Complexity in a Gender Binary: the Challenge to Universities to Include Transgender Students

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COMPLEXITY IN A GENDER BINARY:
THE CHALLENGE TO UNIVERSITIES TO INCLUDE TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

by

Tricia N. Collins

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This research explored how colleges are addressing gender diversity by exploring the lived experiences of Trans college students in relation to institutional supportive resources. A total of four Trans-identifying students at Bucknell University volunteered to participate in semi-formal interviews to share their experiences. The foundation of this study reveals that the pervasive understanding of gender in binary terms narrows the limits of “appropriate” behavior into two mutual exclusive categories of masculinity and femininity. Such a narrow definition of gender causes problems for Transgender (Trans) students who do not easily fit within these categories. Through the interviews, Trans student insights show there is great complexity within gender identity. To be supportive to Trans students directly, helping professionals do not need to necessarily identify as a gender minority to be most supportive but must express knowledge-based skills of Trans issues. Also data findings show Trans students feel most included and connected to the university through a combination of symbolic and relational means. Symbolic structures, such as gender neutral bathrooms, express the extent of Trans visibility to campus while relational means of inclusion require an actual middleman to “bridge the gap” between the student and the helpful resource. Implications gathered from results assume that a systemic approach is needed to enhance both the symbolic and relational structures to all aspects of the campus experience. Additionally, implications for Student Affairs theories assume that linear gender development theories do not adequately calculate the lived experiences of Trans individuals. Adopting inclusive theories and practices is hard work but we have already begun the journey towards Trans student inclusion.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

American society, as a whole, is becoming more open to outwardly discussing the needs of LGBTQ individuals. For example, a marriage equality law was passed in the Supreme Court in 2015. Through a historical trajectory of equal rights efforts such as Feminism waves, racial equality movements, and Human Rights Campaigns, minorities groups like LGBTQ individuals are gaining more visibility. In more recent times, attention has been drawn to gender diversity issues. For example, although literature about Transgender individuals existed before society openly discussed such matters in daily conversation, Bruce Jenner’s transition to Caitlyn Jenner in 2015 has received massive attention in modern media. Therefore, Trans research has connected to a moment in time where transgender issues can be explored and discussed more openly. Although transgender issues are addressed alongside issues of sexuality, gender identity issues are a separate but equally important cause to address. Transgender advocacy is not necessarily the next phase of equal rights campaigns but rather an additional form of continued exploration into minority groups’ experiences. By attending to various disadvantaged groups, the collective knowledge gained can serve to discover solutions against inequality.

Unfortunately, there are reactionary groups that have strong oppositions to equal rights efforts. Such opposing rights groups argue that life was better in the “good old days” and therefore society must return to traditional roots. Rather than giving a listening ear to all voices, the mentality is to silence disadvantaged groups while continuing to attend to privileged groups. To keep everyone in their place is injustice, and even Martin Luther King Jr reminds us that the good old days should remain in the past. “Never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was legal” (Letter from a Birmingham Jail, 1963). Repeating history has not always been successful and therefore strides towards progress call for more research. This thesis serves to
encourage the forward momentum of visibility for minorities, in particular transgender individuals, to deconstruct a heteronormative belief that people fall into distinct and complementary identity categories. Attention to gender as a fluid concept will not only liberate transgender individuals who do not conform to binary gender concepts (male or female only), but will benefit advantaged cis-gendered individuals who may identify as a minority in some other way, and consequently also desire respect for their humanity.

As a graduate student in the Education Department studying College Student Personnel, I believe attention to transgender issues can have vast application in the division of Student Affairs. The mission of Student Affairs professionals is to address student growth and self-exploration beyond the classroom. In higher education, opportunities to develop exist everywhere and at all times, therefore causing Student Affairs professionals to seize such learning opportunities for college students. Through developmental models of learning and identity, Student Affairs professionals act as a form of support for student needs, including the needs of transgender students. However, Student Affairs developmental models by theorists such as Arlene Lev (2004) and Vivienne Cass (1979), address gender and sexual identity in a linear fashion, perpetuating the overarching societal problem of classifying people to narrow categories.

Narrow gendered concepts have negative implications for students who identify as a sexual and/or gender minority. For example, some universities remain single sexed such as Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. Other universities such as Carlow University in Pennsylvania are coeducational but in practice continue to be women-serving. The education provided at such institutions may be excellent, but the traditional dynamics of the student body pressures students to adhere to the norm. Hence a feminine individual at an all-female institution risks separation
from the university, despite excellent academic performance, by identifying as more masculine. The stresses of hiding their identity and the emotional process of coming out that many transgender students experience can, in turn, lead to poor mental health issues that prevent students from reaching their full academic potential (Beemyn et al., 2005). By continuing to abide by a gender binary tradition, Trans individuals must conform to the norm or be subject to mental health issues and poor academic performance. Rather than forcing Trans students to choose between two unfortunate options, universities must make the space for students to be themselves, and so perform at their highest potential. Student Affairs professionals must therefore acknowledge a broader population of students that need assistance.

Progress has been made at Bucknell University in respect to LGBTQ student issues such as designating an affinity house on campus to individuals of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance and providing free contraceptive options to students besides just male condoms. I have also noticed more recent institutional attention to transgender issues by implementing gender-neutral housing and bathroom options on campus. In my work as the Graduate Assistant at Bucknell’s Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC) since August 2014, the CSDC made changes to the score of care offered to students, in an effort to increase access and inclusion, of which Trans students may not have been informed. For example, shortly after starting in the office I noticed counselor communications ended with a note indicating their preferred pronouns (See Appendix A). I had not seen any emails with this information before and saw this as a positive recognition of gender identity issues that all institutional departments should be adopting. While changes are being made, outreach needs to improve to take full advantage of the inclusive services being offered.
Originally, the agenda of this a thesis exploring the perceptions of College Counseling Center support by transgender students at a heteronormative campus like Bucknell. However, after exploring the literature and conducting interviews, I switched my focus away from College Counseling Centers specifically because other services within a University can, and should, also provide adequate support to transgender students. As a student studying College Student Personnel, I did not learn department specific information in my classes, but I was instead instructed about the practice of Student Affairs in general. For example, there were not classes called, “Counseling Center Services 101” or “An Introduction to Orientation Services.” Rather, the courses were collaborative, just as the practice of Student Affairs is meant to be as well. When successful, equal rights movements have combined efforts rather than having a single individual or one group creating change. As such, all university functions should adopt a full campus culture change needed to adequately support college students in their gender identity. Until then, gender binary tradition will continue to narrowly constructed “appropriate” gender behavior, identity, and expression of all individuals, not just transgender individuals.

While my position as a researcher implies an obligation to be objective, it is important to note that as much as procedures were taken to control for biases, all research cannot be 100% objective. My positionality relative to the ideas of LGBTQ issues, counseling centers, and other student affairs support systems influences all aspects of this thesis whether intended or not. I am approaching this thesis from the frame of reference as a heterosexual, Christian, middle class, half White/half Asian, cis-gendered female at the age of 24. I also identify as an alumna of Bucknell University in 2014 with my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, therefore totaling my time at Bucknell to six years. On paper, I recognize that my privileged identities may not lend participants to feel comfortable expressing their opinions with me to provide a thorough and
honest look at how Bucknell University Trans students perceive the counseling center and other student affairs support systems. Therefore, I had to network in order to recruit participants. Since I have also identified as an ally on such a small campus, I hoped that the Trans students felt comfortable coming to me to share their opinions.

The choice to study the Trans population specifically was one that was not motivated by my personal identity per se. I do not identify as transgender nor do I have any close friends that identify as transgender. I typically find that colleagues choose to investigate and research problems that they have a connection to. For example, studying time management amongst athletes as a student athlete themselves. However, the topic relates to me on a personal level based on a prior incident in college. Having never been exposed to diverse genders, I didn’t know that a Trans identity existed until sophomore year of college when my friend’s resident asked to have a hall meeting about bathroom use. I had so many questions about how a transgender identity worked and rather than looking for answers for a better understanding, I settled with the limited knowledge I was given from others who also did not understand the transgender identity. I even made fun of a friend for “hooking up” with this Trans person at a party. My friend was not embarrassed when he discovered who he made out with. In fact, he asked me what was wrong with that and why it was such a big deal. I was at a loss for words because I was ashamed. I judged a person by one aspect of their identity without even understanding the full details of who they were as a person. My shame grew the following year when I took a Queer Studies class with this Trans individual who disclosed that either feminine or masculine pronouns were comfortable for her as someone who identifies as gender queer. Over the semester, she told stories and provided me information into her life as a
Trans/genderqueer individual. I felt horrible for the way I judged her as being abnormal and came to reframe the identity as different from mine, not any better or worse.

I tell this anecdote not to place my thesis topic as a rectification of my guilt, but rather to provide a personal example of how easily judging and oppression can happen when we don’t have all the information and understanding of something or someone. My thesis topic is personal on a broader level since I believe in a community approach where actions of one impact all. In my story, I was not part of the solution and was therefore part of a cultural problem that most cis-gendered do not recognize creates barriers for Trans individuals. The more I learn about a topic, the more I come to appreciate it. Learning as much as I have about Women and Gender studies, it is hard not to be an ally and supporter of LGBTQ rights. By shedding light on the Trans community, my hope is that your eyes will be opened and perspectives will change in order to view people as people.

My goals in deciding to explore the perception of Bucknell Trans students of how helpful support systems are on campus are threefold. Firstly, I am addressing Bucknell’s concern of lack of diversity. Bucknell has done a better job in recent years to encourage diversity through implementing programs such as Posse, providing more need-based scholarships, and by admitting more International students each year. However, these attempts have brought more attention to ethnic/racial diversity, overlooking other forms of diversity. Secondly, I am hoping to bring visibility to a group that is considered to be a minority. Thirdly, I hope to contribute to the Student Affairs realm by using gained information to contribute to theories of identity development and in turn, have such inclusive theories inform my future practice.

Upon completion of the thesis and defense, I hope broader implications can be gathered. On a broader scale, keeping in mind to ask for preferred gender pronouns or simply just being
mindful of cis-gendered privilege every time one uses the restroom is a good start towards inclusion. I also suggest that when being bombarded by media with headlines about Caitlyn Jenner, or any information about a transgender individual, be critical about how/if the gender binary is being communicated to the general public. Opening your eyes to an alternative perspective is the first step to acceptance of difference, rather than tolerance. It can also be implied from my research that the ways Student Affairs Professionals attempt to support students may need some adjustment. On the institutional level, I hope that Bucknell continues to keep diversity a priority rather than giving up when faced with outcomes that challenge heteronormative traditions. A great start after reading this thesis is to re-evaluate existing structures, such as housing assignments, to review the extent to which they are truly inclusive to all students. I suggest Bucknell also implement a more integrative approach when programming and/or taking a relational approach to outreach rather than having multiple ineffective educational programs. Student Affairs Professionals can help to model such change by acting as a bridge to connect students to other students, faculty, and resources on campus to address inclusion of all students, not just transgender students.

My thesis explores questions that include, but are not limited to: What does it mean to be an Ally? How can Student Affairs offices be more accessible and inclusive to all students? How does a gender binary construction influence Student Affairs work? How do Trans students, specifically at Bucknell, perceive current methods of support for their community? How can Student Affairs Professionals best support Trans-identifying students? To address the thesis questions, I gained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct a qualitative study consisting of semi-structured interviews with self-identifying Trans student volunteers. Participants were recruited through campus-wide online advertisements and through networking.
From audiotaped one hour interviews with each participant, conversations were transcribed. Transcriptions were sent to participants at two different times for member checks and patterns were discovered in the data in order to present the following research findings.

Following this chapter, I explore the literature finding that the gender is commonly conceptualized as male or female. The binary gender thinking resonates in society and politics. A deeply engrained gender binary understanding not only has negative implications for Trans individuals who do not fit neatly in the binary, but also pressures those who do fit in the binary to remain within the gender constraints. Looking more specifically at the college student experience, the gender binary is established in campus restrooms, housing assignments, and other campus services. By maintaining a gender binary tradition on campuses, Trans students are excluded from participating in campus life like everyone else. If these Trans students do not receive adequate support from the institution, students risk their academic performance and poor mental health. I personally address Trans students’ perceptions of institutional support by conducting my own qualitative study. Chapter 3 acknowledges the preparation for and execution of methodology practices. Through Bucknell Trans student interviews I gathered data. Data findings are presented in chapter 4 to show three main themes. In chapter 5 all information is synthesized into a discussion where implications of the research are discussed. I conclude my thesis encouraging Student Affairs professionals to be mindful of the gender binary in their work to observe the progress that has been made and the progress that still remains, in being more inclusive.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

While investigating the literature on Transgender students’ perceptions of Student Affairs resources and other institutional support systems, it becomes apparent that this demographic is a marginalized group. For the purposes of this study, the term transgender, or Trans, for short, encompasses a wide range of identities, appearances, and behaviors that blur or cross gender lines. This transgender umbrella includes the labels of transsexuals, cross-dressers, drag kings/queens, and genderqueers. Such individuals live some or all of the time in a sex different from their biological sex, wear clothes typically associated with the “opposite” gender, cross-dress within a performance context, and/or identify outside of binary gender or sex systems (Beemyn et al., 2005, p. 49). Through an interdisciplinary approach, theorists from fields of Sociology, Psychology, Women and Gender Studies, and Philosophy show that binary language used to conceptualize gender is engrained deep in society, making it difficult for Trans individuals whose identity is a resistance of a binary gender discourse. The binary gender construct is even problematic for those who identify within the gender binary, pressuring them to behave only within their assigned gendered categories or risk their visibility and legitimacy. Society at large has attempted to address the ways in which language narrows gender to two separate categories of male or female through political movements, but have failed to create lasting change. Visibility of Trans issues on a political level is a start, but society needs systemic change to tackle the binary ways of conceptualizing gender rather than having one or a few groups be activists.

Focusing specifically within the realm of higher education as a subgroup of the larger societal population, Trans students are at a higher risk, compared to their cisgendered peers, of struggling academically and of facing harassment. The language used to study the gender
development in Student Affairs is limited to the ways in which sexuality development is understood, therefore indicating a lack of appropriate attention on this student population. Additionally, the literature on Trans college students specifically is lacking, unoriginal, and/or further stigmatizing to this population. As higher educational institutions are supposed to appropriately support students, the gender binary norm prevents campus cultural change to allow Trans students to feel adequately supported and safe in their identities.

The following literature review explores the challenges Trans students experience within their gender identity by first exploring the societal ways language is used to understand and articulate the Trans experience. Such language constrains humans, not just Trans individuals, in certain ways. For example, defining gender as a binary places femininity opposite to masculinity. Therefore to resist gender norms, a female deviates away from feminine stereotypes, in turn perpetuating the strong hierarchical masculine characteristics. College settings specifically need a systemic, multi-cultural language change because Trans students interact with unique challenges that most of their peers take for granted on a regular basis. When paired with the research on lesbian, gay, and bisexual college student support, more research on Trans individuals, including this thesis research, can investigate the effectiveness of support systems for Trans students in an institutional environment that has the potential to create systemic change on a smaller scale.

The Limits of Language

Reality, just like gender, is a fluid concept. What is seen as real is only defined by a person’s particular belief structure or schema. Also, one person’s reality may be very different to someone’s reality of the same event. The Talmud even says “We see the world, not as it is, but as we are” (Sodha, 2006). The difficult part of perceived realities is that what we as humans name
is not reality and in turn, what is reality, humans do not have the language or ability to name. The ideas that communicating realities are ever-changing because of context may be an uncomfortable or dissonant thought for some, but language must be addressed in this thesis first in order to observe the ways gender and the Trans experience is communicated. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach to explore the fields of philosophy, queer studies, and sociology, the literature reveals the ways in which the any language itself constricts the way knowledge is conceptualized, how stereotypical gender characteristics continue to lie within the core of American cultural value systems, and what has been done to address the ways American vocabulary and gender definitions have limited the progress of providing appropriate Trans student support. The evidence of inadequate conceptions and language for gender enlightens the inability of universities and society at large, to move towards a full institutional multicultural approach when attempting to support marginalized populations such as Trans students.

Michel Foucault is not generally regarded as a philosopher of experience or a feminist. In fact, he is accused by critics, in his *The History of Sexuality* specifically, of discounting female sexual experiences. However, Foucault is a literary critic as well as a social theorist and French philosopher. Johanna Oksala, a philosopher who specializes in Foucault studies, argues that Foucault’s post-structuralist thought in terms of the understanding of experience is a theoretically fruitful resource for feminist studies despite being accused by others as androcentric. “Foucault thus holds that experience is always constituted through specific cultural and historical conditions that shape even its purely personal meaning. Experience must exceed linguistic representation because our embodied habits and sensations are constituted in a web of both discursive and non-discursive practices” (Oksala, 2011 p.212). Foucault believed theoretical knowledge should not be solely informed by phenomenology. At the same time, phenomenology
should not be solely informing theoretical knowledge, because experience is limited by narrow vocabulary. This means that what a person is experiencing materializes in interrelated elements of power, knowledge, and forms of self-relation, but the limits of this experience are subject to the ways the experiences can be articulated. While there are characteristics of humans that we conceive are fixed, the presence of a Trans identity dares to show that human characteristics are actually fluid. As author Jerry Spinelli says, “I’m not my name. My name is something I wear, like a shirt. It gets worn. I outgrow it, I change it” (Good Reads Inc., 2016). Just as characteristics of a person are associated to a name, characteristics of a name are also associated to the person. Therefore, phenomenology comes close to, but never actually achieves a way to gain crucial insights for understanding human existence because reality and the way realities are communicated are ever-changing.

Foucault presents a believable argument about language on a theoretical level but on a practical level, his argument is pessimistic. Phenomonologists would agree that the lived experience of individuals cannot be fully articulated through current vocabulary but, in response to Foucault, language limitations should not prevent people from asking questions. Phenomology indeed can be a philosophy that helps thinkers out of the hole language places society in. The best course of action to get perceived reality as close as possible to actual reality, would be to ask the people who are living the experience what language they prefer. Rather than relying on “experts” such as the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of a term such as transgender, to best understand someone’s Trans experience, it is best to ask that individual to communicate in their own words what being Trans means and how they prefer to be addressed. Repetition is also important for this individual’s Trans experience and preferred language may be different from another Trans person’s experience and preferred language.
There is a distinction between having an experience and describing it, as long as the language currently used to describe a lived or felt experience continues. For example, if two individuals were asked what it means to be feminine, they will share key invariants that make them both feminine beings, while also having significantly different lived experiences. However, language limits the ability to fully understand the lived experience, reducing feelings of an event into facts of a story and perhaps categorizing femininity by the feelings they do share rather than taking a holistic approach. (See Appendix B). To create a theory of the Trans identity from these anecdotes generalizes the full experiences that each individual person experiences into one definition. When people express their subjective experiences and then researchers create theories based on these experiences, they become objective, creating categories of humanness. Since modern language and definitions can multiply and/or become distorted, the experiential body is subject to normative definitions and practices. “Experience as an event can never be wholly defined” (Oksala, 2004, p. 114). It appears that the ways in which a lived experience is communicated, such as the one in which a student identifies as transgender, there is the potential to further stigmatize that experience if reduced to oppressive terms.

The perpetuation of such oppressive terms towards the Trans community has already been evidenced by the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V). According to the DSM, the trends a Transgender person experiences can be defined as a psychological disorder called Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysmorphia. Gender Identity Disorder is marked by “incongruence between one’s experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender, of at least 6 months duration” and “a strong desire to be of the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one’s assigned gender)” (2013. pg. 576). While meeting these criteria may allow a transgendered individual to be eligible for medical and
psychological treatment, treatment may not even be necessary if individuals view these characteristics as part of natural gender identity discovery, rather than a mental health illness.

Sociologist Salvador Vidal-Ortiz explored the literature of Trans studies and notes that other authors within the realm of Sociology also critique Gender Dysmorphia Disorder as a mental health illness. Gender, as it is currently defined in the English language, naturalizes two and only two genders. “In that sense, gender does not change, which is how they explain that a trans person has to fight medical, psychiatric, and other institutions that claim they cannot be ‘who they say they are’ unless they have surgical reconstruction” (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008, p. 441).

Consequently, expanding on Foucault’s advice, rather than informing theories through phenomenology, the experiences of Trans students must expand to go beyond what has already been learned.

**Compulsory Hegemonic Masculinity: Anything Not Masculine Is Feminine**

Furthering the argument that language and definitions do not allow the dynamics of experiences to be fully understood, we can look at how the American culture conceptualizes gender. Arlene Istar Lev, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and author of *Transgender emergence* (2004), takes a historical look at a gender framework (See appendix C). Lev does not personally advocate for a binary gender model in her book, but visually represents it. in order to demonstrate the binary way gender, as well as other classification systems, has been historically understood. “The invention of classification systems to label sexual deviation occurred during the mid to late 1800s, the same era that racial classifications were scientifically formulated” (Lev, 2004, p.166). With opposing categories of Black or White, Homosexual or Heterosexual, it is no accident gender is also dually constructed. Gender in binary terms implies that gender identity is classified as either “man” or “woman” with no room for gray area. “If a person is a
male, he is a man; if a person is a man, he is masculine; if a person is a masculine male man, she will be attracted to a feminine female woman” (Lev, 2004, p.94). Lev criticizes the approach, stating that when one identity category is chosen, other identity categories of sex and sexual orientation follow, leaving identities such as transgender and bisexual out of the realm of possibility. The binary gender approach constricts sex, gender, and sexual orientation into mutually exclusive entities rather than each being its own continuum of possibilities. As a result of the binary way gender is constructed, creating a transgender development model is a difficult mission.

To demonstrate the way the current gender construct limits attempts for social change, several scholars, such as Professor of Sociology Shelly Budgeon, acknowledge what is called “hegemonic masculinity.” As it currently stands, a hierarchical approach exists where “masculinity becomes ‘what men and boys do’ and femininity the Other of that” (Budgeon, 2013, p.7). Gender is thus conceptualized based on how different or similar something is in relation to stereotypical maleness. This dynamic even extends to the ways sexual orientation is understood as the relation of active male dominance and passive female receptivity (Budgeon, 2013, p.7). By defining masculinity and femininity as complementary opposites in a hierarchical fashion, hegemonic relations are sustained. Rather than theorizing gender in multi-dimensional terms, any resistance to gender diversity continues to be conceptually confined to how similar or different the act is in relation to masculinity.

To further prove the point of hegemonic masculinity, Budgeon explores the problematic possibility of a hegemonic femininity. The idealized new femininity would be reconstructed as any resistance to a stereotypical feminine expression. For example, a proud new femininity becomes a feeling and expression of strength to establish the same legitimacy as masculinity.
However, by doing so, there is still a hierarchical configuration of masculinity as the primary gender compared to femininity. To feel “empowered,” the new femininity just embodies conventional masculine qualities which do not work to break down the hierarchical structure of gender. “This model [hegemonic femininity] provides a framework which aids in advancing our understanding of how a range of femininities and masculinities are implicated in sustaining or challenging hegemonic gender relations” (Budgeon, 2013, p.8). Rather than serving as an antidote to hegemonic masculinity, hegemonic femininity perpetuates binary gender categories. The fact that these new femininities assimilate masculine attributes without upsetting hegemonic masculinity shows how deeply the role of gender is engrained in society, thus providing a significant challenge to Transgender individuals who do not fit within this gender dynamic. As such, social progress is not about women becoming masculine, but about becoming individuals.

Even within masculinity at the top of the hierarchy, males are also constricted to the current gender definitions. Sociology Professor Melanie Carlson conducted a qualitative study about masculinity in terms of bystander intervention entitled, *I’d Rather Go Along and Be Considered a Man* (2008). Carlson found that for men, the benefit of saving a victim in a rape is not enough to broaden what it means to be masculine. The moral dilemma is not whether or not to save the woman but whether or not overthrow someone else’s masculinity and risk looking vulnerable if the heroic attempt backfires. The study not only implies that men are pressured to abide by their gendered stereotype, but also that the way masculinity is currently conceptualized is so narrow that it does not even include acting on another’s behalf.

When asked if Carlson’s male participants would want to intervene in the event a woman was being sexually taken advantage of by multiple men, the participants answered said “yes.” Several of the reasons why the males would want to intervene in the gang rape situation included
an expression of their gender, because protecting a “damsel in distress” exerts masculinity. Next, when asked if the men would lose respect from their male peers if the participant were to intervene in the rape, the men responded affirmatively. “John Smith also said, ‘They’re [his male friends] not going to leave; they’re not going to do anything about it. ‘Cuz they’re too scared to look like a pussy leaving the room.’ George did as well, ‘I think they’re [the group of male friends] pressured to cheer him [perpetrator] on because they don’t want to look weak in front of their other friends.’” (Plante & Maurer, 2010, p.446). Another participant in the research study indicated that he definitely would be judged by his male peers if he intervened because he would be entering upon another man’s territory: his girl. Thus, while the majority of men in this study stated they would want to protect the woman in the hypothetical abusive scenario, some seemed to waiver their conviction to intervene because doing so would compromise the definition of masculinity they are pressured to abide by. Even though saving the woman is an expression of masculinity, the male participants agreed that placing themselves in such a position increases the risk of the male to present as vulnerable and sensitive. Showing such weakness, by hegemonic masculinity standards, places males in the category of being more feminine. These comments are telling in how men must weigh their options of preserving a masculine reputation or do what they believe is the right thing to do for the victim’s sake.

An even more complicated example of how hegemonic masculinity is constricting is revealed in studies of how Drag Queens navigate masculinity. Jack S. Kahn, Lynsey Goddard, and Jamie M. Coy, all researchers in psychology, interviewed an alternative drag performance troupe comprised of four gay male-identified members called House of D’Bus. Their regular performance entails traditional elements of drag such as dressing in “other gendered” clothing, lip-syncing popular songs, and portraying female bodied characteristics in a caricatured fashion.
When prompted to reflect on what masculinity means to them, a common trend was the notion of “I as Peacock Masculinity” (Kahn et al., 2012, p. 149). This is a type of expression that emphasizes masculine characteristics of directness and aggressiveness by over-exaggerating the feminine characteristics with color, dress, etc. “The peacock stance emphasizes directness, confidence, self-assuredness, and pride in oneself. This type of hybridized masculinity represents a way of letting the world know who you are, what you stand for, and not caring about other’s reactions” (Kahn et al., 2012, p. 149). Through a bold physic and behaviors, these drag queens exert their power and dominance in a way that claims the space, since all attention is directed at them. This tactic is a powerful method in resisting gender concepts by reconstructing gender categories as free and open. For example, the drag queens do not resist masculinity by modeling femininity, but rather combine the two stereotypical characteristics to create something new.

However, the dominant role that hegemonic masculinity has is so engrained in the American culture that gendered definitions are internalized, causing these drag performers to wrestle with a fully gender resistant presence. Merely combining masculinity and femininity to create a new gender performance only reinforces that a gender binary exists. The performance exaggerates the extremes of both masculinity and femininity together to perpetuate the stereotypical characteristics of those genders. Furthermore, the performers uphold their masculine physical characteristics and behaviors to associate themselves with a “not feminine” identity. For example, comparing penis size, muscular status, and amount of body hair as an internal form of competitiveness continues to be valued. Treasuring the embodied male over feminine expression contradicts their original Peacocking position as a hybrid of gender expectations.
By clinging to the physical characteristics that embody masculinity, there is a possibility of inclusion rather than the potential of being marginalized as a fully gender resistant body. The difficulty in fully resisting hegemonic masculinity rests in the risk of being excluded from society. The authors discuss the difficulty the House of D’Bus drag performers experience in their attempts to recreate gender as free: “In order to be sized up one must be counted as a person who can be included. In other words, it connects House of D’Bus members to the overall world of men and masculinity” (Kahn et al., 2012, p. 152). While attempts to dethrone hegemonic masculinity have been most successful in the community of drag performers, the performers continue to struggle with the liminality of fully embodying a fluid hybrid of gender by letting go of traditional physical markers of masculinity which foster inclusion into society as a whole. Not only are cis-gendered individuals afraid to challenge the gender binary, but drag queens, whose performance relies on resistance, also struggle to be fully resistant. The current way gender is defined is problematic for all people, not just Transgenders, because acceptance in society depends on fitting into narrowly defined gender categories.

By looking at how gender is researched in multiple subject fields, findings commonly link back to the idea of hegemonic masculinity. Problems arise for individuals internally and for society as a whole because masculinity is centered as the comparison to which all other gender options are made. All genders, not just the Trans identity, are as such restricted to narrowed gender characteristic and “appropriate gender behavior.” The approaches to dethrone hegemonic masculinity through means of drag and hegemonic femininity have started to resist compulsory gendered categorizations but nothing new results from these approaches. No new language, nor new conceptions of gender arise by combining the two ends of the dichotomy or trading places between the two. Continuing to perpetuate hegemonic masculinity posits the Trans identity
within a vacuum that is neither male nor female, or both. The inability to make room for gender diversity beyond concepts of masculinity and femininity deems all other identities as invisible. Unfortunately, binary gender categories are so engrained in multiple aspects of society that the government’s attempts to address gender diversity have failed.

**Politics of the Gender Binary**

The gender binary is reified in law due to flawed social justice movement tactics. Gender diversity has tried, but failed to be considered a right that deems protecting against crimes of discrimination. Furthermore, any political movement to address gender diversity disregards other forms of diversity such as ability. Dean Spade, a law professor teaching specifically on gender and sexual identity law and social movements, spends an entire chapter in the Haggerty and McGarry text pointing out the failed initiatives the American government has made to address gender diversity. In the chapter, he acknowledged the great work of Chela Sandoval, a Professor of Chicana Studies who is most famous for her book *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000). Sandoval indicates that tactics in social justice movements used in the last half century include four forms of resistance; an equal rights form, a revolutionary form, a supremacist form, and a separatist form. Unfortunately, while the tactics have been successful in bringing visibility to many issues, they have also created divisions within social justice movements. For example, marriage equality and gender equality in the military are seen as mutually exclusive campaigns even though they both address inclusion of sexual minorities at its core. Sandoval suggests a new form, differential consciousness, as an alternative tactic to social justice movements. “The differential is about traveling across worlds of meaning, shuttling between systems of understanding identity, and engaging narratives strategically with an underlying ethical commitment to equalize power between social constituencies as its guide” (Haggerty &
Differential consciousness as a fifth form of resistance abandons a single narrative of identity and power and instead combines and utilizes various forms of constituencies to create a coalition of resistance. A push for unity of various structures is being made to help break down the current ways in which the gender binary limits society. However, the attempts to be more inclusive have yet to achieve a fully systemic approach to social change.

Dean Spade points out that government initiatives intended to help Trans persons have yet to reach a level of differential consciousness, thus failing to progress the Trans-affirmative agenda. Of note, the House of Representatives passed the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2005 (LLEEA) which included gender identity in its list of categories of bias when putting federal hate crime laws in place (Spade, 2007, p.246). However, queer and Trans activists have critiqued this approach, suggesting that hate crime laws enhance the punishing power of the criminal justice system and thus continues to target marginalized groups rather than helping them. “According to this analysis, placing reliance on the criminal justice system to resolve violence against queer and trans people misunderstands the operation of this violence in our culture by focusing attention on individual perpetrators rather than the systemic conditions of oppression that result in widespread violence against our communities at the hands of the state” (Spade, 2007, p.246). To address a hate crime by enhancing the criminal justice system further endangers, rather than protects, sexual and gender minorities because the political powers only react to the violence, rather than taking preventative measures to ensure systemic safety for all. While including gender as a bias category is a necessary approach, it is also insufficient step toward gender equality. Therefore, the impact of the LLEEA, may not be as helpful as intended. In the end, when it came time for the LLEEA to be voted on in the Senate, the category of gender identity was eliminated from the bill after behind-the-scenes negotiating between the bill’s
Senate sponsors and the Human Rights Campaign (Spade, 2007, p.246). Although an imperfect initiative, the LLEEA did not even get far enough to have gender diversity as a government priority focus. Unfortunately, the political stances to gender have yet to break the gender binary, furthering the lack of Trans visibility and support needed.

While initiatives such as the Safe Bathroom Act Campaign have benefitted Trans individuals, these efforts miss the mark because they are too narrowly focused. Instead, a cultural change is needed to address all humans, not targeted as gender, race, ability, and other identifying categories. “Starting in 2003, the Safe Bathroom Act Campaign (SBAC) focuses on the real world problems that are created for transgender people and our partners, family and friends because of the way that society views gender and the stereotypies associated with it” (Plante & Maurer, 2010, p. 415). The aim of the campaign is to allow safe bathroom space for all to be normalized rather than viewing bathroom access as a luxury or a special right, for without such access to public bathrooms, transgender individuals are denied from participating in public life like everyone else. Gendered restrooms even make life difficult for those who do not identify as Trans. For example, the lack of a changing table in a men’s bathroom makes it hard for a single father to address the needs of their baby. Also, the height of the sinks, paper towel dispenser, and other accommodations prevents someone in a wheelchair from easily accessing such basic bathroom needs. Adding gender-neutral restrooms has been an excellent start but the knowledge of such bathrooms is few and discrimination occurs for other demographics in these bathrooms as well. While implementing resources such as the Safe Bathroom Act Campaign are helpful in protecting Trans individuals from harassment, it does not make any attempt to break down the binary way gender is constructed. Additionally, it discriminates against other populations such as people with disabilities, and therefore continues to marginalize.
Systemic change is needed but such a movement may be overwhelming to those with unknown gender identities. As a result, people need greater latitude to explore gender identity. Judith Halberstam, who has transitioned to Jack Halberstam, is an English Professor who argues that the rush to adulthood should be slowed down dramatically because relying on future thoughts to apply to present moments creates a divide between youth and adulthood. He is saying that by assuming that queer youth need support systems is forcing them to rush the natural flow of gender development. For example, the choice to medically transition is a decision that affects not only the individual, but it has implications for their future ability to have children “naturally”. “Queer youth sets up younger gays and lesbians not as the inheritors and benefactors of several decades of queer activism but rather as victims of homophobia who need ‘outreach’ programs and support groups.” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 176). Halberstam’s point implies that the increased awareness of Trans visibility can progress the model of gender identity development too quickly. So, by assigning a gender identity too soon, there exists the pressure to medically intervene in order to align to the appropriate gender category. Therefore a new approach to LGBT activism is needed to find a delicate balance between providing adequate support while at the same time not making it feel like a requirement to help figure out who they are. Given Halberstam’s assumptions, the college/university setting is a great place to start when attempting to provide support for Trans students seeing as the college age would be an older age to appropriately explore gender identity development.

**Gender development in Student Affairs Theory**

Within college student affairs, student gender development has not been a primary focus. Student Affairs theories that guide current practice can be dated back to the 1950s with Erik Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development with more recently Vincent Tinto’s Retention
Theory in 1987 (Evans et al, 1998). Topics perhaps more prominent include learning theories, typological theories, and developmental theories such as moral reasoning. Within identity development theories, sexual minorities are recognized more so than gender minorities. When gender diversity is addressed in student affairs development theories, unfortunately, the gender binary remains the cornerstone of gender development theory.

In regards to LGBT themes in college student personnel, the most relevant research dates more recently on the timeline to the late 1970s and early 1980s. The literature provided evidence of barriers amongst the Transgender community that keep these individuals at an inferior status, while the literature itself, ironically presented a Transgender inferiority. That is to say, Trans-only research or research acknowledging the Trans student population is significantly infrequent compared to the literature found on Lesbian, Gays, and Bisexual college students, originating more recently in the late 1990s and more so in the 2000s. Trans student theories help provide the language to discuss the transgender identity, bringing visibility to the Trans student population. However, the novelty of the Trans theories lends itself to be unoriginal, deriving gender minority theories based on what has already been learned from studying sexual minorities.

Vivienne Cass (1979) and Anthony D’Augelli (1996), for example, have theorized models for sexual minorities that have become a cornerstone for LGB research. They share that there are six stages of sexual identity development for lesbian, gays, and bisexuals where both theories start when the student realizes that there are alternative identities from what society deems as “normal,” they develop a level of comfort when aligning the self with the alternative identity and then move to the point where coming out to others is comfortable (Evans et.al., 1998, chapter 17). While Cass and D’Augelli’s works are most popular, there are other theories related to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual identity development such as Ruth Fassinger’s Model of
Gay and Lesbian Identity Development (1996). These Student Affairs theorists on sexual identity students provided visibility to LGB college students, but theorists have yet to provide adequate and supportive attention to the Trans student population.

Perhaps the reason Trans college student studies are few compared to other Student Affairs research, is because the language for non-conforming gender categories were not common until recently. The most recent and multicultural approach to a transgender identity development model is by Brent Bilodeau (2005). And even so, the theory is modeled after the same 6-step process as D’Augelli. These steps include: exiting a traditionally gendered identity, developing a personal transgender identity, developing a transgender social identity, “coming out” to others, developing a transgender intimacy status, and entering a transgender community (Evans et al, 1998, pgs. 342-343). Do these parallel structures imply that the experiences of sexual identity and gender identity are that similar? Perhaps; but there is a lack of Trans studies that present original and inclusive materials to inform gender identity development theories in the field. With the reduced visibility of the Trans community in the research, how can Student Affairs professionals be expected to appropriately support this group of students? The impact of insufficient Trans research fails to challenge dominant gender binary systems, such as the inclusion of Gender Dysmorphia Disorder in the DSM, allowing such gender construction to continue.

While there is a more developed research base amongst college lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, this literature may not be completely irrelevant to the study of gender identity development for Trans students. If students who identify as lesbian, gay and bisexual experience difficulties in a dominant heteronormative culture, one can imagine that the extent to which Trans students experience difficulties in college with their gender discovery is on at least a
Sara B. Oswalt and Tammy J. Wyatt (2011), both in the Department of Health and Kinesiology at the University of Texas at San Antonio, analyzed responses from heterosexual, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students on the 2009 National College Health Assessment (N=27,454), in order to observe the mental health impact of sexual orientation. Findings showed that the students who identify as a sexual minority consistently reported higher levels of mental health issues as well as an impact on academics because of these issues, compared to their heterosexual peers. “While more non-heterosexuals reported experiencing depression with no impact on academics, there were higher levels for ‘lower grade on a project’, ‘lower grade in a class,’ ‘incomplete or dropping a course,’ and ‘significant disruption of the thesis, dissertation, research or practicum’” (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011, p. 1270). While the LGB students’ general perceptions were that their mental health concerns were not disrupting their academic performance, the detailed data shows otherwise. Additionally, bisexual students had the highest rating of negative mental health including reported rates of suicide attempts (21.7%) compared to the other sexual minorities (13.6%). Considering the implication that the Trans population experiences more barriers compared to LGB peers, one can reasonably speculate that if Trans students were included in this study, they would have the highest levels of mental health issues.

While Oswalt and Wyatt (2011) do indicate that while sexual minorities experiences higher levels of mental health issues while heterosexual students indicated never experiencing any of the negative feelings and behaviors with the exception for ‘feeling exhausted,’ the authors suggest that higher rates of anxiety may be a motivator for change because sexual minorities are more interested in seeking help than their heterosexual peers. “Participants’ responses regarding diagnosis and treatment of anxiety, depression, and panic attacks within the last 12 months
showed that bisexual individuals reported higher rates of being diagnosed and treated” compared to being diagnosed and not treated for these three issues (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011, p. 1267). When asked if the respondent had used or would consider seeking help from a mental health provider, more bisexual respondents indicated they had used the types of service providers such as the counseling center on their campus compared to the other respondents (p.1267). Therefore, it appears that being diagnosed and/or experiencing higher rates of mental distress by the bisexual student population encourages this group to seek help.

Susan D. Longerbeam and colleagues conducted a qualitative study to explore LGB student experiences when coming out. The Longerbeam study also suggests that the struggles LGB students experience, in turn encourage these students to seek support from trusted individuals. Results mostly explored the coming out process in relation to those in same living situation as the LGB students (roommate, hallmates, and residential staff) to show that after disclosing their identity to others, the LGB students are more open-minded to difference. “The results from this study indicate that lesbian and gay students perceive higher growth in critical thinking and liberal learning (or being open to new perspectives) following coming out to others. Perhaps the challenges that lesbian and gay students face in reaction to prejudice and hostility foster a greater sense of tolerance and acceptance” (Longerbeam et al., 2007, p.225). Therefore, while literature suggests that sexual and gender minority groups are at risk for more mental distress, the same distress experienced can lead such students to develop coping skills and a willingness to utilize campus resources such as the college counseling center. However, with continued lack in the research about the extent of which university student affairs staff, especially at the counseling center, are helpful to reducing these mental health issues for Trans
students in particular, there leaves room for more questions than answers about how Trans students perceive college supportive resources.

The extent to which counseling can be helpful to distressed LGB students may depend on a variety of factors. One of which, as suggested by Joseph T. Chonjnacki and Susan Gelberg (1995), is how far the LGB client has progressed in Cass’s identity development model. (See Appendix D). According to the college counseling staff psychologists’ observations of LGB group screenings, counseling is most helpful for these LGB persons in stages two, three, four, and six, while being less helpful in stages one and five. In stage one, students may not be motivated to seek help from any support system because there is no pressing concern. Rather the LGB student is in a pre-contemplative stage. In stage five, their new lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity is highly valued and therefore a heterosexual worldview is devalued. “There may be a great deal of anger, distrust, and intolerance of heterosexual facilitators” (Chonjnacki & Gelberg, 1995, p. 353). With a large amount of pride for the newly discovered sexual identity, someone who aligns with that particular sexual orientation may be necessary support seeing as heterosexuals, regardless of their helping role, may not be tolerated. Since the gender identity model is similar to that of sexual identity development theories, perhaps a Trans counselor, or a counselor who shares the same gender identity, may be needed to best support Trans students during all phases of their development. This is therefore an important question for my own research.

The American Psychological Association (APA) most recently published Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People in 2015. The purpose of the guidelines is to better assist psychologists in delivering cultural competency that is trans-affirmative. So, not only are researchers pushing for institutions to adopt a multicultural
approach in their practice, as is the official professional organization representing psychology in the United States advocates for a multicultural approach. However, literature continues to lack consistency in how a multicultural approach to counseling centers can be achieved. Indeed, the APA makes a distinction between guidelines and standards. “Standards are mandates to which all psychologists must adhere, whereas guidelines are aspirational” (2015, p. 3). Because what is published is only a guideline, their points are merely suggestions to counselors. Therefore, the only motive a counselor has to apply a multicultural lens to their practice is their own initiative. While the guidelines are helpful in expressing the rationale behind the importance of inclusivity in counseling practice, a universal and standardized multicultural student support is lacking.

**Binary gender thinking has repercussions for Trans college students**

The incongruity of the Trans identity with the contemporary binary understanding of gender, on societal, political, and educational levels, creates very real problems in the daily lives of Trans individuals. The challenges Trans individuals face are even more apparent in the college environment considering that every interaction, both curricular and extra-curricular, take place on campus. Brett Beemyn and colleagues, directors of LGBT centers at different college institutions, mention multiple struggles that are unique to Trans students specifically. For example, when registering for housing and when filling out other administrative forms, gender selections provided are only male or female. Binary bathrooms and locker rooms may be difficult to navigate as well, not to mention the barriers present in terms of campus health care coverage for hormones and gender-related surgeries. With more obstacles, more attention to supporting Trans students is needed. “The social and economic stresses that many transgender students experience as a result of family rejection, harassment, violence, and isolation can, in turn, lead to adjustment disorders, posttraumatic stress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse,
suicide ideation, and self-harm. These mental health issues may affect the academic success of transgender students, making access to supportive counseling even more important for this population” (Beemyn et al., 2005). With multiple obstacles to overcome that other populations have the privilege to discount, university supportive systems must address the needs of Transgender students.

Other research supports Beemyn’s claim that Trans students experience unique challenges. Susan R. Rankin, an Associate Professor of Education in the College Student Affairs Program at Pennslyvania State University, also addresses how college Trans students are marginalized by surveying LGBT college students about campus climate. The data shows that Trans students’ experience almost double the harassment compared to their heterosexual/cisgendered peers, but even more so compared to their nontransgender peers. “Although nontransgender LGB men and women (28 percent) reported experiencing harassment, a significantly higher proportion of transgender respondents (41 percent) reported experiences of harassment” (Rankin, 2005).

A qualitative study by Jeffrey S. McKinney in the same year (2005) supports Rankin’s quantitative findings that Trans students do not feel supported. Dr. McKinney, an Associate Director of the Indiana Project on Academic Success, surveyed 61 different colleges to gain the perspective of the Transgender college students’ experiences. Participants in the study did not paint a very positive image of their respective institutions, indicating a general lack of transgender resources. “Resources, such as gender-neutral restrooms and recreational facilities, knowledgeable faculty and staff (especially at counseling and health-care centers), student groups for transgender students, a well-funded GLBT center, and responsive student affairs professionals, are important for transgender students to feel welcomed on campus, as well as for
non-trans people to educate themselves about the issues confronting transgender students” (McKinney, 2005). It appears that with multiple barriers for Trans students, higher education institutions need to meet those student demands by providing more supportive resources, hire knowledgeable staff, and education about Trans-related issues for all students. But McKinney is vague about how such changes would be executed in practice.

Rankin also collected data about initiatives the institutions had introduced in order to better the environment on campus for sexual/gender minority students. He too, found that the effectiveness of these programs lacks clarity on decreasing the level of harassment. “Despite those initiatives, LGBT people fear for their safety, keep their identities secret, experience harassment, and feel that their universities are unsupportive of LGBT people” (Rankin, 2005, p20). Findings were consistent with Rankin’s past research in 1998 where LGBT college students generally rate campus climate lower than their non-LGBT peers. To see that there hasn’t been much progress in 2005 since 1998 indicates that my research could provide further insight about how to better help LGBT students. These results were from ten years ago and things could have changed, however we have no recent data to demonstrate such claims. My research, therefore, will provide insight on what, if anything, has worked and if Trans students still feel unsafe on campus.

The need for a multicultural, universal inclusion model

Since more knowledge has been discovered about sexual minorities, the question then becomes to what extent does LGB research apply to Trans research? It is hard to know a concrete answer for sure, but I argue that the most applicable information that pertains to Trans students can be found in the suggestions that authors make to better support LGB students. While researching the LGB population to discover interesting results, several authors have made
suggestions on how to better assist Trans student participants such as being more accessible and relatable.

Firstly, Rankin (2005) suggests that institutions should adopt a campus-wide approach where inclusive ways of thinking are engrained in multiple facets of any student’s college experience. “New approaches to creating transformative change include creating centers for interdisciplinary study and cross-cultural teaching and learning inclusive to LGBT issues; supporting active, collaborative learning concerned with helping students to come to grips with their identities; and reconfiguring classes by encouraging students to assist in developing or changing the syllabus at the start of and during the semester” (p.22). Going back to Rankin’s earlier claim, despite the institution’s initiatives, LGBT students still felt unsafe and unsupported. However, taking a more integrative approach to such initiatives is suggested to be the key in developing a comfortably inclusive environment for all because it goes deeper than the surface level educational programs. Also, with all aspects of the institution adopting a mission of inclusivity, a welcoming and supportive environment is the norm rather than the exception. This idea was proposed back in 1990 when Stone and Archer Jr. assessed challenges counseling centers could face in the coming decade. The authors suggested that counseling centers should provide extensive training to all staff in multicultural counseling. In fact they suggested that an effort to foster multiculturalism be at the forefront of counseling work and therefore centers must explore innovative ways to provide counseling services to sexual minorities. “Different ways to deliver counseling services need to be explored. Satellite offices, peer-counseling programs, special walk-in hours, less formal single sessions, and many other innovations have been used successfully by some centers” (1990, p 556). Adopting more accessible, flexible, but yet individualized support can be beneficial for all students, not just LGB students. If all
offices/departments of an institution take such initiatives to put multiculturalism at the forefront of their work, campus culture change is more apt to come about rather than just a passing fad.

Paul J Wright and Christopher J. McKinley (2011) took a more modern approach to the idea of an integrative/multicultural approach by sampling college counseling web sites to assess the degree to which sites feature information and reference LGBT services. Results revealed that most college counseling websites do not even mention services to support LGBT students. For instance, “only 30% of counseling centers stated that they offered individual counseling for LGBT students and only 11.3% stated that they offered group counseling for LGBT student” (Wright & McKinley, 2011, p 145). Additionally, “only 10.3% of counseling centers advertised their ability and willingness to change hostile LGBT sentiment in the campus community through educational outreach programs” (Wright & McKinley, 2011, p.145). There appears to be a definite lack of Rankin’s active campus-wide approach if campus counseling centers, a main source of student support, does not at least offer or advertise their commitment to supporting LGBT students. If students are hesitant to physically utilize counseling center offices, it is important that students are at least be informed through the counseling center’s alternative electronic means that they provide sufficiently inclusive information about services, self-help resources, and a mission to promote LGBTQ awareness and support. Wright and Mckinley’s study helps to suggest that perhaps the first step to achieving an integrative campus-wide approach is to have offices and/or institutions advertise their dedication to a wider demographic via the internet.

Another suggestion authors have posed to address the problem of unsupported LGB students is to hire staff that identify as a sexual minority in order to better relate to their LGB clients. “One important response made by most counseling centers to the special needs of
underserved populations (racial and ethnic minorities, gay/lesbian students, disadvantaged students) has been to hire staff who are members of these various groups and to offer special programs geared towards their special needs” (Stone & Archer Jr., 1990, p. 558). Gerald L. Stone and James Archer Jr. made this statement that staff who are not members of these minority groups have a difficult time conducting educational programs on their own in 1990. However, more modern-day authors suggest that the identity of the counselor is not the deciding factor of what is helpful for LGB students. Rather, it is the trusting relationship between the counselor and client that allows the LGB students to comfortably disclose any information the students are personally struggling with.

In 2007, a psychologist himself explored how he as a heterosexual individual could be a supportive ally to the LGBT community and shared his reflections in the Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy. While the counseling psychology profession is uniquely situated to address and amend negative experiences LGBT students experience, there is risk that within the counseling-client relationship, a negative relationship could further exacerbate their negative feelings. The therapist came to discover that the best way to be supportive as a heterosexual male is to do his job with a multicultural lens. “Allies are not born; they are trained” (p. 183). This is to say that just because someone identifies as a sexual or gender minority, does not necessarily indicate that they are an ally. Rather, anyone can adopt a supportive role as long as they are willing to be open-minded. Therefore, a campus community, not just a college counseling center, can be supportive simply by having a flexible attitude.

A quantitative source by counseling psychology researchers at the University of California in Santa Barbara, also posits that the identity of the helping professional is not imperative. This study generalizes findings to the LGBT student population even though their
data includes only one transgender student. While it would not be scientific enough to apply findings of the sample to an entire population, the great deal of evidence within the LGB student identities leads me to believe that the ways LGB students are being supported would also be applicable to Trans students. The participants of the study addressed that in situations that were most helpful in counseling, a therapeutic alliance was formed. “Helpful situations were commonly defined by the therapist’s positive relationship with the client (42.9%), the effectiveness of the treatment in resolving the client’s presenting concerns or alleviating symptoms (35.7%), the therapist helping the client gain insight (28.6%), the therapist focusing appropriately on the client’s concerns (21.4%), and the therapist being nonjudgmental (21.4%)” (Israel et al., 2008, p. 365). Rather than sexual orientation of the counselor, it is really the strong working alliance that is most instrumental to therapeutic change. Therefore, adopting a multicultural lens to therapy will train and encourage counselors to develop qualities of open-mindedness and nonjudgment, which are most helpful to LGB clients.

Summary

As demonstrated, within the past forty years, the research on gender and Trans students has changed and is still changing. Other academic fields show that perhaps a multicultural strategy would be beneficial on a broader level beyond college institutions given the depth to which the gender binary influences multiple aspects of daily life. Linguistically, experience is reduced to simple knowledge terms which contribute to gender stereotypes. Also, hegemonic masculinity is a term commonly used to demonstrate the ways in which gender characteristics of masculinity dominate males and females alike. For example, while females attempt to resist gender norms by resisting characteristics of femininity, they in turn encourage masculine characteristics, thus making anyone who does not identify within the gender binary to feel
conflicted. While attempts have been made on a political level to relieve the dissonance that Trans students may experience, unfortunately the gender binary continues to exists at the core of initiatives to only create small changes rather than systemic culture changes.

Specifically, literature within student affairs pertaining to college students who identify as Trans shows that such students face more barriers than their cisgendered peers, and therefore are in need of more support. It is clear that if Trans students are not better understood and supported, their higher risks of poor mental health, harassment, and lowered academic performance will continue to be problematic. While literature recognizes the necessity in supporting Trans college students, the developmental models that exist are limiting to attend mostly to lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, while Trans studies are few and do not relieve any barriers due to the perpetuating stigmas of gender binaries and gender identity development as a risk of a mental health illness. However, LGB research on this topic does not appear to be completely irrelevant to Trans studies. In fact, LGB research is most useful for its call for more institutional support for marginalized students. The suggestions for a multicultural approach can be used if complimented by more research on Trans students. My qualitative research will start at Bucknell University to gauge what proactive steps are being taken to support Trans students and how effective these approaches have been.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The Qualitative Design

Through an interdisciplinary literature review, it is clear that gender is commonly understood and communicated as a binary: gender identity is limited to either being either masculine or feminine. Lack of gender diversity in societal thinking and structures such as politics is problematic for Trans-identifying individuals, whose identity is neither masculine nor feminine. Similar issues arise for Trans college students within a college environment, students centralize all aspects of their life to the college campus, leaving little room for Trans students to escape gendered university structures. The research problem at hand addresses the impact of a binary gender tradition to the lives of transgender college students. Rather than a specific research question or hypothesis, framing a qualitative research problem allows researchers in qualitative studies to stay open to all possible interpretations and meanings offered through the data gathered. In contrast to quantitative data, which is more systematic and standardized, qualitative findings are longer, more detailed, and allow for variation. Authors James McMillan and Jon Wergin (2010) define qualitative research as a way of gaining understanding of someone’s reality. “As a philosophy of knowing, qualitative research focuses on understanding from the perspective of whoever and whatever is being studied. Rather than trying to establish objective descriptions and relationships, as quantitative research does, qualitative studies are based on the assumption that reality is subjective and dependent on context” (pg. 89). With a topic as fluid as gender diversity, it seemed most appropriate to have a qualitative design where all incoming information is valuable.

There are three major types of qualitative studies: ethnography, grounded theory studies, and phenomenology (McMillan & Wergin, 2010, pg. 89). For the purposes of this qualitative thesis, a phenomenological type of qualitative design was used. Since the research problem
addresses the Trans student experience, observations would not suffice in understanding the transgender experience. Additionally, when taking into consideration the literature by Oksala (2010) on Foucault, the process of constantly theorizing experience may further stereotype and stigmatize populations, such as the Trans population. Michael Quinn Patton (2002), author of a qualitative methods textbook, distinguishes phenomenology from ethnographic and grounded theory works. According to Patton, phenomenology aims to gain insight of a subjective experience by focusing on descriptions of what people experience, how it is they involve themselves in the experience, and also how meaning is made from that experience. Phenomenology’s foundational question is: “What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?” (Patton, 2002, pg. 104). The closest way possible to understand the lived Trans college experience, without being a Trans community member, is through phenomenology, where the participants themselves describe their experiences and interpretations. (Please see Appendix E for an overview of the phenomenological process to qualitative research).

Participants

Transgender-identifying participants were purposefully sampled for this study because the data points are aimed at insight about the Trans college student phenomenon. The participants of this study consisted of four students who self-identified as transgender based on the definition from LGBT office directors, Brett Beemyn and colleagues (2005) consisting of a wide range of identities, appearances, and behaviors that blur or cross gender lines. Such individuals live some or all of the time in a sex different from their biological sex, wear clothes typically associated with the “opposite” gender, cross-dress within a performance context, and/or identify outside of binary gender or sex systems (Beemyn et al., 2005, p. 49). The transgender
umbrella in this particular study contains identities such as transfeminine, agender, genderqueer, and bigender. Readers can consult Appendix F for a list of identity terms that were mentioned by participants and a clearer understanding of queer terminology. In addition to the four participants who contacted me voluntarily, two Trans-identifying Bucknell alumni contacted me wanting to participate in the study. However, the alumni were not included in the study as to keep the interviews as relevant to the current Bucknell culture as possible. All participants were therefore current Bucknell students above the age of 18 years old who volunteered to be a part of this qualitative study. The participants included a freshman, a sophomore, a junior, and a graduate student who had attended Bucknell as an undergraduate. All participants had different majors and all identified differently in terms of gender, while still falling under the Trans umbrella. While the sample size was small, there were various perspectives of the Trans identity since the participant’s other identities, such as culture, geographic location of hometown, and sexual orientation, varied as well. For the purposes of this thesis analysis, when referencing any of the participants, they will be referred to by their preferred gender pronouns.

Since I was working with a population I was unfamiliar with, I consulted the literature to investigate how other qualitative researchers have respectfully studied minority groups. Evans and Broido (1996), two Associate Professors of Education, conducted qualitative research to explore the perceptions of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, in relation to the students’ residential living environment, during the coming out process. The study included multiple strategies for recruiting a minority group of students. The findings from successfully obtaining a large and diverse participant pool showed that students adjust their level of self-disclosure based on the extent to which their living environment is supportive. Therefore, I structured my thesis research procedures similarly to the methodology used by Evans and Broido because of how
many approaches to minority student recruitment were conducted. Given the small size of the Bucknell University student body as compared to the population of students at Evans and Broido’s institution of Penn State University, various approaches to participant recruitment needed to be adopted in order to gather sufficient data.

Participants for my study were recruited similarly to the ways Evans and Broido conducted their study. “The information [of the study] was posted on the campus listserv, an electronic mail discussion group. Participants were recruited through personal contacts and on the recommendation of residence life professionals and the staff of the office of the vice provost for educational equity. Finally, we used snowball sampling, in which participants were asked to recommend other possible participants” (Evans & Broido, 1996, p. 660). Hence, I posted information for my study on a larger electronic forum that is called the “Message Center” at Bucknell (See Appendix G). The posting was distributed on the Message Center for three weeks in October after Fall Break. Since the Message Center acts similarly to a physical bulletin board, I made sure to keep the information at the top of the information pile by reposting the message every three or four days. The message was distributed to the entire Bucknell community which includes all faculty, staff, and students.

Although participants were not recruited through personal recommendations or referrals from a particular office or department, I did utilize the snowball sampling method. “By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, pg. 237). The snowball sampling method allowed participant recruitment through word of mouth only. I emailed the same Message Center post information to the President of Bucknell’s Gender and Sexuality Alliance and the Residential Adviser of the affinity house of LGBTQ student organization members to inform interested
volunteers and/or pass along the information to anyone who knew someone who fit the participant criteria. I personally approached friends I knew were supporters of the LGBTQ community on campus and invited them to pass along the information orally and have participants contact me if they are interested. If a friend suggested a particular individual, I refrained from contacting that individual directly to avoid tokenizing any specific individual for their Trans identity. Rather I left it up to the individual to contact me if interested.

**Preparation Procedures**

Before any interviews or participant outreach was conducted, I submitted a proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Bucknell University. Bucknell’s IRB is the body charged with reviewing and approving all proposed research involving human subjects. The purpose of the IRB is to safeguard the welfare, rights and privacy of all persons who participate in research projects. The safeguards are grounded in respect for persons, beneficence, and justice in the practice of human subjects research which were first articulated in the Belmont Report by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research in 1979. The proposal submitted to the IRB included a review of this thesis’s research purpose, basis for the research questions, an overview of research procedure, and a copy of a human subjects training program certificate. Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) Human Subjects Training Program is a web-based training program that includes basis courses in human research subject protections. I had completed the online training in the spring of 2014 for a psychology course and the certificate is valid for two years after completion. After about a month of review and revisions to meet ethical scientific standards, the research was approved in late September.
After gaining IRB approval to work with human subjects, participant recruitment began after Fall Break in the beginning of October. Once someone who met the criteria contacted me, I communicated with them via email to schedule a time in our schedules to meet and to send a copy of the Informed Consent information (See Appendix H). The Informed Consent information was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Bucknell and contained information about confidentiality, risks, benefits, procedure, commitment, and contact information for any concerns or questions they had. As instructed by the IRB, prior to the interview, participants verbally agreed to understanding the Informed Consent information. Having a signed Informed Consent document risked the confidentiality of the individual’s identity and understanding of their rights was therefore gained verbally. All parts of the Informed Consent document were discussed with the participant prior to interviewing to ensure full understanding, and as an opportunity for the participant to ask questions or refuse participation.

When a mutual time and date was established, I met with the participant at the designated location. According to appropriate qualitative research guidelines, the setting of the interview location must be “convenient, available, and appropriate” (Glesne, 2011, p.116). Indeed, the location chosen typically took place in a quiet and private room that was easily accessible. The Elaine Langone Center (LC) building was suggested to the participant as a place to meet, but the participant was offered the opportunity to suggest a location in which they felt the most comfortable. The LC was used for all interviews since its location was central to all points of campus. When a time was found and the general location was set, I booked a room in the LC with the Events Management Office on the Bucknell website. Only the researcher’s name was given to book the room and the event title was “Thesis interview” in order to avoid revealing the participant’s identity. In addition to keeping the location accessible and private, all rooms had
comfortable chairs to add an element of comfort given an academic setting. To accommodate for busy schedules, the interview was set to last one hour. “An hour of steady talk is generally an appropriate length before diminishing returns set in for both parties” (Glesne, 2011, p.117). However, if a participant was in a rush to leave or a participant was not finished with a thought, the interview time length was adapted to meet the participant’s needs.

**Data Collection Procedures**

After gaining verbal consent to understanding the Informed Consent information, I proceeded with a semi-structured interview process. Similar to Evans and Broido (1996), “structured interview protocols were used, although interviewers did deviate from the protocol to explore issues raised by participants, or to ask related follow-up questions” (pg. 660). The interview approach used was conversational, thus allowing room for variety while also keeping to a standardized method for data comparison. Unlike a non-structured interview design, where there is no planning prior to the interview, and unlike a standardized open-ended interview, where a set of questions are carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each responded through the same questioning sequence, a semi-structured interview process combines the best of both methods (Patton, 2002). The semi-structured interview consists of a general pre-determined interview guide to outline discussion topics and asking questions based upon the participant’s conversational direction and flow. The semi-structured interview process allowed for consistency across all participants but simultaneously allowed for flexibility to follow the participant’s lead in providing information they felt was most important.

The formal point of the interview process included a guideline of potential themes to discuss and potential open-ended questions. (Please see Appendix I). There were a total of four themes that were addressed in all participant interviews and the order of the themes remained consistent for all interviews as well: general information about the individual, gender identity in
particular, institutional support systems, and Counseling Center support in particular. However, the open-ended questions about each theme may have been phrased slightly differently or asked at different points of the interview. Also, questions were asked of participants outside of those listed in the interview guide so as to follow the participant’s lead in the conversation. The first set of questions was a general warm up in order to develop a comfortable relationship between the participant and researcher. It was important to establish rapport in order for the participant to feel most comfortable disclosing personal information. This introductory theme also provided data on the participant demographics outside of insightful data about the Trans identity in relation to Student Affairs resources. The second portion of the interview related to their Trans identity specifically. Questions related to their preference in how I address them, how they identify within the Trans umbrella, and how central their identity is to their lived experience. The third theme related to resources on campus relative to their Trans identity. While the focus was intended to address Counseling Center services specifically, I left the questions open to any campus resource that was used to support the Trans student. The final theme of questions addressed the Counseling Center specifically. The last theme was drafted and used before the broadening of my thesis topic to Student Affairs resources. The insight provided by participants was extremely helpful in motivating a shift of the thesis topic from Counseling Center support to Student Affairs support in general.

Throughout data collection, I used an empathetic neutrality strategy. “An empathic stance in interviewing seeks vicarious understanding without judgment (neutrality) by showing openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness, and responsiveness” (Patton, 2002, pg. 40). The term itself appears to be an oxymoron but neutrality can actually facilitate rapport and a relationship with the participant, if the researcher is open and nonjudgmental. Surely complete neutrality is
impossible but I was transparent in my identities that could perhaps create bias. I also expressed extreme curiosity but asking for clarification and paraphrasing participant comments in my own words to make sure I comprehended the participant’s perspective correctly. Given that I went into each interview with a willingness to hear the participant’s perspectives without judgement, I practiced empathetic neutrality.

Audiotape recording was used to document the verbal interview information. Audiotaping the interview was a convenient way to collect a nearly complete record of what was said and to easily reflect upon data at a later time. Recording in this fashion was non-intrusive since the small tape recorder was not a distraction to the participant-researcher dialogue. Rather than having a camera pointed at the participant, an audiotape recording was less obtrusive and more confidential, allowing participants to freely disclose their opinions. The device stored data in a digital format and through a USB connection to my personal computer, I downloaded each interview as a sound file. The files were marked under the number given to the participant before starting the interview.

The audio files were stored on my personal computer for a total of two weeks after the interview. During the two weeks I had the audio files, I played back the recording in order to type up a transcript of the interview. Transcribing was completed over Thanksgiving Break at the end of November. No one other than me, the researcher, had access to the audio recorded and transcribed interviews. After the interview was transcribed and sent to the participant for approval, the audio files were deleted.

**Analysis and Verification Procedures**

To verify the accuracy of the transcribed data, I assumed a member checking process where the participants were given the opportunity to review and edit the collected data. Member checking involves “submitting notes to informants to ensure that their perspectives have been
recorded accurately” (McMillan & Wergin, 2010, pg. 92). First, after transcribing the audio recorded interview, I sent a copy of the recording and the transcribed document to the appropriate participant via email for the participant to review. The participants had an opportunity to edit, add, or delete any part of the interview they were unsatisfied with. In February, I conducted a final check by sending the participants their transcripts with redacted information. Redacted information included evidence such as major, class year, hometown, and campus residence location. In the email, I indicated that this final transcript would be included in the appendix of my thesis. To respect and ensure participant confidentiality, I provided this opportunity for the participants to monitor any identifying information. If edits were made by the participant, I corrected the transcribed material and sent it back to the participant via email for further approval. As indicated in the emails to verify data accuracy, given a silent response, I assumed that there were no edits to be made to the transcript. In this case, I proceeded under the assumption that the transcribed document was appropriate. (Please see transcribed interviews with redacted identifying information in Appendices J-M).

After conducting member checks to address any potential issues of internal validity, I conducted a data analysis procedure. All of the interview transcripts were read by the researcher only and coded in the style of a phenomenological approach to data analysis. Epoche, a process of setting aside personal viewpoints, was used in order to see the Trans experience for itself. For example, I did not seek to confirm the bias that the Counseling Center was underutilized but I rather retained all information as important even if contradictory to my viewpoints or the insights of other participants. “Epoche helps enable the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open viewpoint without prejudgment or imposing meaning too soon” (Patton, 2002, pg. 485). Stepping aside from the data and coming back to it with a fresh, non-presumptuous attitude
was helpful to discover data conclusions rather than imposing preconceptions to forward a biased agenda.

Following epoche, the second step in phenomenological data analysis is to “bracket out” data in its pure form. To follow bracketing procedures, when I re-read the transcripts, I highlighted any quote that drew my attention and seemed important to include. I made note of similarities across all participants and points where participants had very strong opinions even if they did not align with the other participant’s opinions. At that point in the analysis, all aspects of the data were treated as being of equal value, and thus “horizontalized” (Patton, 2002, pg. 486). The data points were ready to be organized into meaningful clusters. I then took my list of multiple findings to my adviser who helped to organize my findings into three categorical themes to be further discussed in the next chapter.

To organize the data points with the categorical themes, I used a color-coding system. Each theme and the theme’s subsections had a designated color. The first theme institutional features had two subsections and therefore two different colors were used to indicate each subsection of the broader theme. Data about institutional structures which symbolized inclusion were highlighted in green, whereas the actual relational institutional features were highlighted in red. Yellow highlighted information marked any data related to development in identity and purple indicated data relating to the Counseling Center and/or identity of helping professionals. I went through the transcribed interviews again to highlight important quotes that aligned with a specific theme, or subsection of that theme, with the appropriate color. I copy and pasted the highlighted colored quotes from each interview into one document. Seeing as the document was ordered by color, the data points were henceforth organized by theme. The only materials used were the transcribed documents and the three themes my adviser and I collaboratively saw
existing in the data. Since the sample size was small, no other resources or technologies were needed to conduct this analysis.

**Ethical Concerns Addressed**

Through my experiences in research, both this thesis and other projects, there are sensitive ethical issues that need to be considered. The principles of ethical conduct addressed by the IRB are: do no harm, ensure privacy and anonymity, remain confidential, offer informed consent, develop rapport, practice intrusiveness, avoid inappropriate behavior, honor standard data interpretation and data ownership strategies (Lichtman, 2010). I addressed all these ethical concerns in my research and thus the research was approved by the IRB. Most importantly, my research addresses participant risks, confidentiality of the participants, and researcher efforts to reduce biased data.

Most, if not all, of the ethical concerns were addressed in my Informed Consent document. As seen in the Informed Consent information, participants had the option of refusing to take part in any part of the interview. If for any reason they did not feel comfortable with any question, they were not forced to answer. Not responding to a question or refusing to take part in the interview did not affect their standing within the university or any other part of their relationship with Bucknell. The biggest risk presented in participating in the study was to their mental and emotional health. By asking participants to share with me some very sensitive and personal information regarding their identity and experiences as a transgender individual, participants risked being triggered and or feeling uncomfortable talking about some of the topics that naturally arose in conversation. If at any point the participant became distressed, they could be easily connected to an appropriate on or off campus resource. During the research process, none of the participants expressed distress that prompted additional support. At the conclusion of
their participation, volunteers were thanked for their contribution but were not compensated in any other way. While there was no direct benefit to the participants, their involvement in this research led to possibility that their insights would help the Student Affairs departments on Bucknell’s campus to learn more about how to adequately supportive and be beneficial to Trans students.

The participants were very brave to share with me intimate details of their lives. In return, it was my responsibility to respect the participant’s confidentiality. No identifying information about the individuals who participated in this study was revealed to anyone, not even to my adviser. All participants were assigned a number as an identifier. The number symbolized the order in which the students contacted me with their willingness to participate in the study. I was the only one who had access to the identifying information and all audio and written identifying information was removed in a timely fashion. Any email communications between the researcher and the participants were deleted in a timely fashion as well. Permission was granted from all participants to make the final transcript with redacted information public.

Regardless of my relationship with the participants prior to the study, I was professional in attitude and behavior throughout the entire thesis process. No inappropriate relations were developed between the researcher and participants beyond a welcoming acquaintanceship. Interactions with the participants after the interview never exceeded a friendly wave or greeting. Showing favoritism or crossing any professional research standard risks biasing the results. I reduced the risk of biased results by maintaining a professional demeanor, conducting member checks, and having a semi-formal interview process. Also, the participants were not purposefully sampled but rather volunteers who fit the criteria of being a Bucknell student over the age of 17 who identifies under the transgender umbrella. If participants were hand-selected, the findings
could have been skewed. In the presence of any concerns, all participants were made aware that they should contact the IRB chair at Bucknell.

In accordance with IRB human research guidelines, my qualitative research study was able to accommodate a complex research problem of gender binary influences on Trans college students. I conducted semi-formal interviews with four individuals who identified under the Transgender umbrella. Participants were all 18 years of age or older and were recruited through networking and online campus bulletin board messages. When the participants volunteered, they read over the informed consent information and shared with me their opinions of Bucknell campus support relative to their gender identity. Data, in the form of transcriptions from audio recorded interviews, were categorized into three important themes; diversity in development, cultural competency of professional staff members, and a feeling of connectedness to the university through symbolic and relational structures.

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the qualitative research methodology of this study, explain the participant selection, describe the procedure used in collecting data, and provide an explanation of procedures used to analyze the data. Overall, appropriate measures were taken to ensure respect to qualitative research standards and respect to the participants. Through the creation and maintenance of a professional and comfortable environment, participants were provided the opportunity to openly share their opinions with minimal risk. These honest insights from participants allowed for rich data results which will be explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: DATA RESULTS

From the collected interview transcripts, three main themes arose amongst all participants of the study; a call for diversity in gender and sexual identity development, the need for culturally competent student affairs staff, and a feeling of connectedness, both symbolically and actual, between Trans students and the institution. The first theme explores how Trans students’ gender identity develops in different ways, resulting in different levels of comfortability of labels and determining how gender identity fits with multiple other factors of their identity. University structures need to be aware of these diverse identity notions, allowing support systems to meet Trans students wherever they are in their process. The second theme explores the interaction, or lack thereof, between the Trans students and Student Affairs professional staff when reaching out for help. The data shows Trans students feel most comfortable when Student Affairs professionals demonstrate acceptance of Trans and queer identities; Importantly, while it may be useful to have Trans-identifying staff members, it is not necessary to identity as a sexual or gender minority to be supportive. Lastly, the feeling connected theme represents the extent to which Trans students perceive they belong to the university through various signals. These signals come to students both symbolically and through actual relations with students, staff, and faculty. The symbolic features of a university (such as the mission statement, dominant introduction practices that assume gender pronouns, and access to LGBTQ information) represent the institutional perspective on Trans-affirmative progress and inclusivity in general. The actual elements help “bridge the gap” to connect students with appropriately support resources for the Trans student’s needs. While the data findings are presented in three separate categories, all work together to symbolize the larger context in which Student Affairs professionals practice inclusion in their work.
Theme 1: Diversity in Development

Although the sample size of participants in this study is small, there is a wide spectrum of developmental diversity in the participants. Each of the Trans participants in this study acknowledged that they are in different stages of a gender identity and use a variety of labeling conventions to communicate these liminal positions. Some students are more comfortable with who they are as Trans-identifying students, while others are trying to figure out their identities and how it influences their lives. Therefore it is important for Student Affairs staff and those who support Trans students to be deeply mindful of the diversity in their journeys as well as the likelihood of change over the college years.

When asked how the participants of this study identified, the responses were complex. Unlike other identifying factors that consist of a one word response, like height or eye color, gender identity responses were more elaborate. A common misconception is that gender can be easily determined based on physical appearance. Alternatively, these participants determine their identity upon multiple other factors like internal feelings and their identity in relation to romantic attraction. The participant’s ability to sit with their ambiguous identity thus reinforces the notion that gender diversity does not consist of a masculine identity, a feminine identity, or a combination of masculine and feminine identity. Rather, gender is fluid.

Participants 2 and 4 demonstrate just how fluid gender is by acknowledging that the label they settle with currently may has changed from the past and may continue to change in the future. Both participants have many questions about their gender that they are only able to answer, thus leaving a gender identity to be under construction. For the sake of labeling, they favor a label that they most strongly identify with given the current context.

“It’s been such a confusing 18 years up until I’ve actually had the ability to think for myself and like, come to my own conclusions about myself. So, I’m still on the fence
about what exactly like, I identify as. But I most strongly identify as bigender so like, I go between male and female.”

“Interviewer: And when you say, ‘who you want to become,’ what does that look like? Interviewee: It’s still developing like I said. It’s just more open with the idea.”

-Participant 2. (2015, November 6). Personal Interview

“I’m all over the place right now. It’s kind of a mess but I think it’s a good mess because I’m actually figuring out what I like and what I don’t like. And like, realizing it’s not a carbon copy. Like, I don’t have to follow the steps of other people that are similar to me but I also don’t have to follow in the steps of the people that want me to be a certain way. You know? I don’t have to be the transgender person who does whatever they want. Like, I can do it the way that I want to do it you know? But I don’t know exactly what that is yet.”

“I’m not totally comfortable with my identity yet. I’m not settled on it. And so when I envision that for the future, I’m sort of basing that off of how I feel right now. Now I don’t really want to talk about it because I feel like if someone asks me one simple question, it will sort of like, evolve into a two hour long conversation about like, ‘I don’t know what I’m doing. I don’t know what’s happening.’ So it’s sort of best not to open a can of worms.”


Participant 1 acknowledges that she has not settled on a definitive gender label because she has yet to explore how her gender identity influences her daily life. Unlike sexual orientation, gender cannot be determined by assessing attraction levels of the population. Rather gender is conceptualized by Participant 1 based upon the context of others a room. She feels more masculine when surrounded by women and vice versa. Identifying as bisexual thus implies a different gender identity based upon the gender of the person she is dating. She declared that she needs to get to know herself more in terms of gender identity in order to confidently be a partner in a long-term romantic relationship.

“So, when figuring out your sexuality generally you can kind of generally look at the population and say, ‘I’m attracted to this person and this person and that person. And today I’m not really attracted to that person and this person and oh my gosh what’s happening.’ And you can kind of feel it out day by day. And that’s what I did.

Interviewer: Right
Interviewee: Gender is not so. It is entirely in your head, or in one’s head. And it can’t be understood by looking...or it can’t be reflected by your surroundings. It has to be examined. Or for me it had to be examined internally and that process takes a very, very
long time. Am I a feminine guy? Am I actually a girl? I identify now as sort of gender queer. Like, this is a very new revelation. Like only in the past... on Tuesday I made this revelation that I identify more in the middle as gender queer. But I like thinking of myself more as female. But because... like, this is one area where my gender and sexuality do intersect. You often hear that gender and sexuality are different things."

“I think of myself as sometimes more female when I’m thinking of myself in relation to a guy.”

“Yeah like male... Well there are some parts of my identity that I still haven’t figured out. I haven’t really dated anyone. You have to figure out yourself, at least to some level, first to get to that realm.”

-Participant 1. (2015, November 4). Personal Interview

Just as gender identity is fluid, the process to which students come to discover their gender identity is fluid. The participants of this study presented many factors that prevent them from quickly and solidly identifying with a specific gender category. These include the weight of a label in itself and the implication of these labels. For example, identifying as masculine as a biological female implies, within a heteronormative culture, that one’s sexual orientation must align with the gender identity, therefore resulting in being lesbian. Also, a gender label may influence some of their other identities such as their sexual orientation, their major, and even how they envision their lives in the future as employees and potential parents/spouses. Instead, the label of the gender category may only be contextual to how they feel in a particular time, or might be an adopted label that works for a social identity but does not quite fit internally.

Participant 3 knows that she feels more masculine but identifying as masculine does not lend itself to simultaneously identifying as lesbian. She struggles to balance a gender identity and sexual orientation that she internally feels comfortable with because the label of a “male lesbian” is contradictory. She must therefore find some sort of compromise in her identity labels.

“Being gay has been the biggest part of my identity and it is definitely something that I want to be around other people.”

“And I still identify as gay because I’m on the more feminine side and I’m attracted to more feminine people. That’s sort of how I justify that I guess. It’s honestly because I’m lazy and gay is easier to say. Because that’s the thing, there really isn’t a word for
identifying as non-binary and being attracted to women. Like, that’s not really a thing. So also my body is female and I am attracted to female bodied people.”

-Participant 3. (2015, November 11). Personal Interview

Participant 4 similarly struggles with the liminality of gender identity and another aspect of their identity. This participant is part of the Society of Women Engineers, of which she is proud to be. However, participant 4 also identifies as more masculine, implying that their identity as masculine prohibits membership into the Society of Women Engineers. Participant 4 compromises a gender identity with academic identity by identifying as genderqueer, as not to fully acknowledge a masculine gender.

“Like, I feel like it’s very empowering to be a woman in engineering because they’re not a lot of them so that’s one of the reason I sort of cling to that identity. But at the same time that’s something that’s a little bit superficial that I don’t actually like, you know? It’s like, neat to be a woman in engineering but it’s also neat to be a trans person in engineering because it doesn’t get talked about as much.”


Even if students are committed to their current gender identity, they are often unsure of the future implications of their identity. For example, when discussing transition or more apparent physical expressions of their gender, all students interviewed had difficulty conceptualizing what that would look like. To develop and define a gender identity takes multiple factors into consideration, including in what future life opportunities they want to participate such as child-bearing. With these overwhelming considerations, defining a gender identity is difficult, thus often leaving Trans students with more questions than answers.

Participants 1, 3 and 4 have all considered transitioning to a physical expression of gender that matches how they feel about their gender internally. However, these participants feel a physical transition is an enormous decision for someone to make at the college age. Any physical transition has different implications for Trans students. For Participant 3, getting a
haircut is a leap towards a more masculine physical gender expression. Participant 3 feels that a short haircut would be such a dramatic change from a lifetime of long hair that it would be a burden to “come-out” to family and close friends about the significance of the change.

“I think that the transitioning process would be hard. Like if I could go to a completely new context and meet completely new people and present as male and be read as male, that would be one thing. But the process of transitioning and having to repeatedly tell people that I’ve known for years that this is a thing that’s changing. And also coming out to my family because I don’t know how they’d take that.”

-Participant 3. (2015, November 11). Personal Interview

In addition to a change of physical gender expression as a form of “coming-out,” the participants mentioned other aspects of their identity that would be impacted by a transition such as familial and financial implications. For other Trans students like Participant 1, a physical transition is more medical and therefore thoughtful consideration should be taken towards future life in terms of bearing biological children “naturally.”

“It’s [hormone replacement therapy] on the docket. I’m interested in it. Though the thing is, starting HR therapy would mean becoming infertile at some point and I haven’t yet made the decision if I would want my own offspring when I am married and want have kids. And I don’t even know if I’m going to end up with an AFAB or AMAB person (Assigned Female At Birth or Assigned Male At Birth). And it would clearly only be an issue in one of those cases and sperm storage is expensive. I mean, I’m 19. It’s a difficult decision to be making right now so it’s hard to know when I would be entertaining the idea.”

-Participant 1. (2015, November 4). Personal Interview

Participant 4 also expresses the stress of unknown future implications of a physical gender identity expression. They (preferred pronoun) does not know how transitioning to become more masculine could affect her career and personal life at any point in the future. Furthermore, medical transitions are costly and at the college age where financial autonomy has not yet been established, gender expression may need to be postponed until finances have been secured.
“Like some days I’m like thinking I want to transition medically but then on other days I’m like, ‘no I don’t want to do that. This is great.’ So it’s really weird.

Interviewer: Transition to male?

Interviewee: Not male...trans masculine. So not male, but masculine.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: So probably not top surgery or anything but testosterone is an idea that has been very appealing to me in the past. But on other days it’s like, ‘ahh that’s fine.’ It’s whatever. So that’s something that sort of stresses me out because I’ll probably have to navigate that in the future- just figuring that out. And that’s another reason why agender is a good place for me to be sitting right now because I just sort of have time. I feel like I’m removing myself from all of it and just sitting there to look at everything and look at my options, and looking about how I feel about it. Like, this is nice and I’m not going to worry about it right now. Later. I’ll figure it out.

Interviewer: And when is that later? When to you think that could happen for you because later could be like five years down the road, five months...what does that mean? Interviewee: When I think about it I think of when I’m on my own. Self-sufficient and like would potentially have the money to support myself in whatever decision I end up making. Because my parents are great and they are supportive but I don’t feel comfortable asking them. Like, I don’t feel comfortable talking to them about this sort of thing. And that’s partially because I don’t really know. There are still a lot of questions. I also just...my family is very much the sort of family where we don’t talk about a lot. We don’t talk about anything too intense or too personal. It’s fine. I like it that way but it’s hard sort of difficult when you’re too dependent for resources.”


Trans students from this study have considered several factors of their lives, such as sexual orientation, when discerning their gender identity. Responses to how these Trans students identify were complex because gender identity is complex itself. A binary approach to gender therefore does not encapsulate all the ways gender can be experienced, expressed, and understood. Settling on a gender identity is difficult and has strong implications for normalized “appropriate” behavior. Some of the participants were more certain than others in the process of gender identity discovery but those individuals more confident in their gender identity do not necessarily have the upper hand. Rather, gender identity is continually changing and fluid. So, while some Trans-identifying students are comfortable in their gender label now, they acknowledge that perhaps in the future, their gender label will change along with their changing context.
Theme 2: Cultural Competency of Student Affairs Professional Staff

This theme of responses support the investigated literature to show that culturally competent Student Affairs staff is more valuable to the Trans student community than having Trans-identifying Student Affairs professional staff members. The questions asked of the participants were specific to Bucknell’s Counseling and Student Development Center as a primary form of support, but responses highlight that Trans-students felt comfortable with someone who was knowledgeable about the Trans identity even without identifying as Trans. Having a similar queer identity was acknowledged as helpful by Trans students in order to feel comfortable asking for help. And yet a similar identity was suggested as helpful more for short term comfort. Lasting support comes from cultural competency knowledge. Regardless of the position within the university or how the helping individual identified on a gender identity spectrum, Trans students felt more supported if a staff or faculty member indicated an openness to queer understanding.

As Participant 1 suggests, the initial affinity between a Trans staff member and student is important, but not necessary in all situations. Participant 4 also agrees that having a staff member who is queer in some way would make a difference if the Trans student was hesitant to seek help but the most important factor for seeking help is finding someone the student can trust.

*Interviewer: Would you feel more comfortable with somebody who identifies the same as you?*

*Interviewee: Not necessarily. While that would give a short term reassurance...My therapist at home is a while, middle-aged guy who is excellent in DBT [Dialectical Behavior Therapy]. At the end of the day it doesn’t matter exactly who it is as long as they know what they are talking about.*

*Interviewer: Ok. Sure. Makes sense*

*Interviewee: And what I felt like I found among the CSDC was people who weren’t exactly sure of how to handle exactly what was going on.”*

-Participant 1. (2015, November 4). Personal Interview
“Them [a counselor] being knowledgeable would be, in theory, enough but I think having a counselor who was queer in any sort of sense would increase the trust a lot. For me, that would...I feel like they could understand more. So like, Bill McCoy, the director, I'm more comfortable going to him with issues because he sort of understands more than it would be going to a counselor. Like, I don’t know you and I don’t know where you went to school. My attitude is sort of like, how is some person I just met gonna help me work through stuff that's very personal to me better than someone I know and trust? So that's something I don’t really get. I don’t think they're gender, well cisgender versus nonbinary or transgender, would make a difference. In terms of male/female, that would make a difference. I guess their gender identity with respect to their assigned gender and their sexuality would make a difference...a huge difference.”


Unfortunately, Bucknell’s counseling center was not a form of support that the Trans students perceived to be open to inclusion. As the Graduate Assistant at the Counseling and Student Development Center, I am aware that the staff is attempting toward an inclusive operation by means of person-centered counseling practices, having transgender and other as a gender categories on intake forms, and by acknowledging gender pronouns. However, the Trans participants in this study were not aware of these efforts or the inclusive efforts were ineffective in providing appropriate support. When asking about supportive resources that have helped these Trans students, half did not even mention the counseling center as a source of support they utilized. The other half of the participants did mention seeking assistance from the Counseling and Student Development Center but were disappointed with the service they received.

“So I went through, literally 3 or 4 therapists there through lack of being able to schedule accordingly or just they weren’t helping at all. And two people I met with for 3 sessions or around there, at least to try to give them their fair chance at proving themselves and honestly I found no relief. It felt like a complete waste of time. So I was fortunate enough to be able to ...have a family with the means to allow me to meet with a therapist in Lewisburg not affiliated with...

Interviewer: Sure, off campus
Interviewee: And so that has been a God-send. But if I were not able to meet with a therapist outside of Bucknell...the CSDC really needs to get their act together”

-Participant 1. (2015, November 4). Personal Interview
“I just have a lot of fears about it…you know I go there and spend all of this time and nothing good could come out of it. I don’t want to waste my time. I also have this fear that whoever I go see won’t be as educated about LGBTQ issues as I’d like them to be. I don’t want to be going there and having to explain all the time. Also I’ve talked to a few of my friends who’ve been to the counseling center and just like, they’ve confirmed my fears. Like, ‘Oh I went and they didn’t do anything’” or ‘Oh, I went and told them things that I really wish I hadn’t because …’ I don’t know. I don’t know. I think amongst my friends some of them say, ‘yeah it was good. You know, I just talked about stuff.’ Sometimes talking about things for me is helpful but at the same time, my other friends don’t really trust it so that’s feeding into my distrust.”


In response to the disappointment Trans participants felt by the Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC), I asked what would need to happen for the participants to feel comfortable seeking help. Some responses commented on internal changes Trans students needed to make themselves, like overcoming stigmas of counseling or help-seeking in general. For example, Participant 3 shared that her counseling experience was not very helpful because she did not put in the work. She had an appointment every week but she would not have anything to share or work through with the counselor and therefore left after ten minutes. Participant 3 also acknowledged that she has a difficult time expressing her emotions. Participant 4 was most strongly opposed to seeking help from the Counseling Center because of their skepticism towards mental health systems in gender. Other responses, like those from Participant 4, addressed a desire for cultural awareness. Trans students indicated they would be more motivated to seek help if the helping individual acknowledged gender diversity, but did not treat the student differently based upon that identity.

“So a lot of my friends go to the counseling center or have been at some point. I don’t know why but I just have this weird aversion to going. Like my mental health has not been super great so I acknowledge that I probably should go to the counseling center but for whatever reason I just don’t feel like…I don’t know. A part of me is like, ‘it’s not going to help. It’s not going to do anything.’ And then another part of me is like…well I don’t really trust the system I guess. Like I don’t know much about the people that work there or their qualifications.
Interviewer: Hmmhmm
Interviewee: I think I’m sort of skeptical about psychology as a whole. Like, my response to, ‘maybe you should go see a counselor’ is, ‘well, they’re not real doctors.’
Interviewer: Okay
Interviewee: So I don’t. My response to that is the same as my response to, ‘maybe you should go see a chiropractor.’ It’s like, ‘Uhh, no.’ So I’m a little skeptical about that.”
“Like when you’re a queer person or any sort of marginalized group in a largely white or straight or anything sort of group you want to be visible but at the same time you don’t want to be tokenized. Like you don’t want people sort of treating you differently.”


Overall, Trans students were not comfortable with the Counseling and Student Development Center because of historical distrust of society’s response of gender diversity. Distrust from participants who did not seek emanated from their fear that the helping professional would not be knowledgeable about or accepting of gender non-conforming identities. Distrust from participants who had sought help was generated from having found most support from resources outside the Counseling Center that communicate an acceptance of diverse gender identities. Clearly, the Counseling Center must find alternative ways to clearly communicate the inclusive strides it has made in recent years to welcome all students. However, it is not just the responsibility of the Counseling Center to support Trans students, but other Student Affairs departments as well to provide culturally competent support. Other than the obvious choice of the LGBTQ office and student organizations, Trans students desire to find trusted individuals and spaces where they are welcomed throughout the university. If the Counseling Center is not yet an alternative safe space for the Trans individuals, Student Affairs professionals must do their part to adequately advertise their office’s ability and willingness to include minority groups without further tokenizing their identities.
Theme 3: A Feeling of Connectedness - Symbolically and Relationally

**Feeling Connected through Institutional Symbolic Features of Inclusion**

Since the Counseling Center was not the top choice for support on campus, other helpful institutional structures of the college were explored to see what has been successful in supporting the Trans student population. The Trans students included in this study indicated that the most helpful features were those that are open to all students, such as certain student organizations and programs, informative literature, and other administrative features such as gender neutral bathrooms. What participants feel is supportive about these non-excluding elements, is that they symbolize the overall message that the Trans identity has visibility on campus. Rather than inviting students to utilize such institutional features based upon gender, these structures symbolize that all students are welcome regardless of their identity.

**Campus-wide events and programs** appear to be helpful to Trans students because they are open to the entire student body. This way, Trans students can participate as students rather than participate as specifically a male or female. In the interview, the participants were asked what institutional structures exist and how they had come to discover these resources. The following quotes from the research participants indicate the top examples of campus-wide events and programs that appealed to them. The Admitted Students Day and First Year Orientation fairs were open to the entire campus with a focus on first-year students. These two events expose students to extra-curricular activities Bucknell has to offer and encourages any student could sign up for any student organization.

“Yeah and I knew like, there’s the table at admitted student’s day which I don’t think I went to because I was probably way too scared to go up to. Um, and then I think during the wandering orientation where they have the activities fair again, I ran up, wrote my name down on the list and ran away.”

Participant 3. (2015, November 11). Personal Interview
“Yeah at orientation. And I was like, ‘well maybe I should check that out.’ So I wrote my name on the list but then I walked away quickly because I was like, ‘I don’t know. What’s going on?’ And yeah so they email me and I feel bad every time that I read the emails because they are like, ‘you should totally come’ and I’m like, ‘ahh, I’m busy with school.’ But um, hopefully next semester I’ll be able to get more involved in stuff. And I went to the trans visible community dinner.”

-Participant 2. (2015, November 6). Personal Interview

Interestingly, these participants were comfortable signing up for the Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) student organization when advertised to the entire student body during the Activities Fair. However, each person who signed up ran away perhaps because they were not confident in their gender identities yet. Signing up to join GSA could subtly symbolize “coming out.” Another example mentioned by the participants was the community dinner centered around the topic of Trans-visibility on campus. The dinner, which occurred in the Fall semester of 2015, was open to campus faculty, staff, and students for free to discuss topics related to the campus community’s Trans population.

“And also the community dinner. You know the trans visible dinner? Because they kind of laid out everything. And I’m telling you everything. And I was just like, ‘that’s cool!’”

-Participant 2. (2015, November 6). Personal Interview

Related to the topic of the community dinner, one participant mentioned another strong institutional symbolic feature of Trans support: Bucknell’s Mission Statement. While Bucknell has recently changed its mission statement, the interview was conducted prior to this change and therefore the participant sensed the institution’s embrace of the gender binary at an institutional level. This participant implies that the ignorant word choice of the mission statement symbolizes a higher level of discrimination towards the Trans student body in the midst of accessible and inclusive events and programs for all students. Therefore, while there are activities and programs that the entire campus can get involved in, there is a lingering understanding on a symbolic, institutional level that the entire campus consists of only men and women.
“At the community dinner that happened a while ago, people wrote down suggestions for the school to do and someone wrote something really interesting. In the mission statement of the school, it says, “we seek to educate men and women.”

Interviewer: Hmm, I didn’t know that.

Interviewee: Yeah. And that was something I never even thought about but that is very gendered binary language so I don’t know. I think that to me is sort of symbolic of everything. Like, the mission statement of the school forgets and I think that’s like...I think because a lot of the discrimination isn’t actively intentional. It’s just that people forget and I think that’s the main problem.”


In the interview, participants were asked what they perceived to be contributing factors to the successful support systems as opposed to solely focusing on the areas of improvement of the support systems. Participants responded that the campus organizations and activities that addressed preferred pronouns were the most supportive to Trans individuals. LBGTQ+ student organizations make preferred pronouns a priority but a less obvious example of a campus-wide activity that asks for pronouns is Common Ground. Common Ground is a student-led diversity and inclusion retreat that takes place during Fall Break at a local camp and conference center. Any student interested in staying for the five days participates, for free, in activities and discussions that help the group explore race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, socioeconomic class, ability, and other topics of diversity. Opportunities like Common Ground provide a safe space for all students to learn and openly discuss various identities with others who are open.

“Interviewer: Can you elaborate on what a queer space is for you?

Interviewee: Yeah so I guess like in GSA[Gender & Sexuality Alliance] and in Frans house [LGBTQ and ally affinity house group]which is the affinity house, just generally people who identify as queer themselves or who are informed about different gender identities, and that I’m not afraid to be judged if I am out to them. Pretty much any space that asks for pronouns in introductions I feel fairly comfortable in that context. Um, like Common Ground I did and that was also....it’s not a queer space but it’s a space I feel more comfortable in.

-Participant 3. (2015, November 11). Personal Interview

“In Common Ground we spend a day on gender. And coming out at Common Ground in such a large group of people and some people that I know have never really had a
conversation about anything other than the gender binary before, like, that’s definitely scary.”

-Participant 3. (2015, November 11). Personal Interview

Being in queer spaces, like Common Ground and LGBTQ+ student organizations, where preferred pronouns are actively discussed and addressed, has allowed students the liberty to express their gender identity amongst a culture where the gender binary is dominant. Having multiple platforms to initially declare their gender pronouns to others is important to symbolize that the school does not want to assume gender based upon physical characteristics but rather by the individual’s preference.

“Like, you hear for Trans people their pronouns are their pronouns and if you use the wrong pronouns it’s very hurtful. For me it’s sort of shifted to like, “if you use she/hers like, that’s fine. It’s whatever and that’s what everyone does because I’m very female presenting. But if you use they/them it’s like ‘YAY! I’ll be inside.’” I went to a conference over the weekend and Bill McCoy, the director of the LGBTQ services, he knows that on my nametag I prefer they/them and he used that consistently through the entire day. And I was like, ‘Yes! Everytime! Bill, you’re great.’”


“Interviewer: What has helped you feel comfortable with your identity at Bucknell? Interviewee: Just being in a community of people who like, understand. So like, I was in GSA my entire time at Bucknell and also lived in Fran’s house from the first time it was created…so like, 3 years. Which was great to have a sense of community in general but specifically a community that understood about gender and sexuality and have conversations about it regularly.
Interviewer: Um what do you wish was available at Bucknell to like, better support you or make you feel comfortable in your identity here?
Interviewee: Um, I think just like more awareness in general, which I don’t really know how to do.
Interviewer: Awareness more in terms of like, education on labels or what does that mean when you say awareness?
Interviewee: Awareness that gender is not a binary. Um and like that pronouns are important. And this isn’t necessarily me personally but also from having conversations with other people who identify as trans on campus. Like, pronouns are a huge thing. I know a lot of people are repeatedly misgendered by professors even after they’ve come out to them. So I think like getting some education sort of on that level and then just like
making it a norm to ask for pronouns in introductions. Especially in group introductions because it is important.”

-Participant 3. (2015, November 11). Personal Interview

Using the correct pronoun and actively asking for declaration of preferred pronouns is primary in shaping the environmental context of inclusion. Asking everyone for their preferred pronouns decreases the risk of misgendering someone or categorizing someone to fit within a gendered category based on physical appearance. Similar to campus activities and programs that are easily accessible to all students, addressing preferred pronouns do not cause Trans students to feel tokenized or separate, but rather comfortably immersed in daily college student activity.

In addition to truly inclusive campus events and pronoun preference options, the research participants also indicate an educational aspect to resources that they find supportive to their Trans identity. Informative Literature is helpful to educate all students about campus resources because the magnitude of their presence around campus. Similar to the supportive campus events previously mentioned like Common Ground and Community Dinners, the target audience is the entire student body, not just a single group or demographic of students. Having educational and informative literature advertised to the entire campus sends a message of inclusivity and support. As a result, Trans students see that a support system exists and are more willing to utilize the support system because they do not feel targeted as an individual who requires support. The participants mentioned that Bucknell has a variety of symbolic gestures of inclusivity. For example, on the Bucknell website, the LGBTQ+ information is easily found, educational, and up-to-date. Bucknell’s Message Center, which acts as a public online bulletin board, advertises LGBTQ events. The bathroom “Installments”, monthly newsletters posted in the bathroom stalls throughout campus, and any other pamphlets and posters placed in various locations, include resource contact information and support structures that are in place on campus. The following
quotes mention the informative literature the Trans participants found to be most helpful in guiding them to supportive resources.

“So GSA I came to know about from searching Bucknell’s website.”
-Participant 3. (2015, November 11). Personal Interview

“Yeah those Installments man, they are life savers.”
-Participant 2. (2015, November 6). Personal Interview

“That [the message center] was the catalyst I guess for like really thinking about being really open about because like being able to see stuff like that...” we want to know what your opinion is,” that is really inviting and interesting. And if there were more posters like that, like everywhere, there would have been more people too. I would have definitely even pushed it further.”
-Participant 2. (2015, November 6). Personal Interview

“I used to use a lot of social media and like digital forms of interacting with other people. But now since I’ve been here I’ve just kind of like ditched that. And if I see a pamphlet, I’m going to read it instead of using my phone. I find it a little bit more like...I want to be more engaged with people here instead of always being on my phone so posters are awesome is essentially what I’m saying”
-Participant 2. (2015, November 6). Personal Interview

In a modern age of technology, electronics can help all students, not just Trans students, come to find, explore, and discover the resources a college campus like Bucknell University has to offer. However, it is up to the student to step away from their digital device to inquire further and/or take action to utilize the supportive resource.

**Other administrative features** symbolize an inclusive environment, such as the type of bathroom one chooses on a regular basis. Bucknell has gender neutral bathrooms in various locations which indicate that the campus is making progress towards creating an inclusive community for all. Since Trans students are often forced to choose between two gender identities they may not completely feel comfortable with, every participant that participated in the study mentioned that they are pleased that a gender-neutral bathroom option is available.

Unfortunately, there are still not enough gender-neutral bathrooms in all locations and are not
necessarily as visible or accessible as the Trans students would prefer. For example, Participants 3 and 4 will only use the gender-neutral restroom if there is one in the proximity. Otherwise, they will just use the women’s restroom because no one is going to stop them as female-bodied and female-presenting individuals. The lack of gender-neutral bathrooms symbolizes that the campus does not yet fully prioritize Trans students participating in public life like everyone else. The Trans students are happy to see that the institution is attending to their needs but the progress must continue.

“I’ve spoken to people from different affinity houses like, not necessarily about gender but like, whenever they talk to me about living in an affinity house they say, “there are gender neutral bathrooms, we like, don’t discriminate against anyone.” Like, Wow! That’s freakin’ awesome! Like especially Summit house. My friend was telling me that everybody’s super nice. And they have like…I don’t know why that’s such a big deal but it really is, like, gender neutral bathrooms. I mean that’s awesome”

-Participant 2. (2015, November 6). Personal Interview

“Gender neutral bathrooms. When I saw bathrooms in the Weis center labeled, which are conveniently out of the way, but still they’re there which is a start, labeled gender neutral and it just felt ‘ahh.’ It was really nice. Like, people who don’t have to worry about not looking like or not feeling comfortable with the other people in the rest room don’t understand how meaningful it is to have nonbinary cis identities affirmed. But it’s really nice to see at least we are headed in the right direction”

-Participant 1. (2015, November 4). Personal Interview

“Like, I’d rather, if there are gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, especially for those people who it might not be comfortable just using the bathroom of their assigned gender. Especially in buildings like Dana…Have you been in Dana? Yeah it’s ridiculous. So that’s something. And I’m on the E board of the [redacted information] so that’s something that we want to push for a little more because that sucks right now. It’s like the worst.”


Similar note to bathroom access, housing assignments and other identifiers listed on student profiles primarily divide the student body based upon the binary gender assignments. This again sends the message to Trans students that they must choose one of two gender categories that they do not fully identify with. However, the students acknowledge that there
have been attempts to resist the dominant segregation based on the gender binary such as changing identifying name on Moodle, an online learning forum. Participants have also mentioned gender neutral housing as an indicator of inclusive progress, but that these opportunities generally offered to upperclassmen only.

“It was really affirming because for one, I changed my name on Moodle from (Male name) to (Female name). And that was a step in and of itself because again, I want to reiterate this was still so fresh and I was so unsure, but I knew (Male name) was not happening so I thought, ‘Well, I’m hoping that (Female name) will pan out so let’s just run with that for a while.’ So, a couple of them [professors] noticed. They said to me, ‘Hey, I noticed you changed your name of Moodle. What’s that about?’ And I told them I would like to referred to as she/her/hers pronouns in class and it went well so it worked out from there.”

-Participant 1. (2015, November 4). Personal Interview

“Interviewee: Yeah so housing improved quite a bit since my first year.
Interviewer: How so?
Interviewee: So starting with Fran’s House. My sophomore year was the first year that Fran’s house existed. We could have gender-neutral living so I actually could live with a male roommate that year and I think that is the first time that that has really happened. So Fran’s house was entirely gender neutral. The rooms are mostly singles but the doubles are gender-neutral. Me and my roommate were actually the only ones there actually mixed gender. And our bathrooms were gender-neutral. And then there was a push to make the gateways and the mods not as separated. So like, gateways now you can have males and females in the same gateway. And in the mods you have to be split by sides. But I know for first years that’s still an issue because I think if they don’t want to be in the room they were assigned based on their sex, they have to be in one of the single accessibility rooms.
Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?
Interviewee: Not great.
Interviewer: Not great?
Interviewee: Yeah. I think they should be able to room based on the gender they identify as. And I think I’ve heard of some first year halls deciding to make their bathrooms gender neutral which I think would also be a good thing. Just in general like, we talk a lot on this campus about how men and women don’t interact with each other because like, they live in such separated situations and that would improve a lot of that I feel like.”

-Participant 3. (2015, November 11). Personal Interview

Similar to housing, the dominant Greek life culture at Bucknell divides students based on a gender binary. When asking one participant why they are hesitant to be fully “out” and/or
transition, the response was that he feared how being “out” would position himself within the Greek system. Another participant said that the dominant Greek culture divides students based upon two gender and sex categories to create sororities for feminine females and fraternities for masculine males, and therefore should be done away with completely. This individual also adds that the mixers that occur in the Greek system combine one sorority with one fraternity, also encouraging a heteronormative campus culture. The popularity of Greek life and its systemic implications makes it very difficult for any Trans student to easily participate and blend into a dominant part of Bucknell party culture.

“Like, I’m not sure how people in school are gonna react to it or like, or if I want to rush a frat, how they’re going to react to it, you know?”
-Participant 2. (2015, November 6). Personal Interview

“Interviewer: How did you know that they [sorority women] were welcoming?
Interviewee: Oh you can tell by how comfortable people are. And generally, it’s a small swath, but a small handful...It’s somewhat of an indication of the broader culture of how, especially how much the chapter at Bucknell reiterates to their member that this is an important issue to be well versed on and to understand everyone who walks into these doors as Barbara Perlman said to me. As she told everyone, but clearly that message wasn’t clearly disseminated. Everyone who comes through here identifies as a woman. And there were several people who were quite disrespectful to me.
Interviewer: How so?
Interviewee: Um, repeatedly misgender me, didn’t really make eye contact. I could tell they were uncomfortable with someone who wasn’t cis-female. And some other people did mess up with pronouns obviously but that happens.”
-Participant 1. (2015, November 4). Personal Interview

Moreover, the way the campus runs on an administrative level symbolizes the extent to which gender diversity is valued by the institution. At Bucknell, gender diversity is not acknowledged in Greek Life, Housing, and most other administrative forms. Most often, the only options available are either male or female, leaving Trans students to feel excluded from participating in campus life. The institution has, however, made strides to address gender diversity by changing the language of the mission statement and providing increasing
opportunities and information provided for student engagement, regardless of gender identity. There are also gender-neutral restrooms that relieve the tension for Trans students to choose between two gender categories they may not easily identify with. All these efforts considered, Trans students still feel disconnected to the university because these efforts are not yet enough, and in some cases, ineffective. As a result, institutional forms and practices should give students the opportunity to declare their gender identity during introductions and when filling out forms, just like any other type of identity presentation such as a name or job title. The opportunity for gender declaration should not only be a service available for all students, as not to burden Trans students with extra paper work, but the service should be a continual opportunity. The Trans students expressed diversity in their gender development indicating that their gender identity in the current moment could change in the future. Having the ability to not only share identity markers like preferred gender pronouns, but also having the ability to change those identity markers such as preferred name, symbolizes the institutional respect the university has for integrating all student populations rather than having the minority groups conform to traditional norms.

**Feeling Connected through Actual Relationships**

Upon observing what support systems exist on Bucknell’s campus and what more could be done, it appears that Bucknell has made some steps forward by having educational programs, and some student organizations that include all students. However, more support on a systemic level, rather than an individual departmental level, is an important quality needed for Trans students to feel supported. It is not enough to have multiple inclusive programs and information if these inclusive efforts are underutilized. In fact, the interviewed students were at times hesitant to use some of these support systems unless a referral was made through an encouraging push from a figure in their lives with whom the student had a trusting relationship. It appears that
these students feel a self-referral to any support system, even if the service does not address their gender identity, is an intimidating process. However, relief can be found in a natural networking fashion where friends, faculty, staff, and mentors refer students to others who can assist with the student’s needs.

These “insiders” that connect the student to campus resources play a pivotal role for Trans students if a trusting relationship has been developed. One student in particular discusses the importance of an insider: Participant 2. This participant has yet to attend an LGBTQ+ event or meeting, but he did indicate that there is a personal connection with a member there that helps to ease any fears he has about attending an event. He not only mentioned that a natural entry into a support system is helpful in regards to entering queer spaces, but also noted that the natural flow of a personal connection is helpful in support systems whose focus does not necessarily attend to gender. In terms of utilizing the Teaching and Learning Center and the Writing Center, a simple suggestion from his Posse mentor was enough for this student to take what knowledge he had about campus resources and fully engage in them. To cross the threshold of going to a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) meeting or event, he had a personal connection, but the relationship tie there was not as strong as the one with his academic mentor. The strength of the personal connection also applies to this student’s use of the Counseling Center; he mentioned that because he did not know anyone there, he was hesitant to utilize the service even though he had been made aware of how helpful the service can be for students.

“I’ve spoken to my friend who lives in Summit House who’s a very active member of the LGBTQ+ community. And um, she’s like my go-to person for that community. And she’s introduced me to some of her friends who are also pretty supportive.”

“Well I mean from the resources I’ve actually gone around to getting, like, it just seems a lot more natural as well. GSA is great and everything but like it doesn’t seem natural enough. Like it seems kind of forced like, to have break out groups to focus on improving certain aspects of certain people’s lives. Which I totally get and I want to take part of
more but like, given the circumstances like I said, I’m just trying to get all the things together as well. So like, the resources I do have like talking to my friend from Summit and like [academic mentor] and like other people like I’ve really come to trust, they work for my schedule as well as they are more personal. Like, it’s nice to just kind of talk to a friend about how I feel today or how things have changed throughout the course of the day and then they are like, ‘Oh dude that’s cool. Like what are you going to do? This and that.’ It’s a little bit more natural.”

“Interviewee: It’s taken a lot for me to go out of my way to talk to my own mentor about it you know?
Interviewer: Hmmmm. Even though a counseling session would be one on one, that would still be difficult for you?
Interviewee: Yeah. I guess it’s partially because I haven’t met them yet either”

“Interviewee: I mean I know that in the past counselor’s that I’ve had that are like, not talking to me about my gender or anything like that have really made themselves known but then like, just kind of stepped back. Or like, have somebody else tell me to go to them….through them, I guess. But that was because they knew someone knew the issues I was having at the time. So if they like, I don’t know, had like informants of something like that, that ran around trying to figure out stuff. I get it that it’s really hard to do on a campus like this where people are like hiding.
Interviewer: Yeah but if you got like, a serious referral, is that what you mean?
Interviewee: Yeah. That would definitely be a pushing factor but that’s just me.”

-Participant 2. (2015, November 6). Personal Interview

An active agent who mediates connections is not just important to this participant. Other study participants also expressed the importance of a natural flow in order to feel comfortable utilizing a campus resource regardless of the service’s extent to address gender diversity. Having an insider or “broker” to connect Trans students to campus resources is similar to having a host of a party give out a personal invitation. Extending a personal invitation acknowledges the Trans student’s visibility and also offers the student the chance opportunity to feel accepted on campus. The personal trusting relationships are therefore vital to having Trans students feel connected to university.

“And also my RA [Resident Adviser], like I told you, is gay so he was…I was a little bit nervous showing up to the first meeting but he was like, ‘well I’m going. Come with me!’ And there were other queer first years in my building and we all got together and walked over there. So that was really nice just having a couple other people who were new
stepping into that space and then having my RA who’s like a veteran but also sort of our bridge. So that was really, really great. He did a really good job. He offered a lot of support to the queer residents of our building and not only our building. There was one resident that would come all the way from Swartz just to talk to him. So he did a really good job supporting people.”


“So Professor [redacted information] was my [redacted information] lecturer and problem session instructor was one of the first people here at Bucknell who I entrusted with this part of my identity because it took a little while to feel comfortable among the faculty...Yeah I don’t remember when exactly this happened or when all of this happened at different time of the semester but [this professor] was the first faculty member I came out to. And then my electrical engineering professor followed and then my calculus professor and pretty much everyone was on board.”

-Participant 1. (2015, November 4). Personal Interview

“So in the time that I don’t meet with my therapist outside of Bucknell, I have met with [redacted information] who is an incredible resource who is actually...he’s religious teachings and methodologies are actually...and we chat every week now this semester and the way he listens to what I say more resembles dialectical behavioral therapy which is the primary therapy is treating dissociation. He resembles DBT more than my therapist so that’s pretty cool. He is a HUGE resource and we get along so well. And there’s never been anyone in the church, I grew up Episcopalian, who I would call Father. And he is the one I would call Father.”

-Participant 1. (2015, November 4). Personal Interview

Transgender students face many challenges. The data shows that students struggle to land on a permanent gender identity because students must balance their other identities with their gender identity. Also, gender identity is fluid, so changes may arise in the future to how students identify. Student Affairs professional staff, including counseling center staff, must accommodate a fluid gender identity by being open-minded and knowledgeable to Trans issues at the very least. Identifying as a sex and/or gender minority can help Trans students feel supported as well but it is not necessary as long as the helping individual is knowledgeable. Given that the Counseling Center at Bucknell is not yet a main form of support for Trans students, Trans students who choose to stay at the University are being supported thanks to culturally competent
campus workers who develop personal trusting relationships with their students and refer struggling students to the support systems needed. Through meaningful relationships, Trans students feel welcomed into the community on a personal way. Trans students also feel connected through institutional symbols which send the message that the administrators acknowledge gender diversity. Other than developing trusting relationships with faculty and staff, Trans students feel most supported when organizations and campus events are open to the entire campus. The insights provided by the participants help to draw conclusions. Such conclusions and implications are addressed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter draws tentative implications based upon a combination of theory found in literature and this study’s data findings. Implications most importantly acknowledge a normalized, systemic, fluid gender construct and gender identity development model. Symbolic institutional support features paired with relational agents can increase the Trans students’ level of trust and sense of importance in the campus community. Recommendations towards a more inclusive campus culture, such as repeatedly asking for preferred gendered language, are provided from these implications. In reviewing the study, limitations are included to prevent extreme generalization of the research findings to all institutions and all Trans students. To conclude, further research is suggested in order to continue learning about a complex topic such as gender identity at the college age.

Implications

Transgender college students, at least at Bucknell, have difficulty identifying their gender category. These students not only struggle to participate in a society full of binary gendered structures, but the Trans students also struggle to land on a certain gender that does not adhere to their assigned-at-birth gender identity. Participant 4 demonstrates the difficulty of landing on a gender identity based upon other identity factors. They (preferred pronoun) feel more masculine but they also are a part of the Women in Engineering organization. Therefore, they must deal with the liminality between identifying with a group for women or identifying with the part of their identity that feels masculine. Participant 4 has therefore settled on the label of “genderqueer” in order to satisfy both aspects of “their” identity.

The complex juggling act applies to the other Trans participants as well. Participant 3 is a woman but identifies as more masculine. Yet she struggles to identify as masculine fully because she is a lesbian and that part of her identity is something she does not want to give up. If she
were to identify as masculine, her sex would still be female and she would still be attracted to other women. However, identifying as masculine would then imply that she was no longer a lesbian as a “male” being attracted to females. She was so unsure of how her preferred gender identity would influence her sexual orientation that she refrained from getting a hair-cut. Long hair marked her femininity and she held on to that aspect of femininity while dressing and behaving more masculine. Similar to the complex hegemonic masculinity example of drag queens clinging to their masculine physical characteristics to feel socially accepted, Participant 3 also clung to her feminine hair perhaps as a way to feel included in society while still remaining queer.

Feeling settled in a gender identity is tough for Trans students because they also have to consider the future implications of their choice. In the long term, fully transitioning to align their sex with their preferred gender identity is a heavy decision to make, especially for these college aged students. Participant 1 mentioned that deciding how and if she would have children would be a conversation for later in life when she has found a spouse and they together explore those options. If Participant 1 were to surgically transition to a female body, she perceives her ability to have children “naturally” with a female partner would be limited. Making a firm commitment to a gender identity would perhaps rush the individual’s development in other ways. As Halberstam (2005) points out, by assigning a gender identity too soon, there exists the pressure to align “appropriately” to the chosen gender identity. Halberstam’s point implies that Trans students should be given visibility but not too much attention. Trans students need the space to explore gender identity options and change their minds based upon the context of life.

Making a gendered assumption risks labeling someone’s gender identity decision for them. Therefore, I recommend that Student Affairs staff, as well as other campus affiliates, take
the first step towards acknowledging diversity in gender development by consistently asking for preferred gender language. The research from both the literature and the participant data show that Trans students are in different stages of discovering their gender identity and that gender identity is a fluid concept. Therefore, administrative forms should always include a gendered section where their preferred identity can be selected. For example, if identifying in feminine terms, administrators should therefore address the student as “Miss” rather than “Mister.” There should also be a category on forms for preferred pronouns such as “she,” “he,” “they,” or “zir.”** Acknowledging preferred gender pronouns and gendered language on a consistent basis is a step the university can take to symbolize gender beyond a binary, and that gender identity development is complex and can change over time. As hypothetical example, what happens to an incoming student who initially identified as feminine, but upon the start of the academic year they identified as masculine? In the current institutional structure, students are assigned housing based upon gender originally indicated to the university upon admittance. Therefore, this Trans individual would be given a female roommate because housing records indicate that the student is also female. Gender-neutral housing is unfortunately not an option for first-years at Bucknell so any room changes would still assign the incoming student to a female roommate. Current institutional structures should not limit experiences by gender because doing so symbolizes to Trans students that they do not belong. Furthermore, students should have the opportunity to easily change their identity throughout their time in college.

From the difficult decisions and experiences Trans students have expressed, it should be apparent that gender, or any other form of identification, should not be regarded as definitive seeing as such bounded categories cause more harm than good. Similar to Foucault’s argument about language reducing phenomenology to simple terms, minimizing individual’s identities to a

** “They” and “Zir” (also seen as zher) are considered types of gender-neutral pronouns
checked box on a form does not encapsulate the entire lived experience and identity of that individual. Furthermore, within recent Student Affairs theories “emerging models posit that no matter one’s gender identity, it is not fixed in any point in time, but rather is an ongoing process that transforms over the life course” (Patton et al., 2016, pg. 176). Gender is a fluid concept and a binary gender perspective is not only limiting to the Trans students, as seen from their interview responses, but also a gender binary is limiting to cis-gendered individuals who feel pressured to conform to such narrow categorizations and resulting behavioral expectations, as seen in the literature review. Therefore, universities should embrace ambiguity more rather than limiting individuals to a single categorical box. In an ideal world, gender concerns would cease to be an issue, but in reality there are tensions that result from necessary bureaucracies that allow institutions to function. For instance, there is tension between the traditional housing assignment process and gender fluidity. Deadlines to submit housing requests are in place for all students but yet setting a deadline to commit to and maintain a gender identity, at least for an academic year, does not necessarily allow students the space to evolve in their identity. However, providing only Trans students the exception to freely choose housing without a deadline is not including Trans students as equal to other students. There is a fine line between the arbitrary and necessary systems essential to the university functioning and accommodating all aspects of inclusivity. While I suggest that universities remain open to ambiguous identity categories, administrators must be careful not to provide special treatment or tokenize Trans students. Trans individuals must come together and work with governing structures to settle on the best options available for Trans students and the realistic structures of the university.

Within the theme of “Cultural Competency of Student Affairs Professional Staff,” Trans participants indicated that if they were to seek help from the counseling center, they would feel
comfortable meeting with a counselor who also identifies as a gender/sexual minority. However, the Trans students simultaneously acknowledged that identifying similarly does not necessarily guarantee the requisite knowledge base of how to handle Trans issues the student could present in session. Participant 1 referenced that her counselor does not share any identifiers with the participant since the counselor is a heterosexual, white, middle aged male. However, the participant feels most supported by this counselor because of his knowledge of Dialectical Consistent with the literature, demonstrating cultural competency is the best way for Trans students to feel supported. Israel and colleagues (2008) found that sexual minority students felt most supported in counseling if they had an alliance with the helping professional. The gender, sexual orientation, theoretical orientation to counseling, and setting was not as influential to therapeutic change as the therapeutic relationship. From this study’s findings, the participants’ negative attitudes of Bucknell’s Counseling Center was due to a lack of therapeutic alliance, demonstrating the need for Student Affairs staff to develop and demonstrate cultural competency. Hiring gender minority identifying Student Affairs professionals is important but not a complete solution to having Trans college students feel welcomed and included in the University. Rather, training the current Student Affairs professionals to develop an awareness of one’s own cultural worldview, an attitude towards and knowledge of cultural differences, and cross-cultural skills to appropriately work with campus minorities, is the best plan of action for Trans students to feel included on campus.

Findings indicate that Student Affairs professionals should not only receive multicultural training, but they should also communicate their cultural competency skills to students. These findings of both developing and advertising cultural competency are supported with literature. As Wright and McKinley (2011) discovered, only 10.3% of college counseling centers
advertised advocacy towards LGBT sentiments on their websites, and only 30% of them advertised individual counseling services for LGBT students on their websites. Therefore, counseling centers, in addition to other Student Affairs offices, should explicitly state that services are open to all students regardless of how they identify. The Trans students of this study would agree. Participants came to know of inclusive activities, resources, educational programs, and student organizations to participate in when such postings were advertised to the entire campus body. At Bucknell, through inclusive advertisements like online searches, posters, “Installments”, and Message Center posts, Trans students have come to know what aspects of campus life to which they are invited to participate. Therefore, Student Affairs professionals should make the effort to visibly show their cultural competency whether that be in their daily practice or in advertising for events.

One of the most important implications to take away from the research findings is that systemic change is needed for Trans students to feel included in campus life. A systemic approach means that inclusive measures should be taken by all offices and departments of an institution. Multiple scholars of queer research support an integrative, multicultural approach to inclusion that will not only integrates Trans students, but will support all other students as well. Lori Patton and co-authors of the most recent edition of *Student Development in College* (2016), acknowledge that the college setting allows for more identity exploration, experimentation, and expression that Trans students may not have previously experienced prior to college. Therefore, Trans students may utilize a variety of support services at different points of time in their college career. It is not enough to have an LGBTQ office on campus to claim to be an allied intuition. It is also not enough to hire a Dean of Diversity and claim that the campus is open to diversity. Change must be campus-wide rather than departmental. As an example, Participant 1 mentioned
that she was easily able to change her name on Moodle, an online forum for classroom materials. The ease of changing her name allowed her to identify under a feminine name on all documents such as homework, email accounts, student ID cards, and administrative forms. If the student decides to change their name to one that better aligns with their gender identity, having a system that allows them to have all profiled documents read the same is an example of how Bucknell has already started to be integrative and inclusive in a systemic way. The ability to change a name online once and therefore have all other profiles updated with the new name shows how inclusion can and must happen at all levels, departments, and platforms of the institution. By adopting a systemic approach to inclusivity, gender diversity, along with other minority identities, will be normalized.

Steps towards systemic change have started at Bucknell but there is more progress to be made. Students of this study mention multiple resources and structures that are intended to provide support to their gender identity but yet the students report feeling excluded at times. An excellent example of this is again seen in Participant 1’s Greek life experience where she was symbolically included by being allowed to participate in sorority recruitment like everyone else who identifies as a woman. However, being misgendered, judged and seeing how her “difference” in identity made others uncomfortable did not necessarily give the impression that she belonged. While there were consequences experienced by the Trans individual, it is noteworthy that the females on the other side of the sorority recruitment process were made uncomfortable, thus implying that inclusive practices have outcomes for “majority” students as well. Having the Trans Community Dinner and gender neutral bathrooms on campus were viewed by the participants as a positive move towards an inclusive community but just having these symbolically inclusive structures is not enough. Towards an integrated approach of
inclusion, relational supports enhance the symbolic structures so all are comfortable. “Majority” students must also use gender-neutral bathrooms, not just Trans students. Enhancing the relational aspect to inclusion can help spark systemic change when paired with symbolic structures of inclusion.

Trans participants noted a desire for a natural flow when utilizing a resource implying “strength in weak ties”. Coined by Sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973), the idea behind the “strength in weak ties” philosophy is that individuals in a disadvantaged position within a hierarchy can gain mobility by working towards common goals with other individuals in similar positions. “Seen from a more macro-sopic vantage, weak ties play a role in effecting social cohesion. When a man changes jobs, he is not only moving from one network of ties to another, but also establishing a link between these… Information and ideas thus flow more easily through the specialty, giving it some ‘sense of community,’ activated at meetings and conventions. Maintenance of weak ties may well be the most important consequence of such meetings” (Granovetter, 1973, pg. 1373). Such weak ties are an excellent source of connectedness to the university. Authors of How College Works (2014), Daniel Chambliss and Christopher Takacs address belongingness through a relational approach. “Acquaintances say hello in passing, give a nod of recognition and a greeting, the face brightens up when they look up and you say: ‘How’s it going?’ Those greetings matter, making the recipient feel like ‘I am somebody.’ Without them, one becomes entirely dependent on close relations and less at home in this broader world. When weak ties are common, even ubiquitous, they reinforce the feelings that ‘this is my home’” (pg. 91). In other words, a network of “brokers” links students to the university creates the infrastructure of inclusion and importance. For example, Participant 2 knew about the Writing Center’s services but did not take to steps to visit the Center until his adviser recommended it.
Even though the Writing Center does not necessarily address gender identity, it is still a helpful resource that students can feel comfortable in utilizing if there is an agent who mediates the connection between the office and the student. Participant 4 joined GSA because the RA of their floor was a member of the organization and the RA invited them to come along. Similar to having a good connection with a counselor, resulting in therapeutic change, Trans students can also result in better mental health outcomes if they have a broker to connect the student to campus resources. The Trans students will then feel more comfortable and utilize/continue to utilize campus resources. Trans-affirmative relational initiatives are not a means to an end and do not just happen by accident. The institution shapes the available pathways into other group memberships, making it easy (or not) for different students to fully join (Chambliss & Takacs, 2014).

Along the lines of a systemic approach to inclusion, Student Affairs staff are called to role model and encourage such inclusive change. Change therefore needs to start with the theories that inform Student Affairs practices in order for the helping professionals to appropriately role model inclusive habits. I propose revisiting development theory structures in Student Affairs. Cass (1979) and D’Augelli’s (1994) sexual minority identity development theories both include progressive stages of development with the first stage, or milestone, being categorized by gaining awareness of an alternative identity and continuing through a resulting stage of a settled identity. While self-actualization is usually the end goal of development theories, research in literature and this thesis data show that gender identity development is not a simple straight line. Rather, Trans students move all along a spectrum of development to consistently identity themselves, re-evaluate their identity and re-identify themselves, sometimes realizing that their original gender identity was the best fit. Development theories in a linear
fashion do not allow for identity to evolve and re-evolve but are rather prescriptive to categorical stages. Instead, I recommend a non-linear format to development, perhaps a developmental theory that is cyclical or spiral shaped. Having a more cyclical shaped theory allows students to progress through all development stages while going back to re-evaluate their identity and change as needed. (See Appendix N to see a proposed idea for a gender identity developmental framework). Student Affairs theorists and staff have to release the notion that some identity characteristics are fixed, therefore meaning development stages are also not fixed. More research we have on Trans students can lead to a deepening understanding of a more iterative developmental model that should be able to account for future change.

The implications of this study are vast and difficult to achieve, but not impossible. Developing truly inclusive campuses nationwide that are engrained in all institutional systems will be a long journey. The first suggested step to achieving successfully inclusive campuses through a systemic approach would be to be mindful of language and messages that may be directly or indirectly related to gender. As Peter Ji (2007) mentioned in the literature review, “Allies are not born; they are trained” (pg. 183). Step one in training to be an ally is to contemplate the experiences of others. Aspiring allies should notice how binary gender categories influence language, define mannerisms, and shape perceptions. For example, the Trans community has already been stigmatized by the mere category of Gender Dysmorphia Disorder in the DSM. Acknowledging gender diversity should be done carefully so as to not further tokenize or stigmatize the group. As mentioned by Foucault, language does not fully communicate the lived experience. Therefore, being critical of the gendered language used and other messages of gender concepts is a way to rely more on the lived experience rather than
relying on language. Being mindful of gendered messages received can help one settle into gender ambiguity.

Limitations of this study

Data from this study and implications drawn from the data findings should not be generalized to the Trans student experience of all institutions. In fact, doing so could perpetuate social categorization traditions to further stigmatize the transgender population, falsely asserting that all Trans students tend to feel disconnected from the university and unsure in their identity. Due to a small sample size, many of the responses may have been individual factors rather than factors as a result of their gender identity. For example, when students expressed hesitation or fear to visiting the Counseling Center, reasons for avoidance may be due to personal views of counseling and cultural stigma rather than a lack of personal or symbolic connection to the counseling center. The population, while diverse in gender identity under the Trans umbrella, age, class year, hometown, and major, all participants were from Bucknell University. A private liberal arts institution in a rural location typically draws certain privileged populations to the University, therefore one should be cautious of generalizing findings to other institutional settings. Other limitations to add are of the researcher and the research process itself. In the introduction, I mentioned my positionality. While I did my best to control for any biases, research is never perfectly unbiased. Qualitative research is typically time-consuming and even with a small sample size, there is a volume of data that makes the analysis and interpretation difficult to maintain and comprehend.

Findings may reflect my own stance on the data responses since qualitative research involves more interpretation using the “researcher as instrument” approach. As a non-Trans-identifying individual and staff member of Student Affairs offices, my identities may have
intimidated the participants since most had not met me prior to the interview. Affecting the subjects’ responses through researcher presence during data collection is often unavoidable in qualitative research, but I attempted to establish a professional and ethical position to the research and to balance the roles of friendly, curious student and practiced researcher. While the choice to conduct a qualitative thesis using semi-formal interviewing procedures was fitting for such a complex phenomenological research problem, the variance and flexibility allowed in the research methods may indicate lower credibility with some researchers. However, the qualitative data exploring the “hows” and “whys” of the Trans experience in college, can prompt quantitative research predictions to discover the “ifs."

Although the sample size was small, and therefore did not lend itself to much diversity, great insight was gained. For a school size as small as Bucknell, and considering a small sized minority group, I was pleased to have four participants volunteer to share their opinions. Also, it is important that there was any voluntary participation given the historically-framed distrust mentioned earlier in the data findings. Sampling students from Bucknell only was not only a choice made upon convenience, but the sampled participants allowed me to analyze their responses in the context of Bucknell University traditions rather than accounting for other factors such as location, school size, and/or school type.

**Future recommendations**

Given these limitations, further qualitative research exploring Trans student perceptions of institutional inclusion is necessary. If this study were to be replicated, I offer two recommendations for future research. Firstly, I recommend that research on this matter explore the perceptions of gender inclusive campus systems by other subjects outside the Trans population. The data findings of this study suggest that a relational approach helps to “bridge the
gap” between students and resources in a fluid, natural way, regardless of identity. For example, a participant from this mentioned that he decided to go to the Writing Center after being prompted by his Posse adviser. The Writing Center is a resource that does not necessarily address gender identity but yet he did not feel comfortable utilizing the service until his adviser suggested he do so. Seeking help through a relational approach may be applicable to the general student population and not just the experiences of the Trans population. However future research is needed to confirm if this is an isolated experience of the Trans community.

Furthermore, interviewing Student Affairs professionals about their inclusive efforts to Trans students on campus can provide further insight to institutional inclusion. The Trans students of this study addressed campus resources that were both helpful and unhelpful to their gender identity. However, the insight given about a relational situation is only from the side of the Trans students. The staff perspective to the same topic is valuable to determine how applicable student concerns and suggestions can be to Student Affairs daily practices. According to findings of this thesis, the participants would acknowledge that the Student Health Center’s lack of hormone therapy and other medical transitional options symbolizes exclusion or disconnect from the institution. However, interviews with the Student Health staff could reveal that such medical services were offered in the past but were discontinued due to lack of funding or underutilization of such services. Such a response from the medical staff would not be surprising since all participants of the study indicating that transitioning medically to their preferred gender identity is not something to be considering at the college age. For the Trans students, that decision would have to come after establishing themselves financially. While medical transitional services could symbolize inclusion for Trans students, the underutilization of the office in such a gender related way may not be worth the investment on a practical level.
Perhaps hearing from both the provider and “customer” of a campus resource can shed light on the barriers and challenges both parties face to understand the other perspective.

The second recommendation also suggests further research to be conducted relating to the Trans student experience be conducted in other locations. The transgender community is a minority group within society, but the Trans community is even more so a minority group within the context of Bucknell University. Bucknell University, located in rural Lewisburg Pennsylvania, does not situationally lend itself to a diverse population of individuals and therefore research including Trans college students should be conducted in more diverse areas. With more information on the Trans student experience in relation to institutional support is needed to determine if the findings of this thesis is applicable only to the Bucknell Trans community or if the findings can be generalized to other institutions.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the lived experience of Trans college students. Motivated by passions for multiple academic fields, interdisciplinary literature revealed a significant lack of Trans support due in large part to a pervasive view of gender as a binary category. Binary gendered concepts have narrowed “appropriate behavior” into two apparently mutually exclusive categories, thus deeming any gender non-conforming category as “abnormal” or even invisible from society. In a college setting, Trans student barriers are more prevalent because of how central their gender identity is addressed in order to participate in daily student life. Reports show an increased risk of facing harassment and poor mental health in Trans college students as a result of the efforts exerted to overcome barriers set by a gender binary. Combining literature research with my own qualitative research of Trans college students, I focused my exploration the Trans lived experiences in relation to college support services.

Conducting this thesis topic has been an eye-opening experience. To address the research problem derived from literature about the inability to appropriately support Trans college students, this thesis suggests a more systemic multicultural approach that goes beyond the symbolic features of inclusion. Specifically at Bucknell University, the institution has provided a solid start in developing features that signal to students that all individuals, including Trans students, are welcomed into the campus community. The most recent example of positive symbolic change towards inclusivity is the mission statement’s adjusted wordings. (See Appendix P). Changing the mission statement to read “educating students” from “educating men and women”, the institution sends the message that Bucknell acknowledges gender diversity beyond a binary. While some inclusive structures are in places, like the new wording of the mission statement, the LGBTQ Center and student organizations (see Appendix O), bias
reporting forms (See Appendix Q), gender neutral bathrooms, and educational programs that symbolize inclusion of Trans students, simply having such inclusive structures is not always most effective. From the data collected, students may still be hesitant to ask for help. To ease the tension, a more relational and systemic approach to inclusion is needed. A systemic approach addresses the complex gender diversity in development in all areas of the institution and does so on a continual basis as to allow students the permission to evolve their identities without repercussions. Inclusive structures may symbolize Trans students belong, but a relational shift goes further to address Trans students as people, not just a numerical minority group. By normalizing respect for gender diversity, students may not even need help because of the amount of support from the institution or students would at least feel more comfortable seeking help in times of struggle.

To continue with a systemic approach to a more relationally inclusive approach, Bucknell should not be the only school to attempt social change. Rather, social change must occur in both Student Affairs practice and theory in order to ensure the success of a truly inclusive campus culture. In practice, Student Affairs staff can encourage the momentum toward systemic inclusivity by communicating more effectively their cultural competency for Trans issues, asking for preferred pronouns during introductions, and even asking for preferred pronouns again after knowing an individual for some time. The thesis findings suggest that development theories should allow students the opportunity to re-evaluate their identities in a non-linear theoretical way.

A culture change towards a supportive and inclusive community is not unrealistic, but the process is not one that comes easily or quickly. However, small steps can be extremely influential to students even if the benefits are not easily visible. To demonstrate, I noticed, as the
Graduate Assistant at the Counseling and Student Development Center, that all participants of this study had utilized the Counseling Center’s services since data collection. My positionality as both the researcher and the Counseling Center’s assistant allowed me to converse with the participants about the Counseling Center. Perhaps in discussing the Center in the interviews with participants, I became the relational agent that drew students to more comfortably contact the Center on their own. One participant even reached out to tell me that they were going to the counseling center weekly because of the conversational interview we shared about the center. Small steps to converse and act inclusively and collaboratively do positively improve student well-being. While more relational and systemic change needs to occur, the campus has set good groundwork to thus move towards progress.
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A:

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My pronouns: she, her, hers

Image from Counseling Center Communications with preferred pronouns. Dr. Marie Shaw has since moved to another location but consented to having her information included before her departure.

APPENDIX B:

The overall box represents the current language available to describe experiences. With the vocabulary available, several individuals who identify as female can explain what it means to be feminine (each circle). There are many similarities and differences between their perceptions therefore overlapping with some other circles but yet remaining separate. What gets attention is the small space in which represents what all women have in common. That small section is named, understood, and normalized as femininity. All other communications shared by the women about femininity therefore are invisible from the socially constructed “femininity.”
FIGURE 3.3 It is assumed that each of these components lines up and ensures the next

- if a person is a male, he is a man;
- if a person is a man, he is masculine;
- if a person is a masculine male man, he will be attracted to a feminine female woman;
- if a person is a female, she is a woman;
- if a person is a woman, she is feminine;
- if a person is a feminine female woman, she will be attracted to a masculine male man.

From Transgender Emergence by Arlene Istar Lev (2004), p. 94. Figure 3.3
APPENDIX D:

Brief Summary and Adaptation of the Stages of the Gay and Lesbian Sexual Identify Formation (SIF) Model by Vivienne Cass in 1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage and Name</th>
<th>Worldview</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Identity Confusion</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Beginning internal awareness of g/l/b thoughts, feelings, or behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Identity Comparison</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Increase contact with g/l/b persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Identity Tolerance</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Increase in g/l/b contact, selective openness about sexual orientation, extremely limited disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Identity Acceptance</td>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>More positive view of g/l/b self, increased networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Identity Pride</td>
<td>G/L/B</td>
<td>Strong g/l/b identity, confrontation with heterosexuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Identity Synthesis</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>Sexual orientation as part of total identity, allows both positive and negative perceptions of g/l/b and heterosexual persons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### APPENDIX E:

**Phenomenology**

| Purpose, goal - to describe experiences as they are lived | • examines uniqueness of individual's lived situations  
• each person has own reality; reality is subjective |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Research question development                           | • What does existence of feeling or experience indicate concerning the phenomenon to be explored  
• What are necessary & sufficient constituents of feeling or experience?  
• What is the nature of the human being? |
| Method                                                  | • No clearly defined steps to avoid limiting creativity of researcher |
| Sampling & data collection                              | • Seek persons who understand study & are willing to express inner feelings & experiences  
• Describe experiences of phenomenon  
• Write experiences of phenomenon  
• Direct observation  
• Audio or videotape |
| Data analysis                                           | • Classify & rank data  
• Sense of wholeness  
• Examine experiences beyond human awareness/ or cannot be communicated |
| Outcomes                                                | • Findings described from subject's point-of-view  
• Researcher identifies themes  
• Structural explanation of findings is developed |

APPENDIX F:

Glossary of Terms

**Agender (Also Non-gender)**: not identifying with any gender, the feeling of having no gender.

**Androgynous**: A person who may appear as and exhibit traits traditionally associated as both male and female, or as neither male nor female, or as in between male and female.

**Bigender**: To identify as both genders and/or to have a tendency to move between masculine and feminine gender-typed behavior depending on context; 2) Expressing a distinctly male persona and a distinctly female persona; 3) Two separate genders in one body.

**Bisexual**: A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders, and there may be a preference for one gender over others.

**Cisgender**: A person whose gender identity is aligned to what they were designated at birth, based on their physical sex; 2) A non-trans* person.

**Fluid**: A gender identity where a person identifies as 1) neither or both female and male; 2) Experiences a range of femaleness and maleness, with a denoted movement or flow between genders; 3) Consistently experiences their gender identity outside of the gender binary.

**Gay**: Term used to refer to homosexual / same gender loving communities as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual; 2) Term used in some cultural settings to specifically represent male identified people who are attracted to other male identified people in a romantic, erotic, and/or emotional sense.

**Genderqueer**: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is outside of, not included within, or beyond the binary of female and male; 2) Gender non-conformity through expression, behavior, social roles, and/or identity; See also Fluid, Non-Binary

**Lesbian**: Term used to describe female identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other female identified people.

**Queer**: An umbrella term representative of the vast matrix of identities outside of the gender normative and heterosexual or monogamous majority. Reclaimed after a history of pejorative use, starting in the 1980s; 2) An umbrella term denoting a lack of normalcy in terms of one’s sexuality, gender, or political ideologies in direct relation to sex, sexuality, and gender.

**Pansexual**: A sexual orientation where a person desires sexual partners based on personalized attraction to specific physical traits, bodies, identities, and/or personality features which may or may not be aligned to the gender and sex binary; 2) A sexual orientation signifying a person who has potential emotional, physical, and/or sexual attraction to any sex, gender identity or gender.
expression; 3) Sexual orientation associated with desiring/loving a person's personality primarily, and specific bodily features secondarily.

**Top Surgery:** Term used to describe medical surgery on the chest for the purpose of better aligning a person’s physical body to their gender identity and expression. May be referring to a bilateral mastectomy (removal of breasts) or breast augmentation.

**Transfeminine:** A spectrum of identities where female identity or femininity is prominent; 2) descriptive term representative of DMAB, trans female, and/or MTF people; 3) A gender-variant gender expression that has a prominent feminine component.

**Transition:** The coming out process of a trans* person; may be continual or deemed to be a set period of time or series of events; 2) To physically change one’s appearance, body, self-describing language, and/or behaviors in accordance with their gender identity. May be broken down in parts; social transition (language, clothing, behavior, legal documents) and physical transition (medical care such as hormones, and/or surgery).

From PDF “Trans, Genderqueer, and Queer Terms Glossary.
https://lgbt.wisc.edu/documents/Trans_and_queer_glossary.pdf

The original document was adapted with permission from JAC Stringer of The Trans and Queer Wellness Initiative (2013) JAC (at) transqueerwellness.org, http://www.TransQueerWellness.org
Additional definitions referenced: Jack Skelton, Oberlin College, (2007) and Brett Genny Beemyn, GLBT Student Services, Ohio State University, (2006).
APPENDIX G:

Message Center Post:

Hello! I am Tricia Collins, a graduate assistant in the Counseling and Student Development Center. I am here because as a graduate student in the College Student Personnel program, I am conducting thesis research for my Master’s degree in the Education department. My thesis will be a qualitative study to explore the perceptions of helpfulness and inclusivity of Bucknell’s counseling center by the Trans community.

The challenges faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students can prevent them from achieving their full academic potential or participating full in campus communities. Individuals of the Transgender* community specifically, are less acknowledged in literature compared to the research on other sexual minorities, showing presence only within the past decade. The purpose of the research will be to gain more information about the challenges faced by the Trans population on campus while also identifying the support systems for such individuals.

The term Transgender (or Trans for short) encompasses a wide range of identities, appearances, and behaviors that blur or cross gender lines. Within this umbrella are transsexuals (who live some or all of the time in a sex different from their biological sex), cross-dressers (who wear clothes typically associated with the “opposite” gender), drag kings and drag queens (who cross-dress within a performance context), and genderqueers (who identify outside of binary gender or sex systems). –Beemyn et. al 2005

I am looking for individuals above the age of 18 who identify with the definition of Trans above. If you or someone you know meet the criteria of this research, please have the individual contact me via email at tnc005@bucknell.edu to schedule 1 hour to be asked questions about the topic. Participation is completely voluntary and all responses will be confidential. I will be the only one with the information and will not reveal the results of the study with anyone’s name attached to it. The study has also been approved by the IRB. For more information, please contact me.
APPENDIX H:

Informed Consent Information Sheet

Introduction:

Hello! I am Tricia Collins, a graduate student in the College Student Personnel program conducting this thesis research for my Master’s degree in the Education department. I am also the graduate assistant in the Counseling and Student Development Center. I am also very involved on campus as I have attended Bucknell University for undergraduate school as well as graduate school. You are invited to participate in this thesis research for academic purposes and to allow overall data findings to better Bucknell campus resources. You will be provided information and you are able to talk to anyone you feel comfortable talking with about the research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in the research. Before you decide, you are free to ask any questions if you do not fully understand some of the words or concepts and I, Tricia Collins, will take time to explain them as you go along. You are able to ask questions at any time.

Purpose of the research:

The challenges faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students can prevent them from achieving their full academic potential or participating full in campus communities. Individuals of the Transgender* community specifically, are less acknowledged in literature compared to the research on other sexual minorities, showing presence only within the past decade. This research examines current campus support systems for Trans students to explore the perceptions of access, inclusiveness, and effectiveness. With less visibility unique concerns in terms of housing, bathrooms and locker rooms, health care, and recorded documents, it is important that they feel there is campus support for them at the Counseling and Student Development Center because of professional, confidential, free, and collaborative services they provide. Whether positive or negative feedback, I want to learn more about the perspective of Bucknll’s Trans population in regards to student affairs’ helpfulness in accommodating and supporting all students. Feedback will be helpful to better the services Bucknell’s campus can provide.

Participant Selection:

You are being invited to take part in this research because your experience as a Transgender individual above the age of 18 can contribute much to the understanding and knowledge of campus student affairs support system effectiveness, access, and inclusiveness. It is my hope to go in depth with a minimum of 4 participants and I thank you for your interest in being one of the four.
The term Transgender (or Trans for short) encompasses a wide range of identities, appearances, and behaviors that blur or cross gender lines. Within this umbrella are transsexuals (who live some or all of the time in a sex different from their biological sex), cross-dressers (who wear clothes typically associated with the “opposite” gender), drag kings and drag queens (who cross-dress within a performance context), and genderqueers (who identify outside of binary gender or sex systems). –Beemyn et. al 2005

**Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate all the services you receive at the Counseling and Student Development Center or any other campus service will continue and nothing will change.

**Procedure:**

I am asking you to help me learn more about your thoughts and feelings towards the campus services in general, and the Counseling and Student Development Center more specifically; that you feel could be helpful in regards to your Trans identity. This will be done through an individual interview. Here is an example of a question I will ask: “What was it about the support systems you’ve used that is appealing to you as someone who identifies as Transgender?”

The interview will take place in a reserved room of the 2nd floor Langone Center or any other location that is comfortable for you. I will not ask you to share any information that is too personally invasive nor do you have to share any knowledge that you are not comfortable sharing. The interview will start with me making sure you are comfortable by getting to know you in general. You can also ask me questions about myself and/or the research. No one else but you and myself, Tricia Collins, will be present during the interview, unless you would like someone else to be there. It will then be optional for you to participate in method checking processes to confirm the reliability and validity of data responses by elaborating or editing the transcribed audio.

**Duration:**

The collection of research data will take place over 1 month in total. During that time, you will be interviewed at the end of October or early November for one hour. It is then encouraged but optional to participate for one hour maximum for method checking. The method checking process includes reading and reviewing transcribed responses to elaborate or edit information.

**Risks:**

I am asking you to share with me some very sensitive and personal issues regarding your identity as a Transgender individual and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview/focus group discussion. If you don’t wish to do so, that is fine. You do not have to give me any reason for not responding to
any question or for refusing to take part in the interview. If at any point you become distressed during the research process, please let me know and I can connect you with an appropriate on or off campus resource.

Benefits:

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help the student affairs departments on campus find out more about how to be supportive and beneficial to those students in your community.

Confidentiality:

I will not be sharing any information about you to anyone outside of myself. The information that I collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only I will know what your number is and I will never share that information with anyone else as I will be the only one with access to your information.

Sharing the Results:

Nothing that you tell me will be shared with anybody and nothing will be attributed to you by name. Your interview responses will contribute to data trends which will be presented at the end of the academic year’s thesis defense. However, your name along with personal information connecting you to the data will not be revealed. Only I will have the list linking names/emails and identifiers on my own personal computer until the end of data collection.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw:

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and choosing to participate will not affect your position within the university in any way. You may stop participating in the interview at any time that you wish without your student status being affected. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Who to Contact:

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Bucknell Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, you may contact the IRB chair at Matthew.slater@bucknell.edu. Before you voluntarily and verbally consent to this interview, please ask any questions you may have of this document. If you have any questions about the research, you can ask them now or later. You may contact the researcher, Tricia Collins, at 717-433-7114 or tnc005@bucknell.edu if you have questions at any time.
APPENDIX I:

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Thank you so much for meeting me. I really appreciate your willingness to participate. Before we begin, do you have any questions for me about anything you read on the informed consent about the research? Remember that you don’t have to share any information with you are not comfortable sharing. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may say “pass” and I will move on to another question. To keep your identity confidential, I will not use your name. Instead I will refer to your feedback under subject number ___. Being audio recording.

1. Get to know you
   a. How has your semester been so far?
   b. What are you studying this semester?
   c. What class year?
   d. Where are you from?

2. Trans Identity
   a. How do you identify?
   b. What pronouns do you prefer?
   c. Can you please articulate your experience here thus far?
   d. At what point did you come out or are you in the process of coming out?
   e. How central is your identity to your lived experience?

3. Resources on campus relative to Trans identity
   a. What has helped you feel comfortable with your identity at Bucknell?
   b. What support systems are available to you on campus relative to your gender identity/expression?
   c. What appealed to you about the support systems you have used?
   d. What is unappealing about the support systems you have not used?
   e. How do you get information about support systems available to you?
   f. What do you wish was available at Bucknell to better support you/ make you feel comfortable in your identity here?

4. Counseling Center
   a. (The counseling center could be resource for you as well since it is free, confidential, and the counseling center can connect you with additional support. For example: administrative dean if struggling with academics. I noticed you did/ did not mention the counseling center when we were discussing campus resources earlier. Could you elaborate on why that is?)
   b. When do you feel you would need to use the counseling center?
   c. How do you get your information about the counseling center?
   d. How does the sex, gender, or sexual orientation of the counselor influence your interaction at all?
   e. What could the counseling center do proactively to be a good ally?
   f. What can the counseling center do to be more welcoming and inclusive to all students?

Closing:
Is there anything else in general that you would like to add on the topic? Again I really appreciate your willingness to share this information with me. Here is a card with my information on it. If you know anyone else who meets the criteria for this research, please pass along my information so they can contact me if they are also interested in participating. I will send you a transcribed copy of the audio recording sometime this month so you can review what was discussed. At that point you can elaborate, modify, edit information in any way. This is encouraged for an accuracy check but it is not. Again, I really appreciate your participation.

APPENDIX J:

PARTICIPANT 1 TRANSCRIBED

Interviewer: So thank you again for meeting with me. What year are you?

Interviewee: [redacted information]

Interviewer: A [redacted information] ok. And do you know what your major is yet?

Interviewee: Hmmhmm. [redacted information]

Interviewer: Ok so you had to declare that your first year. Ok cool. And where are you originally from?

Interviewee: I grew up in [redacted information]

Interviewer: Ok cool. And how long of a commute is that?

Interviewee: 6 hours

Interviewer: Oh boy. So um, how do you identify?

Interviewee: Currently I identify as trans-feminine/genderqueer. For all intents and purposes I tell people I identify as trans-female just because it’s a lot easier…it’s the first step that people can understand.

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: Because it’s a binary

Interviewer: Hmmhmm.

Interviewee: And um, yeah

Interviewer: Ok. Are there any specific pronouns you prefer?
Interviewee: She or hers

Interviewer: Ok. And can you articulate your experience here thus far here at Bucknell?

Interviewee: My experience, ok. So what would you like in regards to my experience? You mean in terms of my experience coming out as Trans or my experience overall?

Interviewer: Both

Interviewee: Freshman year was absolute hell. I …so starting at the beginning at last November and lasting all the way through to ‘til late April, I didn’t recognize myself in the mirror.

Interviewer: Hmm

Interviewee: It just sorta snuck its way into my life and I didn’t know what was going on once it was happening. So, I had a very hard time adjusting to Bucknell anyway and I had issues, first semester especially, with self-harm. And none of this stuff helped the seclusion I was feeling within the Bucknell community. It took me awhile to find my people, that is. And as with any college or with any situation, I think, but I felt very lonely and isolated. And the Greek system and the polarized social scene which functions as like “You are in the Greek system,” “You are in BSU,” “You are in this certain group on campus” but that is core to your identity because there’s not much intermingling here. That’s what I mean by polarized.

Interviewer: Uuhh

Interviewee: So that, and I have Borderline-personality Disorder.

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: It’s mild…relatively. But still, that also did not help. So, you might get the idea that there was a perfect storm going on here and yeah…

Interviewer: Hmm

Interviewee: So first semester happened. But then over winter break, that was ohh. I had a very difficult time over winter break. I hallucinated some. I started believing there was… like I had trouble looking at myself in the eyes in the mirror because I felt there was something evil back there. Yeah. And that was also because of other complicating factors such as a traumatic relationship experience that happened in December and then I came out as Bisexual in October and so I was figuring out that part of my identity. And everything just fell on top of each other.

Interviewer: Yeah, sounds like it.

Interviewee: Yeah so second semester happened. I volunteered to perform in the GSA’s Drag Ball and that was in late April I believe….March…yeah March.
Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And so the last Saturday before Spring Break in March I was trying on women’s clothes to try to find an outfit and these were all clothes of my mom’s. We were standing in front of the mirror together and something about seeing myself in women’s clothes clicked. I saw myself in a different light. And my mom, sensing my enthusiasm, suddenly asked if I was going to end up being a girl. I said, “Nah, I don’t think so. That’s crazy.” So that was on a Saturday and the following Sunday or Monday on March 23rd or 24th…it’s hard to pinpoint a date of this sort of thing because it was like on October 19th I realized I was Bisexual. It was like that (snaps fingers) for me. But with gender, it’s a lot more complicated.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So it was only on the following Monday or so that I started entertaining the possibility that I was feminine and not cis-gender. So Borderline Personality and being Trans don’t mix well. I was hating my identity as a guy but I couldn’t figure out…it took me months, and months of therapy too, to figure out whether I hated being a guy because of my experiences as a guy and my BPD. Or the flip side was, if I hated being a guy simply because I was uncomfortable because I was guy…or because I was identifying as a guy. And the real monkey wrench in this was I identified seemingly happily for 18 solid years as a male. I was a boy scout. Um, I played shoot-'em-up video games, played with guns when I was young. Like, I was, for all my parents knew, I was your stereotypical boy. (Long Pause) I just made a connection I had never thought about before. I think I always thought I was performing given a set of standards. I always felt like I was doing something because it needed to be done. This isn’t a vague look at my childhood but…

Interviewer: So you’re just realizing this now?

Interviewee: Yeah. I felt comfortable doing everything that I was doing in high school. Like, I busied myself to no end. I was kinda into music, boy scouts. I did it all because that was what I thought I was supposed to be doing. And looking back, I identified as male and as straight because that was what was expected of me. Now, people below 18 generally aren’t diagnosed with BPD because you’re still forming. But, and I’m no expert in BPD, but one of the major ways BPD has manifested itself in me is a weak sense of self, and so that makes sense that I felt like I was just going along with the flow.

Interviewer: Ummhmm So not that you are realizing that now, how are you feeling at this current moment about this revelation?

Interviewee: It makes sense. Like I said, I was just going along with what I thought I was supposed to be doing and didn’t really understand what I truly wanted to be doing. And because I didn’t know what I truly wanted to be doing, I felt…well I thought that I truly wanted to be doing what I was doing because I was doing it and because I enjoyed it so…

Interviewer: Yeah, they overlapped. Ok.
Interviewee: Yeah so I ended up getting. So back to later second semester, I started identifying with she/her pronouns and changed my name that I went by with, just in general to (Female Name). And this was very sudden. I didn’t have a whole lot of time to reflect upon it because I had a very unstable state so it was sort of a last ditch effort rather than “this is what I truly want to do.” So, because I was so unstable at the time, I was…the metaphor I use is that I was sort of like trying on different garments of clothing. So like, “this one doesn’t fit so the original one must have been better.” And then I realized, “oh wait, this one isn’t that comfortable at all. Best go back to the other one.” And this happened three or four times over the course of the summer. So I went back and forth from (Male Name) to (Female Name) to (Male Name) to (Female Name). And there was a war going on in my head because I did not know what to believe about my identity, about who I was so um…I left school early, in the middle of finals, because I had gotten suicidal. Over the summer I spent a bit of time in a mental health partial program. And a week in the mental hospital I was…I hit rock bottom because of this. So coming back to Bucknell, I realize I was giving a lot of information but that doesn’t necessarily pertain to the goal of your research.

Interviewer: It’s ok. Just continue

Interviewee: So as for the CSDC my experience here was…so back in that time where I was still trying out this (Male Name), (Female Name), (Male Name), (Female Name), I had a very tough time even wearing jeans. Because jeans, yeah this I mean, just because this is the only pair of jeans I basically own that I like wearing. I’d begun to attach meaning to clothes. Although jeans are very, as you might argue, unisex as a piece of clothing, I began to associate just pants with masculinity and how I felt when I identified as masculine. So I was…I got some very strange look from how I dressed last spring. I went through a phase in which I basically could only dress in an overtly female way.

Interviewer: OK

Interviewee: I wore dresses and I didn’t have much at the time so my wardrobe was limited to two outfits. And darn it, I wore those two outfits pretty much every day.

Interviewer: Did you get those two outfits like, at a store or were they borrowed from somebody or did you already have them?

Interviewee: Borrowed

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: So at the CSDC, honestly, I would not have gone to this ordinarily, but since I know that’s a goal for you…

Interviewer: Yeah so I’m just, not just the CSDC, but any other resource on campus.

Interviewee: Alright, ok. Um so as for the CSDC, I um, I went through three people there. This was actually the first semester.
Interviewer: First semester freshman year?

Interviewee: Yeah. It took me..

Interviewer: And this was…sorry to interrupt…but you were identifying as Bisexual and masculine at that time correct?

Interviewee: Correct. So I started cutting myself and I went in for…So I did get an initial appointment at the CSDC. They are good about that at least. But then it took me, I believe three weeks to be able to schedule a follow up appointment. They are so backed up it was ridiculous. And then the next semester when I was having a lot of trouble, I, my depression definitely started at the beginning of the next semester but I just didn’t notice the early warning signs.

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: So I went through, literally 3 or 4 therapists there through lack of being able to schedule accordingly or just they weren’t helping at all. And two people I met with for 3 sessions or around there, at least to try to give them their fair chance at proving themselves and honestly I found no relief. It felt like a complete waste of time. So I was fortunate enough to be able to…have a family with the means to allow me to meet with a therapist in Lewisburg not affiliated with…

Interviewer: Sure, off campus

Interviewee: And so that has been a God-send. But if I were not able to meet with a therapist outside of Bucknell…the CSDC really needs to get their act together.

Interviewer:Hmmmm

Interviewee: Everyone that I’ve talked to at least about the CSDC has said that. It is embarrassing.

Interviewer: Sure, so when you say, “get their act together,” what do you mean by that?

Interviewee: Increase their staff. I feel like that’s the really big thing honestly. I’m not saying to fire people who are already there because that’s not realistic. But at the very least they need more staff because so many more people today need mental health consulting or just need therapy than they did a little while ago. And they’re not being able to keep up with the need. (Sighs) If there is a month, or three weeks to a month, I forget exactly what it was but it was insane. It there is that long of a waiting list, hmmm.

Interviewer: Ummhmm, yeah. So um I guess we can touch upon the CSDC and other resources a little bit later. I’d like to go back to like, your journey. So you mentioned the summer and how you took me through the semester, second semester and then summer. Can you talk to me about your current semester?
Interviewee: Uh sure. So actually I didn’t quite finish over the summer

Interviewer: Oh Ok sure

Interviewee: When I got out of the hospital I worked part-time at GAP because that was the only job I could do while being post-suicidal. And that was difficult by itself because you might think “Well, just retail. What’s the deal there? How could it be so challenging?” Being in retail or just being in a clothing store is a performance in and of itself. And when you think of gender performance, that combined with everyone assuming you’re male. Fortunately about half of the GAP employee staff were LGBT so they were awesome about the pronouns and were just getting on board with everything that was going on with me. I mean I was still in a precarious mental state at the time so how others saw me affected me mentally too. So when I perceived that other people saw me as male, that hurt. Because I was still very unformed. So that was difficult in and of itself and there were just days were it was, of course, your run of the mill post-severe depression. It was just hard to function on the job. And I was fortunate to be in the lower stakes position than were I in an internship right off the bat ‘cause it was among my goals to have an internship after freshman year. So after…then when I had become stable enough I, well my dad…this is a function of my familial privilege. My dad had recently become the CEO of a startup in [redacted information] and he finagled an internship for me and so for the last 6 weeks of the summer I worked [redacted information] and I loved it. But anyway it was a good experience in and of itself because I got to understand a bit of how the real world worked because…well I feel a bit conflicted still about where, sort of where we are going as a society with respect to how much respect we give to the individual. Maybe respect isn’t the right term. But, among people of my own generation, the resounding mantra has been advocate for yourself. Try to get other people to understand your pronouns. And among the older generation, especially my parents who are from an older swath, the lesson I’ve been sharing is try to figure out how to function in society…well this is necessary anyway but this is an argument from the flip side of how can I be more understanding of other people when they screw up my pronouns or they just don’t care.

Interviewer: Hmmhm, sounds like a burden.

Interviewee: Yeah It is. So like I haven’t…clearly haven’t started hormone replacement therapy.

Interviewer: But that’s something that you would like to do? Or is it?

Interviewee: It’s [hormone replacement therapy] on the docket. I’m interested in it. Though the thing is, starting HR therapy would mean becoming infertile at some point and I haven’t yet made the decision if I would want my own offspring when I am married and want have kids. And I don’t even know if I’m going to end up with an AFAB or AMAB person, assigned female at birth or assigned male at birth.

Interviewer: Right, yeah
Interviewee: And it would clearly only be an issue in one of those cases and sperm storage is expensive. I mean, I’m 19. It’s a difficult decision to be making right now so it’s hard to know when I would be entertaining the idea.

Interviewer: Sure yeah. But it’s on the back burner of your list

Interviewee: It’s in the back of my mind right.

Interviewer: OK

Interviewee: So about HRT, it is a bit unfair of me to… I can’t say that completely straight faced, but anyway…to assume that people can remember my pronouns at every turn. People, like friends, misgender me every day and I have to choose my battles because some people just, it’s not going to have as big of an impact on them. So, while I still obviously…well I don’t dress overtly female because that takes energy.

Interviewer: On your part to get dressed or to go out and …

Interviewee: both. Because I am quite visible. And while I can do that for a bit, it is really mentally exhausting to know that people are going to be staring at me or just knowing that you are clearly outside of the norm. I mean, I wear dresses a lot more often in the summer. That’s part of the reason I don’t dress overtly female in the winter months is because I simply don’t have the wardrobe for it. So that present its own struggle. But um where was I?

Interviewer: Um, I’d actually like to question you about your employment.

Interviewee: Sure

Interviewer: So over the summer you had worked both at GAP and at an internship in which it seems you really enjoyed. Um, so your co-workers at GAP were very understanding and compliant with the pronouns and um I was curious about your wardrobe. Like, did you have to wear a uniform.

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: Ok so what did you choose to wear?

Interviewee: I actually have trouble remembering what I wore on a day-to-day basis at GAP. Whether I quote-quote crossdressed…sidenote with crossdressing, I’m not quite sure what to say about it. Crossdressing for me it used to mean at least used to mean dressing in a male way because when you take into account my gender identity it makes sense.

Interviewer: Right, yeah

Interviewee: Crossdressing used to mean the other way
Interviewer: Right vice versa

Interviewee: Now it doesn’t really have meaning for me

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: Because I identify less with a binary. But as for GAP, I think I probably dressed more male

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: Or at least presented male. I did my best but I had a limited wardrobe. That’s what it was at GAP. At my internship, yeah um, there were some questionable…there were some days…I had started gaining access to a more female wardrobe so I made some questionable work related fashion decisions that I would change if I had to do it all over again. I mean it was a startup, really laid back, no dress code. People didn’t really give a hoot. It was very easy going.

Interviewer: It was easy going but yet you said you wouldn’t do it again.

Interviewee: Yeah I mean, I just…some of my fashion decisions…I was still finding out how fashion worked for me in a male body and as my dad was quick to inform me, there are some fashion decisions female-bodied people can make that I can’t make without sticking out like a sore thumb. So that being what it was, um yeah, I wouldn’t like to elaborate on that.

Interviewer: Sure that’s totally fine. It seems like, from what I’m hearing, again using your words, you kinda have to pick your battles. Because when you prefer to dress more feminine, you’re sort of compromising yourself mentally with all the looks and the energy that it takes to put into dressing. And then on the other hand if you dress more masculine, it’s still compromising yourself because it’s not expressing yourself the way that you prefer. Am I getting that correct?

Interviewee: Correct. The thing about presentation is…this is another symptom of borderline personality disorder.

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: I have to belief it influences this in some way. So I’m almost…at some point, I’ll almost begin being…yeah this is common among depression…people suffering from depression. There comes a point where you’re so comfortable being uncomfortable, that it’s uncomfortable to be comfortable.

Interviewer: Yeah I have depression so I can relate.

Interviewee: Really?

Interviewer: hmmmm.
Interviewee: So we stop believing that…well it feels wrong to feel comfortable in the right state of mind.

Interviewer: Right. So that’s…so would you attribute…I know there’s a lot of overlap between your BPD and your identity as Trans. Could you elaborate more on that?

Interviewee: Oh yeah. Ok so one of the first things probably that any Trans person will tell you, and I can’t say that out of 100 Trans people, 100 Trans people would say this, but the vast majority will say that they have suffered from gender dysphoria for some time, feeling like they are not present in their body or experiencing their environment in a cohesive way. When I dissociate…now I’m leading towards dissociation. When I dissociate, I cease to see you as a fellow human.

Interviewer: hmm

Interviewee: You simply resemble as an object that talks and moves. And that chair, it takes my brain awhile. Like, I don’t make that connection that that’s a chair. Its an object that can be used for sitting and I know my brain tells me that that is a chair but I feel so lost and floating in my surroundings that…and like, these body parts aren’t mine. I can control them with my brain but none of it feels natural. For me that’s what dissociation is at its worst. And one of the unsavory symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder is dissociation. So I am in the lovely position of having those two overlap. (sarcasm)

Interviewer: Hmmm

Interviewee: So I don’t know exactly how they overlap, if there is any distinction between the two, but that is…between my BPD and identifying as Trans…Trans people have to start from the…well, no. I can’t make that sort of blanket statement either because people come out at different point of their life. I came out when I was 19 so I had to build from what felt like to me, the ground up, a new identity. And that actually was incorporating more of my old identity that I realized, but it really felt like I was creating a new person.

Interviewer: Can you talk more about your coming out process? You said you were 19 so you were in college. Um, how was that?

Interviewee: (long pause) Hard.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Interviewee: It brings back memories of…well, unpleasant obviously. But it brings back memories of hanging on for dear life because you see, I’ll compare it with my coming out as bisexual.
Interviewee: Yeah, I feel like this is a good comparison.

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: So, when figuring out your sexuality generally you can kind of generally look at the population and say, “I’m attracted to this person and this person and that person. And today I’m not really attracted to that person and this person and oh my gosh what’s happening” And you can kind of feel it out day by day. And that’s what I did.

Interviewer: Right

Interviewee: Gender is not so. It is entirely in your head, or in one’s head. And it can’t be understood by looking…or it can’t be reflected by your surroundings. It has to be examined. Or for me it had to be examined internally and that process takes a very, very long time. There are no such external ____ of gender. Am I a feminine guy? Or am I actually a girl? I identify now as sort of gender queer. Like, this is a very new revelation. Like only in the past…on Tuesday I made this revelation that I identify more in the middle as gender queer. But I like thinking of myself more as female. But because…like, this is one area where my gender and sexuality do intersect. You often hear that gender and sexuality are different things.

Interviewer: Right, yeah.

Interviewee: But in this case, I feel like one does inform the other in a way. In a way. Because I am…technically I am defined as pansexual but po-tay-toe/po-tah-toe.

Both laugh

Interviewee: I think of myself as sometimes more female when I’m thinking of myself in relation to a guy.

Interviewer: Yeah…and so vice versa…

Interviewee: Yeah like male…well there are some parts of my identity that I still haven’t figured out. I haven’t really dated anyone. You have to figure out yourself, at least to some level, first to get to that realm.

Interviewer: Yeah, like with another person.

Interviewee: And um so yeah…so that’s why I identify as more queer, gender queer. But like I said, I prefer to…but sort to speak I’ve kind of run this test so many times I’ve lost count. Time and time again when I think of myself as gender neutral to get a basis of where my identity might lie somewhere, I always pretty much without fail come back to feeling like I am at least some level female, and want to think of myself that way.

Interviewer: Ok. So um, who was the first….so who did you explain this all to in your coming out process? How did you explain it? Yeah.
Interviewee: It was not easy because I often did not have words for it. I mean, um, I mean I explained it first to my mom and then my brother. And he was like, “Ok cool.” He came out in 7th grade as gay so he knows this stuff pretty well.

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: My sister was probably intrigued, definitely confused at the prospect of having a sister for the first time…or less of a brother at least. Even then when I say that, like, I count myself as more on the female side but just saying…referring to myself as a sister implies a connotation that I’m not fully comfortable with yet because that…I have an idea of what a sister fully constitutes. And again while I’m more comfortable viewing myself more as female, I’m still figuring stuff out.

Interviewer: Sure sure. So your mom, your brother, and then your sister.

Interviewee: Yeah and then my dad

Interviewer: Your dad.

Interviewee: It all took a very long time.

Interviewer: Yeah so family first.

Interviewee: Yeah, family first. I’m still not really out consensually to a lot of my extended family.

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: I’m out to two of my aunts. One of which is very on board with everything. I am so grateful. She lives in [redacted information]. She is as hip and happening as you could imagine. So yeah, this part of my family on my mom’s side is from [redacted information] so that gives you a bit of an idea of the general demographic.

Interviewer: Yeah. You mentioned before your family was more on the conservative side?

Interviewee: I mean most of them voted for Obama but they just have a more conservative upbringing so I actually had a…there was a family reunion this past summer and whooo! (exhales) That should give you a bit of an idea. Well for one my grandfather had passed away the summer before so I felt like I didn’t…it wasn’t really my place to…uh…

Interviewer: Kind of make it about you when it was…

Interviewee:hmmhmm

Interviewer: Gotcha
Interviewee: It was not a good time.

Interviewer: So like, at school, how was that?

Interviewee: So Professor [redacted information] was my [redacted information] lecturer and problem session instructor was one of the first people here at Bucknell who I entrusted with this part of my identity because it took a little while to feel comfortable among the faculty. More about Bucknell, because of the predominant culture here, geographic location, I had and definitely still have a picture of what this school is. So pretty much a facet of how I am involved here at Bucknell is informed by how I perceive the general culture. So of course with the progressive liberalism of the fraternity culture, I felt incredibly comfortable with every part of this school.

Interviewer: That’s sarcastic.

Interviewee: Yes, quite. So yeah, coming out to her was the first big step because this was all very questionable at the time.

Interviewer: Sure. So you came out to a professor first?

Interviewee: I believe so

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: Well I mean Bill McCoy, the director of the LGBTQ office of, resource office. Um I mean I started meeting with him, I can’t remember when exactly. Yeah I don’t remember when exactly this happened or when all of this happened at different time of the semester but [redacted information] was the first faculty member I came out to. And then my electrical engineering professor followed and then my calculus professor and pretty much everyone was on board.

Interviewer: How did you feel about that?

Interviewee: It was really affirming because for one, I changed my name on Moodle from (Male name) to (Female Name). And that was a step in and of itself because again I want to reiterate this was still so fresh and I was so unsure but I knew (Male name) was not happening so I thought, “Well, I’m hoping that (Female name) will pan out so let’s just run with that for a while.” So, a couple of them noticed. They said to me, “Hey, I noticed you changed your name of Moodle. What’s that about?” And I told them I would like to referred to as she/her/hers pronouns in class and it went well so it worked out from there.

Interviewer: Yeah. Great. Sure. And in the last few minutes can you talk about some of the support systems, whether that be individuals or organizations or offices on campus that have helped you during your process? And what was helpful about them?
Interviewee: So in the time that I don’t meeting with my therapist outside of Bucknell, I have met with [redacted information] who is an incredible resource who is actually…he’s religious teachings and methodologies are actually…and we chat every week now this semester and the way he listens to what I say more resembles dialectical behavioral therapy which is the primary therapy is treating dissociation. He resembles DBT more than my therapist so that’s pretty cool. He is a HUGE resource and we get along so well. And there’s never been anyone in the church, I grew up Episcopalian, who I would call Father. And he is the one I would call Father.

Interviewer: I like him too.

Interviewee: Yeah he’s good. Bill McCoy has been…we don’t have as close of a relationship but that’s okay. Um, he has good things to say and when I leave after talking to him…I’ve actually started setting up a weekly appointment to see him so that’s a third support on campus. Yeah, when I leave his office, I always feel my mind is always sharper then when I entered. So, it’s good. Oh yeah, and how could I forget? Fran’s House. It is excellent having a community, albeit on frat row, that is just us and that is very close knit.

Interviewer: Is that, to use your words earlier, it was hard to find your people. Is that who you are referring to? The people in Fran’s house?

Interviewee: Not necessarily.

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: When I said that earlier, finding my people, within the college context. Finding who you jive with. Not everyone in Fran’s house is my best friend just because. It’s more out of…it’s a lot more out of ______. That’s not to say that if we weren’t in Fran’s house, we wouldn’t necessarily be best friends, but because we are in that community together, we have a bond with each other, to support each other no matter what because we are a small community here.

Interviewer: Hmmhmm

Interviewee: There’s a mutual understanding of relying on each other.

Interviewer: When you say, “we are a small community here” do you mean within the LGBTQ+ community or like, within Bucknell?

Interviewee: Within Bucknell.

Interviewer: Ok. Gotcha

Interviewee: And I think there are four or five Trans people on this campus of at least 3,600. For all that I know, I think I am the only Trans female identifying person on this campus. So at times, it can get lonely. It really can. But being in that community is…being connected in that likeness is…and of course there are allies in the house, which is good too in its own way. Just being in that community is reassuring because its…you’re guaranteed not to go wrong. Yeah.
Interviewer: So you said that the CSDC was not a helpful support system for you. Um, were there any other resources on campus that you feel were unhelpful? And what was unhelpful about it?

Interviewee: The CSDC was really the only resource I tried to utilize last year.

Interviewer: Ok. And um was it more of the counselor-client relationship that was unhelpful to you?

Interviewee: That was part of it.

Interviewer: Ok. What do you think would have helped?

Interviewee: I want to say more of a selection for one because not every therapist is going to match exactly with a client. That’s a given. Um, so more of a possible selection would have been good but also people more trained, or with more of a background. And I say this more along the lines of, or through the grapevine so I don’t have a huge background of the diversity of the CSDC but they’re all white for one. Sorry, they’re not all white. Forgive me. Well it is not as diverse as one could hope. So people specializing in special areas would be good.

Interviewer: Would you feel more comfortable with somebody who identifies the same as you?

Interviewee: Not necessarily. While that would give a short term reassurance…My therapist at home is a while, middle-aged guy who is excellent in DBT. At the end of the day it doesn’t matter exactly who it is as long as they know what they are talking about.

Interviewer: Ok. Sure. Makes sense

Interviewee: And what I felt like I found among the CSDC was people who weren’t exactly sure of how to handle exactly what was going on.

Interviewer: Ok Thank you. Um, so is there anything in general that you would like to add or say that I didn’t cover? Anything about your journey you would like to share?

Interviewee: (Long pause) What do you want to do from this?

Interviewer: Like what? For my thesis?

Interviewee: Yes. What do you want to accomplish?

Interviewer: Honestly, I am just so curious. There’s no motive. Um, Like I’m not searching for a specific answer. I’m mostly searching for what can be done at this school to be more helpful to other students. Like, in general to be more inclusive. And like I know diversity isn’t really something that Bucknell is known to be strong in and I would like to help that process in general. So finding what is good and what’s not so good about what is going on currently.
Interviewee: Ok. Well here’s another thing. It doesn’t impact me as much directly because…did you know Barbara Pearlman?

Interviewer: Yeah. In fraternity/sorority affairs?

Interviewee: Ah, I loved her. She really advocated for me when I expressed interest in rushing a sorority last year. Or at least going through the process

Interviewer: Ok. Uhhuh

Interviewee: And I actually went to open suites and 7 out of the 8 sororities were welcoming.

Interviewer: How did you know that they were welcoming?

Interviewee: Oh you can tell by how comfortable people are. And generally, it’s a small swath, but a small handful…It’s somewhat of an indication of the broader culture of how, especially how much the chapter at Bucknell reiterates to their member that this is an important issue to be well versed on and to understand everyone who walks into these doors as Barbara Pearlman said to me. As she told everyone, but clearly that message wasn’t clearly disseminated. Everyone who comes through here identifies as a woman. And there were several people who were quite disrespectful to me.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: Um, repeatedly misgender me, didn’t really make eye contact. I could tell they were uncomfortable with someone who wasn’t cis-female. And some other people did mess up with pronouns obviously but that happens. Like I mess up with you know (Name of BU student) who uses zhe and zhers pronouns? Like I still sometimes…like, it’s okay as long as there are the right intentions then you can generally tell when people generally mean well and you can tell when people do not.

Interviewer: Ok. Gotcha.

Interviewee: Yeah, that aside. As for the general diversity of Bucknell’s campus, the Greek system is an apologetically heteronormative, cis normative, white normative system that a lot of the international students and, I mean it might be not as much of a thing for people coming here from outside of this hallowed American culture, but also among black students. I know of so few black students in the Greek system and mixers are between the fraternities and sororities and there’s not like…One of my close friends who identifies as a gay male is in a fraternity and feels very left out of some of the functions that go one because while I’m bisexual and I can participate as it only caters to part of my identity and I can still be part of it, but for other people who can’t, it’s a very antiquated system that…I know that trustees and alumni that are products, maybe not products, but are graduates of the Greek system have Bucknell by the …um yeah.
Interviewer: So do you think doing away with the Greek system would help increase diversity here?

Interviewee: Yeah I do, honestly.

Interviewer: Yeah? Ok

Interviewee: It’s a very grandiose image to do away with the Greek system on which this school lives and breathes so I don’t know if it’s feasible even to think about the next 20 years. I confess not to have very specific ideas about the Greek system, to make it more amenable to more diverse populations but just in general I feel like there has to be some things that can be done to make it more inclusive.

Interviewer: Hmmhmm. How about the strides that Bucknell has made thus far to be more inclusive? How do you feel about that? You know like implementing gender neutral housing, and the bathrooms, and Commonground…I see you are wearing the shirt?

Interviewee: I am a fan of that. I am very very grateful for Commonground. Commonground convinced me not to transfer. Gender neutral bathrooms. When I saw bathrooms in the Weis center labeled, which are conveniently out of the way, but still they’re there which is a start, labeled gender neutral and it just felt ahh. It was really nice. Like, people who don’t have to worry about not looking like or not feeling comfortable with the other people in the rest room don’t understand how meaningful it is to have nonbinary cis identities affirmed. But it’s really nice to see at least we are headed in the right direction.

Interviewer: And so do you primarily just seek out those gender neutral bathroom or when presented with the binary, which do you choose?

Interviewee: Often it depends how I’m dressed. This has been more of a recent development because I am more comfortable now going into a men’s bathroom and using a urinal because it’s just easier often. I’m at the point where I can do it and not really care. In some cases it makes me feel like even more of a rebel. Um but that aside, I often do feel more comfortable using the gender neutral bathrooms but I can use gendered bathrooms and it’s okay.

Interviewer: Ok. Thanks. Is there anything else that you’d like to share? I don’t want to take up too much of your time and I really do appreciate everything that you have shared. It’s been wonderful.

Interviewee: I don’t think I have anything right now but I’ll let you know.

Interviewer: Yeah and like whenever I do send you the transcript, you can absolutely use that time to add anything once you take that time and reflect on what has already been said. Or change anything- decide like, “oh I didn’t want that to be said.” So you can even take things away. Thanks I really appreciate it.
APPENDIX K:

PARTICIPANT 2 TRANSCRIBED

Interviewer: Alright so, how’s your semester going so far?

Interviewee: Um, it’s been unique to say the least

Interviewer: Okay that’s good

Interviewee: What are you studying this semester? Like I don’t know. Do you know your major yet?

Interviewer: I’m currently undecided but I am thinking about something like [redacted information] Who knows?

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: We’ll see what happens

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: But I’m studying [redacted information] among a few other things that are somewhat related.

Interviewer: Are those like, requirements for your like, liberal arts…

Interviewee: Sort of.

Interviewer: So just for your degree in general. Where are you from originally?

Interviewee: Okay. [redacted information]

Interviewer: How old are you?

Interviewee: I’m 18.

Interviewer: 18 Okay. First year?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Cool. That’s exciting. So um, how do you identify?

Interviewee: Well I identify as bigender.

Interviewer: Okay
Interviewee: Yeah. It’s kind of interesting to think about but I’ll get more into that if you want me to.

Interviewer: Yeah sure go ahead. Whatever you want to share.

Interviewee: Like I don’t know. It’s been a…it’s been such a confusing 18 years up until I’ve actually had the ability to think for myself and like, come to my own conclusions about myself. So, I’m still on the fence about what exactly like, I identify as. But I most strongly identify as bigender so like, I go between male and female.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: Yeah. Not to be confused with bisexual though.

Interviewer: Right. Correct

Interviewee: It’s kind of weird. Like you’d think that since I switch between the two genders, I’d also switch in sexual orientation. But I don’t.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: Like I yeah, I feel sexually oriented towards females

Interviewer: Okay sure. And like, because you say you tend to switch back and forth, do you like, prefer any pronouns?

Interviewee: Well I wish I could say that I prefer “they” which I honestly would. But given the circumstances like right now since I’m on the fence about exactly what I want to do, like, I’m just gonna stick with “he” for a little while just because its more…it’s easier for other people to get for right now.

Interviewer: Sure. So you said “for right now.” At what point or like what would the circumstances have to be in order for you to…

Interviewee: Just acknowledgement of acceptance. Like, knowing for sure that that’s exactly what I want.

Interviewer: Hmmhmm. So acceptance of yourself rather than other people accepting you?

Interviewee: Yeah like, coming to terms with the fact that like I am the way I am. Because like, I’ve gone leaps and bounds within a few months from really coming to the like, idea of it. Because I’ve never had the liberty to think about it because back home it’s like…it’s a very liberal culture back home but in my own home it’s like you can’t think a certain way. You only have to think like, one body, one gender. If you think anything else you’re crazy. But like, being away from that I can actually express myself you know?
Interviewer: Hmmhmm

Interviewee: But I want to express myself the right way off the bat instead of like, saying that I’m a certain way but not really being a certain way.

Interviewer: So can you elaborate on like how you express yourself?

Interviewee: Well I mean the goal is to like, switch in terms of appearance as well as like, how I interact with people whenever I feel like it; however it switches because it switches all the time. I’ll be sitting in class and be like, “Hmm okay this is different today.” But like, I want to be able to switch freely and have people accept that I switch freely. Um but yeah it’s a little difficult to figure out how to do that without making it off the walls crazy I guess, if that answers your question.

Interviewer: Sure sure. And how about um, can you tell me a little bit about your journey and how you’ve come to self-discover this identity?

Interviewee: I mean like I guess I’ve always really known that I’m very…well not very…at least somewhat different than other people. Like, I remember some of my earliest memories as being a kid, not identifying as like everybody else. Like all the guys that I’d hang out with, like when I wanted to hang out with the guys, and I’d hang out with the girls at times. And then I’d switch and be like, “guys let me hang out with you.” And they’d be like, “No you wanna hang out with the girls all the time bro.” And I’d be like, “Oh okay well yeah.” So it would always be like switching between the two people and like, I don’t know. I just didn’t always want to be around guys or always like they’ll always want to pursue girls the way the other guys did. And I guess like, um, it’s weird to think about. Wow. Sorry. It’s just so recent that I’ve just been able to say that.

Interviewer: Okay. And I appreciate you sharing that with me and feeling comfortable enough to do so.

Interviewee: I appreciate you taking the time to like, find out about this stuff because I feel like there’s a lot of people that know that intrinsic feeling. Like I’ve spoken to a few people that have like expressed that. But like they just don’t feel like it’s okay to express it outwardly yet. And I’ll get sort of the same way right now, but with courage and time I think I’ll get there.

Interviewer: Hmmhmm. When you say “there” what does that mean? Like you said that is the end goal right? To kind of switch fluidly. Is that what you mean by “get there?”

Interviewee: Yeah. Sorry that’s very ambiguous.

Interviewer: No. Yeah I mean that’s your reality. That’s how you feel. Alright. Um and so at what point did you, or are you still going through, a coming out process? Like so when I say coming out, how do you respond to that?
Interviewee: Yeah I think I’m still in the transition phase because like, I’ve always had to I guess repress the feeling of feeling different genders or switching between the two. So like, I had to be the tough guy and put a mask on of being the dude and that’s it. I can’t be anything else. And like, I guess now that I’ve realized it I’ve been able to embrace the masculine side as well but like I’ve been trying…I don’t know. I’m all over the place right now. It’s kind of a mess but I think it’s a good mess because I’m actually figuring out what I like and what I don’t like. And like, realizing it’s not a carbon copy. Like, I don’t have to follow the steps of other people that are similar to me but I also don’t have to follow in the steps of the people that want me to be a certain way. You know? I don’t have to be the transgender person who does whatever they want. Like, I can do it the way that I want to do it you know? But I don’t know exactly what that is yet.

Interviewer: That’s okay. Yeah

Interviewee: Yeah. Coming to terms with the fact that I can actually do that is pretty awesome.

Interviewer: That’s great! Since you are still like taking those first baby steps or whatever you want to call it, who have you shared these baby steps with?

Interviewee: Hmm. Honestly like, probably my closest friends back from home.

Interviewer: Your friends from home, okay

Interviewee: Honestly, it shows sometimes, when I switch. Which is great. But like, my friends would always be like, “Are you like…what’s up man?” And I’d always be like, “Oh you know just nothing, nothing.” I’d always be repressing it but now that I’ve really realized it, I’ve been able to like, speak to them about it. And they’re like super encouraging and I’m so glad that they’re there for me because I don’t know what I’d do without them. I’ve expressed it with my mentor [redacted information] if you know him. He’s wonderful. And like, he’s super on board with anything I do and he’s always here to help. And I guess like, you?

Interviewer: (giggles) Thank you

Interviewee: There’s not that many people I’ve really spoken to because I don’t know how everyone’s going to react. Um I don’t want to say it’s the school culture that I’m afraid of as well because it seems to be somewhat accepting. But, that’s also a factor. Like, I’m not sure how people in school are gonna react to it or like, or if I want to rush a frat, how they’re going to react to it, you know? And I know that they’re resources out there and I personally never have time to go to like, LGBTQ+ meetings or anything like that. But like I wish I could but I always have something to do on Tuesdays and during the break-out sessions. It’s just crazy.

Interviewer: Sure. Sure. And um, you kind of talked about it already, the resources here. Can you elaborate on what those are for you?

Interviewee: Well um, I’ve spoken to my friend who lives in Summit House who’s a very active member of the LGBTQ+ community. And um, she’s like my go-to person for that community. And she’s introduced me to some of her friends who are also pretty supportive. But they
don’t…she’s kept it pretty under wraps as well. Like, I’ve expressed my own gender with her but like…well genders. Gender? Genders?

Interviewer: Yeah your gender identity, we’ll go with that.

Interviewee: I’ve shared that with her but she hasn’t really told anyone else because I’m not ready for that many people to know yet. Wow that’s crazy.

Interviewer: What’s crazy?

Interviewee: Just like talking about it is just really awesome. Yeah so, she’s my connection to the GSA group

Interviewer: Sure. Sure. So how did you come to know about the GSA group?

Interviewee: Um well it was at the community fair thing

Interviewer: Activities Unlimited?

Interviewee: Yeah at orientation. And I was like, “well maybe I should check that out.” So I wrote my name on the list but then I walked away quickly because I was like, “I don’t know. What’s going on?” And yeah so they email me and I feel bad every time that I read the emails because they are like, “you should totally come” and I’m like, “ahh, I’m busy with school.” But um, hopefully next semester I’ll be able to get more involved in stuff. And I went to the trans visible community dinner. Did you hear about that? Did you go to that?

Interviewer: I heard about the community dinner. I’ve attended community dinners in the past, I just haven’t gone this semester.

Interviewee: Ok well I was able to go to that and it was really cool to like, hear what everybody’s opinion was without them knowing that I was actually in the community that we were supposed to be talking about. So I was like, “Huh, that’s interesting that you said that.” It was very insightful.

Interviewer: Insightful how?

Interviewee: Like, to hear other people’s perceptions. Because it was like a group of like, 50 people there or so and everybody was really…not everybody was as open as I would like…well more people were more open than I thought they would be but they were less open than the ideal. Which is interesting to think about because they were all still there. They were all there attending a community event about transgendered people.

Interviewer: And they volunteered to be there.
Interviewee: Yeah even though they didn’t necessarily align with the ideas. I mean 50 people out of 3,000 people. I don’t know if that was a good enough statistic. It was still pretty cool to see that.

Interviewer: Cool that’s fine. So what other support systems do you know of that’s available to you. I know you mentioned [redacted information]. How did you find out about him as a resource?

Interviewee: Well he is a um…he’s my Possee mentor.

Interviewer: Oh right. Through Possee.

Interviewee: Yeah through Possee basically.

Interviewer: So you said you found out about GSA through Activities Unlimited...

Interviewee: And through the extension of Possee.

Interviewer: Cool. Ok. Any other resources?

Interviewee: I know that the CDC…Oh not the CDC

Interviewer: CSDC?

Interviewee: CSDC yes. There you go. That they provide some pretty interesting resources for like, just like psycho…you know, mental stuff…ahh.

Interviewer: Psychology.

Interviewee: Psychology yes. That was what I was trying to say. I was actually considering reaching out to them pretty recently just to like, figure out how they would be able to study me. I don’t know. Like, but I haven’t yet.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: But I know it’s there. So that’s pretty cool.

Interviewer: So how did you come to find out about the counseling center?

Interviewee: The installments

Interviewer: The installments? Ok gotcha.

Interviewee: Yeah those installments man, they are life savers.
Interviewer: Cool. Any other support systems that you know are around but you also haven’t used?

Interviewee: Ummm oh wait. Cap and Dagger is also a resource only because they are very accepting.

Interviewer: The theater group?

Interviewee: I love them so I joined them. I feel pretty good about that decision. But they all…everybody there is just so great and very nice. I don’t know if they are exactly a support system or a dedicated support system of the kind that’s like necessarily transitioning and stuff like that but…

Interviewer: But for you it’s a support system?

Interviewee: It seems like it. It’s a little gleaming light. It’s nice.

Interviewer: Okay. So going back to why you don’t participate in GSA meetings or go to their event, that’s just because of other time commitments? Like what do those include?

Interviewee: It’s actually just trying to get through some homework and stuff like that. But Tuesdays, well pretty much any day of the week is hellish. Um and that’s partially a thing of personal accountability and time management. Like, a lot of clubs don’t actually do because my time management skills are not in the place that I want them to be either. Um, so like, I end up just trying to dedicate my time to actually doing the work. But that’s about it really. That sounds really bad but yeah.

Interviewer: Ok Yeah. Um, and so what is appeal about the resources that you’ve kind of taken advantage of? Like even though you haven’t gone to a meeting, you’re still dedicated to GSA and the LGBTQ groups, Cap and Dagger and Posse and [redacted information]. I mean, what is appealing about that to you?

Interviewee: Well I mean from the resources I’ve actually gone around to getting, like, it just seems a lot more natural as well. GSA is great and everything but like it doesn’t seem natural enough. Like it seems kind of forced like, to have break out groups to focus on improving certain aspects of certain people’s lives. Which I totally get and I want to take part of more but like, given the circumstances like I said, I’m just trying to get all the things together as well. So like, the resources I do have like talking to my friend from Summit and like [redacted information] and like other people like I’ve really come to trust, they work for my schedule as well as they are more personal. Like, it’s nice to just kind of talk to a friend about how I feel today or how things have changed throughout the course of the day and then they are like, “Oh dude that’s cool. Like what are you going to do? This and that.” It’s a little bit more natural.

Interviewer: So when you mean natural, kind of not having your identity be a central part of the conversation?
Interviewee: Yeah essentially. And I guess that relates to kind of how I want it to be moving forward or even after moving forward to expressing it outwardly, or if I ever get around to it. Hopefully. But I want that to not be the focal point. Like a lot of people make your gender or your sexuality the focal point of you which albeit is true. Like, that’s who you are. But I don’t want that to be what everybody sees immediately and then makes a direct opinion about that. Um which may or may not be a good thing. Like, depending on who the person is or how they’ve interacted with me before.

Interviewer: Sure. So you want to be known for like, who you are rather than what your gender identity is.

Interviewee: Yeah exactly.

Interviewer: Okay. Gotcha. Um and how about the um, the support systems you have not used? Um, you mentioned you just don’t have time but what are some other things that prevent you from taking advantage of these resources?

Interviewee: Well like I said, like the natural aspect of it. Like, I’m coming to realize that the people at the CSDC are there for a reason. They want to help. Like even at the learning center, not by my own accord but because [redacted information] told me to… and I really appreciate him doing so. And like the writing center. Like there are people that generally want to help. And like previously I’ve had a predisposition that they only wanted to help to like forward their job or whatever. But like I’m realizing now.

Interviewer: They have their own agendas you mean?

Interviewee: Yeah. But like it’s more than that. Yeah there’re just so many things I’m learning in college. It’s such a different worldview that what I’m coming up with keeps changing I guess. So I’ll eventually get around to that?

Interviewer: So how does that feel for you?

Interviewee: It’s so overwhelming. Like sometimes I wake up and think, “wow did I really think that the other day?” And then I like, I don’t know, you know? Sorry gosh.

Interviewer: No you’re fine. Yeah, could you elaborate more on the CSDC. I know that you haven’t used it correct?

Interviewee: Hmmhmm

Interviewer: Okay. Um what are your expectations? Like what would you want to happen if you did go?

Interviewee: Hmm, you know I have no idea. Like maybe I could say I would expect them to be like, open with like the idea of what I’m talking about. Just be supportive and help guide my thought process I guess, but not make my thought processes you know?
Interviewer: Hmmhmm

Interviewee: Guide my path, not make it. I like that quote a lot. But um, I think I’d just want it to be pretty loose or organic. I don’t know.

Interviewer: Okay. Now when you envision speaking to a counselor would it matter what the gender orientation, identity, sexual identity is of that individual?

Interviewee: Not necessarily because I’ve spoken to people about the topic of people who are bigender, transgender, agender…it doesn’t really matter. But I just kind of assume that most of the time people that aren’t um, multiple genders or different genders from their sex…

Interviewer: Yeah gender queer?

Interviewee: Yeah I kind of assume that they would be opposed to it because of like where I came from and everything like that but I’m starting to realize that that’s not always the case. And like it’s difficult to like, separate previous ideas from the ideas that I’m forming now. But like I said, changing ideas and everything like that and being able to talk to you, and being able to talk to some of my friends back home just kind of breaks those boundaries I guess. I’m like assuming you’re female?

Interviewer: Yes

Interviewee: Ok cool, alright.

Interviewer: And like, what do you think the counseling center could do to make you feel more like, welcome there? Or what would it take for you to take that step and make an appointment?

Interviewee: Hmm. That’s an interesting question honestly. I’ve never really thought about it that much. I mean I know that in the past counselor’s that I’ve had that are like, not talking to me about my gender or anything like that have really made themselves known but then like, just kind of stepped back. Or like, have somebody else tell me to go to them….through them, I guess. But that was because they knew someone knew the issues I was having at the time. So if they like, I don’t know, had like informants of something like that, that ran around trying to figure out stuff. I get it that it’s really hard to do on a campus like this where people are like hiding.

Interviewer: Yeah but if you got like, a serious referral, is that what you mean?

Interviewee: Yeah. That would definitely be a pushing factor but that’s just me. Sometimes it just takes me a bit to go places. Or seeing like the advertisement on the like, community digest or what was it?

Interviewer: The message center?
Interviewee: Yeah. That was the catalyst I guess for like really thinking about being really open about because like being able to see stuff like that...”we want to know what your opinion is,” that is really inviting and interesting. And if there were more posters like that, like everywhere, there would have been more people too. I would have definitely even pushed it further.

Interviewer: Okay. And how about some other resources on campus? So it doesn’t necessarily have to be like, organizations or services that can be directly handed to you but some of the other things that are offered to you on this campus. For example, um, the ability to change your name, gender-neutral housing, gender-neutral bathrooms, like how do you feel about those things?

Interviewee: That sounds amazing. Oh my gosh. Especially um… I was talking to my friends at Summit House…actually no, I’ve spoken to people from different affinity houses like, not necessarily about gender but like, whenever they talk to me about living in an affinity house they say, “there are gender neutral bathrooms, we like, don’t discriminate against anyone.” Like, Wow! That’s freakin’ awesome! Like especially Summit house. My friend was telling me that everybody’s super nicer. And they have like…I don’t know why that’s such a big deal but it really is, like, gender neutral bathrooms. I mean that’s awesome.

Interviewer: Hmmhmm. I mean like, how do you feel about your residence hall since it’s very split?

Interviewee: My residence hall? Ugh. Whenever I’m there I try not to be there because like, I don’t know. It just feels like…after coming to terms with what I want, it gets even harder to live with having to choose. You know? And like if I walk into the girl’s room it’s going to be like, “Oops, nope, just kidding. I can’t be there.” Or if like if I try conversing with my female friends in the way that I want to converse with them or act in a certain way, I’ll just be like, “Ahh, just kidding no.” But if I were at Summit House it would be like, “Oh yeah for sure. Let’s go out and have a girl’s night out.” And I’d be like, “Okay sure.” You know?

Interviewer: Hmmhmm

Interviewee: So I guess it just varies with different places but knowing that that’s available just makes me really happy for next semester or next year as a sophomore.

Interviewer: Gotcha. And so how did you come to know about those types of things that Bucknell has other than my just telling you? You know, like the ability to change your name or gender-neutral bathrooms, housing?

Interviewee: I knew that we could change our names because I opted for my nickname to be my standard name in other school dealings. And I found out that there were gender neutral places and affinity housing especially for like, the LGBTQ+ community just through campus pamphlets and stuff like that, that I just so happened to read, the installments or like talking to that particular friend at Summit house. She like, super engages me right off the bat at school and I was like, “you’re really cool.”

Interviewer: How did you come to meet that person?
Interviewee: She was also another member of Possee

Interviewer: Oh that’s exciting.

Interviewee: Or is….And I think she posted something in the class of 2019 Facebook page. I’m not sure. Yeah it was a while ago but she did a really good job of reaching out. So that was really cool

Interviewer: How about, like you talked a lot about getting to know your resources if they are kind of physically present you know? Like through a pamphlet that you can hold and an installment that you can see and posters. Um how about social media and the internet and even the Bucknell website. Have you ever utilized those at all?

Interviewee: You know personally just because like, I used to use a lot of social media and like digital forms of interacting with other people. But now since I’ve been here I’ve just kind of like ditched that. And if I see a pamphlet, I’m going to read it instead of using my phone. I find it a little bit more like….I want to be more engaged with people here instead of always being on my phone so posters are awesome is essentially what I’m saying.

Interviewer: So since this is your first semester here, just kind of in general, how has your experience been here thus far with your gender identity? I know that we kind of talked about specifics but if we were just meeting me for the first time, just give me the “Spark-note” version of how this semester has gone so far in terms of your identity.

Interviewee: Let’s see. First few weeks…Okay, Buckwild trip to the end of orientation I was very like, trying to be overly masculine. Next for weeks while I was doing rowing, I was trying to fit in with those guys being even more masculine but still like pushing that idea of being a different gender down. It’s what I’ve always been doing until like, recently. But it kept on coming up. Like, you’re independent now. You can do whatever you want. You don’t have to think about what other people want you to be. So like I quit rowing, and not because of my gender or anything, but I just didn’t want to be around them. But like, after I quit rowing I felt a lot more free to think how I wanted to. And since then I’ve been developing and really realizing the things that I want to do with my gender and who I am and what I want to become. Yeah

Interviewer: Okay. And when you say, “who you want to become,” what does that look like?

Interviewee: It’s still developing like I said. It’s just more open with the idea.

Interviewer: Open how so? You were talking a bit about how you would express yourself in your mannerisms and behaviors. Would that also affect the way that you dress?

Interviewee: Yeah essentially. On that note, just saying that out loud is still difficult because like, it’s what I want to do intrinsically but saying it in the real world is like, “Woah.”

Interviewer: It makes it too real?
Interviewee: Yeah. I mean like given the situation, like, given the still developing idea…like I want it to be real but like…. Just 18 years, well not even 18 years…years of consciousness knowing you know? And then finally being able to like, think about it independently is mind blowing. Everything just gets flipped upside down.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: But yeah. I’d eventually want to be like, display it in the way that I dress and all that jazz.

Interviewer: And since you are kind of unsure about the future and next steps and that kind of stuff, what can help you now? Like in the present moment. Like what do you think you need?

Interviewee: I think stepping out of my comfort zone.

Interviewer: So just an internal thing?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: Like just being able to talk to you today was really helpful. Um, gradually gaining more people that I can trust to like, that I’m able to speak about it is another thing. It just helps so much to know there are other people out there that are willing to be okay with myself. Maybe that sounds a bit egotistical but still. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And how about thinking about the person that you were a few months ago I guess, like right before Bucknell, like what would you say to that person?

Interviewee: You are about to embark on a very eclectic journey is how I would start it. And I would probably end it with a very emotional hug or something. Because emotionally, physically, everything is just like different. Um even being separate from home is itself a big factor and like, I don’t know. It’s almost intangible, the feeling of ease in knowing but at the same time the pressure of still sort of repressing some aspect of it.

Interviewer: Hmm

Interviewee: Because of that knowledge I guess it’s a two edged sword. Being aware but then being aware that you can’t do certain things just yet. Well maybe that’s just a personal thing…I hope.

Interviewer: Okay. So you mentioned your transition into college was just as difficult as is, do you think you would ever feel comfortable going to the counseling and student development center to talk about things outside your gender identity?
Interviewee: I’d love to say yes but I’m a very one on one kind of person. So I don’t know yet. I’d have to think about it a little bit more. It’s taken a lot for me to go out of my way to talk to my own mentor about it you know?

Interviewer: Hmmhmm. Even though a counseling session would be one on one, that would still be difficult for you?

Interviewee: Yeah. I guess it’s partially because I haven’t met them yet either.

Interviewer: Okay. Gotcha. Gotcha. Okay, um, how about your professors and classes? Do you think if you were to I guess like, be more upfront about your identity, how do you think that would play out in an academic context?

Interviewee: I have spoken to one of my professors about it who is also the one who is helping me with my digital story where I express the anxiety of being bigender. And there’s not really a change I guess. In fact, there’s actually a sense of reverence that I feel from him. Like, he does just seems a lot more…like, previously we had a very good relationship just ‘cause he has a very similar story in terms of like home life and all that stuff that he shared with me within the first few days of knowing me, and since then we’ve been really good on terms. But now he’s really like, “Hmm yes!” I don’t know. It’s just really good to have that on the table in our dealings and I can just be more open in the way that I speak to him and all my different hand motions and strange things that I do. Yeah

Interviewer: And so what was it about this certain professor that made you compelled to express that?

Interviewee: I mean he sat me down within the first few weeks of school because he’s my foundation professor.

Interviewer: Hmmhmm. So then he’s also your adviser for the current moment?

Interviewee: So essentially I was kind of forced into meeting him on a deep level and from there it just got easier to like, talk to him about other things, not just gender but like anxieties I have because of school or like, social issues or home issues.

Interviewer: Ok Gotcha.

Interviewee: Sorry. Just one sec (coughs)

Interviewer: Do you want some water? Okay. Are there any other things that you would like to share? Any questions you have? Just any other comments?

Interviewee: What compelled you to like, study the trans community?

Interviewer: Um I am a very huge ally. That is something that I am passionate about even though I don’t identify under that umbrella. I am very passionate about counseling and psychology and
how um, different it can be depending on the different demographics that you work with. So taking a very multiculturalism approach to counseling and doing just some reading in the literature like, the LGBTQ+ community in general you know, has a lot more difficulties just because they’re just trying to find their own identities and if they don’t get the help that they need, it’s kind of repressed and negatively affects some of their other areas of life. They can’t reach their full potential and within the Trans community especially, it hasn’t even been acknowledge in literature until like, recently. And even then those research articles express that it is even more difficult than some of their other friends within the LGBTQ+ community just because they may need additional resources such as like, hormone therapy or like those gender-neutral bathrooms and that kind of stuff that sometimes other individuals don’t necessarily have to deal with.

Interviewee: Yeah I was going to say that. That’s for sure.

Interviewer: You’d agree?

Interviewee: There’s a lot of ambiguity to the whole idea of like being a different gender. Like, I didn’t even know there was such a thing as bigender people. I only thought there were transgender before I got here but I was like, able to find out from other people that there are a ton of different gender affiliations and I was like, “This is awesome.” So I went through a list of all these things and I was like, “Ahh, I identify as that.” So that was helpful

Interviewer: Okay so you educated yourself through conversations with friends?

Interviewee: Hmmhmm conversations with friends, Wikipedia…or not Wikipedia but it was like (coughs) sorry. Oh gosh. It was like some website that was very informational. I forget what the name of it was but it was like, “This is this and that is that.”

Interviewer: Okay so kind of like the dictionary version? I think I looked it up too once.

Interviewee: And also the community dinner. You know the trans visible dinner. Because they kind of laid out everything. And I’m telling you everything. And I was just like, “that’s cool!” But yeah it was cool.

Interviewer: Cool.

Interviewee: Well I really appreciate you doing this.

Interviewer: Well I really appreciate you dedicating your own time. Um thanks. Is there anything else that you’d like to say?

Interviewee: Um. I don’t know. I don’t really think so. It’s just really good that you are doing that kind of thing for the community.

Interviewer: Thanks. Yeah.
APPENDIX L:

PARTICIPANT 3 TRANSCRIBED

Interviewer: Okay. So again just thank you so much for meeting with me. Um, just a few questions to just get to know you even though I know you a little bit. Um, just how is your semester going so far?

Interviewee: Yeah it’s been alright. It’s been busy but it’s been alright. Getting through it.

Interviewer: Do you live on campus?

Interviewee: No, I live [redacted information].

Interviewer: Gotcha. Um so you were…what year did you graduate?

Interviewee: [redacted information] and then I took a year like, away. I always spend half the year working.

Interviewer: Okay. And then you came back for grad school. Okay gotcha. And where are you from originally?

Interviewee: Uh, [redacted information]

Interviewer: Okay, Cool. So how do you identify?

Interviewee: Um for gender?

Interviewer: Sure. Or anything else is fine.

Interviewee: Okay um. I kind of go back and forth on it. I internally identify as very genderqueer. Um, and just what I’m comfortable with for myself but I feel like it’s more queer politically for me to identify as a woman because that kind of…like, I have a whole lot of theory behind it. I took a queer studies class my sophomore year and that kind of made me really think about it more just in terms of what my identity expresses to other people. And I think it’s valuable to kind of push the boundaries of what is acceptable for a woman to be. Um but I don’t…woman still feels like a weird category to me that I don’t really connect with at all. So yeah gender queer definitely like, internally.

Interviewer: Ok so internally you feel gender queer but I guess relating to kind of the norm of society, are you saying that you identify as a woman just for the sake of others? I just want to make sure I’m clear.

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean it depends on the space I’m in. Like, if I’m in a queer space…so like, I’ve been really involved in the LGBTQ+ community on campus and I’m very open about my gender identity there, but in other contexts not so much.
Interviewer: Ok. Can you elaborate on what a queer space is for you?

Interviewee: Yeah so I guess like in GSA and in Frans house which is the affinity house, just generally people who identify as queer themselves or who are informed about different gender identities, and that I’m not afraid to be judged if I am out to them. Pretty much any space that asks for pronouns in introductions I feel fairly comfortable in that context. Um, like common ground I did and that was also….it’s not a queer space but it’s a space I feel more comfortable in.

Interviewer: Okay so what pronouns do you prefer?

Interviewee: Um I have…I don’t really have a pronoun that I prefer. So how I’ve been introducing myself recently is just like, use whatever. “She/her/hers” don’t feel right to me. Um, like when I hear people refer to me using those pronouns, it just doesn’t feel comfortable and it just feels like that’s not me. But there isn’t a different pronoun that does feel comfortable. So I say that I don’t have a preference and they can use whatever in hopes that they will use different things but like, I appear feminine so people use “she/her/hers.” And it’s not really anything that I push people to use other pronouns for but it definitely doesn’t feel correct.

Interviewer: Okay. How about kind of just the neutral “zhe/zher?” You don’t feel comfortable with that?

Interviewee: I..I like the idea of having gender neutral pronouns. “Zhe/zher/zhers,” ugh, it just sounds so weird to me.

(Both laugh)

Interviewee: And like I know people that use that and I can use it for other people but that doesn’t sound right. Um, “they/them” I like a little bit better but that’s also still like, foreign for people. “He/him/his” like, honestly sounds more comfortable for me that “she/her/hers” but that’s not something that I would like, want other people to necessarily be used exclusively. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. Gotcha. Can you just kind of articulate your experience at Bucknell in terms of your gender identity?

Interviewee: Um, yeah. So it was something that I was thinking about in high school. Um, kind of like earlier in high school I came out earlier as gay and then was like, I was getting a lot of my information off the internet so I kind of found out about what it meant to be trans. I thought I was trans for a while and then decided that that maybe wasn’t true. Um, I didn’t really think about gender for the first year of college and then my sophomore year I took queer studies and that was like…well just kind of those sorts of topics in general were coming up a lot more so that really made me reflect more on my own identity. And basically it has been a lot of back and forth and like, it’s really hard to think about and I kind of don’t want to think about so it’s like if I’m forced to think about it, I will. But otherwise I kind of try to push it to the back of my mind. And I have not made much progress in the 4 years. I was actually just talking to someone recently where 4 years ago, we had talked about gender identity together and now they are completely out
and transitioning and I’m still in this place of, “I don’t really know what I am or how to identify.” Um, it’s definitely something that I’ve thought about a lot but yeah. And I’ve become more open to other people about it, particularly in the queer spaces. But it’s still something that I don’t really feel I’ve figured out.

Interviewer: Sure. Okay. So you said that you haven’t quite figured it out but yet you have said you know, “I kind of identify with this and I kind of identify with that” and that you have shared that with other people in queer spaces. Like, would you consider that to be a coming out process for you?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think, yeah. Definitely in the initial moment of telling people that I was coming out, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay can you talk a little bit more about what that was like?

Interviewee: Um, at first it wasn’t actually that scary because I was telling people that had expressed similar feelings to me. So it was like, yeah. I already knew that they felt the way that I did. Um, and usually when I actually get into actual conversations with people about it, it’s with people that I know also identify as trans, or not identify as trans but like, don’t feel completely comfortable with cisgender. So that has actually been really good to be able to talk to those other people about it and like, share our experiences, and kind of work on figuring things out together. Um yeah so I forgot what the question was.

Interviewer: Oh so just kind of like, how was the coming out process, I guess?

Interviewee: Yeah so in those terms, good. Um but in context of like…like in Common Ground we spend a day on gender. And coming out at Common Ground in such a large group of people and some people that I know have never really had a conversation about anything other than the gender binary before, like, that’s definitely scary.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: Just to like, put yourself out there in such a way.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, who were the first people that you shared this with?

Interviewee: I think it was a few close friends probably my sophomore year that were also in GSA and we had been having conversations about gender. Yeah so just a couple of close friends that I knew were also thinking about these things.

Interviewer: Okay and any family back home?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: No?
Interviewee: My parents know that I’m gay but um, yeah, they don’t know my gender identity.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: It is interesting though because Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome runs in my family. So I don’t know if you are familiar with that but like, people that have XY chromosomes but they don’t have the receptor for androgens, so they develop externally female. So um, I think, that runs on my mom’s side of the family so I think there is some awareness that gender and sex aren’t necessarily always the same thing. But I don’t know how far beyond the binary of male and female that gets. And that was an interesting conversation after I came out, my mom put me in contact with one of my aunts that has Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome. And she kind of talked to be about her experience which was kind of different than my sexual orientation but it was really helpful to like, have that conversation with her. But I don’t know how comfortable I would feel coming out to them about my gender.

Interviewer: Okay. Gotcha. So how central do you feel is your identity to like, your lived experience?

Interviewee: Um, it’s definitely something I think I am aware of a lot just because of the language that people use. Like using she/her/hers pronouns or like when I’m in a group with other women and someone will collectively refer to us as “ladies” or things like that. It’s something that I become aware of a lot but it’s not…I don’t know. I don’t think it affects the way that I…I guess, I don’t know. It affects the way that I live because I am so aware of it. And I think like, just the way that I present myself in my gender expression is maybe not what I want ideally but it is something that I’m aware of within how other people perceive me if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah Okay. Can you elaborate more on your gender expression?

Interviewee: Yeah so like, I prefer dressing more masculine. But I’m not always in a context where I’m always comfortable doing it. I wanted to cut my hair for a very long time really short. Um and I might be doing that soon. But one of the things that keeps me from doing that is that I know I will feel more masculine if I do that. And that’s almost scary to think about. Like, maybe I actually wanna’ do it and that would be the first step towards that. But I’m so scared to do that, that I don’t want to take that first step.

Interviewer: Hmm

Interviewee: Because I don’t know if that’s what I want. But I feel like if I take the first step I’ll figure that out more. And I don’t really want to figure it out because it’s really scary to have to deal with.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, if I’m getting this right, having long hair but yet dressing masculine kind of like, balances out um the binary, I guess, of having your hair be more feminine and the way you are dressing is more masculine. So that’s what you are comfortable with right?
Interviewee: Yeah and even, I don’t dress as masculine as I’d like to kind of for the same reasons of like, I’m afraid that if I do that, then that’s what I’ll want. And then yeah, it’s just really scary to think about like, if I were to identify as transgender and transition completely, that would be a huge process.

Interviewer: So, what about the full transition is scary for you?

Interviewee: Mostly I think coming out to my family probably at this point. Because a lot of my friends...like, I’ve kind of self-selected friends just by like, being gay and being in a lot of queer spaces so most of them would be fine. I think that the transitioning process would be hard. Like if I could go to a completely new context and meet completely new people and present as male and be read as male, that would be one thing. But the process of transitioning and having to repeatedly tell people that I’ve known for years that this is a thing that’s changing. And also coming out to my family because I don’t know how they’d take that.

Interviewer: Do you have any ideas of how they could take it?

Interviewee: No. Just because the AIS runs in my family, like, my mom has said that my grandma kind of like blames herself for passing that on to her children so there’s like, some tension around gender that I already know of. And I don’t know if that would make them more understanding or if that would be worse because like, if one of those people had some sort of gender identity thing then it would be understandable because they are like, biologically...they have no chromosomes. Like, there’s no explanation for why I feel this way.

Interviewer: Hmm. Yeah that makes sense. So do you think there were some scientific explanations that you would feel more comfortable?

Interviewee: Um, I think I would personally feel more comfortable just to like, have an explanation for myself. When I was in high school I thought that I did actually have something chromosomally going on before I knew that AS ran in my family.

Interviewer: Oh, how did you know that?

Interviewee: Um I...so in 9th grade biology we were doing a unit on genetic disorders and we had an assignment like, “oh figure out what things run in your family.” And I asked my mom and she said, “well there’s this thing that your two aunts have and your two great aunts have. It causes them to not be able to have children.” And then she wouldn’t tell me what it was. So I got really suspicious and we did this unit and we started reading about like, Turner Syndrome and other things with chromosomes and I kind of assumed that that’s what it was. And I realized that could have inherited it based on the genetic pattern. And then I was like, “Well maybe this explains why I’m feeling this way and why I don’t feel very feminine or very comfortable in that role.” So I kind of assumed that for myself for a while and then found out my sophomore year of college that like...like when I learned that it was AIS, my mom told me that they had got me karyotyped as a child and I have XX chromosomes. And that was good to know for sure but it was also like, “well now I don’t have an explanation for why I feel this way.”
Interviewer: Hmmm so how did that make you feel?

Interviewee: It was hard because I was holding on to that. I was like, “Okay I feel this way but this is what it’s because. It’s clearly biological and I know that’s why.” And then that reason kind of went away and it was just more confusion.

Interviewer: Sure. Yeah. You didn’t really have anything…I don’t want to say blame it on but you like…

Interviewee: Yeah just to attribute it to.

Interviewer: Yeah exactly. Okay, gotcha. Um how about…let’s talk about like, your identity here at Bucknell. So you mentioned sophomore year of college is when you realized you have XX chromosomes and you are still trying to figure things out. What has helped you feel comfortable with your identity at Bucknell?

Interviewee: Um, just being in a community of people who like, understand. So like, I was in GSA my entire time at Bucknell and also lived in Fran’s house from the first time it was created…so like, 3 years. Which was great to have a sense of community in general but specifically a community that understood about gender and sexuality and have conversations about it regularly. Like we’d just be hanging out in the common room and that’s like the thing we would talk about because it was so relevant to our lives. And then yeah. Just being able to have that space to have conversations with people who understand who are either going through the same thing or are knowledgeable enough about the issues that they can have a conversation.

Interviewer: Are there any people who you feel are informed that you feel you are able to have a conversation with outside of GSA and Frans house?

Interviewee: Um like there are some. Like there are professors that know what’s happening. I think…my perception is that most of the students who are informed are the ones that have been in GSA or who have done Common Ground.

Interviewer: And how did you come to join GSA? You said you were doing it the whole time. Like what was appealing to you about it and why did you join?

Interviewee: Well I’ve been out as gay since I was 14. Yeah so that was the reason.

Interviewer: Okay. Gotcha. So what I guess is…what’s the word? Yeah, what motivated you to join? How were you aware that there was this group? Like, what was the incentive?…That’s the word. Incentive, yeah.

Interviewee: Being gay has been the biggest part of my identity and it was definitely something that I wanted to be around other people. Like, I tried to join the GSA in my high school and I was like too scared to go to meetings and then I ended up being cut. Like, they ended up cutting a lot of clubs from high school so I didn’t really get that experience at all. And there weren’t that many out gay students in my high school so I didn’t really have anyone to connect with about
something that was so important to me and so significant. So I was definitely looking for that. Before I came to Bucknell, I applied early decision to Bucknell and knew I was coming here and I was looking online about the stuff about GSA which had a different name at the time. But I was looking for as much information online as I could find, which is really outdated which was really disappointing and still is because nobody updates their websites. But um, I really wanted very desperately to have that community.

Interviewer: So that was a deciding factor for you in coming to Bucknell?

Interviewee: No that was a decision I made before that. That was about my major. But it was definitely something that I was looking for. It wasn’t a deciding factor but it was something that I was very aware of.

Interviewer: That you were considering?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay, gotcha. And um how about some of the support systems that you have used. Like how did you get information? You said… you mentioned going online and doing an online search. Was that through Bucknell’s website, through Google, through….how did you come to find out about Common Ground and GSA?

Interviewee: Yeah so GSA I came to know about from searching Bucknell’s website.

Interviewer: What did you kind of type in the search box there?

Interviewee: I think I was clicking through.

Interviewer: Clicking through?

Interviewee: Yeah and I knew like, there’s the table at admitted student’s day which I don’t think I went to because I was probably way too scared to go up to. Um, and then I think during the wandering orientation where they have the activities fair again, I ran up, wrote my name down on the list and ran away.

Interviewer: Oh okay

Interviewee: And that’s kind of what got me into Common Ground. Well I participated for the first time as a sophomore but my freshman year I heard about it from a lot of people in GSA that had participated and they were like, “Oh, this is such a great experience. You should really do it.” And then Fran’s house didn’t start until my sophomore year and the person who founded it was in GSA. I think she was the president at the time. So she was looking for people to live in that house and I was there and was like, “Yeah that would be a fun thing.”
Interviewer: Ok cool. And um, oh I totally had a great question. Oh well. So how about your living situation before you moved to Fran’s house? Like, living on a hall with other students who I’m assuming…were bathrooms an issue?

Interviewee: At that point, no

Interviewer: …the spaces that you were sharing with others?

Interviewee: Yeah it wasn’t something was thinking about as much. At that point, my freshman year, my main concern was my sexual orientation. I came out to my roommate the first two days, I think during orientation. It was like, terrifying but she ended up being really accepting and being a huge ally and coming to GSA all year. She later ended up being the house leader for Fran’s house senior year and still one of my closest friends.

Interviewer: Okay Great

Interviewee: And she kind of encouraged me to come out to other people on my hall which didn’t happen until later on in the year. So yeah, I ended up being very comfortable with my roommate. And on my hall gender wasn’t really something I was thinking about at that point.

Interviewer: Okay so it was just your sexual orientation at that point. So how has your experience differed as a grad student compared to your undergrad years? Or has it?

Interviewee: Um, it hasn’t differed that much. I think what’s actually interesting, especially in terms of my gender identity, is being out in those spaces in GSA I’ve had more conversations with some of the younger people who are just thinking about their own gender identity and gender expression, and just coming to me as a resource as someone like “I really want to talk about something. Can we sit down and have a conversation about it?” Which has been really awesome to be out there in that way and have people asking for help. But then it’s like also frustrating because it’s like, again, I still have no idea. And like, I’ve been having these conversations for so long and still am very confused about my own identity.

Interviewer: Do you feel like they look up to you to have some answers?

Interviewee: Not answers in terms of myself. Definitely they want some sort of guidance I guess through the process, which I feel I am able to provide. I’m fine because I am generally aware of the issues and everything, and I’ve had a lot of conversation with people about it. Uh, so it’s not really a problem in that aspect at all.

Interviewer: Okay sure. Um what do you wish was available at Bucknell to like, better support you or make you feel comfortable in your identity here?

Interviewee: Um, I think just like more awareness in general, which I don’t really know how to do.
Interviewer: Awareness more in terms of like, education on labels or what does that mean when you say awareness?

Interviewee: Awareness that gender is not a binary. Um and like that pronouns are important. And this isn’t necessarily me personally but also from having conversations with other people who identify as trans on campus. Like, pronouns is a huge thing. I know a lot of people are repeatedly misgendered by professors even after they’ve come out to them. So I think like getting some education sort of on that level and then just like making it a norm to ask for pronouns in introductions. Especially in group introductions because it is important.

Interviewer: Hmmhhmm. And how about presence of gender-neutral bathrooms? Is that important to you?

Interviewee: I’ll use a gender-neutral bathroom if there is one immediately accessible but if not, I usually just go to the women’s one. It’s definitely something that I’ve been thinking about even more. There definitely are not gender-neutral bathrooms available everywhere that there should be.

Interviewer: So like housing situations and like any other resources that you think campus may need?

Interviewee: Yeah so housing improved quite a bit since my first year.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: So starting with Fran’s House. My sophomore year was the first year that Fran’s house existed. We could have gender-neutral living so I actually could live with a male roommate that year and I think that is the first time that that has really happened. So Fran’s house was entirely gender neutral. The rooms are mostly singles but the doubles are gender-neutral. Me and my roommate were actually the only ones there actually mixed gender. And our bathrooms were gender-neutral. And then there was a push to make the gateways and the mods not as separated. So like, gateways now you can have males and females in the same gateway. And in the mods you have to be split by sides. But I know for first years that’s still an issue because I think if they don’t want to be in the room they were assigned based on their sex, they have to be in one of the single accessibility rooms.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?

Interviewee: Not great.

Interviewer: Not great?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think they should be able to room based on the gender they identify as. And I think I’ve heard of some first year halls deciding to make their bathrooms gender neutral which I think would also be a good thing. Just in general like, we talk a lot on this campus about how
men and women don’t interact with each other because like, they live in such separated situations and that would improve a lot of that I feel like.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you decided to come back to grad school after being here also for undergrad. Do you think that was because of the safety security net you had with the community that you’ve already established here who have supported you?

Interviewee: Um, community definitely was a reason I came back but it was mostly the Outdoor Community I’ve had because I’ve worked in that program for 2 years and I knew that I wanted to do education and outdoor education and I prefer to work…I feel much more satisfied in the work that I’m doing if it’s for a community I care for. And it takes a while for me to build that. So especially for grad school where it’s like, two years… like, I was still very invested in that program and I cared about those people and I wanted to come back and do more with them. But having that benefit of the LGBTQ community, which I’m still connected to, has also been very helpful for me being comfortable being back on campus.

Interviewer: Okay. Gotcha. Now when we were talking about resources and support systems you didn’t mention the counseling center. And um, I’m just curious as to why?

Interviewee: So I…I had an appointment with the counseling center at the end of my first year after being asked to by the girl I was dating at the time.

Interviewer: So the girl you were dating at the time asked you to make an appointment at the counseling center?

Interviewee: Yes. Yeah and that was literally during finals. Like, 2 days before I left campus the end of my freshman year.

Interviewer: Oh Okay. So why did you decide do that? You were just listening to her or did you feel you also needed to go?

Interviewee: Yeah I had not been doing well that whole spring semester in terms of mental health. And she kind of pushed me to do it and I put it off ‘til the last minute. And I was like, “sure I’ll go.” And like, that was fine. And then that summer between my freshman year and my sophomore year I had some more mental health issues and I started seeing a counselor at home. That was also when I came out to my parents so like, that was a big thing that we were talking about at that time. And then, came sophomore year and had appointment at psych services at the time and that continued for the entire year I think. It was not very helpful and I think that was a lot of me not wanting to put in the effort. So like, my counseling appointments were usually really awkward. I did not talk much at all. And eventually we decided that I would just come and check in every week and if I didn’t have anything to talk about then I could leave. So then after that for 10 minutes, I’d be fine and then leave. There were one or two instances over that year where I really did have something I wanted to talk about and it was helpful then. But for the most part, I was very frustrated with my experience.

Interviewer: You were frustrated?
Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on that? What was frustrating?

Interviewee: It was…I think it was my expectations. My expectations were not like, very accurate of what actual counseling should be. So like I went there and felt very uncomfortable the whole time. And I wouldn’t talk and the counselor wouldn’t talk and we would sit there and stare at each other and not talk for an hour and it was really awkward and uncomfortable and frustrating because I felt like they should be doing something else. But I didn’t know what that would be. But that was mostly on my part.

Interviewer: So you were expecting them to kind of lead the session?

Interviewee: Yeah I think so. And it was also weird because like I had…like the woman that I had seen at home over the summer like, I was definitely comfortable with. And like we talked pretty comfortably and then just the transition of coming back to Bucknell and coming to someone else, I was just so frustrated. I was like, “why isn’t this the same as what I had at home with this other person? And why can’t it be like that?”

Interviewer: And what was great about the counselor that you saw back home that really helped you?

Interviewee: I don’t know. I think I was more comfortable with her as a person. Like, she seemed more relatable. Not even relatable but nicer. I don’t know. Like the counselor that I was seeing at Bucknell, I was like, “you don’t seem like a person that would understand anything that I’m talking about because you seem like such a different person.” Like I did not feel any sort of connection with them at all.

Interviewer: How could you tell that? Was that based on age, the way that they identified? Did that matter?

Interviewee: Yeah just based on appearance and clothing and just kind of the way they carry themselves. I kind of made a lot of assumptions which were probably inaccurate because they were assumptions based on appearance. And just the way that they talked, I felt like would not be relatable. So I was definitely more hesitant to share and then also them waiting for me to say something.

Interviewer: Okay. When you say the way that they talked, was it the words that they were saying, the inflection, were they understanding of your situation?

Interviewee: Yeah, the inflection. Like the paraverbals.

Interviewer: Paraverbals ok. So it wasn’t necessarily the content of what they were saying?
Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah. And then it was like, I am pretty comfortable when people ask me questions…answering questions and being open about that but I’m not the one to openly share about myself and I think that is what they expected me to do. And at that point I was not confident enough to say that this isn’t working and this isn’t what I need you to do.

Interviewer: So you kept going back though…even for 10 minutes you kept going back.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Interviewee: I felt like I wasn’t doing well and that it was a thing that I should be doing. Or I think that it was a thing that I should be doing…it may have been required. I forget. It was probably mandated at least for part of that.

Interviewer: What do you mean by mandated?

Interviewee: Ah, because of what had happened the summer beforehand, I think it was like, “you need to go see a counselor.” And I also had to see a nutritionist that year too. So I think it was expected.

Interviewer: Ok and how um, did you get your information about the counseling center even being there, and how to schedule an appointment, and all that kind of stuff? Was that through the website as well?

Interviewee: Yeah like, I knew that it was there because it’s a thing that’s talked about tours and everything. At the time I don’t think I knew if any of my friends were going there. And they may have been but no one ever talked about it. Now with my friends we frequently talk about how their appointments are going and things like that. And later on our junior and senior year we would talk about that. At that point, I don’t know if they were going or if it just wasn’t something we were talking about. And I guess my girlfriend was asking about…yeah she had probably asked about it and like what sorts of options there are like, “you need to schedule an appointment.” And then I probably looked on the website. Yeah, I was definitely on the website and called from there.

Interviewer: Okay so you only used the counseling center at the end of your first year and then during your sophomore year correct?

Interviewee: Yeah I’m trying…I definitely used it that one time at the very end of freshman year. And I think through my entire sophomore year and I can’t remember if I had another check at the beginning of my junior year. I don’t think so. I think it was just all through my sophomore year.

Interviewer: Okay and so you haven’t gone back since?

Interviewee: Um I did go, completely different context, senior year. Me and one of my other friends that I was close with, we had a lot of friends who were like, really not doing well and we
wanted to set up an appointment with someone and just be like, “how can we be a better resource for them and how can we help them?”

Interviewer: And when you mean not doing well…

Interviewee: Yeah I mean poor mental health. Having some issues that were like, there were a couple instances with people where there were crises that weren’t like, ”we need to call someone immediately but definitely you were having a mental breakdown at this moment.

Interviewer: Okay things that needed to be addressed.

Interviewee: Yeah so. And it was like at least three people within a week that we were both present for so we were like, “this is going to be a thing.” Also these were people that we were close to and will be talking to in the future so we were just trying to set up an appointment and just talk to one person there for a while, which I also felt wasn’t super helpful in the way that it can’t really….that’s a context where there’s really not an answer that you can give someone other than just be there and refer them to these other resources. I mean, it was nice to be able to go to do that.

Interviewer: Okay so what do you think the counseling center could do to be more helpful for you? You kind of acknowledged kind of walking away and not having the most positive feelings towards the center.

Interviewee: Yeah, um. Honestly for me in terms of one of the things I was really looking for my sophomore year was someone who could really understand what I was going through with my sexual orientation and I wanted to talk to someone who had also gone through that. And like, I didn’t know how they identified and they didn’t bring it up at all so I just assumed that they were straight and definitely perceived them as that so I didn’t feel like I could have that connection.

Interviewer: So it would be more helpful for you if the person that you were speaking to also identified as the same thing as you identify in as gay?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think that is the biggest thing that I wanted at the time.

Interviewer: Okay. Would it matter if they identified as anything else within the LGBTQ+ umbrella?

Interviewee: Yeah. That would also be…

Interviewer: Yeah so that whole..yeah. Why is that? Do you think it’s because they’re more knowledgeable, you believe, about like, language. Like you were discussing with the GSA group…

Interviewee: Yeah. I think just because there’s a different level of understanding. And that’s what I wanted. Just an understanding to know what it feels like to go through that.
Interviewer: Do you think it’s possible for someone to have that understanding without identifying as such?

Interviewee: I think there are definitely people who can do pretty well with it but it’s still never going to be the same. But I definitely straight, cisgendered is not as effective as a counselor. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. What other things do you think the center could do to be helpful to you?

Interviewee: Um For me specifically or in general? Because I’ve been hearing a lot of feedback from other people.

Interviewer: Sure, whatever your perceptions are.

Interviewee: So right now what I’m hearing a lot of is that the center is really understaffed and just not always available for students that feel like they need it in terms of time, I guess. And I think what would have been helpful for me, the person that I was seeing suggest I see someone else because we clearly did not have a very good relationship with the fact that I wasn’t talking. And don’t remember if they ever did. They may have and said that I didn’t want that. I think it might have been helpful to meet with a few different people. Instead I was just assigned to this one person and didn’t talk to anyone else. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Um, and um, when you were going into speak to the counselor, was that specifically a mental health concern or was that related at all to any of your identities?

Interviewee: Um, it was…so it was mostly mental health. So the girl I was dating at the time, which lasted through my sophomore year, had a lot of her own mental health issues going on. So a lot of what I was struggling with was how to be there for her. And just kind of like, yeah, that aspect of it. So there’s definitely an identity part tied into that because we were in a relationship and like, I started dating someone else after that. Like that was always part of it but that wasn’t the focus.

Interviewer: Okay. So how comfortable did you feel expressing your identity to your counselor?

Interviewee: At first, definitely uncomfortable. But it was the same person that I saw at the end of my freshman year that I saw through my sophomore year. So just that first session at the end of my freshman year, and like it’s always scary to like, bring up for the first time for me at least.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Um, moving on in the future, when do you feel you would ever need to use the counseling center?

Interviewee: Uh, I think like if my mental health is so poor that I can’t manage on my own. Because there have definitely been times were it hasn’t been great but it’s like okay enough that I can still function.

Interviewer: Okay
Interviewee: I don’t know if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah that definitely makes sense. Pretty much like, when anything that’s bothering you to the point that it’s affecting your regular functioning?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay. Um, I mean do you have anything else to share about your identity, discovery, transition, expression? What shopping is like even? It could just be anything that you’ve experienced on a regular basis.

Interviewee: Yeah shopping, that’s fun (sarcastic). I’m being more and more drawn to the men’s section in stores, especially at Walmart which is funny because I get nervous to do it at Walmart, because there are people I know that will be there, because all of Bucknell goes there. So I like get really uncomfortable when I’m in the men’s section and there are a lot of people around.

Interviewer: So you’re saying that there is very little relief even when leaving Bucknell’s campus, I guess, because there is still potential risk of just coming out accidently?

Interviewee: Not even coming out. Just that like, people are going to judge me I guess. It’s interesting because in the spring…last spring I had an internship in Wyoming like completely separate…very little context of Bucknell and I didn’t actually think about gender that much. And it was a completely new group of people and it wasn’t on my mind as much. Then coming back to Bucknell this semester I’ve been thinking about it constantly. So I think there’s a lot of benefit for me to have that queer space and that community but it also makes me think about it a lot more because we do talk about it so much. And that is kind of stressful sometimes but I think good ultimately.

Interviewer: Hmmhmm. I’m curious because you said you’re kind of afraid to completely embody a single label let’s say. You know, masculine doesn’t feel 100% right and neither does feminine. And so when you were in that new space and you got that opportunity to kind of recreate yourself and be whoever you wanted, how did you identify in that space?

Interviewee: Um, I think it’s interesting because I was out as gay in that space and a lot of the expectations… I feel like societal expectations for a lesbian is to like, be more masculine and to dress more masculine and to present more masculine. So like, I can do that and just be perceived as more of a stereotypical lesbian.

Interviewer: Okay. So your sexual orientation is kind of helping you in terms of your gender identity?

Interviewee: Yeah I guess it makes it more accepted. But then it’s also interesting because like, one of the things… like, sexual orientation and gender are separate but for me they are very intertwined because like, if I were to identify as (exhales)...I feel like I can identify as gender queer and still identify as a lesbian. Which is something that I struggled with for a while and for
me I’m just like, “well I’ll base my sexual orientation based on sex so I am a female who is attracted to other females” so I can do whatever I want with my gender identity in the process so I can still be a lesbian and still be gender queer. But if I were to identify as male, I couldn’t be a lesbian anymore and I really like being lesbian. Like, I like the community and the culture around it and that’s something I’m really comfortable in. So that’s kind of another thing keeping me back from exploring gender a little more. I don’t know if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah. So from what I’m understanding, you really know and are really comfortable in your sexual orientation that if your gender identity were to change you would be like, no longer being a female who you can say is…or feminine to say that you are a lesbian. Or if you are more masculine that would make you straight?

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah, I don’t want to be straight.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: I was thinking about this the other day, in terms of the people that I would be dating or have the option of dating, I don’t know. Being gay is such a big part of my identity and that’s a bit thing that I have connecting with people so like it’s a lot more…I just feel like I have a lot more of a connection with someone who is a lesbian or bisexual or a queer woman than I would have if I identified as male and was dating a straight woman. It wouldn’t feel the same and I don’t know how comfortable I would feel with that.

Interviewer: Yeah. Sure. Sure. Okay. Um, I’m sorry I cut you off about the whole shopping thing. So pretty much you were saying that you don’t feel comfortable in the men’s section 100% of the time because you are afraid of being judged.

Interviewee: Yeah like, I would much rather buy clothes online where I didn’t have that public view aspect of it.

Interviewer: And how about like, for example, clothes that you can’t always show externally like bra and underwear. Is that more feminine or unisex or masculine or does that matter to you?

Interviewee: Typically more masculine but sometimes there are days where I want to dress feminine. So yeah. Usually I will feel more masculine one day and more feminine one day and dress accordingly if I feel particularly strongly in either direction. If I don’t feel strongly in either direction I just will go with generally masculine. There was something else I was going to say. I don’t know.

Interviewer: Sure. Is there anything else you would like to touch upon in terms of your gender identity, expression, how it plays out in relationships with other whether that be friendships, family, the environment at Bucknell, classes….

Interviewee: Nothing specifically
Interviewer: I’m trying to think of other things. How about your name? Have you ever considered changing your name?

Interviewee: Yeah, it’s something I thought about. It’s interesting because some people will call me (Male name close to given Female Name) by mistake. One of the caf workers here legitimately thinks that’s my name because she misread my ID once and I just never corrected her. So like, she’ll call me that every time and it makes me happy when she does.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: And so like, that’s probably a good sign I feel this good when she says that. I’ve thought about changing it. I’ve thought about options. I’ve wanted for a long time to ask my mom like, what my name would have been if I were born a boy but I’m afraid to ask her that for some reason.

Interviewer: And the process of actually going forth to change your name, how do you feel that process is? Do you think it’s easy, difficult, as long as you put effort in it can be done? I mean, how do you see that process playing out?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think it’s gotten a lot easier on Bucknell’s campus I think in terms of like, changing your name in the system and the email and your ID card. It’s gotten easier since my time here.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: There’s just be more awareness of it. I know Bill, the director of the LGBTQ office has…that’s been part of the thing he’s been working on…to kind of make it easier especially for trans students to change their name and gender through the university. Legally, as a whole, I think that process is still really hard to get it changed on your driver’s license and your birth certificate. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Anything else?

Interviewee: I mean yeah, if you have any other questions…

Interviewer: Yeah pretty much you answered everything but I will type up a transcript of our conversation and I’ll send it to you. That way you can add or exclude or just say anything, and add any other comments

Interviewee: Sure

Interviewer: Okay. Thanks.
APPENDIX M:

PARTICIPANT 4 TRANSCRIBED

Interviewer: Alright. So how’s your semester going so far?

Interviewee: Um, it’s going okay. It’s just a lot… a lot of stuff going on.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Interviewee: Yeah I’m a [redacted information] major

Interviewer: Okay that was my next question because I don’t know much about you.

Interviewee: Yeah so it’s a lot of work and I have two jobs which is interesting.

Interviewer: Wow

Interviewee: Yeah and I was up ‘til 2 last night doing homework and I still have more stuff to do.

Interviewer: Good luck with that.

Interviewee: Yeah thank you.

Interviewer: Yeah. Where are you from originally?

Interviewee: Um, originally I’m from around here in [redacted information]. But when I was in 8\textsuperscript{th} grade I moved to [redacted information] so like, I kind of grew up in both places.

Interviewer: Ok Cool. So um how do you identify?

Interviewee: I identify as agender and that’s like an identity that kind of took on over the summer after a lot of worrying about it and wondering.

Interviewer: This past summer? Between your first year and second year?

Interviewee: Yeah this past summer. Um, but in high school my friend, like one of my gay friends came out as trans and he… I think that was good but then I was sort of watching that whole process and wondering about my own gender and still wondering through college. And so there are still a lot of questions for me but that’s currently how I identify.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay So you said that a lot of coming to terms your own gender identity is from watching your friend go through that sort of discovery. Was that in high school? Like, can you take me through your journey?

Interviewee: Um, yeah so I think probably senior year? Yeah, senior year he sort of expressed to… we have a little group of friends that are very tight knit. Like, we are the main people that
each other talk to. And he sort of expressed to us like, “Hey guys, I think I might not be a girl.” And we were like, “Okay cool” because I think that friend group was kind of interesting actually because I think at the beginning of high school we were all like, cisgender, heterosexual. And by the end of high school we were all queer.

Interviewer: Oh really? Okay

Interviewee: Yeah because we all just sort of came out at different points throughout high school but he was like, “guys, I think I might be a guy.” And we were like, “Okay cool. Great. Awesome Okay. Just let us know if there’s anything you need.” And at that time I was becoming more aware of the possibility of being transgender and I was sort of asking myself, “could that be me?” And I think there’s like some interesting sort of …there’s something…’cause I think prior to sophomore year of high school I identified as lesbian and there’s something sort of interesting about that. Like even if you are feminine and I think I pretty much was and still am to some point…like, being lesbian makes you feel very masculine just because that’s something that society sees as a masculine thing—to be attracted to women. And so like, I just like…questioning that. And that was sort of something I heard. And a lot of binary trans people grow up sort of thinking you know like, “Oh, I’m just gay. But then they realize that they’re straight but just are a different gender.” And so that sort of like, got me thinking about it but then I think I just never stopped thinking about it. I realized I was just so much more comfortable…and that was in high school when I started thinking about this. And then over my freshman year here I just sort of started realizing that I was more comfortable looking at myself and having others look at me without any sort of…outside of the confines of gender. And that’s where I felt most comfortable. And internally I sort have like, gotten to this point where, “yeah, gender is stupid. I don’t like gender. I don’t want that.” But it’s something that I’m a little bit afraid of expressing to people which is weird. That doesn’t really answer the question I’m sorry.

Interviewer: Oh no. Yeah you were just taking me through your journey and like, your discover of that. And from what I was hearing, you know you identify as lesbian and that kind of like, helped you discover part of your gender identity. Even though they are separate, it kind of overlapped. Is that correct?

Interviewee: Uh yeah to an extent.

Interviewer: Gotcha. And then do you prefer any specific pronouns

Interviewee: Uh yeah. They/them.

Interviewer: They/Them?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay. And at what point…I guess can you explain your coming out process or have you yet in terms of your gender identity?
Interviewee: Yeah um, it’s sort of weird. So I live in [redacted information] and most of my friends are queer or very accepting. Like, the one good straight friend that I have is like, the leader of the allies break out group in GSA so she’s super accepting. Like, I don’t have any close friends that aren’t super accepting of any LGBTQ identity. And in the house we have these little sharks that have different identities on them and at the beginning of the year we picked out the ones we wanted to put on our door. And I picked out the agender one and stuck it up and a couple other people put up non binary gender sharks on their doors.

Interviewer: Sharks, like the fish?

Interviewee: Yeah. They are literally like cartoon sharks. Like, our hall is ocean themed. Yeah it’s very cute. So like there were some other people that I didn’t know identify as nonbinary put those sharks up on their doors. So that was like a little subtle coming out process to each other and it’s a very accepting, open, environment. So we are all fine sharing that with each other but at the same time it’s not really something I’m comfortable talking about with my friends. And that’s really weird because I feel like I should be able to talk to them very easily but I also feel like…like I don’t know. I feel like they’re almost too supportive if that makes any sense. Like I think it’s sort of difficult because I sort of want someone who’s going to be critical of what I’m saying to them and maybe to be like, argue with me a little bit rather than, “what you’re telling me I’m just going to take it.” It’s a really great and supportive thing but at the same time if you are someone who has not really figured anything out yet, it sort of…like, “why aren’t you saying anything and just nodding your head?” Yeah and I don’t know. I feel like I want to figure myself out more before I really start talking to someone about it. That’s just how I am I guess. There are just so many questions I have to ask myself before I start talking to other people about it. So I am casually out but I’m not out in a more, bigger way.

Interviewer: Yeah sure. So when you say “casually out” that’s through the passive shark thing within your queer community.

Interviewee: Yeah. It’s very passive and like in terms of pronouns….like, in every GSA meeting we go around and say our names and pronouns and I usually introduce myself with like, “they/them is cool but honestly use whatever.” I think passive is a good word because it doesn’t really bother me when people use, “she/hers” just because that’s what people have been like calling me my whole life. And honestly to me they are just words. But like, it’s something that’s shifted. Like, you hear for trans people their pronouns are their pronouns and if you use the wrong pronouns it’s very hurtful. For me it’s sort of shifted to like, “if you use she/hers like, that’s fine. It’s whatever and that’s what everyone does because I’m very female presenting. But if you use they/them it’s like ‘YAY!’ I’ll be inside.” I went to a conference over the weekend and Bill McCoy, the director of the LGBTQ services, he knows that on my nametag I prefer they/them and he used that consistently through the entire day. And I was like, “Yes! Everytime! Bill, you’re great.” So I don’t know. It’s nice because I am so female presenting, it kind of gets forgotten about. That’s the other thing. I’m only passively out because I don’t look very androgynous. Like, people look at me and they’re like, “that’s a woman.” So I think it just gets forgotten about because other people aren’t thinking about it. Whereas if I looked more androgynous people would be like, reminded. You know? And now I’m not at the point where I feel like reminding people.
Interviewer: Hmmhmm. And so you mentioned you had some of your own questions you had to figure out before you could talk about it with other people. Well thank you for talking about it with me. Um but also what are those questions that you would like to figure out for yourself?

Interviewee: So a large part of it is how I want to present. And how I want to appear to other people because right now I am very much female presenting but I would like to at some point move to presenting into more an androgynous way. I really want to get my hair cut. I already have the hair cut I want picked out and I’ve never cut my hair before so I’m really afraid. And also sometimes I am …I identify as agender but if you are familiar with the definition of gender fluid, sometimes I feel like that matches more of what I actually am. I feel like gender fluid sort of matches how my gender is in reality but agender sort of matches up with the way that I think about it and my concept of it.

Interviewer: So forgetting about labels for a second, how would you express…or explain to me how you are defining your own gender identity.

Interviewee: So for the most part I don’t think about myself in terms of gender. I just don’t…it’s not something I feel fits into the view of myself and where I see myself fitting into the world. And I sort of want to look…like present myself in a way that sort of communicates that to other people. At the same time there are days I feel very comfortable expressing femininity, and on other days, where I feel more comfortable looking very masculine. Like some days I’m like thinking I want to transition medically but then on other days I’m like, “no I don’t want to do that. This is great.” So it’s really weird.

Interviewer: Transition to male?

Interviewee: Not male…trans masculine. So not male, but masculine.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: So probably not top surgery or anything but testosterone is an idea that has been very appealing to me in the past. But on other days it’s like, “ahh that’s fine.” It’s whatever. So that’s something that sort of stresses me out because I’ll probably have to navigate that in the future- just figuring that out. And that’s another reason why agender is a good place for me to be sitting right now because I just sort of have time. I feel like I’m removing myself from all of it and just sitting there to look at everything and look at my options, and looking about how I feel about it. Like, this is nice and I’m not going to worry about it right now. Later. I’ll figure it out.

Interviewer: And when is that later? When to you think that could happen for you because later could be like five years down the road, five months…what does that mean?

Interviewee: When I think about it I think of when I’m on my own. Self-sufficient and like would potentially have the money to support myself in whatever decision I end up making. Because my parents are great and they are supportive but I don’t feel comfortable asking them. Like, I don’t feel comfortable talking to them about this sort of thing. And that’s partially
because I don’t really know. There are still a lot of questions. I also just…my family is very much the sort of family where we don’t talk about a lot. We don’t talk about anything too intense or too personal. It’s fine. I like it that way but it’s hard sort of difficult when you’re too dependent for resources.

Interviewer: Yeah. And so since you come from a background where talking about personal issues isn’t really done frequently, how was that to tell your parents about your gender identity?

Interviewee: I haven’t really talked to them about that. They know I’m queer. I’ve told them in the past that I’m gay. And I still identify as gay because I’m on the more feminine side and I’m attracted to more feminine people. That’s sort of how I justify that I guess. It’s honestly because I’m lazy and gay is easier to say. Because that’s the thing, there really isn’t a word for identifying as nonbinary and being attracted to women. Like, that’s not really a thing. So also my body is female and I am attracted to female bodied people. It’s like that sort of thing and they know that. And I think my mom has sort of an understanding. Like, we’ve had conversations in the past through very roundabout conversations. Like, “Ugh, gender is stupid. It’s all made up. It doesn’t mean anything.” And she’s like, “yeah okay.” And so like she knows and both my parents know I’m very involved in LGBTQ issues on campus and they see me so they know I’m not the most feminine person ever. But honestly, I wouldn’t expect them to understand it just because they are straight people that have grown up in the 70s or whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah…in central Pennsylvania.

Interviewee: Well, my dad grew up in Philadelphia and my mom grew up in Erie. Um, but still. Yeah maybe that’s a conversation I will have with them, we’ll see.

Interviewer: And then since you’re a sophomore can you describe your experience at Bucknell thus far?

Interviewee: Um yeah. GSA is really great. They’re awesome. Like I know that if I wanted to fully come out, they would be fully supportive. But I think part of my reason for keeping it low key is because of the campus in general. I feel like that’s something. Because I have friends who are openly nonbinary or trans and I see them having a lot of difficulties and that’s not something I wanna…like, my discomfort in not being out is less I guess than the perceived discomfort of what could actually happen if I were actually out about it just in terms of other students and getting a lot of weird questions and having people look at you funny.

Interviewer: Yeah. I does seem like it would take more energy.

Interviewee: Yeah. It’s all about the energy.

Interviewer: So how did you become involved with GSA?

Interviewee: Um that’s like the first thing I got involved in because I came into college identifying as…actually I came into college identifying as bisexual but then after two months I was like, no.
Interviewer: And where did you live your freshman year?

Interviewee: [redacted information]

Interviewer: Okay. And how did your hall mates react?

Interviewee: Um well actually my RA was gay so that was really nice. Like, I got there and I was really nervous. Oh and my roommate, who is now my best friend, she…we got our roommate assignments over the summer and I saw that she was from [redacted information] and I was like, “Oh No!” because I know they have, a lot of like, laws on homosexuality. Thinking this is not going to be good but then I started talking to her and she was like, “oh it’s cool. I have so many gay friends.” So I was like, “Yes!” I got lucky

Interviewer: That’s great

Interviewee: Yeah so we’re cool and my RA is gay so obviously he was cool with it. And then everyone on the hall were all…there were all cool but I didn’t really identify in any sort of way in terms of gender at that point. So that wasn’t really an issue. But everyone was super cool which was really nice.

Interviewer: So you said you came in identifying as bisexual and then 2 months later identifying as a lesbian. Is that right?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay so everyone was okay with it?

Interviewee: HHmmmm. I don’t think anyone really ever know how exactly I identified. They just kind of knew I was queer. So that sort of changed amongst my closer friends. And they were good about it. But the people on my hall that I never really talked to like…they could care less about what I was doing. You know?

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: So…which is ideal for me. I just want people to be like, “cool” and move on. It’s not something that I want to be aware of all the time.

Interviewer: Yeah. That actually brings up a really interesting point. If were to fully express and think and identify and have everybody else know your gender identity, what would that even look like?

Interviewee: Ideally it would be sort of like an awareness of it and not erasing it in just everyday conversation. Because that happens a lot right now, where people refer to me as a woman. And in certain contexts that is accurate. So like, we’re talking about feminism or something and like…I know my experiences are that of a woman because I appear to be a woman and the way
that other people act towards me is the way that other people act towards woman. And that’s something that is like, very important to acknowledge. And like, because of that I’m active in the society of women engineers. And that’s something interesting too. Like, I feel like it’s very empowering to be a woman in engineering because they’re not a lot of them so that’s one of the reason I sort of cling to that identity. But at the same time that’s something that’s a little bit superficial that I don’t actually like, you know? It’s like, neat to be a woman in engineering but it’s also neat to be a trans person in engineering because it doesn’t get talked about as much. But ideally, for me, it would be for people to know and for people to be aware of it without any complication and to like, use they/them words. Just being aware of it and not erase it…but not a lot of conversation about it unless I wanted that. I think a fear for me is having people ask me questions about it and want to talk about it all the time. And that’s not something that I want for any of my identities. I sort of want it to exist with me and then just sort of stay in the background until I choose to bring it up.

Interviewer: How come?

Interviewee: Um, that’s a good question. I don’t know. I think with my sexuality I think it’s something that I’ve settled on and that I’m comfortable with that. And so I guess is not….okay that is something that I talk about with my friends. We like, make jokes and we can talk about it because like I said, most of my friends are queer. It’s a strong identity that we all have in common. But with my gender, I guess for now it’s not something that I’m totally comfortable with yet so talking about it isn’t like…I don’t know…that’s so weird. It’s interesting because in a lot of queer circles, a sort of a way that we come to terms with our identities is kind of by making jokes about it and just sort of bringing it up in a casual setting. And I guess that means in terms of the world in general. I don’t know if I’d necessarily want my coworkers in the future, like, bringing it up you know? I just want that to be a normal relationship I guess.

Interviewer: So sorry if I’m putting words in your mouth but it kind of seems like ideally you would want people to know your identity but no have that be your entire identity and know you as just that.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay. So is that why you don’t want to talk about that with the world in genera.

Interviewee: Yeah, it’s partially that and I think it’s also partially because I’m not totally comfortable with my identity yet. I’m not settled on it. And so when I envision that for the future, I’m sort of basing that off of how I feel right now. Now I don’t really want to talk about it because I feel like if someone asks me one simple question, it will sort of like, evolve into a two hour long conversation about like, “I don’t know what I’m doing. I don’t know what’s happening.” So it’s sort of best not to open a can of worms.

Interviewer: Sure. Gotcha

Interviewee: So I guess I’m sort of basing my ideal situation of the future based on how I feel right now.
Interviewer: Hmmhmm. Okay. Thank you for that. And then, so you mentioned GSA being a huge support system for you relative to your gender identity, expression, living situation even. Are there any other support systems that have been there for you?

Interviewee: Um my friends mostly.

Interviewer: Outside of GSA?

Interviewee: Um no they’re all in GSA.

Interviewer: Gotcha

Interviewee: Yeah that was I think one of the reasons why I joined GSA because in high school I had friends that were queer so I was very used to those spaces. I have straight friends. Like I don’t hang out with all queer people but my best friends…actually I have three people that I would consider to be my best friends. Two of them are queer and one of them is straight-my roommate friend first year that I mentioned. But like, everyone in my house…well not everyone but most people in my house are queer so I hang out in the common room and hang out with queer people which is really nice because it’s kind of interesting. Just in terms of like, visibility versus tokenization I guess? Like when you’re a queer person or any sort of marginalized group in a largely white or straight or anything sort of group you want to be visible but at the same time you don’t want to be tokenized. Like you don’t want people sort of treating you differently. But when you hang out in an all queer circle you’re just…it’s just so freeing because you can make jokes about it. I think the joking is the biggest thing because it’s like….I don’t know if you’ve experienced anything like this but just being visible and just knowing that everyone knows you’re queer but everyone is queer too so it’s not different. That’s really nice. And you asked a totally different question but that’s where I went with that. Oh support systems!

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So it’s mostly my friends and the GSA, which overlap a lot

Interviewer: Okay. And um, how about some offices or resources on campus? I’m just sort of naming things but any of the like RAs in terms of Res Life, LGBTQ, Women’s Resource Center, the ability to change your name on Moodle, gender-neutral bathrooms and housing, like, do any of these ring a bell for you in helping you?

Interviewee: Yeah, so, okay, you mentioned RAs so I’ll just get that out of the way. My RA from last year is my best friend now. He’s actually my RA again this year so I guess that worked out pretty well so I guess that relationship and the support that I’ve gotten from that has sort of gone beyond just the relationship with an RA and a resident.

Interviewer: So you consider him to be more of a friend? That kind of fits into the overlap you were saying earlier?
Interviewee: Yeah. When I said I have three friends I consider to be my best friends, he’s one of them which is sort of interesting but he’s great. So there’s that and …

Interviewer: Any offices on campus?

Interviewee: Uhh?

Interviewer: Any faculty members or anything?

Interviewee: Not really. That’s something…I don’t know. So I guess…I don’t really consider myself to be out to any of my professors because it’s not something that is particularly relevant in that sort of setting. I’ve never felt like it would be a problem which is really great. Like last year I went to the National Creating Change Conference. You know of it?

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewee: And I had to miss two days of classes so I had to go to all of my professors and be like, “I’m going to miss class.” And they are like, “Oh why?” And I’m like, “Well, I’m going to a super gay conference.” And they are like, “Okay cool. That’s good to hear. Have fun.” You know? I never felt like it’s a problem. So that’s good. Bathrooms, honestly I usually use the women’s bathroom because no one’s going to stop me. Like, I’d rather, if there are gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, especially for those people who it might not be comfortable just using the bathroom of their assigned gender. Especially in buildings like Dana…Have you been in Dana? Yeah it’s ridiculous. So that’s something. And I’m on the E board of the GSA so that’s something that we want to push for a little more because that sucks right now. It’s like the worst. Um, and what else?

Interviewer: Your name?

Interviewee: Oh yeah. My given name is pretty gender neutral so that’s pretty convenient. I’m happy with this name. It’s a good name. So I’ve never… I haven’t had to change it but I know people who have so it’s really nice that’s a thing.

Interviewer: Okay. And how have you come to learn about those support systems? Like, how did you know about GSA? Like, how was that made accessible to you…any of the support systems like, your RA, your friends, knowing about the ability to change your name or gender-neutral bathrooms? All that kind of jazz.

Interviewee: So GSA is something that I actively sought out because my high school didn’t have one. But like I said, I don’t think we necessarily needed one. But I guess I’m saying that because my friend group was a sort of mini unofficial GSA because we are all queer.

Interviewer: So you sought it out. How did you get that information?

Interviewee: Um well you know how they have those activities fairs? I just walked around until I found it and I was like, “Hey, I’m here. I’m queer. I’m ready.” And that was something that I
was really excited about to come to college for. So that was like something that I looked for. And also my RA, like I told you, is gay so he was…I was a little bit nervous showing up to the first meeting but he was like, “well I’m going. Come with me!” And there were other queer first years in my building and we all got together and walked over there. So that was really nice just having a couple other people who were new stepping into that space and then having my RA who’s like a veteran but also sort of our bridge. So that was really, really great. He did a really good job. He offered a lot of support to the queer residents of our building and not only our building. There was one resident that would come all the way from Swartz just to talk to him. So he did a really good job supporting people. What else?

Interviewer: Wow. Yeah just how did you come to find out about information about supports?

Interviewee: In terms of finding out where the gender-neutral bathrooms are, there’s an older student who talked about that a little bit at one of the first meetings. And I thought I was like, “Hmm okay.” Because at that time it was just sort of whatever. It’s not really something I need and I still don’t consider it to be something that I need. It’s more comfortable for me to use gender-neutral bathrooms but it seems superficial to me as compared to people whose appearance is not conducive to using gendered bathrooms. It’s really important for that reason for those people so it’s the issue that’s more on my radar. I sort of have a vague idea of where the bathrooms are. Like there are two or three in this building and I think they’re putting some in or changing the signs in the new apartments at some point and in Weis. Like I just know about the ones in the buildings that I regularly use and I know there are a lot of buildings were there aren’t any which is unfortunate. So I think it’s mostly the issues that I’ve become aware of at this point rather than the resources because I feel like that’s what the GSA mostly focuses on- becoming more aware of the issues on campus and trying to see if we can do anything about it.

Interviewer: Okay. Gotcha. So I noticed that you didn’t mention the counseling center as a resource and the counseling center is there as a free, confidential support system for additional support. I’m wondering if you could elaborate on why you did not acknowledge that.

Interviewee: Yeah. So a lot of my friends go to the counseling center or have been at some point. I don’t know why but I just have this weird aversion to going. Like my mental health has not been super great so I acknowledge that I probably should go to the counseling center but for whatever reason I just don’t feel like…I don’t know. A part of me is like, “it’s not going to help. It’s not going to do anything.” And then another part of me is like…well I don’t really trust the system I guess. Like I don’t know much about the people that work there or their qualifications.

Interviewer: Hmmhmm

Interviewee: I think I’m sort of skeptical about psychology as a whole.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: Like, my response to, “maybe you should go see a counselor” is, “well, they’re not real doctors.”
Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: So I don’t. My response to that is the same as my response to, “maybe you should go see a chiropractor.” It’s like, “Uhh, no.” So I’m a little skeptical about that.

Interviewer: So ideally what would you want if that was something that you decided to do?

Interviewee: Um yeah. So part of this is a failure to actually look up information about the counseling center on my part, so I just have a lot of fears about…you know I go there and spend all of this time and nothing good could come out of it. I don’t want to waste my time. I also have this fear that whoever I go see won’t be as educated about LGBTQ issues as I’d like them to be. I don’t want to be going there and having to explain all the time. Also I’ve talked to a few of my friends who’ve been to the counseling center and just like, they’ve confirmed my fears. Like, “Oh I went and they didn’t do anything” or “Oh, I went and told them things that I really wish I hadn’t because …” I don’t know. I don’t know. I think amongst my friends some of them say, “yeah it was good. You know, I just talked about stuff.” Sometimes talking about things for me is helpful but at the same time, my other friends don’t really trust it so that’s feeding into my distrust.

Interviewer: Okay. So you mentioned you’d prefer a counselor who was more knowledgeable about LGBTQ issues. Would the sex, gender, or sexual orientation of that counselor specifically matter to you or just that they are knowledgeable?

Interviewee: Um, them being knowledgeable would be, in theory, enough but I think having a counselor who was queer in any sort of sense would increase the trust a lot. For me, that would…I feel like they could understand more. So like, Bill McCoy, the director, I’m more comfortable going to him with issues because he sort of understands more than it would be going to a counselor. Like, I don’t know you and I don’t know where you went to school. My attitude is sort of like, how is some person I just met gonna help me work through stuff that’s very personal to me better than someone I know and trust? So that’s something I don’t really get. I don’t think they’re gender, well cisgender versus nonbinary or transgender, would make a difference. In terms of male/female, that would make a difference. I guess their gender identity with respect to their assigned gender and their sexuality would make a difference…a huge difference.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: I would just feel more…I would feel like I wouldn’t have to explain things or wonder if I had to explain things like queer issues. And there’s also the sense that, “oh you’ve been through a lot of this too so you understand what I’m saying to you and you understand what I’m talking about. And a large part of why I feel like I wouldn’t even do well with a counselor at all is because I have a lot of trouble putting my thoughts into words sometimes and communicating my thoughts and emotions clearly. Uh, I have class soon.

Interviewer: Okay. Sure
Interviewee: If you want to ask me more questions…like, I don’t know how many more questions you have.

Interviewer: No I mean whatever you want to provide me. I’m not looking for any specific answers, just do you have any last thought? Any ways that the school or support systems can help you?

Interviewee: Um I think the biggest this is like improving the attitude of campus in general in terms of like trans and gender non-conforming, non-binary people.

Interviewer: And how do you think that could be done?

Interviewee: That’s like a very…that would be a very long process but just having policies that acknowledge the existence of trans and non-binary people. Like the freshman dorm policies aren’t very inclusive, have gender neutral bathrooms, and the language on forms is very gendered. At the community dinner that happened a while ago, people wrote down suggestions for the school to do and someone wrote something really interesting. In the mission statement of the school, it says, “we seek to educate men and women.”

Interviewer: Hmm, I didn’t know that.

Interviewee: Yeah. And that was something I never even thought about but that is very gendered binary language so I don’t know. I think that to me is sort of symbolic of everything. Like, the mission statement of the school forgets and I think that’s like…I think because a lot of the discrimination isn’t actively intentional. It’s just that people forget and I think that’s the main problem.

Interviewer: I mean, did you have anything else that you wanted to share? Pretty much I’ll transcribe everything over Thanksgiving break hopefully and I’ll send it to you if you want to add anything or change or say, “oh no I don’t want that to be on the record.” And you can absolutely have that opportunity to communicate more if you’d like.

Interviewee: Yeah Yeah Yeah. Because like I took so long answering the questions

Interviewer: Oh no you were fine.

Interviewee: Okay well if you have any more information that you want, you can just send me the questions and I can type them up or something.

Interviewer: Okay. Great!

Interviewee: Yeah, whatever you want because I always really want to help out with studies because information is always really important and I always feel really bad when people send out surveys to me. I always answer them because I feel really bad because the rate of response is really, really low for any survey. So yeah, information is super important.
Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Well, thank you for doing this.

Interviewer: Oh no, thank you.

Interviewee: I think it’s important for people to do.
Appendix D shows Cass’s Lesbian and Gay developmental model which is very linear. The D’Augelli (1994) Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual model displayed here is not a linear stage model meaning an individual may experience these different processes at different times/orders and they occur multiple times. Both models were based on research of predominantly white gay men and lesbian women of high to middle class status and therefore do not necessarily reflect the process of a bisexual or transgender individual may go through. While the D’Augelli model does address personal differences, both sexual minority models continue to categorize development rather than allowing for full flexibility and complexity. As implied from the research findings, Trans students do not progress in development but are continually assessing and reassessing their gender identity status and labeling at varying points in their lives.

Therefore the image below depicts a non-linear and non-categorical approach to gender identity development. Rather than categories, identity falls along a spectrum with the extreme ends being total internal gender identity contemplation and total external identification of gender. Moving from left to right does not necessarily indicate progress towards a solid gender identity and
expression and moving right to left does not imply a retreat to a status of confusion. Rather, than a model where there is a start and finish, and a movement of progression to an outward declaration of gender identity, I see a more fluid navigation of gender identity development across time. A more spiral-shaped model is also flexible enough and “slinky-like” to accommodate timing along a lifespan. This means that the spacing between loops along the spectrum can be close together to demonstrate fluidity in gender identity within a short amount of time, or the spacing can be widened to show the individual has waited to reassess their gender identity for a longer period of time. The key is that gender identity discovery has no end goal so anyone can be anywhere on this continuum at any given point in time.
APPENDIX O:

Date: Tue, Mar 8, 2016 at 9:05 AM
Subject: [MESSAGE CENTER] Bodies, Restrooms & Social Justice Lecture
To: Bucknell Message Center <do-not-reply@bucknell.edu>

Category: Academic
Category: Diversity, Multicultural, International
To: All Campus

Please join us for the 2016 Annual Women’s and Gender Studies Distinguished Lecture

Judith Plaskow, Professor emeritus of Religious Studies, Manhattan College
Thursday, March 31, 2016
7:00pm, LC Forum

The Gender Politics of Public Space: Bodies, Restrooms and Social Justice

In the face of the suspicion of the body that has characterized centuries of dualistic thinking, queer and feminist scholars have written a great deal about revaluing the body and sexuality. But an aspect of embodiment that is generally passed over in celebrations of the body is elimination. The silence, embarrassment, and euphemisms surrounding this fundamental function has its social counterpart in the absence of adequate toilet provision for women, transgender people, and members of other marginalized groups (e.g. people with disabilities, black people under segregation). Focusing on the case of women and transgender people, the lecture will explore how unequal power relations are reflected in the built environment and ask what it would mean to reclaim elimination in the way that feminist and queer studies have reclaimed sexuality.

Judith Plaskow is Professor emeritus of Religious Studies at Manhattan College. Her scholarly interests focus on contemporary religious thought with a specialization in feminist theology. Plaskow has lectured widely on feminist theology in the United States and Europe and is co-founder of The Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion and co-edited it for its first ten years. She is Past President of the American Academy of Religion. She received a B.A. from Clark University and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Yale University.

The Women's and Gender Studies Department gratefully acknowledges co-sponsorship of this event by the Office of the Provost; the Center for the Studies of Race, Ethnicity and Gender; and the Departments of Philosophy and Religion.

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University adapts mission statement and statement of nondiscrimination

Julia de la Parra
Contributing Writer

On Feb. 5, University President John Bravman sent an email announcing a change to the University's mission statement and statement of nondiscrimination. The revised mission statement eliminates gender specificity, no longer stating that "Bucknell educates men and women," but instead, "Bucknell educates students." The latter has been broadened to now prohibit gender expression as a basis for discrimination. Bravman called these actions "small steps in a long journey toward becoming the next best version of ourselves."

Director of the Office of LGBTQ Awareness Bill McCoy shed some light on what this means for the campus as a whole.

"In this moment, it represents action—a move from passive allyhood to understanding the importance of language and taking action towards inclusivity. This change represents that Bucknell will take seriously an institutional critique of cisnormativity [the assumption that everyone identifies with the gender with which they are born]," McCoy said.

"[I don't] think it's fair to expect people to identify as one sex or the other. I think it is very important to represent all people in society," Mishi Papich '19 said.

Abigail Rosenberg '19 volunteered for the University's Gender & Sexuality Alliance (GSA) this past fall semester and completed a project in which she found and mapped out all of the single-stall bathrooms on campus. Having finished counting them, she strove to have them reclassified as gender neutral bathrooms so that they may be utilized by transgender students.

STORY CONTINUES ON A2

NEUTRALITY WINS
CONTINUED FROM A1

Something as small as changing a bathroom label can "make students feel more comfortable and accepted wherever they were on campus," Rosenberg said.

Maxine Charles '19 has also worked with GSA, helping to commemorate the Transgender Day of Remembrance this past November by compiling lists of transgender people who have passed away.

Both Rosenberg and Charles agree with McCoy that the amendment made to the mission statement is successful in recognizing LGBTQ students at the University.

"I hope future students will look at the mission statement and not question whether or not it includes them. I hope other policies, practices, and physical facilities follow so students, regardless of gender identity and/or expression, feel comfortable, safe, and affirmed at Bucknell," McCoy said.
APPENDIX Q:

Category: Campus Business
Category: Diversity, Multicultural, International
To: All Campus

Bucknell University is committed to providing a respectful, inclusive learning environment for all students, staff, faculty and guests to our campus. Achieving our academic mission—to provide an excellent educational experience to all students—requires that we strive to achieve a campus that is free from bias incidents and hate crimes. Bias incidents and hate crimes can have serious detrimental effects not only on the targeted individual(s), but also on communities, including the Bucknell community as a whole. Our efforts to provide a respectful, inclusive learning environment and community are dependent on everyone's efforts to recognize, respond to, and prevent bias-related incidents.

Unfortunately no community-including Bucknell-is completely unaffected by negative bias and its consequences; therefore we have established this bias incident policy and process to clarify what bias related incidents and hate crimes are, how and to whom you can report such incidents, and how Bucknell will respond. While this policy's goals are to inform the campus community about what to do and expect when a bias incident occurs, we hope it also educates readers and contributes to the prevention of bias incidents.

Bucknell recognizes, too, that excellent educational experiences include and must allow for divergent viewpoints and perspectives, some of which may challenge individual beliefs, values, or cultural norms. As a campus community we value and protect academic freedom and freedom of speech. This bias policy is not intended to undermine or weaken these freedoms; rather it is meant to address those incidents that fall beyond educational discourse in terms of time, place and manner.

Please familiarize yourself with the policy and reporting protocols so you can contribute to these efforts: [http://www.bucknell.edu/biaspolicy](http://www.bucknell.edu/biaspolicy). This page also includes the most recent bias incident summary report.

To report a bias incident see [http://www.bucknell.edu/biasreporting](http://www.bucknell.edu/biasreporting).

**What is a bias incident?** Beyond the definition of hate crimes above, bias incidents also include completed, attempted or threatened abusive or hostile acts against persons, property or an institution that involve a target(s) selected on the basis of the target's actual or perceived age, (socioeconomic) class, color, disability status, ethnic/regional/national origin group, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation. Any student charged with violating the Bucknell University [Student Code of Conduct](http://www.bucknell.edu/studentcodeofconduct) (pdf) may face additional bias incident charge(s) if the report indicates that either of the above definitions apply.