dichotomy (Spade). Our current legal system may influence one's formation of what it means to be a "man" and what it means to be masculine. Discrimination may occur when an individual does not fit into predetermined binaries for sex or gender, or when an

individual in a primarily masculine environment embodies masculinity differently from the rest of the individuals in that space.

In my thesis, I conducted in-depth interviews with trans* identified men and online surveys with cisgender men. I interviewed eight trans* identified men and collected 53 survey responses from cisgender men. In both my interviews and the online survey, I asked questions about the embodiment and performance of masculinity and the gender socialization of the participants. In my interviews, I asked participants about their experiences of discrimination based on their trans* identities. The following literature review is divided into three main bodies of knowledge: Transmasculine Identities, Trans* Politics, and Queer Theory and Feminist Theory and Essentialism. I discuss my research methodology and my interviewing process in my method chapter. In the results chapter, I discuss the main themes that emerged from my research and I conclude with a discussion on improvements for this research and suggestions for developments in future research.

Basic Terminology

In this literature review I utilize numerous terms used within gender, sexuality and transgender studies. Therefore, it is important to establish a basic understanding of the terminology, trans-lexicon, and trans-discourse that I present throughout this thesis. Transgender: A broad term used to refer to individuals who are gender non-conforming or whose gender identity/expression differs from the biological sex or gender identity assigned to them at birth (Forshee, 2006). This term is occasionally shortened to trans*, in order to incorporate and account for the spectrum of gender identities. This term focuses more on identity and less on medico-psychological usages, which would be terms used within general medicine and psychotherapy (Vegter, 2013; Cromwell, 1999).

Transsexual: A medico-psychological term which assumes that there are two dichotomous sexes in which a person may transition between (Roen, 2002). In medico-legal terms, transsexuals wish to transition from one sex to another, usually with the help of hormones and surgical sex reassignment surgery (Edelman, 2009).

Female-to-Male (FTM): A term used to refer to individuals who were born biologically female but now have a trans* identity that is male. These individuals take on mannerisms traditionally accepted as masculine by our society (Forshee, 2006). This term is frequently used in combination with the term “trans man” or “trans* men” (Vegter, 2013; Cromwell, 1999).

Cisgender: A term meaning that an individual identifies with the biological sex identification in which they were assigned at birth (Schoellkopf, 2012).

Masculinity: A collection of behaviors, actions, qualities, and social characteristics usually (but not always) assigned to men (Forshee, 2006; Green, 2005).

Literature Review

Within men's studies and masculinity studies, the exploration of gender identity is lacking (Vegter, 2013, Vidal-Ortiz, 2002). Influential masculinity studies scholar Michael Kimmel (2010) fails to discuss the identities of anyone other than cisgender men, nor are the terms cisgender or transgender found within Kimmel's book *Misframing Men: The Politics of Contemporary Masculinities.* This gap in literature in regards to masculinity studies is one of the reasons that I have decided to focus on the lives of men who do not identify as cisgender. Within transgender studies, the majority of the available literature on trans* identities focuses on trans* women and not trans* men (Vegter, 2013; Forshee, 2006; Green, 2005, Vidal-Ortiz, 2002). Many important insights have been gained through this research, but there is still a lack of literature on trans* identities, especially in relation to trans* men. As transgender studies as a field for theory and knowledge production is fairly new, emerging first in the early 1990s, there is still room for more exploration in order to gather a better understanding of the lived experiences of trans* identified individuals (Stryker, 2004). Therefore, it is important to continue including trans* men and trans* women in social science research, a second reason for my pursuit of this research. Finally, I decided to focus on the lives of trans* men based on the emergence of more literature on the discrimination that both trans* men and trans* women face, especially in regards to our legal system.

The main focus of my thesis is to gain a sense of how trans* identified men embody masculinity and "do" masculinity in their everyday lives and how this compares to that of cisgender men. I focus on the literature on the identities of individuals who identify as somewhere within the trans* masculine spectrum (trans* men, gender queer,

gender nonconforming) in order to compare and contrast these identities with my trans* identified participants and my survey results from cisgender men. My literature review focuses on three main bodies of knowledge: Transmasculine Identities, Trans* Politics, and finally Queer Theory and Feminist Theory and Essentialism.

Transmasculine Identities

Rubin (2003), Vegter (2013) and Green (2005) all interviewed trans* identified men about their masculinity and what it meant to be a man. Within Rubin's study, there was a hierarchy within the trans* community in which the men belonged to; trans* men who decided to take hormones were considered more of a "man" than those who decided against hormones. This became problematic to many of the trans* men because despite their female organs, all of them believed that they had "always been men" (Rubin, p. 143). Despite the trans* community's belief that "hormones make the man", the trans* men in Rubin's study did not believe that testosterone itself had any sort of masculinizing effect on their behaviors, although the majority of the men were on testosterone and almost all planned to have chest reconstruction surgery (p. 157).

In addition, when Rubin (2003) asked the participants about masculinity and what it means to be a man, he found that most of the trans* men compared themselves to cisgender men to see if they were alike or different. This comparison showed that although the trans* men considered themselves men, they were still concerned with how well they would fit into hegemonic gender norms and how well they would portray stereotypical masculine behavior (Rubin). Interestingly, although the participants believed that it was necessary to redefine what it meant to "be a man", many still had essentialist ideas about manhood. Rubin's participants distinguished between masculinity

(gender roles) and maleness (sexed bodies) and although they all saw themselves as men, not all of them believed that they had a masculine personality. This is important to note because although the individuals were all self-identified men who agreed that there were some innate characteristics in which all men, cisgender and transgender, had in common, masculinity itself was not always seen as a necessary component to manhood.

Vegter (2013) found that participants did not view masculinity and femininity as opposites; all participants noted that being extremely feminine did not make someone less male and that extreme masculinity did not equate to a male identity. Although most of the participants noted that early on in their transition they increased their masculine behaviors (intentionally deepened voice, rejected feminine characteristics), with time, this "compensatory behavior" declined (Vegter, p. 101). This suggests that although gender expression can help validate one's gender identity, as the participants became more comfortable with their identities, they were able to embody more "human characteristics" instead of "gendered characteristics" (Vegter, p. 101). The trans* men in Vegter's study did not feel as though cisgender men had more masculinity than them but that every person, regardless of his/her gender identity, can have varying amounts of both femininity and masculinity. The FTM individuals did not believe that in order to have a male body, an individual needed to have a penis, which was also one of the major findings in Jamison Green's study involving both transgender and cisgender men.

When Green (2005) found that within his sample of both transgender and cisgender men, certain physical traits did not equate to maleness, it led to a question about whether masculinity is the same thing as maleness. All participants answered "no", suggesting that there were certain behaviors that were considered masculine but that

physical traits were not necessarily masculine or feminine (Green, p. 295). The trans* men indicated that they learned about their masculinity both externally (people told them that they were masculine) and internally (they felt as though they were different from women) whereas the cisgender men indicated that overall, the internal feelings of being different from women were what made them understand their masculinity (Green, p. 296). When asked about ways of expressing masculinity, the participants all cited stereotypical forms of masculinity, such as behavior, speech inflection, occupation, and performing actions usually equated with people with male bodies (Green, p. 297). Like Vegter (2013), Green noted that the trans* men who were in the early stages of their transition were more likely to indicate deliberately behaving in ways so that their masculinity would not be questioned, especially so that they would be seen as male in male-dominated spaces.

For Green (2005), the greatest difference in responses between trans* men and cisgender men came in their response to the question, "What does it mean to be masculine or to have masculinity?" (p. 297). The trans* men equated masculinity with power and privilege whereas the cisgender men noted that "having masculinity meant a particular psychic destiny that is opposite and complimentary to that of femininity" (Green, p. 297). Green concluded that masculinity is often understood through social symbols such as secondary sex characteristics of the body, and signals such as behaviors and speech patterns that have been agreed upon by our society (p. 297). Based upon his interviews and his own personal trans-male perspective, Green concluded, "Masculinity by itself is not the problem for feminism; maleness is not the problem for women. The

problem is the paradigm that frames females as inferior and encourages men (and women) to see maleness and masculinity as "not feminine" (p. 298).

Forshee (2006) discussed this paradigm and called it a "binary classification system" that normalizes dichotomous gender roles and places femininity with female and masculinity with male (pp. 21-22). Forshee argued that masculinity and masculine identities need not only be for male-identified individuals. Although masculine characteristics are alive and well in male culture, masculinity can be performed (that is, people can "do" certain things that would be seen as masculine) and therefore it can also be found in female-bodied individuals (Forshee, p. 45). However, the current dichotomous gender system (female-male) does not allow for individuals to stray from socialized gender norms, which is especially problematic for trans* identified men and women (Green, 2005; Forshee, 2006). Forshee noted that trans* men are socialized as females and therefore their understandings and experiences of masculinity are different from historical/traditional ideas about masculinity held by individuals socialized as males (pp. 5, 46). This unique understanding of masculinity needs to be explored further in order add to the current literature on both masculinity and transgender issues.

Types of Identity

Stealth and either/or. Rubin (2003), Cromwell (1999), Edleman (2009) and Roen (2002) discussed identity categories in which trans* identified individuals could potentially fit. As Rubin found, there is often a hierarchy within trans* communities about using hormones in order to more successfully "pass." The term "passing" within trans* communities refers to the degree in which an individual blends in as either a man or a woman (Cromwell). By definition, passing is "the successful transition into the

gender role of choice, with little (or no) detection of the previous gender or sex" (Forshee, p. 25). Often, this passing can lead to the trans* identity of "stealth". According to Edelman, in order to live stealthily, an individual's previous trans* history is not noticed in everyday life. Trans* individuals who would be categorized as stealth do not disclose their trans* history and therefore lose the "trans" label and simply identify as men or women (Edelman).

This stealth identity is also referred to as "either/or" in Roen's (2002) discussion of trans* identities. Either/or refers to a category of trans* people who "pass convincingly as either a man or a woman" (Roen, p. 505). Oftentimes this either/or identity is criticized by scholars because of how it maintains the dichotomous gender system (Roen). However, individuals who identify as either/or often do so because of the fear of discrimination or hate crimes based on trans* identity, or because they always identified as simply the "opposite" sex, not as an in-between gender (Roen).

Both/Neither. The other identity category in which Roen (2002) discussed is termed "both/neither". Trans* people who fit the both/neither label could neither identify as man nor woman, thus surpassing any gender binaries, or they could believe that they embody characteristics of both men and women and identify somewhere within the binary (Roen). Oftentimes this trans* population does not pass as well as the "either/or" or "stealth" categories, and are often more susceptible to discrimination than trans* people who successfully pass (Roen). This label is often used to help bring visibility to trans* people and to highlight specific issues that trans* identified individuals may encounter (Hansbury, 2005).

Hansbury (2008) proposed what Cromwell (1999) called a "trifecta of possible FTM experience" (p. 167). In Hansbury's theory, FTMs could be genderqueer, trans* men, or woodworkers. Genderqueer is a catch-all term that focuses on the fluidity of one's gender identity (Hansbury). In Hansbury's research, people who identified as genderqueer were often the youngest FTMs, ranging from the teens to the mid-20s. Hansbury noted that self-identified genderqueer individuals often decide that they want an identity somewhere in the middle of the gender identity spectrum, often rejecting the idea of two separate genders. Individuals in this category are often the most politically active and their chosen identity category is often politically motivated (Hansbury). The age range of these individuals could factor in to the political activism. The next category, "trans* men" refers to FTMs who are comfortable discussing their trans* histories and although they see themselves as men, the "trans" prefix serves as a modifier- a way to communicate that gender is constantly in a state of flux and there is never an end stage (Hansbury). Finally, "woodworkers" are Hansbury's version of either/or or stealth. The term suggests that these individuals go back into the "woodwork," that is, the cisgender population (Edelman, 2009).

It is important to note that these scholarly interpretations and critiques of trans* experiences in relation to identity categories are not always consistent with the lived reality of trans* people. Although I discuss these categories in order to create a knowledge base about the possible identities found within the trans* community, it is not an exclusive list. I identify the need to focus on the actual lived experiences of trans* men in order to form a more complete picture of transmasculine identity, hence the

reason for asking my participants how they personally identify, instead of asking them to place themselves within one of the identities discussed above.

Trans* Politics

Discrimination based on gender identity is extremely common (Forshee, 2006). In the United States, discrimination is especially prevalent against trans* people in terms of employment, access to insurance coverage, and parental rights (Forshee). Trans* men and trans* women face problems with public policy, legal issues, and healthcare (Forshee). It is important to conduct research that includes trans* men in order to bring the perspectives of trans* men into the view of health and human service programs, as well as our legal system. Because trans* men face unique oppressions based on their identities, especially if they do not "pass" as a man, it is of utmost importance to discuss trans* rights and the issues in which these individuals deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Legal and Healthcare Issues

Oftentimes, trans* people are discriminated against in their place of employment, usually as the result of not passing, or because of a disclosure of a trans* identity (Forshee, 2006). Recently, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) bill passed in the United States Senate (Human Rights Campaign, 2013). This bill is the first of its kind to include transgender individuals when enacting laws against discrimination in the workplace. Although this bill has passed in the Senate, the discrimination of transgender individuals in the workplace still exists in the America. For example, if an individual identifies as a man but his identification papers still say "F", employers may still refer to this man as "she" or with his birth name. This can lead to prejudice and emotional distress in the work place. This discrimination in the workplace is especially

problematic given the statistics regarding the income of trans* people. “Approximately 40% of trans* people have not finished high school, 31% have incomes under $10,000 per year, and 29% have no income whatsoever” (Xavier, 2000, as cited in Forshee, p. 31). This low high school graduation rate is often impacted by the loss of social support from families. Once they discuss their trans* identities, many trans* men are ostracized from their families and are forced to find their own housing and employment (Spade, 2011).

Not only do trans* men have difficulties finding employment, especially employment where they are not discriminated against, but they also have difficulties maintaining their health because of our current prejudices within the healthcare system (Forshee, 2006 and Spade, 2011). Trans* men are often denied insurance coverage of transition-related services such as access to hormones, chest reconstructive surgery and sex reassignment surgery (Forshee). Trans* men are also often turned away from visits to obstetricians and gynecologists which can lead to increased rates of cervical and breast cancer (National LGBT Cancer Network, 2014). When trans* men do receive medical treatment, the providers often believe that being transgender is a pathological condition, therefore frequently misunderstanding some of the experiences of the trans* men. The intersection of the lack of employment (and therefore money) and the absence of insurance coverage for transition-related services leads some trans* men to seek hormones or money through unsafe means (Spade, 2011). This helps explain why some trans* men and trans* women resort to sex work in order to pay for the cost of everyday living, as well as to purchase hormones (Spade).

Trans* Discrimination and the Perpetrator/Victim Dyad

Dean Spade (2012) is a trans* activist, attorney, and educator; most of Spade's scholarly work focuses on the limitations within the U.S. legal system and the problems with current efforts to promote trans* rights. Spade notes that many trans* activists have attempted to reform laws dealing with antidiscrimination and hate crimes. In terms of antidiscrimination laws, trans* activists often seek to have gender identity and expression included in the list of items in which employers, landlords, and other authority figures cannot use as discrimination against a person (Spade). Similarly, trans* activists frequently attempt to pass hate crime laws that include any crime carried out against someone because of their gender identity or expression. Spade believes that these approaches (passing antidiscrimination and hate crime laws) are severely flawed.

Spade (2012) questioned whether or not these laws actually "improve the life chances of those who are purportedly protected by them" (p. 185). Laws have been passed to help get rid of racial discrimination and race-based hate crimes, yet this discrimination still occurs daily, sometimes as a result of the inadequate enforcement of such laws. Hate crime laws do not deter people from harming others; rather, they serve as a punishment for such acts (Spade, p. 186). Many trans* people who face discrimination or hate crimes do not have access to legal help to do something about these problems, or they cannot afford such access (Spade, p. 186).

Spade (2012) illustrates what he calls the "perpetrator/victim dyad" that leads to problems with trans* rights. This dyad suggests that the perpetrator "irrationally hates" trans* identified individuals because of their gender identities and intentionally discriminates against them (Spade, p. 187). This individualizes the sexism, racism, or other discrimination that occurs, instead of focusing on the systemic formation of such

discrimination (Spade). As a result of this thought process, the basis for such discrimination and prejudice is not eradicated, nor is it thoroughly dealt with. Really, this focus on individuals rather than our society as a whole only serves to preserve gendered and racialized norms found in our legal system (Spade, p. 193). Because there is no question of our basic stereotypes and ideas about race and gender within these legal systems regarding trans* rights, Spade argued that "meaningful change" will not occur for trans* people (p. 187). Indeed, the current legal system's reliance on a binary gender system only reinforces stereotypes about masculinity and femininity, especially in relation to what defines a person as a man or a woman. Spade suggested that we must work outside of the gendered legal system if we are to fully achieve equality between cisgender and transgender individuals. By incorporating questions about discrimination in my interviews, I hope to be able to identify facets of how masculinity, especially as it relates to whether or not an individual passes as a masculine man, leads to transphobic comments.

Queer Theory and Feminist Theory and Essentialism

Defining Queer Theory

According to Oswald et al. (2009) queer theorists question the formation of so called "normal" binaries and attempt to "make the familial strange" (p. 43). Queer theorists "challenge the normative" by attempting to ask why some identities are deemed "normal" whereas others are deemed "wrong" or "abnormal" (Giffney, 2004, p. 74). The basic premise of queer theory is to examine the categories in our society and how they were formed, especially categories that are seen as dichotomous, or divided into two distinctly separate groups.

Queer theorists protest the idea that there is “normal” behavior and they also argue that identity is not defined by sexual acts (Showden, 2012). This means that if an individual engages in sexual acts with someone of the same sex, this would not grant them the label of “homosexual”, nor does only having sexual intercourse with members of another sex justify the label of “heterosexual”. By refusing to use sexual activity as a means to label an individual, queer theorists once again argue against the use of strict binary identification categories. These strict dichotomous categories lead to heteronormativity and institutionalized heterosexuality (Oswald et al).

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity promotes conventional gender norms and the normality of heterosexuality (Oswald et al, 2009, p. 44). Within heteronormativity, “a woman is assumed to be a feminine female and a man is assumed to be a masculine male” (Valocchi, 2005, p. 752). Heteronormativity is observed in everyday life when men and women are assumed to be straight. Not only does this assumption lead to the erasure of an individual’s sexual identity, but it also brings with it a judgment on what is seen as the “norm.”

By questioning heteronormativity, queer theorists investigate the power structures that are reinforced by institutionalized heterosexuality. For example, the process of institutionalized heterosexuality assumes that there are rigid binaries and categories of gender identity and sexuality and these are the categories that queer theorists attempt to take apart (Oswald et al., 2009). Within the frameworks of queer theory, identity is fluid, ambiguous, and oftentimes indefinable (Sullivan, 2003). By investigating the assumption that identities are fixed or givens, queer theorists analyze how these

categories lead to inequalities (Valocchi, 2005). Instead of focusing on the "repression or expression" of minorities, queer theorists attempt to analyze the power and knowledge that shape systems of oppression (Sullivan). Valocchi notes that queer theorists concentrate on identities and individuals that deviate from and do not fit neatly into a binary category, especially categories that are reinforced by institutionalized heterosexuality and heteronormativity.

Thus, using queer theory to help analyze how trans* identified men embody masculinity seems especially fitting for this thesis. Even if some trans* men do indeed identify with a binary category of gender, they were socialized as women and therefore their expression of masculinity will be different from that of cisgender men who were socialized as men in childhood. Queer theory has influenced my main research question by allowing me to examine and develop an inquiry on the idea that masculinity is a fixed, innate characteristic belonging solely to cisgender men.

Feminist Theory and Essentialism

Queer theory's rejection of normative identity categories stems from the "anti-identitarian and "anti-normative" aspects of feminist theory (Jagose, 2009, p. 160). Feminist theorists have critiqued the idea of essentialist identity categories since the early 20th century (Jogose). Gender essentialism, or the idea that there are innate traits and differences between men and women, is often critiqued by feminists who use a social-constructionist viewpoint (Crenshaw, 1997). This viewpoint states that gender is influenced by factors in society, making it socially constructed and therefore gender is not predetermined by biological components. Although many feminist theorists assert

that gender is socially constructed, they do not argue that this social construction leads to the insignificance of gender in our world (Crenshaw).

Gender Does not Equal Sex

Gender categories are continuously brought to the forefront in research within the social sciences. Gender differences attributed to brain structure or chromosome variations are widely accepted within the fields of developmental and evolutionary psychology. It is important to note that anti-essentialist feminists distinguish between sex and gender (Stone, 2004). In order to reference an individual's sex, information is needed about the person's genetic makeup (usually determined by chromosomes). Gender, on the other hand, is determined by factors such as socialization and how people personally identify themselves. Therefore, many feminist theorists critique the idea of gender essentialism because of the failure to recognize the difference between sex and gender. Some feminist theorists note that while you may need specific anatomical features in order to be classified as belonging to the female sex, being classified as a woman requires no genetic or physical components (Stone).

The assumption that sex and gender are interchangeable identity categories has been critiqued by many feminist theorists (Lorber, 1994; West and Zimmerman, 1987, Butler, 1990). By equating sex with gender, behaviors and characteristics are deemed either appropriate or inappropriate for men and women. This leads to essentialist views about what makes a person a male or a female. Unfortunately, these views can also lead to transphobia or discrimination against individuals who claim a trans* identity. Thoughts that suggest an individual's identity goes against essentialist ideas about brain function or genetic makeup can lead to the assumption that the individual is mentally ill or unstable.

The recent removal of “Gender Identity Disorder” from the DSM-5 and the inclusion of “Gender Dysphoria” have helped to remove some stigma about the transgender community, however there continues to be a need for scholars to critically analyze how language and word usage can lead to detrimental effects in people’s lives (Feminist Majority Foundation, 2012). The critique by feminist theorists about the interchangeable usage of categories of sex and gender helps to break down harmful binaries and can help establish new categories of identification.

Method

Individuals who identify within the trans* masculine spectrum face challenges because of their identities, specifically discrimination due to our heteronormative society. Trans* men are discriminated against in housing, employment, and in medical care (Spade, 2011). Many trans* men face this discrimination because of a failure to pass as cisgender men, or a failure to portray themselves as masculine men. Therefore, it is essential that more research include trans* men, both as a general population but also in terms of masculinity studies.

I used feminist approach to in-depth interviewing and survey research for my thesis. Feminist in-depth interviewing attempts to uncover the "subjugated knowledge" of the lives of individuals who are often left out of mainstream research (Hesse-Biber, 2014 pg). Trans* men have been left out of research as it relates to transgender and masculinity studies and by employing a feminist research design, I aim to give these men a chance to share their lived experiences. By using feminist survey methodology to research masculinity in cisgender men, I was able to gather concrete numbers and statistics that can introduce social justice issues to a mainstream audience.

I used a mixed methods design for my thesis. By employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques I was able to generate more complex knowledge than if I had focused on only one type of method (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Hesse-Biber noted that using quantitative methods is often helpful when attempting to disseminate information to a wider audience because it provides easily-remembered statistics and it can help determine "the best course of action in implementing social change" (p. 305). Following David Morgan's (1998) design of types of mixed methods, I

used QUAL followed by quan. This means that my qualitative in-depth interviews were the primary method and the quantitative surveys was used to test results of my qualitative methods on a different population (Hesse-Biber). The qualitative interviews included trans* men (FTM, Transsexual, Transgender, Transguys, Genderqueer, or Gender Variant). This population was chosen in order to gain knowledge on the perspectives on masculinity for individuals who were socialized in childhood as girls but who now identify as men. The quantitative surveys included cisgender men (men who were assigned male at birth and now identify as a man).

Qualitative Method

Using face-to-face interviews helped me gain insight into the lived experiences of trans* identified men. These interviews allowed me to hear how the participants respond to questions, see their body language, and ask them to elaborate on their answers. My interviews were semistructured with an interview guide to help shape the interview. The semistructured nature of my interviews allowed room for spontaneity and for the participants to disclose more information or go more in-depth to specific questions if they wished (Hesse-Biber, 2014). If during my interviews, participants answered a question that was scheduled for later on in the interview, the semistructured form of my interview allowed me to have the flexibility to discuss that question as it appears. By including open-ended questions, I had some control over the direction of the interview but my participants also have agency. These questions give the interview a conversational tone and help minimize the hierarchy that is often found in completely structured interviews.

Participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. Flyers (Appendix 1) were placed around the Mankato campus (near the LGBT center, the

Women's Center, and bulletin boards in Morris and Armstrong Halls). Interested participants contacted the researcher via phone or email. They were asked screening questions (see Appendix 2 attached) to see if they qualified for the research. If they qualified, they set up a time to do the interviews. The qualitative portion of my research study was conducted in an agreed upon location for participant and researcher. All interviewees had the opportunity to meet in a private study room in the MNSU library. When a participant was interviewed, they were asked if they knew anyone who might be interested in the research and that if they did, they should tell this person to contact the researcher.

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher read the consent form to the participant and had him sign it (Appendix 4). The researcher then asked the participant if he had any questions regarding the consent form or the research. After this, the participant was asked to pick a pseudonym in which he was referred to throughout the interview. Then, the researcher began recording the interview via an electronic voice recording device. The interview did not last for over one hour.

Next, the researcher followed the interview script and asked the participant the questions (see Appendix 5 attached). The final question on the interview script asked the participant if he had anything else he would like to share. When the interview is over, the researcher gave the participant the $5 Target gift card, thanked him for his time, and stopped the recording. The recording was then put into the researcher's password protected computer to be transcribed by the researcher herself. After three years from the date of the interview, the recordings will be deleted by the researcher. When the

transcriptions are finished, they will be kept in Dr. Shannon Miller's office for three years. After three years, Dr. Miller will delete all of the files.

Quantitative Method

The quantitative portion of my research study was an online anonymous survey. The online survey was sent via email to students on the Mankato campus. This survey can be found in Appendix 3. The researcher used the mavmail option of sending the email to specific classes via course number (Gender and Women's Studies, Psychology, Sociology, Engineering, and Mathematics). For the online survey, participants received an email asking for their participation. They must identify as a cisgender (assigned male at birth and now identify as a man) man and be between the ages of 18-25. The survey was from SurveyMonkey and it began with the consent form (Appendix 6) which stated that if the participants submit the survey, they have consented to the research. The survey consisted of fourteen Lickert scale questions (see Appendix 3) and should not take more than ten minutes to complete.

I conducted my surveys through an online survey site (Survey Monkey) in order to allow for full anonymity and to reach more individuals than possible with paper-and-pencil surveys (Hesse-Biber, 2014). I planned to interview eight to twelve trans* men and survey 50-75 cisgender men. I have chosen these numbers because of time restraints and because in prior research, these numbers have been used before (Green, 2005; Forshee, 2006). Although I would have liked to conduct in-depth interviews with cisgender men, the large amount of literature on cisgender male masculinity makes it so that I can rely on survey methodology and still have enough background information to make informed decisions about my analysis.

Theoretical Framework

I use queer theory and feminist theory and essentialism as my feminist theoretical framework. Queer theory allows me to question the heteronormative structure of society and how it can impact how transgender men and cisgender men form their ideas of manhood and masculinity. Queer theory also questions institutionalized heterosexuality that reinforces gender binaries (Nagoshi and Brzuzy, 2010). Feminist theory distinguishes between sex and gender and critiques the idea of gender essentialism, or equating certain traits with a specific sex (male vs. female) (Jogose, 2009). I use feminist theory in order to further develop the idea that gender does not equal sex and that an individual's gender identity is fluid and can change over time.

Potential Limitations

Some of the limitations in my research may occur because of my outsider status in relation to the men that I interview. Because I identify as a cisgender woman, it is possible that trans* identified men will feel uncomfortable sharing personal information with me. Another limitation is that I am a first time interviewer. Therefore, my use of probes or responses to the comments that I receive may seem forced or unnatural. As I am conducting my interviews in Minnesota, another limitation is the geographic location of my participants. My participants will be living in the Midwest and therefore have social cues and norms related to the Midwest, which cannot be generalized to other regions of the United States. Finally, there is a limitation in using survey methods to gather some of my data. My surveys are based on a Lickert scale and do not allow the participants to elaborate on their answers. The surveys are also online and anonymous so I cannot guarantee that all of my respondents are actually cisgender men.

Positionality

It is important to reflect upon my own values and attitudes towards my research (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Reflexivity involves a person's social background and location and is used as a way for researchers to "account for their personal biases and examine the effects that these biases may have on the data produced" (Hesse-Biber, p. 3). As a cisgender, white, pansexual woman, my interest in masculinity stems from discussions about gender performance within my peer group. The idea that an individual who is usually seen as feminine can dress differently and be seen as more masculine intrigues me, especially because it seems as though masculinity is a construct that can be performed by anyone, not just male identified individuals. I have close friends who are transgender and I am involved in the queer community as an activist.

Although I do not agree with a binary gender system, I assert that it is possible for an individual to identify with a different gender than one in which they were socialized with as children. I identify as a woman who was born female and who possesses mostly feminine characteristics, and therefore it is possible that I may enact a cisgender gaze (Layton, 2013). This refers to how cisgender individuals see the world in terms of their gender, often comparing trans* people to what is deemed "normal" (assuming cisgender is the norm). I am aware that an individual who identifies as transgender has complex identities other than simply a trans* identity, and I will attempt to incorporate this awareness into my interviews. I will also address the cisgender gaze by elaborating on what my definition of "man/men" is within my analysis of my data. I will not simply state the category of men as a static, fixed entity, but rather I will assert that the identity

category of being a man involves the embodiment of numerous diverse characteristics and traits, not all of which are innately found in cisgender men.

Results

In the results chapter I discuss the findings from both my qualitative and quantitative data collection and how these results compare to one another and to previous research. Through the use of direct quotes and summarization, I present the major themes that emerged from my qualitative interviews as well as descriptive statistics about the frequency of answers for my quantitative survey.

Qualitative

In the qualitative portion of my research study, I divided my interview questions into four main research questions: 1. *How do trans* men (FTM, transsexual, transgender, gender queer, or gender variant) embody (incorporate and express) masculinity?* 2. *How do trans* men perform masculinity in their day-to-day lives?* 3. *How to trans* men recount their experiences of gender socialization?* 4. *How to trans* men experience transphobic discrimination?* Here, I discuss the major themes that developed from these research questions; I begin with a description of participants.

Participant demographics. For the qualitative portion of my thesis, I met with eight participants, ages 20 to 25. The interviews ranged from 24- 48 minutes in length and seven of the eight interviews were conducted in-person; the eighth interview was conducted via Skype. All of the participants resided in Minnesota and had either graduated from undergraduate college, or were currently enrolled in college courses. See Table 1, Participant Demographics, for a breakdown on the gender identity of the participants as well as ages, sexual identities, hormone/Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS) status, educational status, and racial identification. The table shows how diverse the participants were, especially in terms of their own gender identifications and sexual

identifications. Each participant described his sexual identity in detail, many noting that after transition, their sexual preferences became more fluid.

Participant Demographics

Name	Frank	Gus	Toby	Cooper	Theodore	Kay	Brian	Kyle
Age	20	21	22	23	23	25	25	25
Gender Identity	Gender Fluid	Male	Gender Queer	Trans man	Gender Non-conform-ing	Male, trans-sexual	Male	Gender Queer
Sexual Identity	Likes women, no label	Straight/ bi-curious	Queer	Gyne-sexual	Queer	Straight	Mostly straight, fluid	Gay
Hormone/ SRS Status	In gender therapy, plans to start hormones soon	6.5 months on T no SRS	No Hormones no SRS	5 months on T, has had top surgery	No hormones no SRS, does not want	10 months on T, has had top surgery	4 years on T, has had top surgery	No hormones no SRS
Educational Status	Currently enrolled in college courses	Has some college	Has college degree	Has college degree	Has college degree currently working on Master's degree	Has college degree	Currently enrolled in college courses	Has college degree currently working on Master's degree
Racial Identification	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	Latino

Figure 1. The ages, gender identities, sexual identities, hormone/SRS status, educational status, and racial identification for interview participants.

Research Question 1: How do Trans* Men Embody Masculinity?

Masculinity is socially constructed. The idea that masculinity is socially constructed and culturally based emerged as a major theme. The majority of participants noted that what is deemed masculine is often arbitrary and that it can change with different social movements and time periods. When asked to give a definition for masculinity and for the term "guy", almost all of the participants struggled with giving a

concrete definition for masculinity and some were unable to answer what it meant to be a guy. The responses were often prefaced with “I think this is a tough question”, “I’m not even sure if I can define it”, and “this is a hard question.” This shows that although the terms “masculinity” and “guy” are often used in daily language, the actual meanings of the words are rarely thought about in a critical manner.

Many participants noted that in order to have masculinity, an individual must connect to what society deems as masculine. All of the participants discussed how they did not agree with the societal and cultural norms about what it means to be masculine and feminine. Several participants were cautious about their definitions of masculinity for fear that their answers would sound too stereotypical. One of the participants defined masculinity as “connecting more with societal expectations of what it is to be male, but I don’t always agree with those expectations”.

Some participants seemed to be concerned that their answers would sound hypocritical because although they disagreed with societal expectations of what is deemed appropriate masculine behavior, when thinking of a definition, most could only come up with stereotypically “masculine” traits, much like the ones they refuted. One participant actually said, “I totally feel like a hypocrite” when giving an answer about what he considered a masculine feature. As the interviewer, I continuously needed to reassure my participants that I was not judging their answers. I also needed to tell my participants that the point of my questions was to get them to really think critically about masculinity and masculine behavior and so it was normal that many were having a hard time quickly giving answers. One participant was so overwhelmed with having to describe masculinity that he exclaimed, “God, this is getting so philosophical!”

R.W. Connell (1995) theorized four different forms of masculinity: hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalized. Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant form of masculinity in our society and is the most valued type of masculinity (Connell). Individuals who fit under hegemonic masculinity fit into stereotypical forms of masculinity such as having physical strength, and suppressing one's emotions. Complicit masculinity does not fit into the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity but it also does not challenge these characteristics. These individuals often look up to and have high regard for men who fit into the hegemonic masculinity category (Connell). Subordinate masculinity actually displays qualities and characteristics that are opposite of the ones seen in hegemonic masculinity, such as physical weakness or highly expressive emotions (Connell). Finally, marginalized masculinity brings into account factors such as class or ethnicity which make it so that an individual cannot fit into the hegemonic form of masculinity. For example, men of color or men with a disability who still embody characteristics such as physical strength or aggression would fit into the category of marginalized masculinity. Their race or ability causes the individual to be seen as different from that of white, able-bodied men in the hegemonic masculinity category. Although none of the participants labeled their ideas of masculinity in any of Connell's terms, it is important to note that my participants fit mostly into the hegemonic masculinity category because of their focus on suppressing emotions, having physical strength, and being calm, confident, and level headed.

Maleness does not equal masculinity. The second theme that emerged under the first research question was that maleness and masculinity were not the same thing. All participants noted that maleness had more to do with biology or sex whereas masculinity

was more about gender and outward displays of certain traits or characteristics. All of the participants believed that sex and gender were very different categories of identification. Masculinity had more to do with gender (behaviors, or expressions that an individual chooses to employ) whereas maleness had more to do with sex, which often meant physical characteristics or chromosomal development.

When asked what it meant to be masculine, many participants listed characteristics such as being assertive and outgoing, being dominant and having confidence. Participants who identified as male remarked that although they had masculine traits, these traits were present even before they identified with the male sex. When asked if maleness and masculinity were the same, one participant summed up what many of the others had to say, “no, maleness and masculinity are not the same thing. I think when it comes down to it, anybody can be masculine, whether you’re male or female, but the word male really means someone who identifies with a male body or at least that’s what they want to achieve.” While arguing that anyone can embody masculinity or masculine traits, many participants gave specific examples of what they considered necessary physical characteristics for masculinity. These physical characteristics bring us into the third theme that emerged under the first research question.

Necessary physical and emotional characteristics for manhood. When asked whether there were any physical features that participants considered necessary components to being a man, the majority answered no, but then described physical characteristics that they deemed necessary for them to have in order to feel like a complete man. For example, one participant said, “there are no physical features you

have to have to be a man but I'd certainly ideally like male features like having facial hair, being more muscular and ideally I'd have a fully functional penis." Another participant answered, "for me personally, I would say things like having a flat chest are necessary for my own happiness but I wouldn't say that's a blanket statement for everyone. Someone could certainly be masculine and not have that." Other participants, while agreeing that there were no necessary physical features needed in order to be considered a man, noted that they would consider facial hair and muscles to be necessary features for their own personal embodiment of manhood.

Many participants made it known that much of what makes people masculine has to do with their emotions and how well they deal with stressful situations. Phrases such as, "be less expressive," "don't talk about feelings," "be level headed," and "be careful with your emotions," occurred throughout the interviews when the participants described what it meant to be a guy or what it meant to be masculine. One participant replied, "I guess I feel like I should be less sensitive and maybe less expressive of certain things like maybe I don't bother people about my feelings or I don't talk about my feelings as much." Expressing emotions such as fear or sadness was deemed inappropriate in many of the interviews, however some participants noted that displaying emotions such as lust or pride was acceptable if shown through the use of physical strength.

Research Question Two: How do Trans* men Perform Masculinity in Their Day-to-Day Lives?

Clothing as expression. The most commonly occurring theme within the second research question was that participants expressed their masculinity through clothing. All of the participants noted that they dressed a certain way in order to present as masculine.

When asked which type of clothing was considered masculine, the answers ranged from, “no dresses,” to “anything from the men’s department.” Men’s clothing was described as covering as opposed to revealing, camouflage as opposed to lacy, and boxers or jeans instead of bikini briefs or skirts.

One participant who identified as gender queer said that presenting as masculine often has to do completely with outer characteristics such as clothing or hair style. Many participants chose clothing styles that they were more comfortable in, which were described as looser fitting and not feminine. At the time of the interviews, all participants had short hair and most noted that maintaining a short hairstyle was often a way to pass as male in public spaces. Many participants also noted that the way in which they held themselves was often an added safety measure in terms of passing as masculine. Sitting with the legs open, slouching, and walking with a strut were the most common bodily movements in which the participants noted they consciously performed in order to be perceived as masculine. Some participants noted that before they identified as men or as masculine they were scolded for not being a “proper woman” when sitting with their legs apart or wearing hunting gear. After transitioning, these mannerisms and clothes were considered acceptable by today’s standards.

Dating life. The second theme that emerged under research question two was that participants performed certain actions in their dating lives in order to be perceived as masculine and that having a supportive partner helped the participants feel more comfortable with their identities. All participants noted that if they are dating, they do certain actions that are socially deemed as masculine such as driving to and from dates,

holding doors for their partners, paying for dates, carrying items and fixing broken items. When asked about how masculinity shows up during his dating life, Brian, 25, said:

> Um I mean I always joke about gender roles but I do also like to kind of follow them in silly ways. I like chivalry, which a lot of people don't. Because you can be independent and let me open the car door for you, it's fine. So if there's a bag to carry, I like to carry it. And I hate if the girl I'm walking with has a box and won't let me carry it. Just let me carry it, it'll make me happy. And if there's something wrong with her car, I'll probably fix it. And if we go out somewhere I probably want to pay for it.

Many participants noted that if they had an unsupportive partner during or before their transition, their confidence levels dropped and their transition was delayed. Salvador Vidal-Ortiz (2002) describes partner support as "paramount" and "crucial" for the validation of one's identity (p. 205). Having the people involved in a trans person's life validate their identity and support their decision to transition can greatly impact the exploration of gender and gender expression (Vidal-Ortiz). Unfortunately, not all of the participants had supportive partners or other individuals in their lives before or during transition. One participant recalled that intimate relationships had, "to some extent delayed my transition at times or affected my confidence and self esteem in my transition." Another noted, "well before, the partner I had was not accepting, that kept me more in the gender closet so to speak, but then the partner that I had after that was much more accepting so that helped me feel positive and open to exploring it without feeling like I was going to be mistreated badly or differently for that." Having an accepting partner was often linked to feeling more comfortable with expressing oneself. Toby, 22,

noted that, “I think intimate relationships played a big role in my transition, especially because the people I’ve been with have been very accepting and have allowed me to express myself whether it be my appearance or the things I want to do and explore.” Having an intimate relationship during transition appeared to either help or hinder the participants, depending on whether or not their partners were encouraging or discouraging. All of the participants noted that having some variety of a support system was helpful during their transitions, especially with emotional support and dealing with harmful comments from unsupportive acquaintances.

Research Question Three: How do Trans* men Recount their Experiences of Gender Socialization?

Vastly different socialization. When asked about the differences between the socialization of girls and boys, almost all participants believed that there were immense differences, including what was considered appropriate behavior for playing, how one was expected to act during school, the clothes that were deemed appropriate to wear, and which toys were okay to play with. Gus, Kay, and Toby noted that one of the major differences in socialization could be seen in grade school. Boys were often granted more freedom and privileges and were seen as being able to get away with more seemingly inappropriate behaviors, like playing rough during recess, or being loud in the classroom.

When describing where they learned about masculinity, many participants noted that they learned through Gender and Women’s Studies courses, LGBT centers and community groups, and self exploration. Interesting to note, one participant noted that he did not have any male figures in his life in which he felt he could look up to or model his masculinity after, so he learned about appropriate masculinity and masculine behaviors through television and movies. When a father figure was not present, some participants

said that they looked to an older brother or uncle for mentorship, but in general, most participants learned about masculinity through their own means of exploration.

Research Question Four: How Do Trans* men Experience Transphobic Discrimination?

The Bathroom Problem. In her book entitled, *Female Masculinity* Judith "Jack" Halberstam (1998) discussed what she calls "the bathroom problem." This term describes the dilemma many trans* or gender variant individuals go through when picking which public restroom to use. "In public bathrooms for women, various bathroom users tend to fail to measure up to expectations of femininity, and those of us who present in some ambiguous way are routinely questioned and challenged about our presence in the "wrong" bathroom" (Halberstam, p. 20). This bathroom problem can not only lead to questions about whether or not an individual is in the correct bathroom, but it can also bring about "physical violence as a result of having violated a cardinal rule of gender: one must be readable at a glance" (Halberstam, p. 23). This bathroom problem was the form of discrimination in which all of my participants mentioned during their interviews.

All participants mentioned having to deal with uncomfortable feelings when deciding which restroom to use, especially in crowded areas. These feelings revolved around the fear of physical violence from using the men's restroom, and the fear of being called out on for using the women's restroom. One participant's fear of violence became a reality when he was punched for using a restroom at a bar. Another participant developed bladder infections from holding his urine because he did not feel comfortable using the restroom. Some of the participants noted that they felt more comfortable using gender neutral or unisex restrooms, especially if they felt as though they were not successfully passing.

Men's only spaces. When describing how men's only spaces, like the locker room, made him feel, Brian noted:

> I feel nervous, anxious, because I still have two giant scars on my chest, and I don't have a penis so I go into a gym locker room where most guys are hanging out with their wangs out and I feel like I have to cover up still. I always use the locker on the bottom so I can open it up and have like a cover so they can't see that I don't have a bulge in my underwear.

Like Brian, other participants noted that they needed to take special care to cover parts of their bodies when using men's only spaces. There was almost always an extra step required for using the restroom or the locker room, such as covering one's genitals either through using a locked stall in the bathroom or by refraining from using locker room shower. Even though some of my participants were stealth and pass in day to day life, not having a fully functional penis that would be visible in public restrooms or showers stopped them from being comfortable using these showers for fear of violence or harsh comments.

Other forms of discrimination. When participants were asked if they had experienced any forms of discrimination another common form of discrimination revolved around the intersection of gender identity and other identity facets such as ability, race, and age. The majority of my participants discussed the term "intersectionality" and noted that they experience different oppressions and privileges based on their multiple identities. Hunnicutt (2009) states "although gender hierarchies are the central organizing feature of patriarchal systems, age, race, class, sexuality, religion, historical location and nationality mediate gender statuses, assigning male and

females varying amounts of social value, privilege and power" (p.558). For example, one participant noted that he is usually read as white until people hear his last name, so at times he experiences white privilege and at other times, he experiences racial discrimination. Another participant noted that because of intersectionality, his gender identity and disability status interact to cause multiple problems when searching for employment opportunities. It is important to note that although an individual may not experience transphobic discrimination, their other identity categories could lead to prejudice.

Quantitative

The quantitative portion of this thesis involved a fourteen question online anonymous survey, facilitated through the website Survey Monkey. Fifty-three cisgender men fully completed the survey. After analyzing the results, three main themes emerged from the data.

Theme one: Maleness does not equal masculinity; Masculinity is not innate. Over 70% of survey participants disagreed with the statement, "maleness and masculinity are the same thing" and over 50% of the survey participants disagreed with the statement, "masculinity is an innate characteristic in which all males are born with." These sentiments were also shared with the interview participants. The idea that one does not need to be male in order to embody masculinity is a strong case for anti-essentialism, or the idea that there are not specific attributes or innate characteristics that all men or all women embody.

This specific result is especially important to note because almost 80% of the cisgender men who completed the survey noted that they were perceived as masculine in their daily life. So although the vast majority of survey respondents saw themselves as

masculine men, these respondents did not believe that just because they were men meant that they were automatically masculine, rather, masculinity was seen as a trait in which all people, regardless of gender, could embody. This is evidenced through the almost 70% of survey respondents who agreed that boys and girls could have the same amount of masculine characteristics, regardless of their gender assignment. A possible reason for the cisgender participants' relaxed views on who can embody masculinity could be due to the fact that the cisgender survey respondents believed that they passed well as masculine men. The trans* interview participants were more consciously aware of how they presented themselves and whether or not they successfully passed as masculine men. Many of the interview participants noted that they would deliberately perform actions that were associated with hegemonic masculinity in order to be perceived as a masculine man.

The cisgender participants did not have to be as aware of their masculine traits and how these traits would affect their male image. The trans* participants had a heightened awareness of their masculine and feminine traits and were continuously attentive to how they performed masculinity. So although both trans* and cisgender participants believed that masculinity was not an innate characteristic held only by men, the cisgender participants could hold more lax views on what constituted masculinity because they did not have to worry about passing in daily life, or worry about whether or not their behaviors would be questioned in relation to their gender identity.

Theme two: Masculinity is expressed through appearance and behaviors. When asked about expressing masculinity, 42 of the 53 survey respondents (79.2%) expressed masculinity through their appearance and 45 (84.9%) respondents expressed

masculinity through their behaviors. What is important to note here is that not all of the survey respondents expressed masculinity through their appearance or their behaviors, whereas all of the interview participants noted that expressing masculinity through appearance (wearing men's clothing, keeping a short hair style) and behaviors (sitting with legs apart, slouching, working out to gain physical strength) was an important part of their transition and especially important in terms of passing as a masculine man.

Like the participants in Green's (2005) study, my interview participants also noted that they expressed stereotypical and hegemonic types of masculinity that are often associated with people who have a male body. This could show that the interview participants were more concerned with passing as both a man and as masculine whereas the cisgender participants were less concerned about this. As most of masculinity is recognized through socially agreed upon symbols (facial hair and muscle mass) and signals (speech inflection, voice patterns, or behaviors usually associated with masculinity), the interview participants formation of what it means to be a man is heavily focused on behavior and appearance that in our society goes hand in hand with stereotypical masculine manhood (Green, 2005.

Theme three: Masculinity is learned from peers and parents. The third theme within the quantitative portion of my thesis revolves around where the survey respondents learned about masculinity. Of the 53 survey participants, 36 (67.9%) noted that they learned about masculinity through their parents, and 48 (90.5%) participants noted that they learned through their peers. The fact that a high percentage of the cisgender survey respondents learned masculinity from peers and parents suggests that this was a result of gender socialization in the home and at school. Throughout childhood

and adolescence, we learn about our appropriate gender roles, or the expectations on how men and women should behave in accordance to masculinity and femininity (Santrock, 2010; Eagly, 1987). As parents are the primary agents of gender role reinforcement for children, learning about masculinity through your parents could help fortify strict guidelines for appropriate masculinity (Maccoby, 2007). For example, parents often reward children for gender appropriate behaviors and punish children for gender inappropriate behaviors such as saying, "Kelly, you look so pretty in that dress!" or "Tommy! Boys do not play with dolls!" This reward/punishment model helps reinforce societal norms related to gender and gender schemas.

According to Blakemore, Berenbaum, and Liben (2009), children develop gender schemas that help organize associations in terms of male or female characteristics. These schemas motivate children to comply and conform to sociocultural gender stereotypes, especially when these stereotypes are reinforced by motivation through parents, teachers, and peers (Santrock, 2010). As the survey respondents noted that they learned about masculinity through their peers and parents, they more than likely were taught to conform to stereotypical gender roles, schemas, and stereotypes. This was not the case with the interview participants. None of the interview participants said that they learned masculinity through their parents or their peers. Rather, the participants noted that they learned about masculinity through LGBT centers, gay and lesbian youth groups, classes about gender and sexuality, or through television shows and movies. This suggests that the interview participants may have developed an idea about masculinity that was less stereotypically gendered than that of the masculinity that the survey participants learned through their parents and peers. As Forshee (2006) noted, trans* men who are socialized

as females in childhood and adolescence may have a different understanding of masculinity when compared to cisgender men who were socialized as males. This could lead to trans* men having a more diverse definition of masculinity, different from the traditional or stereotypical masculinity cisgender men are socialized to perform and embody (Forshee).

Discussion

This thesis demonstrates that although masculinity is often thought of as socially constructed, it is a powerful force in our society. My results show that trans* men offer a unique insight into the development of masculinity, especially in relation to how it manifests itself behaviorally and through appearance. My results also show that although transgender and cisgender men are socialized with femininity and masculinity differently in childhood, their views on masculinity in adulthood are similar. I conclude with the views on masculinity in which my participants held, and reflect upon the rampant discrimination in which my participants experienced. Finally, I offer suggestions for future research on gender identity and masculinity studies.

Hegemonic masculinity, although not embodied by most individuals, is held to a high level of importance for some trans* individuals who learned about what is considered "masculine" through television or movies (Connell, 1995). Many of my participants described behaving in ways that were socially deemed as masculine in order to be perceived as men, even though all individuals, regardless of their gender identity, have the ability to embody masculine characteristics.

Not passing as "masculine enough" has led all of my participants to fear using gendered public spaces such as restrooms or locker rooms. The prevalence of violence or discrimination with restroom usage within my interviews both shocked and saddened me. Being able to relieve oneself is a perfectly normal and necessary thing for all humans, and yet this seemingly simple issue is constantly in the minds of many trans* individuals. If more individuals were aware of other gender identities besides men/women, and if masculinity and femininity were seen as traits in which all people could embody in varying degrees, I hope that "the bathroom problem" would disappear.

My final interview question asked the participants if they had any final thoughts they would like to share with me. This gave the participants a chance to bring up other reflections that were not asked about in the interview. Many of the participants were excited to be included in my research and noted how important it is to include the voices of trans* individuals in academic research. One participant, Kay, ended with this comment:

> The biggest thing that's made a difference in my transition is hormones and having access to safe hormones. Even a few years ago when I was supposed to start testosterone, no insurance companies would cover it. Getting access to safe testosterone is difficult and we need to really work on getting people access to this.

Having access to hormones, gender therapy, and SRS is incredibly important for trans* individuals who wish to physically transition. This access is something that more activists and law makers need to focus on because without it, many trans* individuals resort to sex work or purchase hormones in an unsafe manner, often leading to health risks or health problems later in life (Spade, 2011).

Many in society are so fixated on binaries that two seemingly innocent choices have become a battleground for many. The rigid binaries of female-feminine and male-masculine have been engrained into our minds since our childhood socialization. Not only will it take legal measures, but it will also require a change in our pattern of thinking in order to divest our culture of discrimination based on gender identity. We must stop thinking in binaries and begin to realize that people are diverse and that everyone, regardless of their gender identity or other identity facets, is worthy of our respect.

Doing this research project has highlighted issues that many trans* individuals in Minnesota face in their everyday lives. I cannot stand idly by, knowing that so much more needs to be done in order to ensure the safety, security, and happiness of the individuals that spoke with me, and others who face violence, discrimination, poverty, or sickness because of their gender identity. I hope for more research that includes voices that are usually left out and I end with suggestions for future research.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One limitation of this research was the small qualitative sample size due to inability to reach participants. Many interested individuals contacted me but were over the age of 25 or were unable to find a time to meet with me. All of my participants had at least some college education, with the majority having an undergraduate degree. This limits the generalizability of my study, especially because approximately 40% of trans* identified individuals do not have a high school education (Xavier, as cited in Forshee, 2006). My results show how some college educated trans* identified men embody masculinity, which could differ from the results of trans* identified men who have not had the opportunity to attend college. I suggest that future research should include the perspectives of trans* identified men who have not attended college, as these individuals may have a different understanding of identity, especially in terms of intersectionality. An additional limitation of this study was the exclusion of interview questions about sex, more specifically about how masculinity permeates itself into an individual's sex life. Several of my participants asked why I did not ask about their sex life, especially in regards to penetrative sex. I felt the need to focus more on public displays of masculinity and less on the private displays, such as my participant's sex lives. However, a

suggestion for future research would be to include a question about the embodiment of masculinity in sexual acts.

Another suggestion for future research is to include the perspectives of trans* women. I went over my interview questions with one of my friends who identifies as a trans* woman and she offered me great insight not only on the embodiment of masculinity and femininity, but also on the struggles that many trans* people face in terms of SRS and hormone therapy. These insights would have been an excellent addition to my research. I would also suggest asking more questions about social support systems and who the participants turned/turn to in times of stress or for moral support. Several participants discussed the role of their significant others (or lack there of) during transition or SRS. By asking specifically about family or peer relationships, more data could be gathered to show the importance of a support system.

Finally, I suggest that future research include more questions about the challenges that trans* men and trans* women face during and after transition. Many of the stories I heard mentioned violence, suicide attempts, and problems with insurance programs. More light needs to be shed on these issues so that we can make positive changes to improve the lives of all trans* identified individuals.

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Appendix 1

Flyer

Transgender, FTM, Gender queer Participants Wanted!

Project Specifics

1. This research is being conducted by Abby Haak under the supervision of Dr. Shannon Miller at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

2. The interview will be held in a mutually agreed upon location.

3. A consent form will be provided and discussed before the interview is conducted. You can withdraw your participation in the research study at any time.

To qualify for participation in this research study, you must identify within the Trans* masculine spectrum (FTM, Transman, Transgender, Transsexual, genderqueer, or gender variant) and be between the ages of 18-25.

Appendix 2

Participant Pre-Interview Screening Guide

Script: “Thank you for your interest in this study! Before we can begin, I want to make sure you meet the qualifications for inclusion.”

1. Are you between the ages of 18-25? If so, what is your age?
2. Was your birth sex female? Or were you assigned female at birth? Yes No
3. How do you identify your gender? What is the gender terminology that best describes you?

FTM FTM Transsexual Transman Transguy Male Genderqueer Gender Variant Other (please specify)_____

Inclusion Criteria

1. Must be between the ages of 18-25 years old
2. Must identify as FTM, FTM Trannsexual, Transman, Transguy, Genderqueer, Gender Variant, or individuals who were assigned female at birth but who now identify as male or a man

Move forward to gather contact information and schedule interview if person meets inclusion criteria

Name:_____

Phone Number:_____

Email Address: _____

Interview availability:

Appendix 3
Survey Questions

Please indicate your agreement to the following items with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree.

1. Masculinity is an innate characteristic in which all males are born with. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. Maleness and masculinity are the same thing. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I express my masculinity through my appearance. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. Masculinity depends on having a penis. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. Males are masculine and females are feminine. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. I express my masculinity through my behaviors. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. In daily life, most individuals perceive me as masculine. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. There are specific gender roles that a man must fit into in order to be considered a man.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. There are specific behaviors that a man should not do because they are not considered masculine.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. In my relationships, I do certain things to prove my masculinity. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. I learned about masculinity from my parents. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. I learned about masculinity from my peers. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. Boys and girls can have the same amount of masculine characteristics. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. All men have the potential to have the same amount of masculinity 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix 4

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

IRB Case Number: 546180-2

The Embodiment of Masculinity among Trans* Identified Men

Dr. Shannon Miller
Abby Haak
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Gender and Women's Studies

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to understand how individuals who identify within the Trans* masculine spectrum incorporate and express masculinity into their everyday lives.

Procedures

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher, Abby Haak, will read the consent form to you. You will also have the opportunity to read this form to yourself. Questions about this consent form or the interview are allowed and you will be asked if you have any questions regarding the consent form or the research. Your questions will be answered before the interview begins. After this, you will be asked to pick a pseudonym in which you will be referred to throughout the interview. Then, the researcher will begin recording the interview via an electronic voice recording device. The interview will not last for over one hour. Your signed consent form will be kept in Dr. Shannon Miller's locked office for three years after your interview date. After the three years, they will be shredded by Dr. Miller.

Duration of Participation

Each interview will last between 30-60 minutes, depending on your responses to the questions.

Potential Benefits and Risks to the Individual

You will be given the opportunity to discuss your masculinity in an open and candid manner. You may feel uncomfortable discussing certain questions about masculinity and your transgender identity.

Voluntary Nature of Participation

Participation is voluntary. You have the option not to respond to any of the questions. You may stop the interview at anytime by telling the researcher to end the interview. Ending the interview will not cause any penalty or loss of benefits or compensation. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato. If you have questions about the treatment of human participants and Minnesota State University, Mankato, contact the IRB Administrator, Dr. Barry Ries, at 507-389-2321 or barry.ries@mnsu.edu.

Initial: _____

Electronic Recording Confidentiality

Your interview will be recorded using an electronic recording device. This recording will be secured on a password protected computer. Only the researcher and the Principle Investigator (Dr. Shannon Miller) will have access to these recordings. The recordings will be deleted after three (3) years from the date of your interview. Interviews will also be transcribed by the researcher and the transcripts will be kept on a password protected

computer. After three years from the date of your interview, these transcripts will be deleted. By signing this consent form, you agree to have your interview recorded.

Additional Confidentiality

The recording will then be put into the researcher's computer to be transcribed by the researcher herself. The recordings will be kept on the researcher's password protected computer for three years from the date of your interview and will then be deleted by the researcher. When the transcriptions are finished, they will be kept in Dr. Shannon Miller's office for three years. After three years, Dr. Miller will delete all of the files. The data collected from this study will be stored on a password protected computer accessible only by Dr. Shannon Miller and Abby Haak. Your personal identifying information will only be on the signed consent form. You will be referred to by your pseudonym throughout the interview and in all subsequent written information about the interviews.

Compensation

All participants will be compensated with a $5 Target gift card given to them at the time of the interview.

Human Subject Statement:

If I have any questions about this research project I can contact Abby Haak at abby.haak@mnsu.edu or at 507-779-9508 or Dr. Shannon Miller at Shannon.Miller@mnsu.edu or at 507-389-5024.

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS **CONSENT FORM**, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT. I WAS GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM AT THE TIME OF MY INTERVIEW.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Participant's Name

_____ _____

Researcher's Signature Date

Appendix 5

Interview Script

Thank the participant for volunteering! Hand them the consent form, read it to them, and have them sign it. After they have signed, begin recording the interview. Ask them to choose a pseudonym in which they will be referred to throughout the interview. Then, begin with these questions:

1. What about this research study made you want to participate?

2. What is your gender identity and how would you define or explain it?

Research Question 1: How do trans* men (FTM, transsexual, transgender, transguys, genderqueer, or gender variant) embody (incorporate and express) masculinity?

1. How would you define masculinity?
2. What does it mean to be a guy?
3. What does it mean to be masculine?
4. Are maleness and masculinity the same thing?
5. Are there any physical features that you consider necessary components to being a man?

Research Question 2: How do trans* men perform masculinity in their day-to-day lives?

1. How do you express masculinity? (What things do you do to express your masculinity?)
2. What do you consider to be your sexual orientation?
3. How, if at all, does your masculinity show up in your dating life?
4. Do you have the same kinds of attractions to similar people than you did before your transition?
5. What role, if any, have intimate relationships played in your transition?
6. Has your sexual orientation morphed or changed since your transition?
    b. If so, how?

Research Question 3: How do trans* men recount their experiences of gender socialization?

1. From your experience, what are the differences between the socialization you had as a female, and the socialization you would have been exposed to, had you been born (assigned) male at birth?
2. How did you come to understand your masculinity?
3. Where did you learn about masculinity?
4. Having experienced living as a (not necessarily self-identified) woman, what differences do you see between yourself and other transgender and cisgender men, if any?
5. How did you interact with other males and females as a child?

Research Question 4: How do, if at all, trans* men experience transphobic discrimination?

1. Have you experienced any discrimination because of your trans* identity? If so, can you describe this discrimination?
2. Do you find yourself comfortable using men's only spaces (such as a gym or a washroom)? How do these spaces make you feel?
3. Have you experienced any other forms of discriminations due to your identity, for example your race?

Final Question: Do you have any final thoughts or comments you'd like to share before we end this interview?

Appendix 6

ONLINE/ANONYMOUS SURVEY CONSENT

Are you between the ages of 18-25? Were you assigned male at birth? Do you identify as a man?

If so, you are requested to participate in research supervised by Dr. Shannon Miller and conducted by Abby Haak, a graduate student in the Gender and Women's Studies program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, on how you incorporate and express masculinity in your life. This survey should take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

The goal of this survey is to understand how men who are **not** transgender view masculinity. You will be asked to answer questions about that topic.

Participation is voluntary. You have the option not to respond to any of the questions. You may stop taking the survey at any time by closing your web browser. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato. If you have questions about the treatment of human participants and Minnesota State University, Mankato, contact the IRB Administrator, Dr. Barry Ries, at 507-389-2321 or barry.ries@mnsu.edu. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Dr. Shannon Miller at Shannon.Miller@mnsu.edu or Abby Haak at Abby.haak@mnsu.edu.

Responses will be anonymous. However, whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

The risks of participating are no more than are experienced in daily life.

There are no direct benefits for participating. Society might benefit by the increased understanding of attitudes about masculinity among cisgender men (men who were born male and identify as male).

Submitting the completed survey will indicate your informed consent to participate and indicate your assurance that you are at least 18 years of age.

Please print a copy of this page for your future reference.