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## Gender Dysphoria: A Qualitative Study

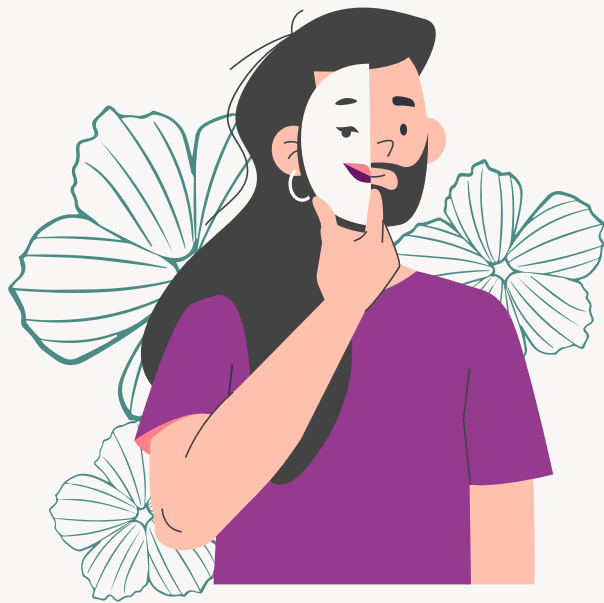
Courtney Stevenson

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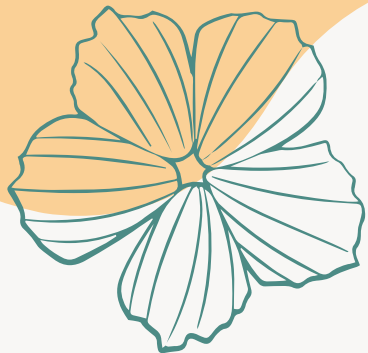
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# **GENDER DYSPHORIA:** A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Court Stevenson



# INTRODUCTION

This qualitative research study investigates gender-neutral language and the impact on the mental health of transgender non-binary (TNB) individuals. This kind of qualitative research is some of the first of its kind, as only recent years have shown an increase in the awareness of this part of the LGBTQIA+ community and providing resources for young TNB individuals.

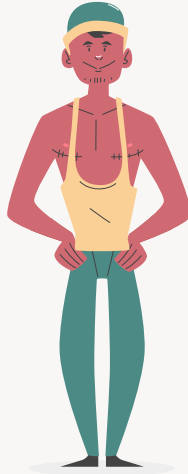
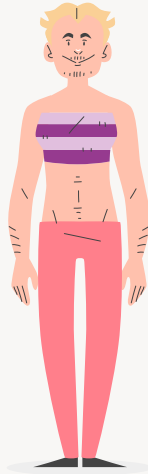


# KNOW THE DIFFERENCE



## SEX

Pertains to chromosomal makeup.  
*(Muehlenhard, 2011)*



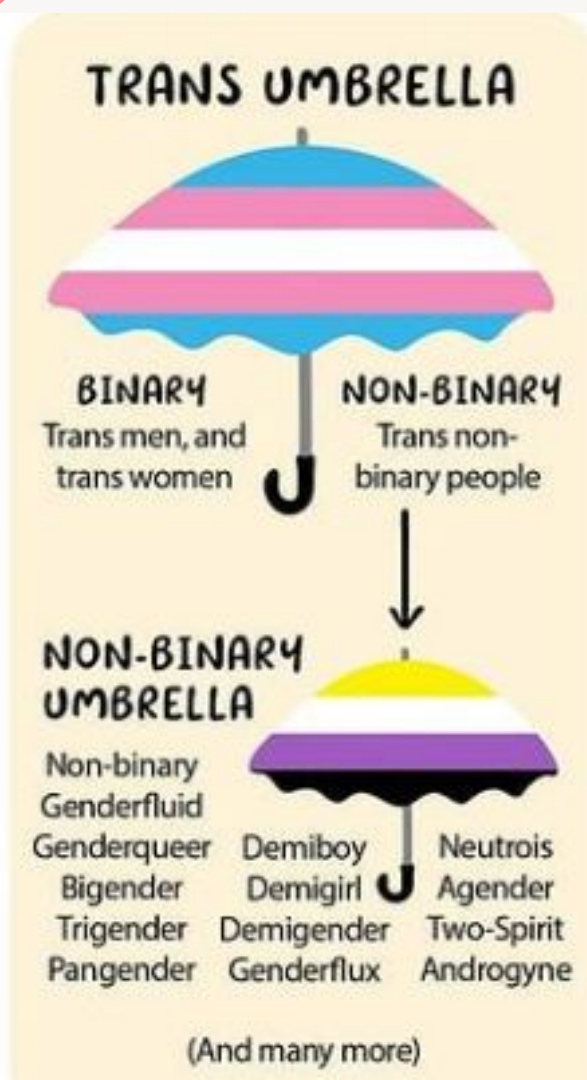
## GENDER

Refers to one's non-physiological self.  
*(Smith, p.5, 2007)*



Transgender is a self-identified umbrella term for anyone whose gender identity differs from their (biological) sex assigned at birth  
*(Britannica, 2020).*

It is used to refer to various kinds of gender experiences.

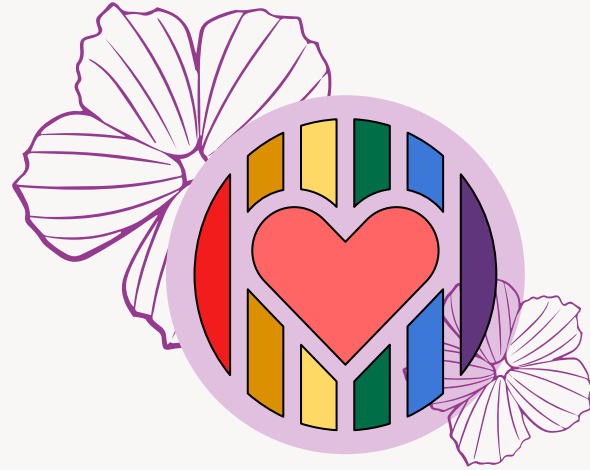


Gender congruent individuals are called 'gender variant' or cisgender  
*(Beek et al., 2016.).*



# 1.4 MILLION TO 1.65 MILLION

of the U.S. population identifies as transgender



# RESEARCH STUDY

Literature Review & Study Design



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the associations with gendered terms, and what are the ramifications of using them within present-day language?
- How is society progressing towards eradicating the discriminatory affiliations with these terms, and should gender-neutral language be used in place of them?
- What are the impacts of gendered language on individuals who identify otherwise?
- Does gender-neutral language benefit the mental health of transgender non-binary individuals?



# LITERATURE REVIEW THEMES



## DIAGNOSIS

Examined the criteria and conditions of certain transgender experiences.



## DYSPHORIA

Discussed the 'distress from the struggle to accurately portray one's internal sense of self'  
(Austin et al., 2021.).



## LANGUAGE

Analyzed terminology and various contexts, such as pronouns.



## BINARY BIASES

Highlighted varying beliefs and challenged unequal binaries.



## MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

Explored the positive & negative aspects of self-transformation.



## NEED FOR CHANGE

Identified the characteristics of society that are indicative of necessary growth.



## HISTORY OF GENDER

Accentuates the development of the concept of gender over time.




The background features several decorative elements: a red shape in the top-left corner, an orange shape in the top-right corner, a purple shape in the bottom-left corner with a thin purple line looping through it, and a green shape in the bottom-right corner with a green outline of a flower on top of it. The text is centered in the middle of the page.

# **AWESOME** WORDS



# LIT REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS



Interpersonal interactions that affirm, validate, or value TNB people and their identities are proven to reduce the negative impacts of minority stress on mental health and improve gender congruence. These include validation of pronouns, names, and identities. —**GOLDBACH & KNUTSON (2021)**

Gender-inclusive forms allow people to be seen, heard, and included. Without inclusive forms, we lose an entire population of individuals who are neglected and therefore will not seek out necessary services when needed.

—**CARABEZ et al. (2015)**



Researchers identified that this concept of blurred gender had been in existence for much longer than one would expect, such as Ancient Egypt's female king Hatshepsut (1473–58BC) and two-spirit people in mid-twentieth-century Indigenous communities.

—**BRITANNICA (2020) & (PASOLLI (2020)**



The background features several decorative elements: a pink wavy shape in the top-left corner, a yellow circle in the top-right corner, a purple wavy shape in the bottom-left corner with a thin purple line looping through it, and a green circle in the bottom-right corner with a green line-art flower on top of it. The text is centered in the middle of the page.

**NOT SO  
GOOD  
WORDS**



The American Psychiatric Association put gender dysphoria on its official list of psychiatric disorders and some mental health professionals acknowledge gender dysphoria as a “severe neurotic or a psychotic, delusional condition” only ‘fixable’ with psychotherapy and ‘reality testing’

— **BEEK et al.** (2016.)



# FOR THE RECORD

Language and the understanding of our human experience are grounded on a cis-normative worldview, thus trans individuals struggle to convey what they know, think, feel, and understand about themselves to others.

—AUSTIN et al. (2021)

33.52% of gender dysphoria is rooted in social interactions with family, friends, and strangers at school, work, or in housing contexts.

—GOLDBACH & KNUTSON (2021)

Dysphoria causes actual visceral feelings of pain and discomfort and disrupts the lives and daily functioning of transgender individuals both within social situations and when alone.

—AUSTIN et al. (2021)



# RESEARCH DESIGN



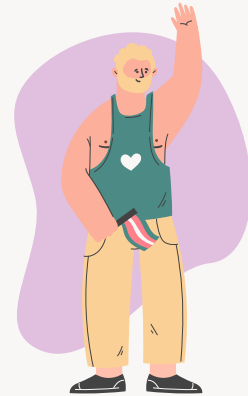
## HYPOTHESIS

Gender-inclusive language benefits the mental health and wellbeing of TNB individuals.



## LIMITATIONS

Insufficient sample size and lack of any previous research to refer to.



## APPLICATIONS

Improvements in society that benefit the mental health of trans individuals.

# QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW

- Data was collected via zoom interview.
- Interview followed a specific set of predetermined questions, collecting observational data throughout.
- Examined a transgender non-binary individual's experiences with gendered language and their thoughts on gender-inclusive language.
- **Responses were elusive of mental health impacts. Data focused more on the intent behind the use of language.**





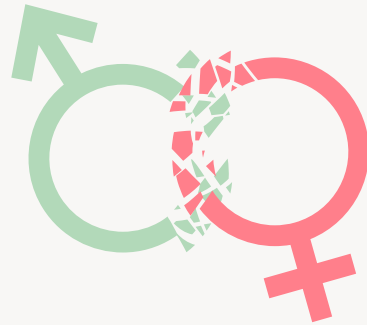
# SIGNIFICANCE OF RESULTS



- ★ Affirms previous research on pronoun, name, and gender affirmations.
- ★ Aids in the better understanding of the transgender community overall.
- ★ Explores the impacts of various contexts of language on the mental health of TNB individuals.

# CONCLUSIONS

The previously conducted research discovered that affirming gender identity positively impacts mental health. This research study suggests that the use of gendered language harms the mental health of the TNB community; thus, proposing further investigation.





# THANKS!

Does anyone have any questions?



# RESEARCH AND RESOURCES



- **Muehlenhard, C., & Peterson, Z. (2011).** Distinguishing Between Sex and Gender: History, Current Conceptualizations, and Implications. *Sex Roles*, 64(11-12), 791-803.
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- **Britannica Digital Learning. (2020).** *LGBTQ History and Current Issues: Vol. First edition*. Britannica Digital Learning.
- **Austin, A., Holzworth, J., & Papciak, R. (2021).** Beyond diagnosis: "Gender dysphoria feels like a living hell, a nightmare one cannot ever wake up from." *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*.
- **Goldbach, C., & Knutson, D. (2021).** Gender-related minority stress and gender dysphoria: Development and initial validation of the Gender Dysphoria Triggers Scale (GDTS). *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*.
- **Carabez, R., Pellegrini, M., Mankovitz, A., Eliason, M., & Scott, M. (2015).** Does your organization use gender inclusive forms? Nurses' confusion about trans\* terminology. *Journal of Clinical Nursing (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)*, 24(21-22), 3306-3317.