

Conceptualizing the Needs of Gender Variant Consumers

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Robert Pettys-Baker

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Marilyn DeLong, Ph.D.

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Robert Pettys-Baker
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my friend Brad Delzer, a person who made such an impact on my life, and made me realize I'm worth so much more than used to think I was. He valued my skills before I ever did and its one of the many reasons I continue to value my creativity, uniqueness, and diligence.

Abstract

Gender variant people are a segment of consumers that are underrecognized in both the academic literature and the retail environment. As people who defy the gender norms held by western society, they have unique attributes that set themselves apart from their cisgender consumers. Therefore, the interest of this research was to start examining these consumers, and make suggestions for where to go from here for both academics and retailers alike. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, a survey was distributed to non-cis individuals asking them about their shopping experiences and various aspects related to same. From this population, five interviews were conducted to better illuminate the findings of the survey. In the end, a diverse sample of non-cis identities were represented, and demonstrated clear needs that aren't being addressed, including unique problems and those shared by their cisgender peers.

In looking through the data, five key themes came to the forefront: A Sense of Belonging, Something for Every Body, Rethinking In-Store Design, Welcome and Affirm Don't Pander, and Interaction Anxiety. From these themes it became evident that gender variant consumers are disconnected from the current retail landscape for many reasons. They do not find products suited to their needs or body shape, and must compromise on fit in order to buy the clothing that expresses their individuality. Interactions with others while shopping comes with a sense of danger because of the worry of confrontation by transphobic appeal. This leads consumers to occasionally shop at odd hours and avoid others in store.

Overall, the findings point to a need for the participants to feel like they belong in retail spaces, with clear signs that a store has their interests in mind. Being able to see themselves in a product, whether through representation in advertisements or non-cis mannequins, was important to some because of this. However, the concern over true support vs. cash-grab pandering was an issue mentioned by some. So, those looking to appeal to this market should keep that in mind. However, given the lack of research on this population, the reason as to why these themes came to the forefront could only be hypothesized. Acknowledging this, future work is discussed at length to give others a sense of how they might contribute to addressing the lack of non-cis inclusion in both academic and retail spaces.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

“This ‘being a man’ and this ‘being a woman’ are internally unstable affairs. They are always beset by ambivalence precisely because there is a cost in every identification, the loss of some other set of identifications, the forcible approximation of a norm one never chooses, a norm that chooses us, but that we occupy, reverse, resignify to the extent that the norm fails to determine us completely” (Butler, 1997 p. 385)

In the current apparel market, one is generally presented with a distinct division in the offerings one is given. Stores such as Nordstroms, Target, H&M, and The Gap organize their apparel by binary gender, more specifically, men’s and women’s sections. However, only using binary gender conflates gender and biological sex, and as such ignores gender fluid, gender variant, and non-binary individuals. These non-cisgender identities represent individuals who fall in-between or outside of the male/female dichotomy (Callis, 2014), and their lack of inclusion puts these consumers to the wayside in favor of their cisgender counterparts. Therefore, to begin to accommodate these people as consumers it is necessary to develop an understanding of these people as consumers.

However, not only is there a lack of representation for non-cisgender people in the retail market, but also in the retailing literature. Academics are focusing instead on cisgender males and females, thus ignoring an underserved, emerging

market. People openly identifying as part of the LGBTQ community, which includes identifying as non-cisgender, is on the rise, particularly with younger generations (Gates, G. (2017, January). Aside from McKeage et al. (2017), no notable work has actively examined this subset of consumers. The closest thing one will find are studies that rely on psychological measures rather than a self-ascribed identity (See Bem, 1981). While this has offered many insights into the diversity of gender expression present within a single gender (i.e. there is diversity within cisgender people's expression of their gender), there have been issues in what exactly psychological gender identity is. To prevent any confusion, 'psychological gender identity' will be used to refer to any work whose gender determination relies on rating measures and not self-determination.

Project Significance and Research Questions

To better establish our understanding of gender variant people as consumers, this thesis project focuses on how gender variant people navigate retail environments, particularly those environments which delineate their product offerings by gender. Examining the baseline ins and outs of who these people are is key to better supporting them in the market at large. A qualitative methodology is employed, utilizing a survey and several interviews to conceptualize the basic needs of gender variant/non-cisgender people.

This data thus helps us begin filling the gap in the literature about this topic, and work towards building a foundation for future research and stronger presence in the retail market. Supporting this marginalized group allows us to make

suggestions for how to serve these consumers better, and best practices for examining them in future research. Moving our actions related to non-cisgender people from ephemeral (passive) support to more practical (active) support applications.

The research questions for this study therefore ask:

1. How do Gender Variant/Trans/Non-Cis people perceive US-based retail environments?
2. What issues, if any, do they have while shopping for apparel goods and accessories?
3. How do we translate these findings into practical applications for the companies that serve these consumers and the future academics who might study their behavior?

Defining Terms

To better understand the content of this paper several terms related to modern gender identity must be defined. Gender identity itself is “an individual’s internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or something else.” (McKeage, Crosby, & Rittenburg, 2017, p. 53) This internal process is separate from a person’s biological sex because it refers to the socialized, cultural meaning attributed to a person, rather than their biology (Butler, 1986). Cisgender refers to a person whose biological sex aligns with their gender identity, with transgender/non-cisgender referring to those individuals for whom those aspects do not align (McKeage et al., 2017). Throughout this paper, the terms gender

variant, non-cis[gender] will be used interchangeably as terms referring to people who do not fall into the category of cisgender. LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) or queer are also used, but only when referenced as a part of this larger group of individuals.

With this, it is important to note the difference between gender variance and gender non-conformity. Gender variance is “(1) People whose gender identity and/or expressions are different from the societal norms; (2) a broad term used to describe or denote people who are outside or beyond culturally expected or required identities or expressions.” (McKeage et al., 2017, p. 53). Where gender non-conformity is the act of dressing in a way that does not fit with the stereotypical/traditional dress for one’s gender. Gender non-conformity could be a sub-aspect of gender variance, but it fails to account for the idea of someone identifying as non-cisgender or gender variant.

Other relevant terms are “clocked/clocking”, “passing”, “binder”, and “gender dysphoria”. “Clocked/Clocking” in reference to gender variant people is a colloquial term for realizing a person one is interacting with is not cisgender. The person being clocked tends to not desire this as it may cause stigmatization. “Passing” describes a gender variant person who isn’t clockable, and thereby passes as their desired gender identity. “Binder” refers to an upper body garment that flattens the chest, usually to diminish the appearance of breasts. Finally, “gender dysphoria” is “a term used in psychiatry to refer to the incongruence

between an individual's designated birth sex and their gender identity, with marked dissociation from one's physical body." (McKeage, et al, 2017, p. 52)

A Researcher's Acknowledgment

Given the qualitative nature of this research, it is important to acknowledge the biases held by the researcher that may impact this study and its analysis. While as a researcher the goal is to present the needs, wants, desires and feelings of my subjects in an accurate and unbiased manner, it would be foolish to disregard how I influence the end result. That being said, a great deal of effort has been put into utilizing the words of the participants to fully reflect their thoughts, while adding analysis of how they work together to form a cohesive message. Only then do I consider how this message might be translated into practical use for parties interested in engaging with this community.

So, to establish my biases, I am an out and proud member of the LGBTQ community and am passionate about letting the voices of my community be heard. As someone who is not firm about their gender expression, I am drawn to better understand how societies current perception of gender benefits and hinders people's ability to express their truest selves. Even I have found myself at odds with expressing my true self, and what the retail landscape has to offer me product-wise. Through this examination of gender variant people I hope to understand how this feeling might apply to others, and what could be done to address it as an issue. Finally, my background is in apparel design, which is a large part of why dress is the focus of this thesis. My experience in this area gives me great insight into the

process of clothing development, marketing, and implementation which makes it easier to suggest changes that might benefit gender variant consumers. However, it should be recognized that the findings and advice provided here may be applicable elsewhere.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

While little work has been conducted in the exact area of focus of this thesis, there is a wealth of knowledge in related fields that helps understand gender (and its effect on people). To this endeavor, it is first important to understand how gender is learned as a construct, queer fashion, and how they impact gender variant people. Following this is an examination of psychological factors related to gender, and an overview of literature about the impact of different aspects of the retail environment. This chapter ends with a summary that coalesces all this information.

Understanding Gender and Gender Variant Consumers

Gender Development

From birth, people are conditioned to gender the world around them, holding awareness of gender differences (based on binary gender: Male and Female) as early as the third year of life. This dictates children's understanding of what is and isn't deemed culturally appropriate for them to wear (e.g. women wear dresses and men wear suits) (Weinraub, Clemens, Sockloff, Ethridge, Gracely, & Myers, 1984). Due to this formation of preferences, an in-group out-group gender dichotomy can be formed early on in life, which leads to positive same-gender and negative other-gender attitudes (Halim, Ruble, Tamis-LeMonda, Shrout, & Amodio, 2017). Positive same-gender attitudes can lead to gender rigidity, where children wear gender-stereotypical dress, possibly as a signaling device (Halim, Ruble, Tamis-LeMonda, Zosuls, Lurye, & Greulich, 2014)

Moving into adolescence, these ingrained beliefs become compounded as deviation from gender norms is often greeted with bullying and victimization from peers (Roberts, Rosario, Slopen, Calzo, & Austin, 2013; Toomey, Card, & Casper, 2014; Jones, Robinson, Oginni, Rahman, & Rimes, 2017). Roberts et al. (2013) note that this victimization leads to a greater possibility of depression and worse performance in school. As well, non-conforming males experienced worse victimization than their female counterparts. At home, gender non-conformity is also more welcomed in girls than in boys (Kane, 2006), and when it comes to the parents of gender non-variant individuals, many condemn or outright reject their children. This is evidenced by the large population of LGBTQ homeless youth, who comprise roughly 40% of all homeless youth in the United States (Durso, & Gates, 2012).

This is all to say that gender is very ingrained in our societal notions of correctness. Whether intentional or not, gender variance can become condemned for its blatant deviation from the norms of society. This dynamic continues into adulthood, where gender variant adults experience victimization for being who they are. This has presented itself in many ways, from the issue of trans-people's right to use a restroom ("*Restroom access for transgender employees*," n.d.), to general lack of protection under the law, poverty, social stigma, and violence ("*Understanding the transgender community*," n.d.). With this discussion of gender as a construct we must also understand gender as a political topic, and what that means for this study.

Gender Politics

Gender has long been a rather politically divisive issue, from women's right to vote, the fight for equal pay, and aforementioned issues related non-cis people, we have seen it hold its own as a hot button topic. However, before fully diving into gender politics it is important to note that the focus here is on gender in the context of the United States, more specifically, a Midwestern metropolitan area that is in a liberal leaning area of the US. Recognizing this is important because the country as a whole is not homogenous in their views. As well, the belief in gender equality, including the rights of gender variant people, has generally been associated with a liberal "blue" political alignment (see Our Platform, 2016). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that so-called blue states would be more welcoming to people who are non-cis. This is bolstered by the fact that most of the states that protect LGBTQ workers' rights have leaned democratic in elections. This increased welcoming attitude would also assumedly extend to blue areas within conservative "red" states.

A common notion is that gender as a construct constrains our self-perception and relegates people to different roles based on this system (Butler, 1997). This very much ties back to the learned stereotypes we develop as we age (e.g. Weinraub, Clemens, Sockloff, Ethridge, Gracely, & Myers, 1984; Halim, Ruble, Tamis-LeMonda, Shrout, & Amodio, 2017). This impacts how people live their lives and go about expressing themselves. Non-cis people's identity becomes divisive and in some ways a political statement of deviation from the set norms.

This has led to a lot of discussion of what rights they have as people. Including the fight for bathroom rights and basic protections mentioned above (“*Restroom access for transgender employees*,” n.d., “*Understanding the transgender community*,” n.d.), and even timelier topics like the transgender military ban (Block, Strangio, & Esseks, 2018, March 30).

Perhaps the most common issue is people questioning whether these identities are “real”, meaning whether people should conflate biological sex and gender and ignore those who identify as something other than male or female. Yet as we will see in the next section, gender has been conceived in ways beyond the binary of male and female throughout time, and as such is real. In the next few sections we see how gender relates to the body, and how gender variant people are impacted by the way we use the body to develop clothing

The Body

It is no secret that people come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and that the clothing we see in stores is generally tailored with a body type in mind. There are, of course, the overarching signifiers of Men’s and Women’s sections, separating fit based on biological sex. Yet, this becomes complicated as people’s gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. In discussing this, a common nomenclature among gender variant people is AFAB (Assigned Female At Birth) and AMAB (Assigned Male At Birth) (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d. a, n.d. b), which signify their biological sex without ascribing it as an identity.

Anthropometric based studies have long examined how we are shaped, and the apparel industry has worked towards creating sizing and fit standards for people to utilize (Simmons, Istook, & Devarajan, 2004a, 2004b ; Olds, Daniell, Petkov, & David Stewart, 2013; Gupta, & Zakaria, (Eds.). (2014). Dividing results by sex, or focusing on one sex is normal for these studies. This is assumed to be because of the gender division utilized by most apparel retailers, which is based on cisgender men and women's bodies. However, no notable study has included, or at least actively included, transgender or non-cisgender individuals in their analysis. A good demonstration of this is Simmons, Istook and Devarajan's two part study on identifying women's body shapes to make developing custom garments easier (Simmons, Istook, & Devarajan, 2004a, 2004b). Their work promotes a strong message about the issues inherent to sizing standards, but by not including trans-women or other femme leaning non-cis people their results only go so far.

This is not to say that their system or those like it couldn't work for gender variant people, but body differences might make the way we consider female shapes unsatisfactory. The same applies to male bodies. Transitioning, should a person undergo it, does impact one's body to a degree (Meyer et al., 2002), but not to such a degree that this population doesn't have specific fit needs. Therefore, without conducting primary fit research on this population, it may be difficult for companies to even develop products for non-cis people. This is possibly compounded by the unclear demographical breakdown of this population. Being

gender variant, non-binary and/or trans means many things and makes it hard to even properly identify a market. Having started this discussion of clothing, the next sections examine how gender, and gender variance, relate to clothing

Defining Gender Variant/Queer/Genderless Fashion

Dress is the “assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body,” (p.1) and is connected to a person’s identity (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992), and gender is a facet of identity, which impacts how one dresses (Freitas et al., 1997). Taken together we understand that gender expression is therefore part of our physical embodiment. However, people traditionally use stereotypical cues to categorize dress by gender. This can include wearing pink, ruffled garments, like dresses for girls, and wearing the colors red and blue for boys (e.g. Shakin, Shakin and Sternglanz, 1985). The dressing habits of gender variant people defies these norms because these people express themselves and their gender uniquely. Out and proud societal subversion of the norms set by a cisgender heterosexual centric society has been a staple of non-cis and queer people (Steele, (Ed.), 2013). This is best expressed by the history of gender variance and its link to self-expression through time.

A Brief History of Queer/Gender Variant People

Queer dress is a term that is used to discuss the dress of LGBTQ people, and their progenitors, as a more all-encompassing term (Steele, 2013). Using queer in this way allows us to better connect the way gender has been articulated, and has changed throughout time. Thus, as a catch all for the gender variant

people, we are able to connect those who paved the way for multifaceted modern definition of what gender can be, with today's queer people.

A good place to start is the notable emergence of genders and gender expressions that go beyond solely male and female that have appeared in multiple cultures around the world. The Hijra of India and Two-Spirit people are two such examples of these expressions. In her ethnography of the Hijra, Serena Nanda (1990) notes that they are a third gender who were born biologically male, or male presenting intersex, and that dates back centuries. They dress in women's clothing, and many often go through voluntary castration, although note that they do not consider themselves women. Two-spirit is an over-arching term that describes Native American people who embody a third or fourth gender role. These individuals were and are a welcome member of their tribe, and their participate in traditionally masculine or feminine roles depending on their specific identity. This includes the adoption of the dress worn by the gender one aligns with (e.g. an AFAB two-spirit wearing traditionally men's clothing) (Brayboy, 2017, Sept.).

Having established two prominent examples of gender variance in cultures, we now move onto conceptualizing modern gender variance, particularly in a Western context. Modern gender variant dress has often been associated with gay men, lesbian women, and trans/non-cisgender people. From the emergence of drag kings and queens, to the fairy and butch lesbian, gays and lesbians have been integral to the modern liberation from gender norms in dress (Steele, 2013).

These pushes against gender norms establish a political component of gender variant dress, and create a bold message about being oneself. Groups such as Act Up used t-shirts with pro-queer logos and phrases to promote equality at political events.

One element to note with this, is the performance of queer identity through clothing. This performance forms a subcultural understanding of who is and isn't in the know and allowing for free expression of one's identity (Lum, 1994; Clarke, & Turner, 2007; Steele, 2013). Despite the positives this brings, Clark and Turner (2007) note that this freedom is often constrained by subcultural norms. For example, in their work they found that lesbian women were expected to engage in a butch aesthetic, performing their identity through a rejection of feminine things. This has the benefit of allowing for recognition of who they can engage with safely, but constrains an individual's ability to truly express who they are.

Moving into the twenty-first century, we see the continued expansion of fashion as a business and the greater dispersion of media have allowed for rapid emergence of modern gender variance, even outside of the LGBTQ community. Several cultural shifts have disrupted our understanding of gender norms and allowed those outside the queer community to explore themselves. The emergence of women in the work place has challenged the traditional gender norms held by society, although progress is still needed (Daily, Certo, & Dalton, 1999). As well, the metrosexual man is an example of how men have begun to challenge masculinity and the gender norms associated with such (Adams, 2011;

Ervin, 2011). The shifts caused by these factors are seemingly ongoing, and time will tell how they might continue to change our perceptions of gender.

In the present day, several modern clothing brands have begun to offer some form of gender-neutral clothing. For example, Target's unisex baby clothing, Zara's "Ungendered" line, or Nudie Jeans who despite fronting as a menswear brand proclaim all of their denim being unisex (Figure 1). They offer clothing to all people, and generally provide basics like jeans or t-shirts. To better talk about these lines, it is necessary to iron out the variety of terms ascribed to gender-neutral clothing. Gender-neutral, unisex, genderless, ungendered, and unlabeled (meaning no label indicating gender or genderless) are just a smattering of the terms throughout the years. These fashions are generally considered to be the same thing, but it is possible people connote certain stereotypes about these terms.



Figure 1: Examples of Modern Unisex Clothing

Now having gone through this brief history, it is clear that gender variance has been articulated in many ways, including dress and social role, throughout history. Gender variance is not some new idea that is only relevant to current society, and it has precedent for being part of people's self-expression. It has certainly changed throughout time, and will certainly change again, yet its continual presence makes it clear that learning about people who express themselves in this way is a worthy pursuit. Despite this, there is little presence of these people in the literature, including the retailing literature, despite numerous avenues of exploration that are possible. Therefore, moving on from the societal presence of gender variance, we must come to an understanding of what has been done to understand LGBTQ consumers.

Queer Consumers: What We Know

In beginning this dive into the literature of LGBTQ people in the retailing literature, it is important to note that most of the work that has been conducted so far has mainly focused on lesbian women and gay men. Although some work on other queer persons has appeared in the literature, the driving force in these early efforts has been the growth of the LGBTQ community as a market segment.

For starters, there have been many efforts to understand how to best serve and attract them as consumers, with multiple studies and papers that have focused on advertising towards/featuring the LGBTQ community (Tuten, 2005; Gudelunas, 2006; Tsai, 2010; Oakenfull, 2013; Chae, Kim & Johnson, 2016), although primarily on gay men and lesbian women. The core interest of these studies is

generally what queer consumers want, and how non-queer (i.e. cisgender heterosexual) people feel about these advertisements. It should be noted, however, that these studies are usually limited to a United States centric population.

In marketing toward queer patrons certain considerations must be undertaken to properly engage with them as consumers. Queer consumers benefit from having their identities recognized and supported by companies, and show extra support for queer friendly stores (Tuten, 2005; Gudelunas, 2006). Some possible examples of how companies could support queer people is through inclusion in advertisements, and corporate policy that is anti-discrimination towards queer people. On the flip side, donating to anti-LGBTQ causes, or other forms of discrimination could negatively impact the sales potential of products, and could potentially lead to boycotting.

In working towards properly serving queer consumers, several considerations have been indicated in the literature. The first is to not glamorize queer lifestyles, as it may distort societal perceptions of how well off they are societally, despite equal rights still being a serious issue (Whitney, 2006; Tsai, 2010). This includes things like depicting LGBTQ as overly affluent or socially accepted to a degree that it becomes a stereotype that disassociates queerness from the discrimination against them. In addition, one must not view queer consumers through stereotypical lenses, and it is important not to view this community as homogenous. For example, Oakenfull (2013) discussed the

intersection of biological sex and sexual orientation to see how gay men and lesbian women differ from one another. It was uncovered that not only do gay men and lesbians have differences in how much weight they place on a company's gay friendliness, but that there were differences within gay men and lesbians as groups individually. A good reminder that LGBTQ people shouldn't be looked at as a homogenous group.

Another thing to recognize as retailers market toward queer people is the need to affirm, but not pander to queer patrons. This veneer of support is often referred to as "pinkwashing" (Note: this term is also used similarly in relation to breast cancer), and is used to describe disingenuous appeals to people about their support of LGBTQ causes to garner people's support and/or patronage (Puar, 2013; Stark, 2015, June; Prerna & Feldman, 2016, February). No notable study has covered this topic in a retailing context within the literature. However, if it is anything like greenwashing's (disingenuous support for eco-friendly practices) negative effect on consumer perceptions (Chen & Chang, 2013; Vries, Terwel, Ellemers, & Daamen, 2015), then it is something to watch out for.

Looking further into the companies side of this topic, we must discuss how a company navigates LGBTQ advertising in a way that sustains their business. The natural concern for any company trying to advertise to queer consumers is a loss of patronage by their straight counterparts. However, one recent study by Chae, Kim and Johnson (2016) suggests that this has shifted in recent years; finding that people view advertisements featuring queer couples not to be an issue.

This provides hope for the inclusion of more diverse expressions of self in apparel advertising. It may even tie into the need for LGBTQ affirming retail practices, as cisgender, heterosexual allies may also boycott companies that fail to support their queer peers. Somewhat related is a content analysis of queer centric advertisements by Um (2012), who noted that it is possible to hide gay iconography that straight people would not notice. Should there be heterosexual, cisgender people who object to LGBTQ content, this would allow for companies to show support in a less overt fashion.

Making sense of everything, it is clear that there is a gap in the literature when it comes to queer consumers. While the “L” and “G”, and to some extent the “B”, of LGBTQ have been given some attention in academia, the “T” and “Q” are particularly underrepresented and/or disregarded. This is why it is so essential to develop an understanding of who these people are as consumers. We are lacking primary knowledge of non-cisgender people that hinders a company’s ability to appear genuine, and offer proper service to their consumers. As well, academics are blind to a population that is primed for attention and recognition, and presents a gap in the overall literature.

Relevant Constructs

This section discusses several relevant constructs and two theories that examine gender from a psychological perspective. The topics covered delve into the potential mentality a gender variant consumer has while they shop for clothing.

Therefore, this is not an all-inclusive section, and more theoretical constructs are certainly relevant to these consumers.

Psychological Gender Identity in Consumer Research

As mentioned above, much of the work that has looked beyond binary gender has done so by looking at gender identity as a psychological construct. Psychological gender identity has been defined as “a two-dimensional model, with masculine traits comprising one dimension, and feminine traits the other.” (Palan, 2001) This differs from self-identified gender identity because it deals with the minutiae of the human mind, rather than a term one ascribes to oneself. It could possibly be considered more of a mapping technique for the range of gender expression people can have. For example, someone who identifies as a woman could be a tomboy, or be very flowery in how they express themselves. Neither is less of a woman because of who they are, but they are still both women.

Two theories are prominent in assessing psychological gender identity: gender schema theory and multifactorial gender identity theory. Gender Schema theory (Bem, 1981) proposes that a person’s gender schema is a self-concept influenced by culture, and that gender is learned from how society differentiates masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1983). Four sex-role categories are used to divide people up, and are conceptualized as a measure of psychological androgyny (Bem, 1974). The four sex-role categories are: sex-typed, cross sex-typed, androgynous, and undifferentiated. According to Bem’s (1974) definitions, sex-typed individuals’ gender schemas are congruent with their self-identified gender,

characterized by rating high for gender congruent characteristics and low in non-congruent characteristics. Cross-sex typed people have a gender schema that aligns with a different gender, and is assigned to people rating low in gender congruent characteristics and high in gender non-congruent characteristics. Androgynous people have a gender schema that rates high in both gender congruent and non-congruent characteristics. Finally, undifferentiated individuals rate low for both types of characteristics.

Multifactorial gender identity theory relies on the assumption that psychological gender identity is a construct that is built from several different factors (Palan, 2001). While previous research has had multiple interpretations of what constitutes the “multifactorial” nature of gender, the general trend in the literature focuses on things like beliefs about gender, stereotypical beliefs/interests, and general self-presentation (Spence, 1993; Fischer & Arnold, 1994; Kempf, Palan, & Laczniak, 1997; McCabe, 2007). The theory itself only acknowledges gender as a binary, but does somewhat acknowledge the gray area. For example, Spence (1993) notes that all people have congruent and incongruent gender characteristics, and that people tend to focus on their congruent factors as a way to ingrain their gender identity and downplay the incongruent.

These two theories open our eyes to the gray area of gender, and that the gender binary of male/female doesn't fully conceptualize how people experience their gender. They do not account for people who actually identify as non-cisgender, but they do establish a clear diversity in gender that cannot be ignored.

By actively seeking out the people who make aware their gender differences (through self-identification) we can hopefully better assess the gray area demonstrated by studies based on these theories. Because these consumers acknowledge themselves in an active sense it, in theory, is more ingrained into their being and therefore more present and distinct.

Gender Stereotyping

For gender variant people, who often times defy traditional gender roles, it can be very difficult to avoid issues related to stereotyping. Stereotyping is a process of using standardized oversimplification(s) to assume fixed traits about a person or group of people (Stereotype, n.d.). One such oversimplification can occur when people are categorized by [binary] gender (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). This can impact a people's attitudes regarding others (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). This is because stored information about various groups of people leads one to these categories of people to act a certain way (Hogg, & Reid, 2006). In thinking about how gender is viewed, Haines, Deaux, and Lofaro (2016) found that gender stereotyping has remained constant, when comparing data from the early 1980's and 2014. This is despite women's roles in society changing (i.e. entering the workforce in greater numbers), pointing to the strength and persistence of gender stereotypes. This also exemplifies our societal reliance on binary gender as an organizing tool.

Stereotype endorsement is the degree to which an individual promotes traditional, cultural stereotypes (Patterson (2012). Understanding the level of

stereotype endorsement one holds is important because the endorsement of stereotypes can have negative effects, such as stereotype-endorsing women having lower math achievement (Schmader, Johns, & Barquissau, 2004). Gender variant people could be incorrectly identified if a person they interact with has strong feelings about what genders are stereotypical. To address issues related to stereotyping, Haines et al. (2016) propose awareness of stereotypes and vigilance helps to work against the influences stereotypes could have on a person, which could greatly benefit gender variant shoppers as they interact with retail employees while shopping.

Concepts Related to the Self

People have a need to make sense of the world through mentally categorized information (Macrae, & Bodenhausen, 2001), which includes aspects related to the self (Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006; Hogg, & Reid, 2006). Hogg and Reid (2006) defined *self*-categorization as a mechanism by which individuals identify themselves as part of a group, and enact group behavior. In their overview of social identity and group norms, Hogg and Reid highlighted the role of social norms in influencing behaviors, attitudes, feelings, and perceptions. Furthermore, gender, one such category, is universally found in all societies and shaped by the expectations of one's culture (Maccoby, 1988). These cultural expectations often dictate the way different genders should or should not clothe themselves (Kaiser, 2012).

Self-monitoring is a process through which individuals become sensitive to the attitudes and behaviors of others in regard to social presentations of the self (Snyder, 1974). People who are high in self-monitoring are therefore susceptible to conform to the observed norm, whereas low self-monitors less so. In relation to gender, this may mean that gender variant people feel a need to conform to more traditional gender roles rather than expressing their true selves. They

In the retail context, both high and low self-monitors place value in name brands. Yet, low self-monitors look beyond just the positive brand image to the functional qualities (Auty, & Elliott, 1998; Hogg, Cox, & Keeling, 2000). In addition, Hogg et al. (2000) found that high self-monitors were prone to shifting brand and product preference based on outside cues, such as differing social situations. Thus, the perceptions of gender variant consumers may be altered by how conducive the environment/context is to their identity. A non-conducive environment might limit a person's comfortability with expressing their true self and impact their overall shopping experience

Relevant to this discussion of self-awareness and monitoring of gender, Gould and Stern (1989) developed a metric for measuring gender consciousness, "the everyday involvement of individuals with their own gender and the processing of gender-schema related information..." (p.132). Private gender consciousness was found to influence women more than men, although fashion conscious men were also more privately gender conscious. It was not stated as a positive or negative thing, which may mean it is dependent on the individual. Good and

Sanchez (2010) provide some illumination with their discovery that valuing gender ideals was associated with a motivation to gender-conform, and this, in turn, was associated with a negative influence on self-esteem. Therefore, a gender variant person who is very aware of their gender, and place great value on it, could be subject to negative feelings if the environment doesn't support their true identity.

The Impact of Retail Environments

In coming to an understanding of gender variant people, it is pressing to consider what we know about consumers generally. It is no secret that the retail environment can have a great impact on consumer's self-concept and willingness to buy from a given retailer. It is a multidimensional process that relies on the physical environment, ambient cues, other patrons or employees, and the shopper themselves (Bitner, 1992; Fiore, & Kim, 2007).

Signage and Layout

In their paper "*Fast fashion in the retail store environment*," Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2010) observed that in-store signage leads consumers to focal pieces and reinforces the fashion story and credentials of the pieces. Goodman, Broniarczyk, Griffin, and McAlister (2013) found that recommendation signage caused people's consideration sets to increase when presented with a large assortment. Recommendation signage was defined as in-store signs that are meant to aid consumers in their shopping. The conflict that arises from recommendation signage increases decision difficulty because of the conflict between the signage and a consumer's preference. Relating this back to the

gendered retail environment, it is important to consider how we gender stores through environmental factors such as signage. Stores present consumers with the direct labels for “Men’s” and “Women’s” sections; often reinforcing this message with photographs depicting a person of that gender.

Sensory Factors

Sensory factors play a role in influencing a consumer’s perception of a store and overall purchase intention. Music, scent, lighting and other ambient clues have all been explored as possible ways to enhance in-store experience (Mattila, & Wirtz, 2001; Spangenberg, Sprott, Grohmann, & Tracy, 2006; Morrison, Gan, Dubelaar, & Oppewal, 2011; Quartier, Vanrie, & Van Cleempoel, 2014). These subtle factors are an important consideration in creating a positive retail environment, and are able to help retailers “set the mood” (Quartier, et al. 2014). Gender differences in preferences can emerge in relation to the cues; however these studies are generally limited to binary gender (e.g., Spangenberg et al., 2006). Because of this it is hard to exactly predict how gender variant people perceive these cues, but we do know they will have an impact.

The Retail Worker

There are also the retail workers to consider when discussing the impact that retail environment has on consumers. Minority consumers can often be the undue targets of suspicion because of their marginalized status (Gabbidon, 2003; Schreer, Smith, & Thomas, 2009; McKeage, et al. 2017). For example, Schreer et al. (2009) discussed the phenomena of “shopping while black”, where black

individuals experience mistreatment by retail workers. They found employees were more likely to watch and/or follow black consumers more often than their white counterparts. These are considered microaggressions “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273).

This can easily translate to other marginalized groups such as gender variant people. For example, gender variant people may be misgendered by an employee (intentionally or not) or asked if they are buying clothing for someone else as a gift (McKeage, et al, 2017). These gender-based microaggressions can cause mental distress or even induce gender dysphoria. Inducing gender dysphoria through these negative interactions could hold very negative effects because it has been linked with increased risk of depression and anxiety (Dhejne, Van Vlerken, Heylens, & Arcelus, 2016), or even suicidal thinking and self-harm (Aitken, VanderLaan, Wasserman, Stojanovski, & Zucker, 2016). So, it is important to understand how this might impact a consumer’s overall experience.

Brands and Brand Image

While the environmental factors of a store and how gender variant consumers perceive them are the focus of this research, it is important to recognize how brands influence consumers as they shop. However it should be noted that, as with other factors discussed, no research has focused specifically on non-cis people, but the concepts and findings should apply to some extent. Brand name is

associated with a boost in perceived quality of a product (Rao, & Monroe, 1989). As well, brands are reliant on their equity (their value derived from perception of a brand), which boosts brand preference and purchase intention at higher levels when comparing similar brands (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995).

Somewhat related to this is self-image congruence, which Clairborne and Sirgy (2015) cite as important for brands, because consumers try to see themselves using a product as they shop. In their review of literature in this area they state that generating positive self-congruity is thought of as essential, and diminishing negative impacts on concepts like self-esteem, self-consistency and social consistency are a must. Grubb and Hupp (1968) found that people whose self-concept aligns with one brand will cause a person to perceive other people engaged with that brand as similar to them, and those who engage with other brands as different from them. While this work is rather old, when taken in tandem with Clairborne and Sirgy (2015) it is clear that brands are deeply connected to a person's perception of themselves, and as such dictates their behavior. For non-cis consumers this could mean that they require a clear connection between their gender and a brand, which we've already established as an important factor related to the self (Maccoby, 1988). Thus, any disconnect might lead to a poor shopping experience.

Going Online

In an increasingly digital world, the ability to engage with retailers online is foolish to ignore. Numerous studies have looked into consumer behaviors and

perceptions that are related to online shopping, including studies that examine gender differences (Garbarino and Strahilevitz, 2004; Poddar, Donthu & Wei, 2009; Hasan, 2010; Luo, Ba, & Zhang, 2012). However, as with in-store studies they are limited to examining cisgender men and women. Two specific studies seem particularly interesting in relation to gender variant people.

Poddar, Donthu and Wei (2009) discussed how both a retailer's website personality and website's consumer orientation are important to making online shopping appealing to consumers. A website's personality is derived from what consumers perceive a website to be like, and so it must be cultivated to produce the desired perception. A website's consumer orientation represents a retailer's ability to provide their customers what they want. The authors stress that optimizing these two facets is key to creating a strong online presence. For gender variant people this could be having non-cis models or providing a diverse array of sizes for people with different body shapes. Overall, they should be able to feel like a retailer can give them products that suit their unique needs.

Luo, Ba, and Zhang (2012) looked into product uncertainty and how retailer visibility, website design, service quality and pricing impact customer evaluations. They say that product uncertainty is derivative of consumers' ability to perceive product quality, which is diminished by the lack of touch and other experiential factors. They hypothesize that product uncertainty and the visibility of a retailer (i.e. how well known the brand/store is) influences customer satisfaction, with the other retail characteristics listed above moderating their effects. They find that both

product uncertainty and retailer visibility are linked with consumer satisfaction. They suggest that retailers should make product information easily accessible, and that giving better service combats the ill-effects of low visibility. Given the body differences discussed earlier, it is possible product uncertainty could be increased without proper sizing and fit information. Gender variant consumers might benefit from a more tailored experience then.

Chapter Summary

Through the review of this literature, it is clear that while much work is relevant to understanding the needs of gender variant consumer, little work has actually worked to fill this gap. What we do know is that gender is a complex concept that has changed throughout time and will most likely continue to change. Across cultures and continents gender is a concept that is often more than solely male and female (Nanda, 1990; Steele, 2013; Brayboy, 2017, Sept.). Despite this consistency, deviating from norms is often met with victimization from peers and society (Roberts, Rosario, Slopen, Calzo, & Austin, 2013; Toomey, Card, & Casper, 2014; Jones, Robinson, Oginni, Rahman, & Rimes, 2017).

We then looked into queer consumption, and how LGBTQ find their way in the market at large. It is clear that this population has unique aspects that set them apart from their cisgender and/or heterosexual counterparts. This consumer base supports pro-LGBTQ companies, but there is some reticence surrounding how valid this support is. There are also unique stylistic standards people in this community that constrain how people present themselves. Within community

guidelines therefore dictate the dress one must wear to fit in with other queer people. However, these studies do focus more on gays and lesbians, which limits how translatable these results are to non-cis people.

The field of psychology has had a history of examining what gender is, and how this relates to their mentality. Multiple theories have even been developed to explain the diversity within gender, although they do leave non-cis people out of this discussion. This does however show that gender isn't as binary as we traditionally have perceived it to be. There are also many phenomena that might play into how a gender variant consumer experiences the retail environment. Those selected for inclusion in the present literature review focused on mental categorization, self-monitoring and gender consciousness. In examining these concepts we find that we organize the world with information related to our self (Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006; Hogg, & Reid, 2006), and gender is one such concept that dictates how we dress and behave (Kaiser, 2012). Heightened awareness of one's gender and surroundings can cause one to experience pressure to conform to certain gender ideals (Good and Sanchez, 2010). This impacts shoppers, and may limit their purchasing behavior.

Diving into the retailing literature, it is clear that there are a great many factors that impact any consumer. There has just not been a great deal of work that has focused on non-cis people specifically, making it hard to fully understand how these factors impact them. Some factors might show great differences in response between non-cis people and their cisgender counterparts, while other

factors might show no significant difference. The brand, their products, in-store design, and website design do influence consumers, but we don't have a firm understanding of how being non-cis might interact with other factors. The largest claim we could hypothesize about would be the impact of retail worker interactions. Despite primary evidence, it is clear that interactions with marginalized groups can turn sour, and possibly lead to ill-effects.

Having considered all of this literature, we have come to a general understanding of relevant fields and the impacts they might have on gender variant people. In the next chapter, the methodology for this study will be presented, including the questions asked, the participants sought, and the method of data analysis used.

Chapter 3 – Methods

This study seeks to aid in understanding of queer persons as retail consumers, particularly gender variant consumers. Given the lack of research in this domain it is necessary to establish a formative understanding of this population. Establishing a core image of who these people are as consumers will allow future research to branch off and create more complex understandings.

Methodology

To establish this understanding, a qualitative methodology is being utilized. This approach provides a wealth of information that allows us to effectively examine the basics of who gender variant people are as consumers, and what they want in a retail environment. The first portion of the data collection is an online survey, which utilizes both short answer and scaled items to examine the issue at hand. In addition to the survey is a set of interviews, with the participants drawn from the survey population. This allowed for a more in-depth examination of gender variant people's opinion of the retail environment.

The Survey and Interviews

The survey itself is divided between short response and rating-scaled items. The short response questions look into the participant's preferences are in regard to retail environments. They were asked about positive and negative experiences in stores, and the factors that play into what they want in a retail environment (See Appendix A for the full survey and interview questions). Demographic information was collected at the end of the survey. The scaled items used 7-point Likert scales

that all ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Both the survey and interview questions were reviewed by a prominent member of the queer student center at the University of Minnesota for appropriateness for dispersal with gender variant people. After revisions were made to the questions, the survey was then disseminated. All survey respondents were given the choice to enter into a random drawing for one of two \$15 gift cards, and they were asked to indicate if they would be willing to participate in an interview.

Potential interviewees were contacted via email if they had given consent to do so in the survey, and a time to meet in a private room in a university library was set up. The content of the interviews expand upon the survey, allowing for greater detail about how gender variant people perceive store environments. After reading and signing the consent form, participants were asked about their gender identity and what it means to them, which allowed the participants to define their specific identity. They then led the researcher through a typical shopping trip, detailing how they choose a store, how they navigate it, and how they perceived the environment. Follow up questions were asked as needed, and allowed for expansion on specific answers. The interview participants were each given a \$30 gift card for their participation. Four of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, with one participant opting to not have the interview recorded. In that case, the researcher took extensive notes to accurately report the responses of the participant (See Appendix B for full transcripts of the interviews).

Participants

Since this study is exploratory in nature, it is looking at this population at a more macro level. The number of identities that fall into the category of gender variant are numerous, and the relatively small population of individuals who identify as gender variant makes it hard to focus on one specific identity. The participants gender identity was self-reported in a short response box in the demographic portion of the survey. This was done to allow the participants to accurately report their identity without being constrained by having to choose from defined options. This proved to be a useful method as many participants identified by multiple labels.

Participants were sourced through online groups for queer people and snowball sampling (See Appendix A for advertisement text), with the assistance of a university group for queer persons. In order to have access to participants for the interviews, the population was limited to the Midwestern area in which the researcher lives. Thirty-six people participated in the survey overall, with five individuals from the survey also participating in the interview.

Data Analysis Method

For the survey, the short response questions were analyzed qualitatively by comparing the responses for each question. The scaled items were graphed and analyzed, and then incorporated in with the rest of the survey data. The interviews were transcribed, and then read through and listened to several times to fully conceptualize the information gathered. The two data sets were then looked at

together to see how they meshed. From this, several key themes were drawn, which served as the anchor points for discussing how gender variant consumers perceive the retail market at large. Demographic information was also reported, with some comparison between sub-groups performed to see what differences could be present. General shopping behaviors (i.e. common stores visited or thoughts on retailing that didn't fit within the themes) are also reported.

Following the reporting of this information, I then delve into more dynamic discussion the results by taking the themes and contemplating what they mean for this population, and how we can use this information to answer the research questions of this project. Connecting the findings to the literature examined provided an opportunity to muse over what the results might mean when looked through these different lenses. Then I applied this to the academic and retailing landscapes to construct a clear path towards what could be done with this information.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis

The following section details the findings of the survey and interviews. After summarizing demographic and shopping habit data, the results of the scaled items are discussed. Following this, the interview and survey data are synthesized to present five key themes that are present in the data. Quotations from both the surveys and interviews are utilized throughout in order to illustrate the themes.

Demographics and General Shopping Trends

The average age of the participants was 21.36 years old, and a majority of the participants were college students. Thirty-four of the participants were white, and two were mixed race. The gender identities of the participants break down as follows: 8 non-binary, 9 trans-male, 5 genderfluid, 1 questioning, 1 genderqueer, 2 agender, 3 non-binary/trans-masc, 1 trans-femme/gender f*ck, 2 trans-women, 1 gender non-conforming woman, 2 other/unsure, and 1 didn't respond. The double identity names were self-identified by the participants, and the other/unsure participants had responses that were not recognizable as an identity. It is unclear if their identity is less known or was entered incorrectly.

When it comes to shopping habits, sixteen participants shopped instore only, two shopped only online, while eighteen shopped both instore and online. The stores the participants shopped at most are shown in Figure 2. Note that only shops that were identified more than one time were included, and that the “thrift/second hand stores” bar combines instances of people saying they thrift shop and mentions of actual thrift stores (e.g., Goodwill). It is assumed these

stores are visited in person given the general preference among the participants was to shop online.

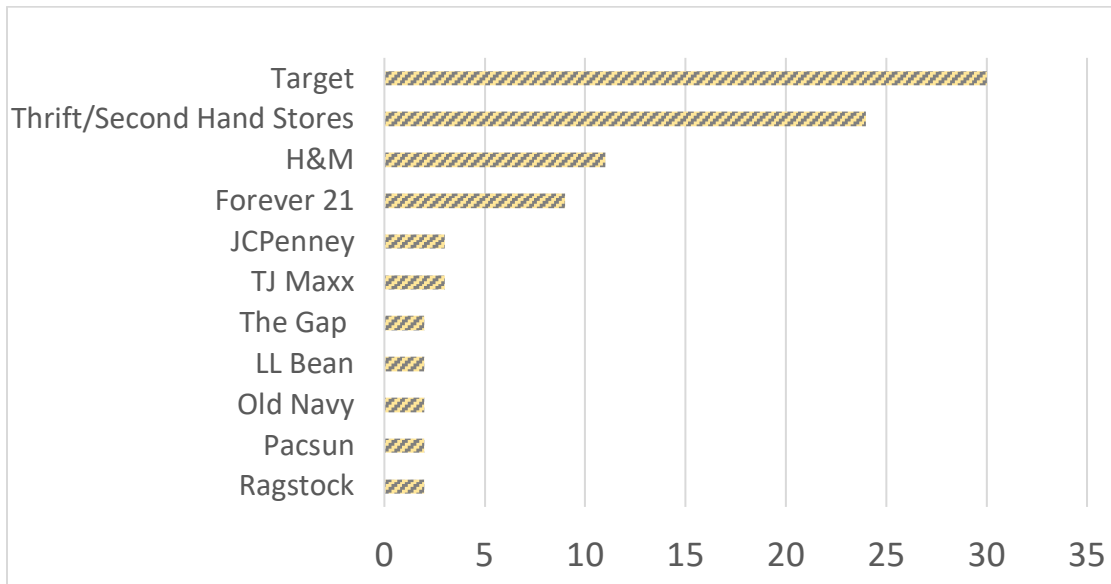


Figure 2: Breakdown of Stores Participants Patronized

It is important to reiterate that these results are most likely skewed by the geographic location where this study took place. Living in a large Midwestern metropolitan area where this study takes place would impact what stores participants could access. This may also influence the rest of the results drawn in this study for other reasons. For example, the area the study was conducted is considered to be liberal politically, which could skew non-cis people's comfortability with being "out".

When asked about gender neutral or non-cis friendly brands, opinions were positive towards the idea, but awareness of specific brands was lacking. In fact, some survey participant asked whether the survey was being used to develop a brand for gender variant people. The options participants were aware of, even if

vaguely, were generally thought of as only being available online. Some participants were okay with these brands only appearing online, but interviewee 4 wished for instore options because she didn't like online shopping.

“yeah I probably wouldn't go out of my way to seek it out especially because with things like that that I've seen before it tends to be very much like oh yeah we you can buy this online on our website... I would prefer to see that in stores rather than online like most brands have done that I'm aware of so far” – Interviewee 4

Speaking of online shopping, it was rather common as noted above, although few shopped solely online. Online shopping did not receive much discussion in the surveys and only a little bit in the interviews. For interviewee 3 online shopping was associated with “for fun” shopping (e.g. band merchandise), while more serious purchases were relegated to visiting stores. Interviewee 1 used online shopping to repurchase items they knew fit them, to look at sales, and use the information provided online to learn about the product, for example materials used or country of origin.

Scaled Items

As mentioned earlier the scales were rated 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), and they are presented below with the amount of responses per number rating and the mean rating. Analysis for the scales will be separated into

two segments. The first part deals with recognition, and the second covers a series of questions that access the importance of several in-store factors. It should be noted that there are issues in analyzing Likert scales, where the exact value of the numbers aren't easy to determine. This value may even be different between people, or even between questions, but due to the formative nature of this study it is useful in generating base perceptions on multiple given topics.

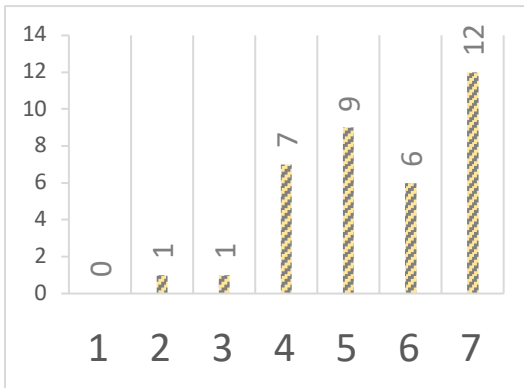


Figure 3: It is important to have gender recognized in a store Mean: 5.5

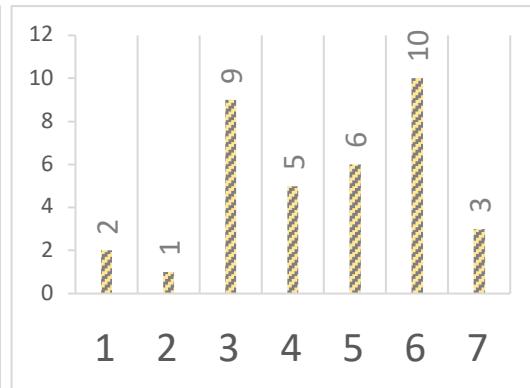


Figure 4: Products found align with gender identity Mean: 4.5

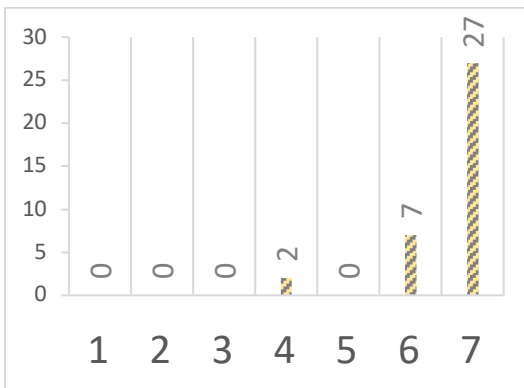


Figure 5: Awareness of gender division in stores Mean: 6.64

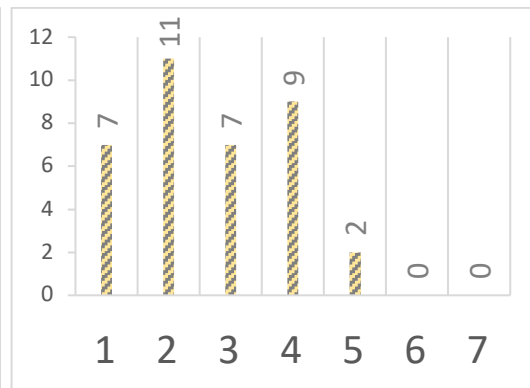


Figure 6: It is not important to have gender recognized in a store Mean: 2.67

Looking at the first four questions, we see interesting findings with Figures 3 and 6. Both questions asked essentially the same question, except Figure 6 was phrased in the negative and when reversed the mean rating is 4.33. Taking both of these scores into account, we see that while there is a trend toward agreeing with needing to have one's gender recognized, but it isn't strong for all participants, which is rather curious when compared to other responses discussed below.

Figure 4, with a mean of 4.5, shows that participants were somewhat mixed when it comes to seeing whether products align with their gender identity. This may be related to the breakdown of gender identities in this population, since many of the participants who disagreed were genderfluid. Looking at Figure 5 we see that the participants were highly aware of gender as a way to divide stores. In the responses where the participants discussed their scaled ratings a common sentiment was the need to be recognized and supported. Gendering sections with signage and imagery caused issues with this, but weren't unanimously hated. The attitude of the store and its employees appeared to factor into this.

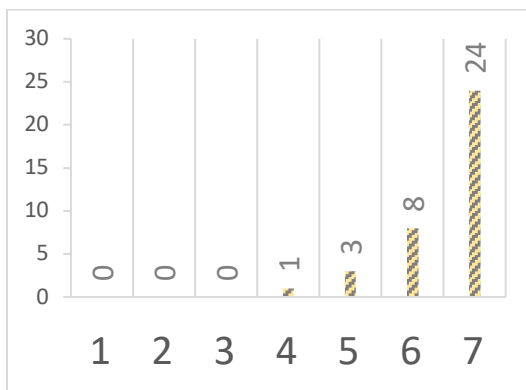


Figure 7: Importance of accessible dressing rooms Mean: 6.53

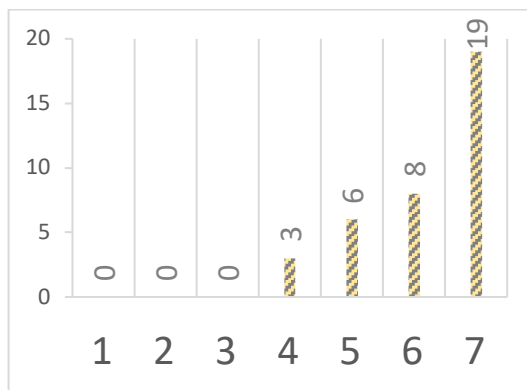


Figure 8: Importance of an affirming store environment Mean: 6.19

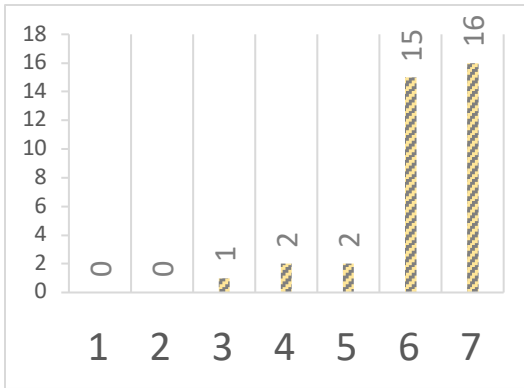


Figure 9: Importance of positive employee interaction Mean: 6.19

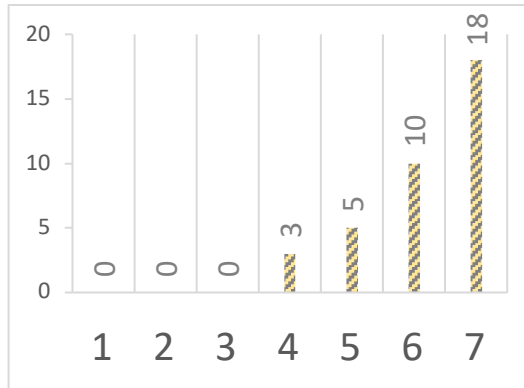


Figure 10: Importance of well-fitting garments Mean: 6.19

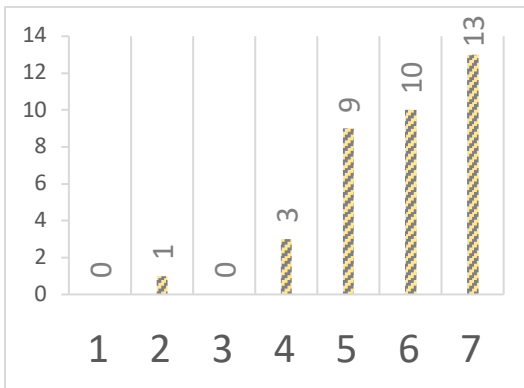


Figure 11: Importance of stores fulfilling gender related needs Mean: 5.83

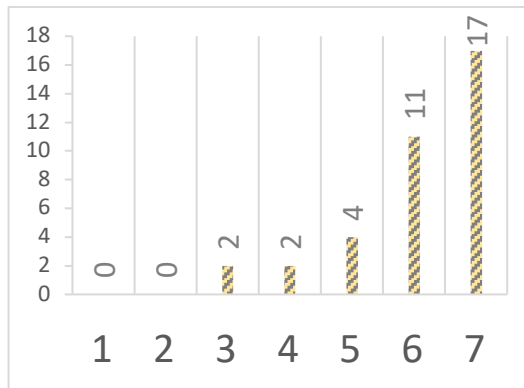


Figure 12: Importance of feeling like one belongs in a store Mean: 6.08

Looking at the scales that deal with importance (Figures 7-12), we see the scales consistently lean toward the agree side. This could be the result of listing common issues and needs. If the items were rated against one another, as opposed to separately, the weighted importance may become more clear. After filling these items out the participants also had the chance to explain their rankings. It seemed that the respondents concurred that these were all generally important things, and that it would be preferable to have all of them, the general idea being that these all factor into how accepted the participants felt in stores. This leaves

the data useful in that it does shed some light on the issue of being a non-cis consumer. However, it is not comprehensive or complex enough to paint a clear enough picture.

Interview Participant profiles

Table 1 shows basic profiles of the interview participants, who will be referred to by their corresponding number henceforth. We see a decent spread of identities in this smaller sample, and they each contributed unique discoveries individually. These discoveries feed into the major themes discussed below.

Participant	Gender Identity	Preferred Pronouns	Recording	Interesting Discovery
1	Gender Fluid	He/Him or They/Them	Yes	True neutral is hard to find
2	Trans Femme/Gender F*ck	She/Her	No	Small acts of trans resistance
3	Trans Man	He/Him	Yes	Stereotypes are ingrained in retail displays
4	Gender Fluid	She/Her or They/Them	Yes	The anxiety of being “clocked”
5	Agender	They/Them Sometimes He/Him	Yes	What is clothing if not just arbitrary fabric

Table 1: Interview Participant Profiles

Core Themes

Taking into account both the interviews and survey responses, five key themes come to the forefront. These are presented below, with quotations letting the participants words affirm the synthesized themes.

A Sense of Belonging

A core theme that was made apparent throughout the data was simply a desire to belong in a space, which in turn impacts the following themes. A consumer's desire to project themselves into a product becomes mired as a combination of all of the information to come. Multiple people mentioned a feeling of not belonging when in certain sections of the store because of their gender identity, explaining they felt they were intruding on other's space.

"Whenever I shop in a gendered section, I feel more like a scavenger making do with stuff that's intended for other people than a valued customer. I also don't like that the section I'm shopping in could be inaccurately interpreted as an indicator of my identity to anyone around who might be trying to figure that out." – Survey Response

Their ability to see themselves in the product can also be hindered due to the presentation. The display information, product development, and overall story of a retail layout can make consumers, like interviewee 1, not feel like they are included as a part of the marketing intentions of the stores. Finding it difficult to find truly neutral options with major retailers, even in product categories where they expected to find more neutral goods.

“and so it'd be nice if some of the more gender-neutral clothing was up on the mannequins so I could see what it would look like on a real person but instead I just have to look on the clothing rack and try and guess what it would look like before I try it on ...it's really a negative when I have to like shop for bras because I still have to wear them but the whole aisle is just... I mean to me, like very flirty, very fun, they're trying to make it really sexy and I don't feel comfortable with that and they don't have an option like even if I'm shopping for sports bras they make it look really fun, really flirty. They have all of the models on the posters and all the mannequins like stretched out so you can see their stomach and whatever, and I'm trying not to accentuate that part of my body ...so that part makes me feel very uncomfortable”

– Interviewee 1

Interviewee 5 discussed how while shopping with friends who were also trans people, other consumers would make comments about why they were in a given area of the store behind their backs. A similar sentiment was true for Interviewee 4 who would find themselves being misgendered because of a store worker who addressed a group of her and her trans friends with a gendered word. She might be affirmed by a statement of “hello ladies”, but her friends wouldn't be, which alienates them as consumers.

Something for Every Body

Fit issues related to gender were a common complaint among the participants. While most consumers experience fit issues at some point, being non-cisgender exacerbated these issues as people shopped in sections not designed for their body (i.e., a conflation of gender and biological sex made manifest through clothing). So participants without that body type had to make do with the selection, or shop in the section that fit their body type. These issues extend beyond general variability in fit for brands, as the consumers don't fall into the general expectation of a company's consumer base. For example, interviewee 4 discussed having to shop in the plus-size section because of her shoulder width, despite not being plus-sized.

"...yeah so I wind up shopping in plus-size sections even though I'm d-- I don't really come off as very plus-sized I just kind of have to to get something that to get tops there right actually my shoulder width, which is another struggle because that also comes with certain bust size limitations which I'm not quite. My boobs aren't quite big enough to fill this shirt out" –

Interviewee 4

Interviewee 1 shared their dissatisfaction with the gendering of items in stores. Because they were AFAB their proportions make it difficult for them to wear Men's styles, particularly pants, and even then Women's styles that interviewee 1

liked were not well fitting. They eventually said they shopped at a work clothing retailer because their selection was found to be rather neutral in style and fit.

“a lot of places that aren't just clothing stores such as like Target or Kohl's I can't usually shop there just because their clothes are very gendered and they're not. they just don't fit me very well even the women's clothes they don't fit me very well so I tend not to shop there” – Interviewee 1

Providing more information to consumers and having employees trained in fit were seen as helpful to this process. For example, participants found the ease of understanding the sizing of Men's clothing to be more understandable than the vague sizing of Women's. Having placards with fit information or body shape would also be helpful.

“...like how men's and women's pants are, they're very different ...how it is from men's it's two different things and that's easier to like find a sizing but with women's pants it's just arbitrary numbers that don't really make sense and don't correlate within different stores because it's like a size eight could be different from this in this store than it is from a different store” – Interviewee 5

A sub-theme that emerged in relation to having clothing of all types suited to all people was a question of what gender neutral clothing meant. While a majority of the survey participants were interested in the possibility of brands offering gender neutral clothing, some took issue with how it is conceived. They viewed many of the styles they see being described as gender neutral being more shapeless and masculine in nature, and thus similar to what we consider men's clothing to be. Because of this, the question of why a skirt or dress couldn't be neutral too was called into question.

“These clothes tend to be masculine styles in smaller sizes, which appeals to me specifically, but it promotes the idea that to be non-binary means being a masculine AFAB [assigned female at birth] person, and a lot of people feel alienated by this.” – Survey Response

“...as long as it's not just "Men's" clothes also marketed towards women, which most "unisex" items tend to be. A gender neutral dress product would be cool for that reason. As someone who is neither a man or a woman, it would make me more comfortable shopping for clothing that isn't inherently gendered.” – Survey Response

Rethinking In-Store Design

Several critiques of store design were put forth in the survey responses and interviews. The primary issue in this regard was the gendering of clothing, where participants found themselves uncomfortable to be shopping in the “wrong” section. To address this, two key solutions were put forth as possible ways to address this issue. The first involved the addition of a third genderless/unisex section, where items that don’t require too specific of proportions would be placed (e.g. t-shirts, flannel shirts, or sweatpants). The second solution put forth involved conflating all of the items that are similar together, and then organizing them by sub category, for example, placing all of the pants into one area of the store, and then separating Women’s and Men’s styles on separate racks. Here, masculine and feminine were sometimes preferred as a replacement for Men’s and Women’s.

“Nothing separated by gender/body type. Femme and masc clothes. Clothes for formal-ish stuff and casual stuff. Basically a big ole genderqueer version of Macy’s that is affordable and that fits my body right or has tailors available to do adjustments” – Survey Response

“Making it so the clothing itself isn’t targeted towards one gender, fashion has no gender so a skirt or a sweater that is targeted towards a certain gender is big enough or small enough as the right dimensions to fit all body types.” – Survey Response

Interviewee 3 did have an interesting comment in regards to the division though, where stores separated in this way acted as a safety net in comparison to stores that are intended for only one gender (e.g. Men's Wearhouse).

“I think that for me I like places that sell to both, like to all genders but even if they have it gendered in specific areas I feel like at least if I go into a place that includes all of it I won't stand out quite as much whereas if I tried to like go into like a Men's Wearhouse and I'm surrounded by like all these cis guys it would be really uncomfortable” – Interviewee 3

A lot of discussion was had about mannequins, particularly in the interviews. Participants were somewhat split on their opinions of them. Interviewee 5 valued their use as a styling and fit aid, where interviewee 2 found the mannequins' presence to be freaky and didn't like being in their 'personal space'. Despite the misgivings, interviewee 2 did want the clothing on the mannequin to be located by the mannequin. Interviewee 3 had a more elaborate opinion, citing the difference in how the mannequins appeared. Men's mannequins were more static and less posed in comparison to women's mannequins, ascribing this to stores using stereotypes in their mannequin usage.

“... they [retailers] highlight a lot of stereotypes just kind of like I don't know just like the difference in like male and female mannequins even is kind of obvious sometimes and yeah I guess that's the biggest thing with how they're displayed ...like model or mannequins who are supposed to represent a woman are very posed and poised and like kind of in like weird unnatural ways whereas a mannequin that's a guy I feel like a lot of times is just a torso sometimes for one or something if they're displaying a shirt and then it is just very static” – Interviewee 3

Welcome and Affirm, Don't Pander

A smaller theme was the issue of creating an affirming environment that felt honest. Concerns of faux-trans/gender variant inclusion was seen as an issue and seemed to impact the decision to patronize a store. For example, Interviewee 4 discussed misgivings with the trans-friendly campaign at Lush, citing this sort of practice as being tokenizing rather than affirming. The overt messaging became disingenuous because of this. It is unclear if this was store specific or companywide, however.

“yeah I mean that would be that would be nice having trans people in the modeling of clothes that would be nice. It would be nice to like have that recognition I guess. Not necessarily in a pandering kind of way like oh look having a whole marketing campaign based around it like oh look at us we're

so trans progressive and the thing that Lush is doing right now, like are you familiar with the thing Lush is? [Trans-flag used as a part of a product line in a way that felt like pandering] Yeah, I I'm not a fan of that, but like trying to make the company look good for it just be a little more subtle about it like have us in your advertisement sure just don't like make it a thing you know because that feels very tokenizing to me yeah” – Interviewee 4

On the other hand, Interviewee 5 had never witnessed, or had awareness of pandering behavior on the part of retailers, and didn't appear to have a strong opinion about it. Despite this, they did share ways in which to better include gender variant and non-cis people in retailing.

“...like tailoring certain clothing, if it was originally designed for men just like making it so it can fit different frames of people's body rather than just a set of like normal sizes for cis-men and then the same thing for women's clothes ... make sure it's like you're not ... like stopping certain groups of people from buying certain types of clothing because how it's fit cause it takes out from what you're going to make ... in profits from those people if they're not going to buy...” – Interviewee 5

Numerous other ways of supporting gender variant, trans, and non-cis people in retail were brought up in the other interviews and survey. Signaling

support for the community in a clear way (e.g., company policies and in store layout), thus making it clear that it is not just cisgender people's space, but gender variant people's as well. In addition, featuring more non-cis people in advertisements or mannequin displays that show clothing on different body types. Training employees in ways of talking with non-cis consumers and helping them with things like fitting to their body type without judgment.

Interaction Anxiety

When shopping for clothing, a number of participants discussed an anxiety tied to interpersonal interactions with both employees and other consumers. Being in a retail setting, dealing with other people is, generally, unavoidable, and so participants had to cope with the fear of discrimination from others. There wasn't necessarily an actualized threat, but the fear of what could happen was the core issue.

"Clothes shopping is generally very stressful for me and I always feel as though I have to have an excuse prepared in case someone accusingly asks me what I'm doing." – Survey Response

"... no problem unless a staff member hears my voice - then they bring me women's stuff (e.g., running store I recently went to - i requested a mens shoes in a specific size, and they brought the women's model) all too often. this annoys me." – Survey Response

“I don't normally interact with employees very much like I could be like looking around for a long time and they'd be like “you find everything okay” and even if I [am] completely not I'll just be like yeah [I'm] hav[ing] a great time” – Interviewee 3

The interviews illuminated an interesting add-on to this, where it appeared that these issues were worse earlier in their transition. Several of them discussed seeking clothing only when stores were empty, and appreciating self-checkout lines. The looming judgment (whether real or imagined) of others manifested an antisocial behavior. As someone further along in transition, interviewee 2 worked past this to agree to enact what she called small acts of trans resistance, i.e. presenting people with her presence as a statement of pride and resistance. This was not noticed in other participants, but it is clearly an interesting perspective on how to navigate retail environments.

Interviewee 4 talked at length about dealing with the thought of possible discrimination, even if it was unintentional. The idea of standing in line for a dressing room produced a concern for what others (other customers or employees) might think of the items in her basket. There was also a concern of being led to the wrong dressing room if the employee read her gender incorrectly. She would end up in awkward situations like this that made her uncomfortable, and this sentiment

was echoed by others in the survey and interviews. Dressing rooms as a whole clearly caused many issues, including accessibility and acceptance.

“...right like no one's going to ask a cis woman why she's trying on these jeans or whatever you know, at least I hope not. Yeah I think definitely a lot of that comes from just not being super confident or like feeling super safe trying clothes on as a trans person, like people do get aggressive about presentation and our existence and trying on certain clothes can sometimes just be a giveaway to the fact that we're trans or not trans...”

– Interviewee 4

“[I want] a way to anonymize who is taking what items into a dressing room, non-gendered dressing rooms, staff who I could trust not to out me or anyone else, and trust not to judge me for my fashion/gender expression decisions.” – Survey Response

In working to better deal with these issues interviewee 2 discussed seeking out employees who they perceived as being trans-friendly. Using cues from their dress or perceived persona to gauge how well interacting with them would be. In addition, they stressed that female and/or queer presenting employees were preferred over male presenting employees because they were seen as more safe to interact with.

Chapter Summary

In this presentation of the data we have clearly seen the needs, wants, and opinions of gender variant/non-cis people as consumers. The sample was small, but a diverse array of non-cis identities were represented with a college-aged sample who primarily shopped at major retailers like Target as well as thrift stores. They were conscious of the use of gender to divide stores, while somewhat desiring stores to recognize their identity, and have those retailers address numerous things important to the consumers. Online shopping was somewhat common amongst the participants, but the interviews highlighted some drawbacks to going online.

Despite the diversity in this population, a consistent set of issues became apparent to develop the five core themes. A sense of belonging illuminated non-cis consumers need to feel like they are meant to be in a retail environment. Something for everybody showed the clear need for sizing diversity that extends to gender variant bodies, allowing AMAB and AFAB people to find clothing that suits their body and style. Rethinking in-store design involved optimizing stores to accommodate all consumers. Welcome and affirm, don't pander related to the slippery slope of pandering marketing and actual inclusion, with gender variant people wanting to be recognized in a genuine way. Interaction anxiety is representative of the overwhelming fear and anxiety non-cis people discussed when thinking about interacting with other consumers or retail employees. Taking all of this data into account the next chapter will apply this knowledge, extrapolating

from this data broader thoughts about what these findings might mean in a broader sense.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Thinking further through the results discussed above, we begin by applying the findings with the literature reviewed earlier, adding additional thoughts and analysis. Comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing the results in this way expand the thinking of this information, and starts the process of making this research practical for those who might utilize it later on. In doing this, we thereby answer the research questions asked in this study. This section therefore follows the structure of literature, with additional analysis capping off the section. This provides the structure necessary to bring to some of the smaller details that come from the data, and leads us into the conclusion, limitations and future research sections.

Gender as a Construct

As previously established, the construct of gender is an ever changing thing. Gender variance in dress is not a new phenomenon (e.g. Nanda, 1990; Steele, 2013; Brayboy, 2017, Sept.), and gender identity, at least in a western/US context, has evolved to describe a person's self, independent from their biological sex (McKeage et al.; 2017). However, it is clear that this ideology hasn't become a permanent fixture in society yet. The presence of anti-trans/gender variant movements is one illustration of this being the case. People opposed to trans-rights often portray non-cis people negatively, and try to stir up moral panic about them (e.g. depicting them as predatory). This isn't surprising per se because any ideological shift takes time, especially those related to minority acceptance, it just strengthens the need for inclusion overall. Another illustration is through the results

of this study, which shows how acceptance of gender (based on this new definition) hasn't quite permeated the apparel market.

We see that retailers don't cater to this consumer group actively, and offer products for them. For products that are catered to this community, it seems more accurate to say we offer products to them, with an altruistic bent that rubs some people the wrong way. It is a step in the right direction, but these aren't consumers who want to be singled out, they want to be included with everyone else. They want to feel like they aren't terrible people who are making others uncomfortable, or feel fear about "shopping while trans." There are those who use their self-expression to make a statement, like interviewee 2, but looking at the rest of the sentiments shared by the participants it is not widespread. More importantly, non-cis people shouldn't have to make a political statement with their presence, at least in the context of shopping.

Greater inclusion into the retail market would greatly aid gender variant people not just as shoppers, but as members of society. We know that people are victimized and held back in society because they deviate from gender norms (Roberts, Rosario, Slopen, Calzo, & Austin, 2013; Toomey, Card, & Casper, 2014; Jones, Robinson, Oginni, Rahman, & Rimes, 2017), and perhaps even forced further into the closet. Yet, this is only so because we allow it to be this way. The multitude of people, young and old, aching to express their true selves is growing daily, and allowing for more people to find comfort in their gender identity and expression validates them. Many of the ideas and thoughts shared by the

participants lend themselves to simple solutions, and do not take away from cisgender people's experiences. In fact, retailers engaging with these consumers would be a clear sign of a permanent shift in the way we think about gender in society, and in some ways benefit everyone.

Think back to the earlier discussion of gender as politics, where the simple divisiveness of being non-cis has become the center of much political and social drama (e.g. "Restroom access for transgender employees," n.d., "Understanding the transgender community," n.d.; Block, Strangio, & Esseks, 2018, March 30). Much of this is attributable to the Trump administration and the rightward shift that comes with a republican presidency. The interaction anxiety held by many of the study participants therefore becomes very understandable, and demonstrates how much benefit would come from inclusion. For gender variant people a stranger isn't just a stranger, they are a potential antagonist for non-cis people. Interviewee 2 even brought up looking for queer signals (e.g. dyed hair, queer paraphernalia) as a way to find a sense of security. It should be said that participants didn't necessarily experience all outsiders as potential threats, but their vigilance was seemingly heightened. Regardless, increasing support for these individuals at a societal level would, in theory, be a great push towards lessening the severity of this anxiety.

While shopping none of the interviewees experienced great victimization in the retail environment, such as being verbally or physically attacked. Instead, misgendering and staring were regarded as the most common issues. This is possibly

the result of the participants geographic location, since they live in a liberal metropolitan area that may be more accepting than other places in the US. Misgendering is still a large issue though because it can otherize gender variant consumers, and could exacerbate gender dysphoria. Some participants were able to shrug these instances off in retrospect, despite not liking that they occurred. However, it was clear that it acted as an interruption to the shopping process and took them out of moment. People who live in more conservative areas might be impacted by this more negatively, which is concerning for the well-being of gender variant people.

It was intriguing to see that some of the discomfort they hold seemingly fades over time. That is not to say that the fear of victimization dissipates entirely, but people further in their transition were more at ease with navigating retail environments. This admittedly wasn't very strong within the data, but it does make sense and is worthy of discussion. The coming out process is not an easy one, and it takes time to adjust to one's identity. For the participants this was a process of becoming increasingly comfortable being in stores, particularly during busier hours. As one grows comfortable with their true self they find the confidence to be open with who they are. In that sense, their presence might act as a necessary exposure therapy for others, and make people reconsider how they view gender and non-cis people. The more comfortable we can make non-cis people feel as consumers the more this exposure effect could take hold. Essentially as exposure to non-cis people increases cisgender people will become more comfortable,

making non-cis people more comfortable. Thus it becomes a cyclical model that comes out as a net positive.

The Current Queer Consumer

Having considered what these results say about gender, we must push further into the consumption habits of these consumers. In certain respects the queer consumer is certainly a fickle one, in a unique way that sets them apart from their cisgender counterparts. Yet, in this study, we see that there is a lot of cross-over in these problems despite their unique attributes. The lynchpin to this connection is not just a need to belong and be recognized by a retailer, but common issues like clothing fit, product selection, and store set up. In some ways fulfilling these needs are the foundation a retailer builds to create a connection to their customers. This has led to many great strides for other groups who find themselves at odds with aspects of the retailers they visit. For example, the continued adoption of plus sized clothing in retailers offerings, and more diversity in cosmetics come from this desire, and there is no reason gender variant people can't experience the same.

Just like these other groups the additional weight associated with the minority status of being non-cis exacerbates the common issues seen in retailing, and even comes with issues unique to this population. The key themes presented here are strong proof for this. Being gender variant or non-cis makes one have a completely different experience in a store because of their identity. They must

enter a store while seeing clear signs that they aren't part of a retailer's consideration.

The most inclusion they might see would assumedly be during LGBTQ pride season, since many major businesses participate in pride events and release pride related products. For example, several companies like Nike and Target have released a pride collection in recent years (see Luttner, 2017, June 5). While not discussed in the interviews, it is interesting to consider the dual implications of these pride collections. On one hand it is a sign of growing acceptance in the retail market, and shows us that companies are invested in engaging with the LGBTQ community. On the other hand, it does strike some people the wrong way because it is a seasonal good, and some have called out the intentions of these companies. The takeaway here is that this is certainly a step forward, but more is also desired and one can hope this call will be answered.

The rise of unisex/genderless brands as a part of major store's selections is one of the more active shifts we do see in the market, but these brands and selections are often limited and don't address all of the issues experienced by gender variant consumers. Part of this is because the definition of what is gender neutral is somewhat limited usually, as evidenced by the participants questioning what gender neutral clothing is. Gender neutral clothing was cited as trending towards a more masculine, formless aesthetic, with no skirts or dresses regularly included. This definition issue is hard to address because it begets society detaching gender from what clothing items are appropriate for different people. It

is also unclear whether the influx of gender neutral clothing is a trend or a true fashion mainstay, so time will tell in that regard. Gender neutral clothing would most likely have to follow the traditional fashion cycle to fully transfer from niche apparel to mainstay fashion item. It is therefore partially in the hands of consumers to show support for these products.

However, in addition to unisex styles, there is this desire for trans specific goods. This doesn't just include clothing made to fit their proportions, but also garments like chest binders, a small addition to a retailers offerings that would demonstrate the strength of their support. Generally speaking garments like chest binders are only sold online, which is concerning since compression garments can be harmful if not sized correctly. In fact many people online create DIY tutorials and informational posts about how to safely bind one's chest (e.g. Healthier and Safer Ways to Bind Your Chest, 2017, October 27). Being able to try on garments like this in a store would make it easier to find a proper garment.

Online shopping was a somewhat common method of shopping for the participants, but some of the interviews highlighted some drawbacks to shopping online. Given the common complaints of the participants it makes sense that online shopping might not be beneficial to all of them. Fit issues are easily exacerbated by the lack of physical touch, and some participants mentioned difficulty related to returns. This possible association also makes sense with what some of the interviewees did while shopping online, such as scouting out potential items or purchasing more of a garment they had already bought in stores. However, without

a fuller examination it is too soon to make conclusive statements about online shopping.

It is also interesting to find that the few queer/gender variant brands people had even vague awareness of were thought to be online only. This thread wasn't actively pursued, but it is interesting to consider the ramifications of this in tandem with the lack of patronage for these brands from these participants. In wanting clothing tailored to themselves, non-cis people won't seek it out. Perhaps a sort of "out of sight out of mind" mentality happens because these retailers lack visibility. No brand has made a hard enough push to draw in these consumers. The reasoning is unclear, but most likely tied to the relatively small size of the population, hard to shift corporate structure, and general lack of knowledge about this group. This shows a clear gap for retailers to capitalize on, whether adding a section to their stores as described above or starting a new store.

Speaking of stores, it is interesting to look back at figure 2 and consider the stores the participants shopped at. We see many more budget conscious options and no luxury brands or specialty stores. This thriftier behavior makes sense given the demographics of the participants, but it does also highlight where these consumers are most in need of support. Stores like Target, H&M and so on would therefore benefit from engaging with these consumers, and better recognizing their patronage. The high number of thrift and second hand retailers isn't surprising given that these stores often beget exploration and unique dressing. The participants might be better able to articulate themselves in this freer environment,

and it would be interesting to consider how this more cavalier attitude might translate to traditional stores. Having started discussing stores in more depth, we will now discuss the retail environment and its branding in more depth.

The Retail Environment and Branding

From the information gathered above, it is clear that many of the core foundation-level things we hold to be evident in the retailing literature are relevant to this population. This population seeks to belong in a retail environment and feel like the store cares about them as people and not just as consumers. Despite the mixed results of Figures 3 and 6, the written responses and interviews point towards a deeper desire to be included. We also see in Figures 7-12, that all aspects of the retail environment have some importance to gender variant consumers. The tricky part is figuring out how to bring in and include non-cis people, while also keeping their cisgender counterparts satisfied. This is particularly true in places that show less support for these consumers. Welcoming one consumer shouldn't come at another consumer's expense when at all possible. So, in this section I will discuss various aspects of the retail environment and how to think about them.

Starting with the difficulty of what is "best" for the retail environment, we must understand that an environment that is 100% perfect for all isn't feasible. The use of gender labeling, for example, is useful not just for cisgender people, but non-cis people who identify as or near male or female. The issue of passing aside, it can be affirming to shop in these sections since you are buying clothing that

aligns with your identity. Whereas people whose gender is less aligned to these identities experience alienation. This most likely explains the rather mixed results in Figures 3 and 6. People who already have their gender identity somewhat recognized might not deem it important to have it be recognized, and products could be seen as aligning with their identity. On the other side, those with ill-aligned identities wouldn't see themselves in the products, and could feel like they need recognition. The various ways this can be achieved are abundant, so it is a process of seeing what is best for a given retailer.

Considering the topic of signage, the participants had many thoughts about how stores demarcate their products, discussing both positive and negative ways to go about utilizing signage in stores. The anxiety extended beyond being clocked, and included a worry of making other shoppers uncomfortable, such as the participants casting themselves as a harmful presence in the eyes of others. This reaction could be thought of as the participants not wanting to make real the assertions anti-trans propaganda tends to make. As well, in Figure 4 we see that they are highly aware of gender divisions by binary gender, in part because it was regarded as the only option for gender diversity in stores.

To solve this the general ideas put forth were to either break down the gendered barriers, or at least offer a third option to consumers. The former is perhaps more complicated, but it represents how gender variant people view clothing, as one survey participant said in reference to shopping in a gender neutral environment.

“Gender neutral [clothing stores] would also hopefully mean ... a place where people are not going to judge you for the clothing you're shopping for based on the gender they perceive you as.” – Survey Participant

This leap to a fully neutral store creates an equitable space meant for all people, therefore reducing the interaction anxiety that might come from the fear of being clocked. The issue with this is how it would work in implementation because of how widespread the use of gendered sections is. As well, in a society where gender is so divisive this might be a sudden shift for cisgender consumers to cope with. The latter option of adding a third section is perhaps more attainable then. In many ways the influx of gender neutral styles pushes us towards this.

Imagine a store with three main sections. The first section would contain female-oriented clothing, the next one more neutral styles that bridge the gap between men and women, and then the third more male-oriented clothing. This would offer non-cis people a place to shop more comfortably, and perhaps enable other customers to conceptualize the gray area of fashion over time. The terminology used by the participants also pointed to masculine and feminine as part of them defining their gender. This is interesting because even referring to clothing using these labels rather than gender might also create a place for people to explore without feeling out of place. Regardless, even in gendered sections, offering better fit information, and having employees trained to aid in finding the

best fit was important to some of the participants. They want to know if products will work for them sooner, rather than having to do a lot of hunting and size comparisons.

Another area of discussion for the store environment is overall branding of the business and its environment. Queer signaling, conspicuously or inconspicuously, would give non-cis consumers a clear sign that they can feel safe in an environment. This can be better enabled through promotional materials whether in advertising or social media. Interviewee 2 touched on this idea of wanting even a small sign that a store supported non-cis people, and interviewee 4 echoed a similar sentiment of wanting to be included without being singled out. Increasing gender variant people's connection to a brand may beget the positive self-image congruence described by Clairborne and Sirgy (2015), and make it easier for consumers to see themselves in a product. This would in theory help increase brand equity, which Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, and Donthu (1995) found valuable in increasing brand preference and purchase intention. Thus, connecting these consumers to a brand is essential to increasing their inclusion.

So, having gender variant people in advertising or in-store set ups, but mixed in with their cisgender peers would be helpful. Phrases that emphasize inclusivity of all people would also help this push. We live in a world where people of all sizes, colors, and genders want to be included. This even extends to mannequins, which some participants found themselves feeling distanced from because they mimic cisgender bodies, and were seen as wearing stereotypical

clothing. Breaking from this convention with multiple mannequin shapes, and a wider variety of stylings could go a long way toward inclusion. With this increased inclusion, interaction anxiety could be reduced because non-cis people would have a clear sign of their welcome in a store, and there would literally be something for every body. Having said this we revisit the last of the literature reviewed, to discuss theories of gender, stereotyping, self-monitoring, and gender consciousness.

The Mentality of the Gender Variant Consumer

The mentality, attitudes, and behaviors of gender variant people hold strong implications for the way we think about the various processes of the mind. The first thing to revisit is psychological gender identity, which in some ways provided an early description of gender diversity for the modern era by highlighting within-gender diversity (Palan, 2001). While this construct is limited in scope, the finding that gender is a multidimensional thing is something that is worth more examination in a broader sense. The issue of including trans, non-binary, and gender variant people in studies is not limited to the retailing literature, and, barring studies where they are the focus, they often are unaccounted for. Yet, how might various psychological theories and phenomena hold up to this population?

Take for example gender stereotyping, and the biases associated with it. Taking the findings from this study we see that two different events make themselves evident. One is when the participants unconsciously ascribing gendered traits to objects such as dress or their location in a store, and have difficulty moving past their perceived label, i.e., in some cases their direct label, as

with store signage. This is something that shouldn't come as a surprise for most, but we see this issue amplified when the participants here felt they didn't belong. The strength of a label was enough to breed discomfort in the participants, and they worried about the discomfort of other shoppers and what they might think. Therefore they shied away from the items they were looking at with the intent to keep all parties comfortable to the detriment of their shopping experience. This clearly impacts their overall shopping experience, thus hurting the profits of the retailers they visit.

The second event that can occur is assumption of gender we ascribe to other people. The general unease the participants had when shopping makes it very clear how much the possibility of discrimination weighs on gender variant people. The primary form of discrimination was misgendering by employees or other consumers. This clearly bothered the participants and could be considered the primary indicator of how accepted they feel in a retail environment. This is especially true for employee interactions, since they are associated with the store they work in. Consumers shouldn't have to hide what's in their carts in order to feel comfortable going to the dressing room. They should feel confident enough to approach an employee and ask for what they want. It is just that getting what they want can be impaired by employees not properly identifying the gender of the shoppers they are helping.

This leads nicely into a discussion of self-monitoring and gender consciousness, as they both clearly factor into this process of stereotyping and

might impact consumer's decisions. We know that self-monitoring causes people to be sensitive to how others might perceive them (Snyder, 1974), and that those who are high in self-monitoring have a habit of altering brand product preference due to this outside influence (Hogg et al., 2000). This social awareness seems rather similar to the anxiety felt by consumers, which did alter the participants behavior in store. In some cases, participants relegated in-store shopping to important items, and only sought items when they were needed. We can't be certain that this is true self-monitoring, but the similarity is notable and worthy of future study. Gender consciousness could possibly be the exemplification of what self-monitoring based of gender causes. Since we know valuing gender ideals is linked with a motivation to gender-conform (Good and Sanchez, 2010), any held consciousness of one's gender in a negative way could lead to non-cis people experiencing negative emotions. At the very least, it is clear that shopping in-store tends to have at least a mildly negative effect on gender variant shoppers.

Revisiting the Research Questions

Coalescing this information we turn back to the research questions specifically. To start, how do Gender Variant/Trans/Non-Cis people perceive US-based retail environments? Put simply, gender variant consumers tend to feel a disconnect from the way clothing is currently marketed. This is not enough to dissuade them from shopping, but it does impact their experience. The retail environment becomes a somewhat threatening place because gender variant people fear discrimination. They also lack a feeling of inclusion and see

themselves as disregarded more so than not accepted. In one way they have to serve themselves, navigating the retail environment in a way that works for them. For some this was a process of cautious travel, trying to minimize the amount of interpersonal contact, but others had more direct approaches

This disconnected non-cis people greatly, which brings us to ask what issues they had while shopping. The lack of support and inclusion is perhaps the most prominent, but several others came to the surface. In many ways these sub-problems are the cause of not feeling included. Fit issues and a lack of product selection were the most of these sub-factors. Many participants couldn't find well-fitting clothing items no matter what section they shopped in. Particularly interviewee 4 having to shop for clothing in the plus size section makes it clear how lacking retailers' selection is. Not having products suited to their shape or identity forces them to improvise, and is perhaps the reason thrift shopping was so common. This also seemed to make shopping require more of a hunt for an item, unless they were shopping for fun. Trying on multiple sizes from multiple sections could be a time consuming process that makes shopping undesirable.

They also lacked knowledge of retailers trying to support them, and some interviewees were against pink washing. The brands and retailers who do try to address their needs are unrecognized because they lack visibility. Non-cis people thus feel like they have no options, while they would appreciate for retailers to make space for them. This is particularly true of in-store shopping since their shopping is visible to others. Pink washing was less notable in the responses, but

for those who cared about it, it mattered. Consumer trust is built upon genuine outreach to serve them, as opposed to false appeals for the sake of getting gender variant people's hard earned money. They are willing to support companies that do try to appeal to them though, which is what makes it frustrating for them when they see nothing coming their way. It loops back to the feeling of being an outsider rather than a welcome guest.

There's also the question about how we translate the present study into clear, practical solutions. While future work will be discussed more in-depth in the following chapter, it is beneficial to generally discuss how to interpret this study on its own. This work represents one lens through which to examine this population and should not be taken as a magnum opus about what non-cis people's issues, desires, or thoughts related to the retail environment are, especially since this study took place in a more liberal area of the country. It also only represents a miniature sample of this population, which means that the themes only translate so far. It is interesting to consider how a greater number of responses might evolve them more fully. The biggest thing that should be clear by now is inclusion, inclusion, inclusion. There is such an opportunity to experiment in the retail space to bring gender variant people into the discussion. Smart businesses should use the findings here as a way to experiment and try new things, because greater equitability is worth it in the end. Now, as this thesis comes to a close, we move on to reflect back on this study, its limitations, and more fully discuss where we can go from here.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion, Limitations and Future Work

In this chapter, the limitations of this study will be discussed. In addition, suggestions will be made for future work to build off of this study, and retailers will be given ideas for how to interpret this work for their uses. We will end with an overall conclusion of this work.

Limitations

As with any study there are several limitations to this study that need to be addressed. First, this study was limited to a specific geographical area, and may not be representative of gender variant people broadly. The fact that it is a liberal leaning metropolitan area also holds implications for how open the participants can be. Having studies in more conservative areas could illuminate new insights about how gender variant people shop. As well, the population size was rather small, which is a difficulty natural to looking at a relatively small community. The participants were also rather young, with a majority of them being around college age. Expanding the amount of participants observed would allow for more in-depth analysis, and the attitudes and behaviors of different non-cis identities could be compared to see what differences might be apparent.

This data also relied on the users to report their experience rather than seeing their shopping process in person, or meeting with them directly after a shopping experience. This is a limiting factor because it means the participants had to rely on memory. Some may have shopped just before participation, and some may have not shopped for months, so the accuracy of some of their

experiences could be skewed by time. As well, since the interview participants were a smaller sample drawn from the overall survey population, their views might not fully translate to all of the participants' experiences.

This work involves a qualitative analysis, which, given the lack of literature in this subject area, serves as a strong foundation for future work to build from. However, as established earlier, it is impossible to completely avoid any biases in this analysis and interpretation, and so future work should clarify and expand out from this base. This study should be considered one push towards filling the gap about this segment of consumers. Building on this work using both qualitative and quantitative methods should therefore be taken to validate and improve upon the present findings. This moves into what future work should occur, and how studies might shape themselves to better examine this population

Implications for Future Research

First and foremost, including this population into future studies is a necessity, whether they are about gender or not. Gender variant people are not anomalies because of their gender identity, or uncooperative participants because they don't pick male or female in demographics sections. They are more than "don't know/unsure/choose not to reply" they are unique, interesting people, whose opinions have broad implications for a multitude of subjects, even beyond retailing. Using a fill in the blank box for gender is one solution, or offering more options in the gender section of limitations is essential to correctly include these participants. It should also be said that saying "transgender" as an all-inclusive term is also ill-

advised. Transgender as a term can refer to trans-women, trans-men, or any number of other identities. Meaning, a wide variety of people would be conflated in a way that could muddle results, particularly those of a quantitative nature.

Tied to this is the need to be cautious in how you approach this group. As a marginalized group, they are hesitant when engaging with others, and may be put off by researchers who don't tailor their studies to them. A smart approach is to follow a method similar to how one might conduct an ethnography, and find a gatekeeper to facilitate the interactions. This study, for example, utilized a college group that is for LGBTQ people. One member read over the study to make suggestions, and helped disseminate the study. This improved the overall wording of the questions, and, in theory, gave a trustworthy face to the participants taking the study. It would also be beneficial to have non-cis people see any papers or presentation derived from research, to ensure the language used is appropriate.

Thinking about quantitative work, academics might develop studies that allow for statistical analysis and comparisons. For example, comparing non-cis people to their cisgender counterparts would allow us to compare and contrast the populations on a variety of topics. Everything from evaluating retailing scenarios to product evaluations would make for interesting analysis, and make it easier to serve both populations. Even the many studies that used gender as a variable could be repeated with gender variant people mixed in. Doing these things will build from the rather foundational questions asked in this study, and push into more complex areas of inquiry.

It would also be beneficial to include more qualitative data, whether alone or through a mixed or multi-methodology. Researchers might observe queer shoppers to see how they behave while shopping, and then interview them about their experience. Perhaps even mocking up an in-store environment to create different conditions, such as changing up how gender is presented. This would greatly expand on the discomfort the participants here reported because it would be observed in real time. This could also include an analysis of the interactions between gender variant shoppers and retail workers. This could follow methods similar to Schreer et al. (2009), or use other techniques. It should go without saying that confederates should be actual non-cis people, and not people posing as such.

Generally speaking, it would be of interest to look at the impact of store gendering on consumers. Not only do stores divide their clothing by gender, but many market to one gender (e.g. Victoria's secret, J Jill, Men's Wearhouse). Having consumers of different genders shop in these stores and rate their experience might illuminate some interesting things about how gender impacts people's behavior and mindset. Observation would also be useful here, since you could see how people of different genders behave in different sections in a natural way. The only issue here is that one would have to assume gender if a true, non-intervention study were to be conducted. This is a rather limiting factor, but not wholly prohibitive to interesting discoveries.

Visiting smaller retailers/brands that cater to this community would also be an interesting path to follow. We could see how consumers behave in a more

gender inclusive environment compared to one that is less so. It would also be a great opportunity to see how cisgender and gender conforming people behave and feel in this kind of environment. These smaller venues essentially offer a focused playground of possibility, and, in theory, give opportunities for researchers to share their findings more broadly since large retailers may keep information confidential.

Finally, coalescing a database of anthropometric data (Akin to the ANSUR or CAESAR body measurement databases) on this population would be very beneficial for academics and retailers alike. With this, it may be helpful to revisit sizing systems and methods to evaluate if this population impacts them. Care will need to be taken in approaching these communities to gather this data, but if amassed it would greatly aid our ability to develop products for them. People interacting with the non-cis people should be properly trained, and sensitive towards them during any measurement or scanning process. It is no surprise that one's body can be a very personal topic for many, and non-cis people should be able to offer as much as they wish without coercion. This discussion of product development related topics leads nicely into what retailers can do for this population.

Implications for Retailers

Retailers have several things they can learn from this work, because there is a gap in the mainstream apparel market that has yet to be addressed. Certainly smaller retailers have been popping up with a focus on gender variant people, but these brands are limited in their recognition. So, for existing brands large and

small, this section details a variety of pathways that companies can take to better tailor their environments to non-cis people. Additionally people looking to develop new brands might utilize this information to guide their corporate structure and marketing. It is important to say that this isn't necessarily an all at once change that needs to happen. Making small steps and working through different aspects of this inclusion problem is a completely viable path to take, and brands should ideally self-select things that are most achievable and work from there.

The first thing any brands/people looking to engage with gender variant consumers should do is work to expand their recognition and product offerings. Bringing in non-cis influencers to develop and promote products and utilizing their insider knowledge when entering this market and developing products will allow retailers to properly meet their needs. Having transgender or non-binary fit models to develop their clothing, or perhaps creating mannequins based off of their proportions would go a long way to show their true support and develop better progress. This will require some rethinking of how to denote the shape of clothing, which offers a unique opportunity to reflect on how we all view various apparel products. One could see these items rolled out as new brands within a stores offering and be given floor space as well, akin to how plus size clothing has been. This will depend on the brand and their unique circumstances, but the breadth of possibilities should be considered.

In developing these products, companies will have to understand that the concern of pink washing is real. This means that consumer trust will need to be

built over time, and that retailers should expect some initial suspicion of their motives. Utilizing the above suggestions will go a long way to assuaging these fears, and they should, of course, tailor their marketing campaigns to promote a genuine, supportive message. It's this continued idea of inclusion that should be front and center, with earnest truth behind it. An ingenuine appeal could lead to quite the backlash, and may even bring the ire of LGBTQ organizations. It would also be beneficial to own up to any past grievances associated with the company that might relate to non-cis people. Owning one's mistakes would show good will, and mitigate any fallout it could have caused.

To develop a better retail environment, retailers should work to address the issue of discomfort and fear of judgement. First and foremost, employees should be trained to interact with people of all genders. Having them greet customers without gendered words is a simple first step, and having them properly ask what clothing customers prefer, when applicable, would also be beneficial. Case in point, some participants found that employees brought the wrong gendered item even in times when they made it clear what they wanted. This might be a benevolent gesture in the mind of an employee, but it is seen as a sign of disrespect and doesn't sit well with people. Training employees in this way might actually improve all consumers' experience because it shows.

The way product information is displayed and labeled is another thing that retailers should be conscious of. As discussed earlier, the gendering of store sections does negatively impact some gender variant consumers. Addressing this

is difficult, but some experimentation with labeling could greatly aid gender variant consumers experience. For example, including non-cis models in in-store imagery, or having mannequins that show clothing on different body types. Providing additional information on the fit of clothing in-store and online would also be helpful. This would let non-cis people know what to expect from the fit of the clothing, and having staff knowledgeable about fit might also aid non-cis consumers in finding the best products for them.

Having gender neutral spaces in stores is also a possibility. First and foremost, offering gender neutral bathrooms and dressing rooms is a great way to support this community and increase their in-store comfort. In fact, many companies have already begun to do this. Participants sometimes felt deterred by gendered dressing rooms because they didn't know where to go. This was a combination of worrying about passing and making other people uncomfortable. Making these gender neutral spaces is an easy way to include people without alienating others, because it promotes a message that everyone belongs. Adding gender neutral sections to stores could also be beneficial. As discussed earlier, this is a good first step to get people used to having a more gender inclusive shopping environment. Given the amount of retailers adding gender neutral and unisex clothing to their selection, it is imperative that they create a space for them in store.

The big issue is how to coordinate all of this into happening, which is especially pressing for large established businesses. Hard set corporate structures

can be difficult and even scary to change because they may alienate existing consumers. To start policies related to diversity and training on same should be integral to companies looking to genuinely attract this community, or any community for that matter. When it comes to this training it should work to have a meaningful impact, because a lot of training methods are ineffective in actual changing behavior. A lot of this has to do with lazy implementation, a lack of roleplay scenarios that put people in the mindset of others, and poor upkeep of training. There is no “one and done” intervention that can fix everything, and mindfulness is required.

Moving beyond mere training, creating groups focused on diversity is a great start because they can brainstorm within the company. This lets employees work together and share their diverse experiences, which, in theory, will allow for better end products. With this, it would be beneficial to bring in outside consultants/experts to help moderate and check up on the groups as they explore diversity. This will prevent insular thinking and provide an “expert” for employees to refer to as needed. They could be non-cis people, or people who are very involved with this community, and there is certainly the possibility of bringing in multiple people. Their involvement could be done in many ways, but it should have them fully involved within the idea generation (or at least very well informed). Having only a cursory view of a project might make it hard to assess the work being done and offer suggestions. These experts could also have informational interviews with employees and have more focused one on one discussion about

how changes can be enacted. Essentially it is important to have these individuals connected, in person, to as many people as possible as easily as possible.

For smaller companies/brands, or ones that are just being formed, there is a lot of opportunity for engage with non-cis people that larger businesses don't have. People can be actively recruited into the organization to focus on non-cis consumers (or LGBTQ consumers as a whole) and have better access to the entire company. People brought in to emphasize diversity can therefore be better able to aide in company/brand wide initiatives and oversee things easier. Small brands also are less rigid in their structure and can adapt more easily, and entering a market, like appealing to non-cis people, can be a more centralized focus sooner. The same need to be genuine is still there, but the ability to better engage with non-cis people and more localized communities can make this process of proving oneself easier.

Regardless of company/brand size there clearly a lot that can be done to address the wants and needs of this community. It feels necessary to reiterate that slow change is an acceptable path, and that there are many paths to follow. Time, effort, money, and passion are required for companies/brands to get their foot in the door, and persistence is needed to keep on the right track. Imagine a company setting up a test space in select stores to see how gender neutral might perform, or a small brand having pop up stores across the county. See retailers large and small engage with influencer and activists to develop meaningful additions to their product line. Consider how we think about clothing and what that could mean for

how we deliver products now, and how we might rethink our perceptions to benefit more people.

Conclusion

Having taken all of this in we see that gender variant consumers present us with an interesting and challenging opportunity for discovery, and they challenge many of the things we hold to be true. Through this study we have begun to uncover the issues these consumers have, which primarily center around a need to belong within the retail environment. The fit issues with clothing, lack of representation in advertising, and inherent anxiety that cropped up pushed these consumers to the sidelines. Having hammered in time and time again how these issues impact non-cis people it is the hope of this work to inspire others to do more. This isn't a master work on this group of people, and they have so much to offer retailers and academics who might be interested in them in the future.

In summarizing this work it is pressing to remember that gender is an ephemeral concept that isn't the same for everyone. Whether one is cisgender, transgender, non-binary, or agender, each person expresses and interprets their gender differently. It is just that we live in a society that crams people into two defined slots: Men and Women. This served us well for a time, because gender variance wasn't as recognized in modern western society. However, it is now clear that we are starting to shift our perceptions. Non-cis people are here to stay and deserve recognition because they are just people who are finally able to start expressing themselves fully. Filling this gap in both the retail market and academic

literature is a great step in the right direction. Continuing this momentum will take time and energy, mistakes will probably be made and discoveries will be had, but getting these consumers products that suit them and making them feel welcome crafts a powerful message of acceptance

Returning to the Judith Butler quote from the beginning of this thesis, I find its sentiment as true as it was in 1997. The internally unstable affair that is being a man or being a woman forces us to constrain ourselves by stereotypes we create ourselves. In some ways we assume a sort of biological determinism to our differences, but it doesn't seem so clear cut. Yet, in seeking to be this norm that we can never quite do we sacrifice our uniqueness and expression for the sake of fitting in. At the end of the day this study isn't just about non-cis people, it is about all people. Cisgender people are just as benefitted by inclusion as their gender variant counter parts, and in this welcoming we might loosen the shackles of being a man and being a woman, not to force them to a new norm per se, but rather giving them the chance to find their own true self. Giving all genders a chance to celebrate their differences is important, and in doing so perhaps we can make gender a more stable affair.

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Appendix A: Interview and Survey Materials

Survey Text

Title of Research Study: Conceptualizing the Needs of Gender Variant Consumers

Researcher: Robert Pettys-Baker under the supervision of Marilyn DeLong Ph.D.

Supported By: This research is supported by the Department of Design, Housing and Apparel at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you identify as either: transgender, genderfluid, genderqueer, agender, gender variant, or any other gender identity that isn't cisgender.

What should I know about a research study?

- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.
- You are free to skip any question for whatever reason.
- CW: This survey is about your experiences shopping, and has questions that could potentially trigger dysphoria.

Who can I talk to? For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call the study team at:

Researcher Name: Robert Pettys-Baker

Researcher Affiliation: University of Minnesota

Phone Number: PHONE NUMBER

Email Address: EMAIL This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants' Advocate Line at 612-625-

1650 or go to <https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns>.

You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done? This study seeks to understand how non-cisgender people (referred to as gender variant people) experience retail settings. This includes what they like, dislike, and would like to see from apparel retailers. This is being done so that we can further understand gender variant people as consumers, and expand the relatively sparse literature about them. Allowing for apparel retailers and academics to better serve gender variant people in the apparel marketplace.

How long will the research last? We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately 15-20 minutes.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 30-50 people here will be in this research study out of 30-50 people in the entire study nationally

What happens if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research”? Through consenting to participate in this research study, you are agreeing to participate in a brief survey where you will answer questions about the current apparel market based on your experiences. Focused primarily on the retail environment itself, you will highlight what you like, dislike, and what you would like to be in the apparel market.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research? You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

What happens if I say “Yes”, but I change my mind later? You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you. If you decide to leave the research, contact the investigator so that the investigator can know of your withdrawal. Upon withdrawal all data you have given will be removed from the data set and be disposed of securely.

What happens to the information collected for the research? Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including

research study, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this institution.

Will I have a chance to provide feedback after the study is over? The Human Research Protection Program may ask you to complete a survey that asks about your experience as a research participant. You do not have to complete the survey if you do not want to. If you do choose to complete the survey, your responses will be anonymous. If you are not asked to complete a survey, but you would like to share feedback, please contact the study team or the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). See the “Researcher Contact Information” of this form for study team contact information and “Who do I contact?” of this form for HRPP contact information.

Will I be compensated for my participation? If you agree to take part in this research study, you will have the option to enter into a random drawing to win one of two \$15 target gift cards. This is entirely optional, and will not impact your participation in this survey. The odds of winning one of the gift cards is roughly one in twenty.

Proceeding with this survey signifies your agreement to participate in this research study

Please retain a photograph and/or screenshot of this form for your records

The questions below will ask you various things about your shopping needs and preferences, or have you respond to a statement. They will either ask you to rate your agreement, or have you write a small paragraph. Please read each question carefully, and respond to the best of your ability.

I tend to shop:

- Online (1)
 - Instore (2)
 - Both (3)
-

The stores that I typically shop for clothing in are (For example, Target):

I shop in stores that organize their selection by binary gender (For example, The Gap or Nordstroms). Why or why not?

I shop in stores that offer products targeted towards only one gender (For example, J Jill or Men's Wearhouse). Why or why not?

My ideal retail environment would include:



What would you like to see more of from apparel retailers?



The problem(s) I have when shopping for clothing are:



Some retailers have begun to offer product lines that are gender neutral. Would this be appealing to you? Why, or why not?



What, if anything, would you like to see from these product lines?

The questions below will ask you various things about your shopping needs and preferences, or have you respond to a statement. They will either ask you to rate your agreement, or have you write a small paragraph. Please read each question carefully, and respond to the best of your ability.



It is important for me to feel that my gender identity is recognized in a retail environment.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat Disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly Agree (7)
-

The products I find in stores align with my gender identity.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat Disagree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - somewhat agree (5)
 - agree (6)
 - Strongly Agree (7)
-

I am aware of the use of gender as an organization tool in most retail environments. (Men's section and Women's section)

- Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Neither disagree nor agree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly Agree (7)
-

It is not important if retail environments recognize my gender identity.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat Disagree (3)
 - Neither disagree nor agree (4)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Agree (6)
 - Strongly Agree (7)
-

The following are important to me in a retail environment:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Accessible Dressing Rooms (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affirming Store Environment (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Positive Employee Interaction (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
well-Fitting Garments (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Store Fulfilling Gender Related Needs (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling Like You Belong (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (Please Specify) (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please explain the ratings above.



Do you have any additional thoughts you would like to share?

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 3

Demographics



Gender



Age

Click to write the question text

- Black (1)
 - Asian (2)
 - Native American or Alaska Native (3)
 - Latino (4)
 - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (5)
 - White (6)
 - Other (Please Specify) (7)
-

If you would like to be entered to win one of two \$15 Target gift cards, please provide your email. This information will not be shared with anyone except the researcher.

If you would be interested in participating in an interview, please check this box and provide your email above. Agreeing to the interview will not affect your chances in the survey raffle.

Yes, I am willing to be interviewed. (1)

Thank you so much for your participation!

Interview Text

Intro text:

Hello, my name is Robbie Pettys-Baker, thank you for participating in this interview. Before we begin I would like you to read through this consent form carefully, and ask any questions you have at this time. Take as much time as you need.

[give time for filling out consent form]

Interview start text:

[Begin audio recording if participant agrees to it]

I'm interested in how transgender/gender variant/non-binary individuals feel in retail environments. This includes things such as: store/product organization, lighting, dressing rooms, or other things that might be a part of a retail setting. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability, and don't hesitate to ask any clarification questions.

1. Please describe your gender identity and what it means to you.
2. What planning goes into choosing which store you will or will not shop in and why?
3. How do you decide where to shop?
 - a. What is your process for shopping for clothing?
 - b. how do you navigate through a store?

4. What do you like to see in a retail setting?
5. What do you not like to see in a retail setting?
6. What do you think of how clothing is displayed in stores?
7. What experiences, positive or negative, have you had in stores, related to your gender identity.
8. Is there anything else you would like to share on anything we have discussed today?

Closing Text:

[Give participant gift card]

I would like to thank you again for your participation in this study. Once again, if you have any questions do not hesitate to get in touch. Have a good day!

Study Advertisement Text

Hello,

I am seeking participants in a research study about non-cisgender people, and how they feel in retail environments. This includes what people like or dislike when shopping for apparel, and what they would like to see change in retail settings to better serve them as customers. Transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary or otherwise gender variant people are relatively underserved in both retail settings and academic literature. Through your participation it is our hope to begin to fix this issue. CW: this survey is about your experiences shopping, and has questions that could potentially trigger dysphoria.

The study will involve both short answer and scaled questions, and is expected to take no more than 15-20 minute of your time.

You will have the option to enter a random drawing to win one of two \$15 target gift cards, and you will also have the option to consent to be contacted to possibly be interviewed. The odds of winning are roughly one in twenty. If selected to be interviewed, you would be asked additional questions about your experiences in the retail market, and receive a \$30 target gift card as compensation.

Please follow the link below in order to take the survey, do not hesitate to contact me, Robert Pettys-Baker, at EMAIL or my advisor Marilyn DeLong at EMAIL with any questions regarding the study. You may also contact the Human Research Protections Program at 612-625-1650 or go to <https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns> with any concerns regarding the study.

At the beginning of the survey you will find further information regarding the study and your participation.

In addition, if you are willing, please share this survey with others who may fit the needs of this survey.

Appendix B: Interview Transcriptions and Notes

Interview 1

Interviewer: so I guess to start if I may ask for gender identity and preferred pronouns

Interviewee 1: okay my name is Michael my preferred gender identity is gender fluid and I use he/him and they/them pronouns

Interviewer: great and for you what does your gender identity mean to you

Interviewee 1: um it means like Who I am and who I would ideally be because obviously as someone who is not cisgender I do-- can't be who I visualize myself as so my gender identity is how I express like my ideal self

Interviewer: okay and what plays into that expression

Interviewee 1: I guess like behavioral mannerisms uh clothing those are really the only two that I have right now because I'm not actually transitioning so

Interviewer: yeah okay and then so as with the survey this is a lot about the store environment and employees so I guess uh what planning goes into choosing which store you will or will not shop in

Interviewee 1: um I like to go to the stores where because I have to buy women's clothing I go to the stores where the women's clothing fits multiple body types and also isn't... like skinny jeans I won't buy I prefer clothes that are more masculine cut or just not cut to reveal your form just kind of to be clothes

Interviewer: yeah yeah so very sort of I mean just use the term maybe neutral

Interviewee 1: yeah I try to buy more neutral clothes

Interviewer: okay and do you do any sort of research first or like do you look anything up online say or

Interviewee 1: I try to look online because I usually have to go in store to figure out what fits but I sometimes do online shopping to figure out what kind of material because materials with a lot of spandex are usually more form-fitting

Interviewer: yeah yeah okay and well I suppose could you give me an example of a few stores

Interviewee 1: so like I buy my pants at LL Bean because they have a cut that's like their work pants and so they're very straight leg cut very thick denim and so it is not spandex it doesn't stretch and it's also not like cut to reveal my hips or anything so that's where I preferred my buy my pants because in other places they have a lot of spandex in them or they're cut to like accentuate your legs and your hips and I don't want that

Interviewer: yeah okay and when when like when you're in a store what is your process through for going through a store so let's imagine we're on a shopping trip and you're you know you're walking through store what would your typical process be like

Interviewee 1: well I usually go to stores looking for a certain item so I will often first go to the men's section and see if anything there fits if it does I'm good but if it doesn't I have to go to the women's section and find something that looks more neutral but can fit my body type

Interviewer: okay yeah so so you'd say maybe you're a very direct shopper you sort of maybe not a specific item but you know I want a pair of jeans today so I'm going to find

Interviewee 1: yes I don't like shopping so I go there for one thing and I leave

Interviewer: gotcha gotcha and would you ever ask a like a retail worker or anything for help or use something else

Interviewee 1: yeah if I've looked up a specific item or I know exactly what kind of cut of like shirt or pants I want and I can't find it I will ask an employee for help

Interviewer: okay um lets see and what do you like in a retail setting itself so if we're talking purely environment and I'm talking sort of all five senses if for if we were to make the perfect store for you what would we ideally see

Interviewee 1: I would like it not to be so divided by gender I'd like it to be divided by the style of the clothing being sold or like there's a shirt section and then within the shirts they'll have like v-necks and low-cut shirts and within the section itself you may divided by gender because for some things like women obviously have breasts so they need different cut shirts so that thing it can be divided but clothes that can be worn by either gender in in my ideal environment would be just grouped together and anybody would feel comfortable shopping there

Interviewer: yeah so sort of a specific even maybe a third section would you say

Interviewee 1: yeah maybe

Interviewer: okay any sort of sensory things and you sort of lighting preference layout sort of things

Interviewee 1: I prefer the layout to have like often they'll have like a women's section on one floor in a men's section on another floor and I prefer that items that are similar to be grouped together just like all the pants are on one floor and all the shoes are on one floor and it's not divided by gender like where there's a big difference you can't just go look at men's pants and then you walk all the way over to another side to look at women's pants

Interviewer: so you're not running all over basically

Interviewee 1: yeah

Interviewer: that makes sense and then what... do you use dressing rooms

Interviewee 1: ah yes I do use dressing rooms because I have to try all the things yeah

Interviewer: do you like dressing rooms generally

Interviewee 1: uh no not really cuz I I don't feel comfortable going into the men's dressing room especially because when I shop I'm usually with my mother so we use the women's dressing room but I always feel kind of awkward in there

Interviewer: okay is that if I mean I don't want to get too personal but is it then you don't feel like you belong in there

Interviewee 1: I don't feel like I belong there and because I don't feel like I belong there I also feel kind of like voyeuristic because I see women like bringing in bras or whatever else they're trying on and I just feel out of place and kind of like a creep almost

Interviewer: okay gotcha and if I can ask when if you're ever shopping in the men's section do you ever feel uncomfortable just because people might visually perceive you differently I realize that might be a little

Interviewee 1: no when I'm shopping in the men's section I don't really notice people looking at me because there are often people shopping in the mens section that I've noticed that aren't necessarily meant

Interviewer: yeah okay um and then what do you not like to see so flipping it on it head and what would you not your no— your non ideal

Interviewee 1: I would not like to see clothes that don't really perform the function that they're designed to perform like a lot of women's clothes they'll have like flannel shirts that are really thin and like low-cut and they aren't warm and they don't do what a flannel shirt is supposed to do and a lot a lot of women's clothes are like that which is one of the reason I prefer the mens section just because the clothing has a better quality and does what it's supposed to do

Interviewer: yeah okay anything else you can think of

Interviewee 1: I like the I just forgot what I was gonna say

Interviewer: No worries

Interviewee 1: it'd be nice if they had more options for different body types but like right now I don't like to see where they only have like one a couple sizes and they only go up to like eight because most people aren't under eight like I'm not under an eight so I don't like it when I can't find clothes that fit me and the ones that do fit me are not at all like the smaller sizes they're just kind of like not like maybe you'll find a size 16 but it's not really cut for a size 16 person it's like they took a 2 and made it to fit a size 16 waist but then the rest of it's all out of proportion as well

Interviewer: that's sort of how it works with pattern making

Interviewee 1: yeah I know [laughs]

Interviewer: um and then and then what do you think about how clothing is displayed in stores and this is whether it's on a mannequin or on a table however you know what do you think about what do you like and don't like that sort of thing

Interviewee 1: um often on the mannequins I don't see a lot of the more like gender-neutral clothing it's often very masculine or very feminine and that's what they decide to put on the mannequins and so it'd be nice if some of the more gender-neutral clothing was up on the mannequins so I could see what it would look like on a real person but instead I just have to look like on the clothing rack and try and guess what it would look like before I try it on

Interviewer: yeah and and then it related to your gender identity if you can could you tell me some experiences either very positively or very negative you've had in relation to that sort of you shopping and in any way um if that makes sense

Interviewee 1: it's really a negative when I have to like shop for bras because I still have to wear them but the whole aisle is just meant to me like very flirty very fun they're trying to make it really sexy and I don't I don't feel comfortable with that and they don't have an option like even if I'm shopping for sports bras they make it look like really fun really flirty they have all of the models on the posters and all the mannequins like stretched out so you can see their stomach and whatever and I'm like trying not to accentuate that part of my body so that part makes me feel very uncomfortable

Interviewer: yeah so sort of the pictorial content and that sort of because they often show the product

Interviewee 1: because they want you to envision yourself in that scenario and I don't

Interviewer: and ironically

Interviewee 1: yeah

Interviewer: yeah yeah okay and any other sort of experiences that come to mind while you've been shopping have you ever found a store that you feel caters very well to sort of a neutral

Interviewee 1: um so far I have not found a retail store that caters to that I can find like sections if you go to like Duluth trading company because they're meant more for like work pants those are almost gender-neutral because they are all similar types like so the pants on the women's section in the men's section are pretty much the same

Interviewer: yeah very standard sort of

Interviewee 1: yeah very standard work cut whatever else

Interviewer: no nonsense

Interviewee 1: yes

Interviewer: let's see well let's see wow we're blasting through these well let me sorry I'm trying to think of a good follow up well let's go back to the sort of process and maybe like even more step-by-step walk through it so are you when you're when you're thinking of it are you going to a very specific store even because I know you talked about going to a very specific

Interviewee 1: yeah I usually go to a very specific store because I'll look up whatever I want I usually like my pants will wear out and I'll buy the exact same one so whatever story I bought it from before I'll just go back there

Interviewer: okay alright and um you know there's a lot of sort of talk about neutral clothing especially in sort of the cultural zeitgeist right now as one more more people are identifying beyond you know cisgender male and cisgender female and do you how how are you are you sort of seeing these being reflected in stores more let's say compared to a couple of years ago and they're yeah I guess that's a question

Interviewee 1: I'm seeing more like the female mannequins and models wearing what could be considered more androgynous like they're wearing more pants less revealing tops but I wouldn't say that they're really being gender neutral or crossing any kind of a gender binary they're still definitely feminine and masculine and at least the stores I shop at I have not really seen any of the gender-neutral things pop up

Interviewer: yeah and so if you were to sort of make a case to it the stores you shop at so like an open letter from you right now what would you say what would your your request be if..

Interviewee 1: my request would probably be to have like a third section in which you would place items that are not really one of the other may be a little bit of both because not only for gender variant people and transgender people but also sometimes men and women just don't want to be hyper masculine or hyper-feminine they want something in between so I think that that item would not just be for the gender variant people but also for everyday people who maybe necessarily don't want to wear a dress every day yeah sometimes they just want to wear pants or they don't necessarily want to wear pants maybe their guy and they want to wear a skirt but there still definitely a cisgender man

Interviewer: yeah yeah and I just forgot my question and um is there any stores you will not shop at period

Interviewee 1: because of this or just in general

Interviewer: ah not because of this necessarily in general is there anything that either you've had a bad experience or you've heard bad things or you just don't prefer them

Interviewee 1: um I tend not to shop at Walmart that's just because like their clothes are kind of you know cheap they're meant to not really fit you the best I don't shop at places like american eagle or aerie I don't remember what it's called but the

really expensive clothing stores because not only can I not afford them but they're also extremely um gendered so I don't feel comfortable shopping there

Interviewer: and what do you mean like extremely gendered

Interviewee 1: I mean like even in all of their ads like the girls pants are like skinny jeans and all of their tops are really low-cut and to show like their collarbone and their breasts and their shoulders and I want a shirt that covers all of those things

Interviewer: yeah yeah okay and sort of going back earlier based off of something you said you sort of talked about how uh women often sort of have that in a way permission to go into a men's section do you feel that the reverse is true

Interviewee 1: I don't think that society is accepting of men who shop in what are considered women's sections

Interviewer: yeah yeah and could you elaborate on that

Interviewee 1: um well I see like moms or whatever and sometimes the kids themselves shopping in the men's section looking for different shirts or pants but I've never seen a boy over the age of like six go into a women's section with his mother or ever a boy or man alone in the women's section

Interviewer: yeah and I guess getting into sort of more how you dress I mean we've sort of talked about it in day to day but let's say what would you what would you say your standard outfit so we're saying you're not like I'm sick and super tired and I don't want to like you know the standard day

Interviewee 1: during the winter my standard is usually a sweatshirt because it's cold but during the summer I prefer to wear longer shorts or jeans and then like I like wearing flannels collared shirts especially or just a regular t-shirt nothing fancy

Interviewer: yeah um we've flown through these this is like well I admit this is my first interview so I'm working on pacing and stuff but I'm really happy with the information

Interviewee 1: if you need more on any of the questions we can go back to oh

Interviewer: yeah well let's go back to sort of what you like to see in a retail setting and you know thinking about like there's like a lot of factors that perhaps aren't always perceptible I mean there's layout there's any sensory music stuff like that is there anything you feel that in those sort of literal construction of the environment that moving beyond just adding that extra section that you feel would sort of aid

you even just as a shopper so we're taking me not fully of course but taking gender identity as the focus away and just sort of your store you know yeah

Interviewee 1: it'd be nice if they had a really clear layout like they had signs and within the sections there was a very clear deviation because most of the stores that I shop at everything kind of has a section you'll have like pajamas and then all of a sudden it turns into pants and socks and then it's into shirts but it'd be nice if they had defined places where you can find things so it would make it easier to shop yeah

Interviewer: and um just because you had mentioned it earlier you talked about shopping with your mother so is that the you usually only shop with your mother or is that

Interviewee 1: yeah my father currently lives in another state so I don't get to shop with him very much

Interviewer: okay and then you wouldn't do you shop your own much or is it

Interviewee 1: uh no I usually shop with her because she lives nearby and she has a car and I do not

Interviewer: well there you go that's usually a very convenient thing and so and then just because you mentioned it if your if your mother was not with you when you're shopping would you go to the men's dressing room

Interviewee 1: yes I probably would

Interviewer: okay and I don't want to get like too personal so but is there a reason you won't go to the men's section when your mom is there

Interviewee 1: no I go to the men's section

Interviewer: err sorry men's dressing room sorry

Interviewee 1: um if my mom isn't there I still just feel kind of out of place there if the dressing room is crowded I won't go but if the dressing room is mostly empty I have gone in before it's just sometimes if there's a lot of people I don't want to feel like I'm taking up space for somebody else and also because if like if I'm in there and it's really busy I know I get weird looks sometimes but if the dressing rooms mostly empty people don't really look at me and that feels better

Interviewer: okay so you sort of don't like that feeling of feeling out of place

Interviewee 1: yeah

Interviewer: and is that and that's true sort of in either direction

Interviewee 1: yes

Interviewer: if we're talking in gendered terms so what a neutral or even I guess the word would be communal dressing room be something you'd like or would you rather have

Interviewee 1: I would definitely like to have a communal dressing room I feel like all people's objections to it aren't really problems in a retail setting

Interviewer: yeah yeah and so it's really just the sort of fact that's like I don't belong with this group and I don't belong in that group and I am my own group and since I don't have my own dressing room I make do is that I don't want to put words in your mouth

Interviewee 1: yeah that's pretty much it I guess

Interviewer: okay and um

Interviewee 1: so that is another thing I didn't put it earlier in the layout but it'd be nice if there was like a gender-neutral like communal fitting room dressing room

Interviewer: yeah yeah and um you know just sort of touching on it again just to be clear have you ever sort of had issues with retail workers

Interviewee 1: no I've never had issues with an employee I've gotten misgendered but that's really not their fault because sometimes it happens but I've never had an actual negative impact and they're not doing that maliciously

Interviewer: yeah yeah okay well that's great and I hope that continues because I know that that can be very troubling for many many people and make sure that's still going I think it is which is good great well I feel like I'm almost out of stuff but I feel like you've given me a lot

Interviewee 1: okay that's good

Interviewer: you know I like I know I said an hour but sometimes there are people who just hit it you know right on the head and they're just very good at being very succinct so don't feel weird about not you know I'm filling out the hour believe me most people end up about forty some people push it to a one hour 20 minutes it's less work for me to transcribe so in a way I'm a little bit grateful and so I guess I

would say is there anything else you would like to share is there anything else you would like to touch on

Interviewee 1: well because this is a retail setting I think it would be really great if they had sections specifically for transgender people such as you know carrying binders in a retail setting so we didn't have to buy them online like dresses meant for people with like male bodies so that way it could still fit them and they could still wear it and feel comfortable it'd just be nice to have clothes that aren't just gender-neutral but very obviously cross over like the gender binaries so skirts and dresses for men or trans women and then it's like suits and pants for women and trans men which we already see more of but it's it would be nice to see more of both sides so like dresses for men like even and if we could get that into a retail setting maybe it would normalize it and not just trans woman would be shopping those sections but cis men as well who just want to wear skirts

Interviewer: yeah yeah definitely and I will actually just now that I think about it we wouldn't really didn't talk about online no—I know you talked about how you're more of a look up online and find in store but I just I mean an online store is in a sense a retail environment is there anything you would like website wise

Interviewee 1: I usually just use the online version of the store I plan on buying from so that's the only online shopping I do like it lands end if they have a sale I'll do their online shopping so I don't have to go to the physical location but I only do that because they're you know what size I am cuz I've been shopping there for years

Interviewer: okay - so you're very like you're you're a long-term customer so you just sort of know the brand

Interviewee 1: yes

Interviewer: you know if something changed in the brand

Interviewee 1: oh yeah

Interviewer: um and now I coming up with questions is there any store you find that you just can't shop at just because of these sort of fit issues sort of thing like

Interviewee 1: a lot of places that aren't just clothing stores such as like Target or Kohl's um I can't usually shop there just because their clothes are very gendered and they're not they just don't fit me very well even the women's clothes they don't fit me very well so I tend not to shop there or at least the woman's clothes that I would want to wear don't fit me well

Interviewer: yes yes and I guess we haven't talked some-- we've talked more about pants

Interviewee 1: yes

Interviewer: is there anything you look for sort of tops or outerwear

Interviewee 1: for shirts I just wearing a lot of t-shirts and I prefer them to have fairly high collars I know a lot of women's college they'll go like below the collarbone but I prefer them to be up higher and to have sleeves that go at least halfway down your arm like to your elbow

Interviewer: yeah okay so ah anything else

Interviewee 1: um when I shop for shirts I like I have very broad shoulders because I was a swimmer so I like to make sure that the shirts will fit because a lot of womens shirts have very narrow shoulders and so I can't fit into a lot of them especially long sleeve shirts like they'll go a little bit past my elbow and they won't go up any longer

Interviewer: alright well then I think that'll that'll do it unless you have any final parting things

Interviewee 1: I don't think so

Interview 2

(Notes taken during interview and expanded after)

Identifies Trans femme/Gender fuckish

Reclaiming her femininity through transition

Style important in decision making because she has a very defined style. Know what she wants and then sees if store matches that.

Very defined clothing style.

Transition aided style evolution.

Goth style slutty style

Thrift shopping cheaper

Sporty french goth

Business goth

Black and white stripes flannel
Lesbian
Basic bottoms, issues with length and fit
Boots are preferred to shoes because they go with her style

Business casual environment for work so normal style is altered to match the environment
In this case more professional style less crop tops low cut and half sleeve things

Ephemeral sense of what she wants. Seeing what other people wear attraction to others. People watches as a way to find style inspiration and goes from there

Some shopping on amazon when needed
Specifics will lead to online shopping. Last resort.
Must have a clear idea of what is wanted and all other resources are run dry

Easier now that she has her own place, easier to buy lingerie without fear

Being trans in public causes anxiety dysphoria confrontation and being herself in public is difficult for her. Mirrors in stores can trigger dysphoria or imagery that highlights her body differences from cis women

Holistic shopping experience, searching actively throughout the store for things she might want to buy. slowly expanded into women's clothing over time as she transitioned, getting more explicitly feminine the further along she got. Early on there was a greater feeling of not belonging in the women's section and so she snuck in at odd hours for things to avoid interpersonal contact.

Ongoing problem of not shopping for bras and underwear since they are so gendered and being clocked could cause troubles if the wrong person saw her shopping.

Doesn't talk to employees unless absolutely necessary. Looks for queer signals safe zone people, like punk aesthetics, colored hair, or other non-cis people. Avoids male workers more than female workers if having to approach a cisgender worker. Men were regarded as more dangerous than women.

Stores should be affirming of gender less mirrors, gender neutral changing rooms. Will use gendered dressing rooms if necessary. Gender neutral restrooms are also important. Creates a space for all to be comfortable without making waves or causing moral panic

Transphobia should be avoided by stores and brands in all aspects of business

Word of mouth about negativity about stores is how she finds out if a brand doesn't support LGBTQ people, not paranoia goes for facts

Mannequins freak her out doesn't like being in their personal space, this isn't related to gender necessarily.

Forever 21 is odd because it's so disorganized makes it hard to find the things she wants while shopping. Not preferred when she's shopping specifically..

Wants clothing on a mannequin next to a mannequin so that it is easy to find. Doesn't want to see an appealing style and then have to hunt ages for it.

Hot topic requires employee contact which makes it more difficult to shop there

Earlier on wanted gendered sections to be next to one another since it allowed for her to hide in the men's section and feign accidentally being in the women's. Created a zone of comfort. Wants practicality and easy to find things, hates to search all around a store for an item. Styles could be grouped together if possible like shirts all in one place. Shape of clothing would be helpful if displayed in more detail, like how a garment might fit on different body types and shapes.

Put things in similar fabric or shape together with clear labels. Doesn't like everything crammed on a rack because it adds to the difficulty of shopping

Hates when changing rooms have a person out front. Understands practicality (theft prevention) but it makes her feel bad. There is a feeling of judgment since the worker has to see what she has and then allow her into these spaces.

Never had transphobia in a store, but panic attacks have happened because of the fear of such happening. successfully shopped for clothing despite this happening.

Throughout daily life small acts of trans resistance as she interacts with others. Not hiding herself is an act of resistance. Showing herself as trans and proud was thought of as giving the workers a chance to challenge their internalized transphobia and work towards self-improvement

Dressing rooms that are accesible - no lines of people

Coherent organization - no reflective surfaces or security cameras since they make her feel uncomfortable and more visible

Stores selling queer things - trans flags as demarcation allow a clear signal of support for non-cis people

No stores known to sell queer things - not that she's been to. Closest would be hot topic because it appeals to outcasts. Judgment free zone because of the vibe.

Knows sex stores have queer stuff, more so online than in real life. No major retailers though.

Less than \$40 per item maximum mostly purchases for around ten dollars. Only bought two things more than ten. Quality matters for expensive purchases since it is more of an investment.

Gender variant is perhaps not a good term but is debatable. Non-cis is a good second term to use

Exposure therapy through shopping. Confidence has built over time. Starting with no one there and now more crowded stores. part of the coming out process. Hard to define a dress code for trans people since they are diverse. Coding clothing cause more problems than it creates because it doesn't include all trans people. Breaking those barriers down is important

Displaying an anti discrimination policy - shouldn't be her job to defend herself. Stores should make it clear that they want to defend trans people and their rights.

Interview 3

Interviewer: all right and then it picks up voices pretty good so I'm just as long as you talk in a normal pace so thank you again participating in this interview um and let's see so obviously this is very much about people who identify as non cis very broadly and how they perceive the retail environment and sort of all the things that factor into that so that I can be lighting that can be shelving that can be the way it's laid out that can be the people you interact with that can be the products you're actually trying to buy specifically focusing on apparel or accessory goods but before we really dive into that please describe your general gender identity and what it means to you

Interviewee 3: well I identify as a trans man so basically just like very or at least very very far on like the masculine part of like the gender spectrum so for me that basically just means it like the most important thing to me is just being perceived as male just like by others um beyond that some gender expression things are like a little bit weird just because it's like I do still like feminine things it's just feminine I'm I'll use words like that but I don't believe in any of it so like so yeah just kind of that's kind of the basics of it

Interviewer: okay cool and so before you go shopping what sort of planning goes into it

Interviewee 3: um I usually try to figure out like what I want to buy and sometimes it will depend on where I'm deciding to go because most like like Target for example I buy a lot of clothes at Target and for that it's just kind of psyching myself up a little bit to be like okay we're gonna go buy this thing don't feel like too anxious about it just because it's like and that's that's just kind of like public spaces in general just like because of social anxiety and stuff aren't super my friend especially when it's like I feel like I'll be in a part of a store where I where people won't think that I like belong or whatever so that's kind of the biggest part

Interviewer: okay and so to be ask further I guess so do you look online beforehand or do you sort of think about what do I need do you look at your closet it is there

Interviewee 3: oh yeah I do look at my closet and just it's mostly out of necessity when I go clothes shopping especially in like a public place if I really like want something just kind of like for fun or that isn't really out of necessity I normally kind of go online for that

Interviewer: okay and what sort of stores would you go online versus in person

Interviewee 3: um target and goodwill are two places that I go a lot for clothes um online it sort of depends I wear like a lot of band merch for example so or like t-shirts that I like that I find fun those are usually bought online

Interviewer: alright okay um and then is there anything that goes into planning or and then when it when it comes to store selection I guess is there anything that says yes I will go to this place or no I won't go to this place

Interviewee 3: I think that for me I like places that sell to both like to all genders but uh even if they have it like gendered in specific areas I feel like at least if I go into a place that includes all of it I won't stand out quite as much whereas if I tried to like go into like a Men's Wearhouse and I'm surrounded by like all these cis guys it would be like really uncomfortable

Interviewer: yeah yeah okay and um if I'm a fly in the wall and you're about to go shopping for like a basic shopping trip walk me through what you would normally do so where do you go in the store how do you look at things and so on

Interviewee 3: um usually when I'm in in the men's section of stores which is where I try to go I try not to stray too long I'll try to like find something that like I generally like and that's in my size but I just like kind of grab it and get out of there

Interviewer: gotcha

Interviewee 3: um if I do have to like for example pants like I can never find pants in the men's section that fit me so it's like when I have to go to the women's section I feel very uncomfortable the whole time but I do kind of like take my time and look at more of my options and like really like try to find sizes and I don't feel as weird about like going to a dressing room and trying clothes on it's like it's it's a it's uncomfortable and it's dysphoria inducing but like it's not the same level of like somebody else is gonna call me out pervy in here

Interviewer: yeah so just to clarify when you shop in the women's section you worry less about going to the dressing room or

Interviewee 3: yeah just because it's like I feel like I get I don't like it kind of like in my own head but I'm always just like so worried about what other people think when I'm just like walking around and I know that they'd be less concerned about seeing me in like a dressing room next to the women's section than like a dressing room next to the men's section

Interviewer: okay so do you ever shop in the men's or a not shop and go to the men's dressing room or do you tend to avoid that

Interviewee 3: um I don't and I feel like honestly part of that is just sort of like I'm buying more clothes that I don't feel like I need to try on cuz it's like pants are like the only clothes that I really like try on in the store and those are all what I buy in the women's section anyway

Interviewer: yeah and so is there anything you use to navigate through store are you very like a very conscious of like sales racks for example or do ask employees for help or anything like that if you're looking for something specific say

Interviewee 3: um I would say that I'd keep an eye on sales racks and like clearance things I don't normally interact with employees very much like I I could be like looking around for a long time and they'd be like you find everything okay and even if I completely not I'll just be like yeah have a great time

Interviewer: yeah and then what do you like to see in a retail setting

Interviewee 3: um I kind of like it when things are sorted more by like types of clothes rather than like gender specific like I mean Goodwill is still like has gendered sections but it's I feel like it's not as like immediately apparent cuz I and I feel like part of that is just the fact it's all like one big like sprawling space whereas like if you go into a store they'll like kind of make it very obvious they're like even just like the decor and like sometimes like the color schemes that they use or like the pictures of the models so I feel like I would like some of that to be like not as present

Interviewer: yeah so highlight the clothes more or if you're highlighting them highlight them for or people perhaps

Interviewee 3: yeah

Interviewer: okay and then sort of on the flip side what do you not like to see in a retail setting

Interviewee 3: um kind of kind of going back to that same thing just sort of like when they make it super overt through like like like you go to them mens sections at like like Target or like JC Penney's it's like they have like these really really huge pictures of like models which is normal but then it's like the men are all like sometimes they'll be like playing sports or like catching a ball and then like the woman will be like posing with friends and like taking a selfie I don't know it's just kind of like very stereotypical

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 3: so it's I mean it's just like the models in general are like a little bit like oh I don't really love that but Then its like they also just make it so like stereotyped

Interviewer: yeah and and then oh and then so if sort of taking those these two past questions into consideration what would for you be an ideal retail environment so if we're building your store right now what ideal it we would we have there

Interviewee 3: I feel just kind of like um again kind of like keeping those like color schemes and patterns and models just kind of like neutral pretty much and having more of like like kind of like that sprawling space almost where it's just sort of like here's shirts but it's got like collared shirts and like what people would describe as more like feminine shirts or whatever they would all just be in the same place because they're all shirts anyway and then it's like and I think that it would be really nice if like I mean like cis women even complain about this all the time just like this sizing on pants and jeans like doesn't make any sense whereas for men it's just like okay like inseam and waist or whatever and so that that makes sense and then like rather than like maybe like having them divided by like okay like skinny jeans and like bootcut and like

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 3: but like making like a universal sizing system but also has like a lot more sizes

Interviewer: yeah yeah um when you stay neutral how would you define that

Interviewee 3: um just sort of like if you have like pictures of models just like maybe like have men and women like maybe dressed in the same clothes or like have like like a model who's a woman like in a suit or something or like and just kind of like maybe have some representations of like non-binary people like

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 3: like just wearing clothes that make them comfortable just kind of in those pictures and stuff

Interviewer: yeah and how do you err I mean we've touched on this a lot but just sort of to ask it again is what do you think of how clothing is displayed in stores

Interviewee 3: um I think that can be interesting to sound like how they how they highlight a lot of stereotypes just kind of like I don't know just like the difference in like male and female mannequins even is like kind of obvious sometimes and yeah I guess that's like the biggest thing with how they're displayed

Interviewer: could you elaborate on that

Interviewee 3: well I feel like uh model or like mannequins who are supposed to represent a woman are very like like posed and poised and like kind of in like weird unnatural ways whereas like a mannequin that's a guy I feel like a lot of times is just like like a torso sometimes for one or something if they're like displaying it shirt and then it is just like very like static and like not quite as like artfully formed in a way that like just like seems very uncomfortable if a person was to like actually stand like that

Interviewer: yeah all right any sort of thoughts on other forms of display in a store obviously mannequins are perhaps the most overt but

Interviewee 3: yeah um I can't really think of any to be honest

Interviewer: okay no that's fine and then what experiences positive or negative have you had in stores related to your gender

Interviewee 3: um the biggest thing has just been kind of like walking in and like knowing that there's probably not going to be like pants in my size or something

Interviewer: gotcha

Interviewee 3: or like when people like label t-shirts as like men's and women's when it's like just a t-shirt

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 3: yeah sorry I feel like I'm not elaborating enough

Interviewer: no worries no no I mean I feel like people give sometimes people give the same amount in very different lengths of time so don't worry you're giving me a lot right now so and that's why I ask follow-up so definitely know that like I'm just yeah we're on a journey and that's um and then I guess to step back how would you describe sort of your personal style the clothing you wear and the you know that or even the aesthetic are drawn to

Interviewee 3: um I feel like when the clothes idea we're definitely just like a lot of band t-shirts and uh jeans and like sometimes like button ups I wear a lot if I have to be a little bit fancier or something yeah I'm feeling kind of aesthetic that I'm drawn to excuse me the kind of aesthetic that I'm drawn to it's just kind of like I don't know it kinda sounds stupid just like like a kind of like punk rock look a little bit kind of like that like artsy aesthetic that's like also like a little bit like I also like listen to music and stuff yeah

Interviewer: yeah okay and do you have a typical sort of price range or even quality ranges necessarily that you look for

Interviewee 3: um I always look for like cheaper things which I don't know I kind of I kind of debate that a lot simply because of like some of the morality that just like goes into like fast fashion and stuff so I try to like look at things both with like a price range and also like why does it have that price so I feel like I try to stay somewhat mid-range um

Interviewer: and... sorry

Interviewee 3: No it's okay I was kinda like trailing off anyway

Interviewer: so do you do a lot of research into that sort of thing since you mentioned fast fashion do you maybe not all of your time but at least a little bit of it

Interviewee 3: I feel like I've for sure watched videos on it occasionally um I feel like I feel like that's part of the reason why I like go to the sales racks and the clearance racks is for sorta because it's like this is cheap but hopefully not because it started out cheap but because of like like they put a they put a sale on it or

something and yeah I feel like I try to do some research with that I feel like I have tried to look at brands and even like where things are made sometimes

Interviewer: yeah okay and do you have any specific sort of places you go to for I mean I guess fashion or style maybe not advice but influence so do you follow people do your friends you talk to you just sort of pull it from the air

Interviewee 3: um I do kind of like look at what my friends are wearing sometimes and if I like it I might like ask like where they got it um again with a all of the band which that I wear is like then it's like basically going straight to like them and their website and then I guess I watched like some like YouTube videos occasionally about like cool things that people found a goodwill or like somebody that I follow on YouTube made like a haul from this other store that I can't even remember and with that I was kind of like I like some of those things so I went on the website but everything was like kind of expensive so I'm like I might wait for like a sale or something

Interviewer: yeah yeah okay and um I had a question well is there anything that's coming to mind as we've been talking about or is there anything has there been anything that's coming to your mind that we've been talking about that you feel you want to mention

Interviewee 3: my thoughts are so like married that I feel like it's mostly just kind of like the neutrality of it you know just like dividing things by what type of clothes it is rather than the gender that they feel like what most fit the clothes

Interviewer: yeah um do you feel like there's any sort of sensory component to that I know it's a very odd thing to ask but like you know we have these five senses and not every store necessarily appeals to all of them but many stores do sort of with things like lighting ambient scent even like the music that's played do you think that plays into that neutrality at all or is that something that's a bit less of an issue

Interviewee 3: I think that it does mostly in gender specific stores I feel like if you're like walking to like a Men's Warehouse versus like a Victoria's Secret is like an extreme example but like it's an example nonetheless like like it always smells really like floral and perfumey and like there's pink obviously everywhere I mean that's like that's like the name of their brand so that makes sense um whereas like a men's warehouse it's very like dark and muted colors and it's like I feel like it smells kind of like Cologne or like something like that

Interviewer: yeah and then when it comes to oh yes so we've been talking a lot about neutrality and a preference for that or at least a mild preference for that is there any sort of brands or any sort of product lines you're aware of that relate to

that have you found anything personally even if you haven't bought from them necessarily

Interviewee 3: I can't remember the name of them but there was this there was this sort of thing that was being advertised for like um it was specifically towards women which was why I don't think that I investigated it further but it was specifically for like gender non-conforming and like women whose just presentation is a little bit more masculine which I probably should have investigated further but at the moment I was like they just use women in that so I'm just like yeah at the time it was kind of like that yeah I think that they just focused on kind of like a more like dapper fashion for women which yeah I think I feel like I'm interested in that and I can't I think I just saw it like online somewhere so I can't remember what the post was beyond that I feel like in some other ways I think that target is trying to go to like a non gendered toy section yeah which I feel like it I mean it's not clothing but it's like you know they're they're they're deconstructing that in other ways that I think is important and yeah target in general has just been like pretty chill I feel like about because I mean like they're all they're all for people being able to use their preferred bathrooms and like things like that so

Interviewer: yeah and is there so if you were to sort of stand on your own soapbox for a minute and tell obviously they're not here but tell the companies what you like sort of what you would like what you'd like to see maybe not just for yourself but for all non cis people this is a very big speech but feel free to

Interviewee 3: yeah I feel like as far as like their spaces and like just like their stores in general just kind of like having more gender neutral bathrooms um I feel like there's a lot of family restrooms but I kind of feel weird going in there just because it's like I feel like this is supposed to be for like like a mom and like or parents and like their baby or whatever to be able to like change to change to the baby or whatever so I feel like having more spaces that's like just like a gender-neutral bathroom without being like I mean I think that family restrooms are also important and then as far as clothes I mean like not sure if[inaudible] for the fifth time it was just sort of like organizing things by type of clothing rather than gender um kind of just like having a more open space or like having a space where all the clothing is because it's like men and women sections tend to also be on like the opposite ends of the store so I feel like just like even if they're slightly gendered which I mean I wouldn't love but even if they're just like next to each other because I feel like they're just really trying to separate that

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 3: um and I think that they even like some places have like different shoe sections and it's like they all just go on your feet like it's fine so yeah just kind of like looking at things like that

Interviewer: yeah and then one thing that just struck me that I realized I asked is would you be in or what what or what do you think of the idea of like a gender-neutral dressing room in a store

Interviewee 3: oh I think that would be great yeah

Interviewer: all right any thoughts on that

Interviewee 3: well just kind of like again I think that part of the whole problem with like bathrooms and and dressing rooms and I kind of brought up earlier is not like what how you feel on the inside it's how you think that other people will react around you and it's like what am I putting myself in danger by going to like my preferred bathroom or my preferred dressing room

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 3: so I just feel like having that space could be really cool

Interviewer: yeah all right so I think and it's exhausted my questions so do you have any last final thoughts any other sort of things that come up here

Interviewee 3: not really besides just like get rid of the gendered t-shirts and like put pockets on all jeans

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 3: just like little things like that cuz it's just kind of like the I could go on for like another hour probably about how like all the weird gendered things that go into just like making making clothes and how it's like we need to make smaller pockets in women's jeans because they need to have purses or something like that it

Interviewer: I mean maybe not an hour but I mean do you have sort of

Interviewee 3: um yeah I mean it's just sort of like I feel like they intentionally I mean like that's one thing it's like they want women to buy purses they make the pockets smaller and they I feel like women's clothing is often made of less sturdy fabric and materials and it's less likely to like break or wear down or fray more easily and I don't know I just think that all those differences are like really interesting and kind of weird and like for my anthropology class it's kind of going off on a different tangent but for my anthropology class we had to examine bridal magazines and at one point so it was like all of these wedding dresses that they were displaying were like very posed models very poised looked just like very very

like static like like the mannequins almost and they were on like this like pure white background and there was nothing else going on in this room and I know it's like the men's suits and they were like out on a baseball diamond and they were like playing baseball while they were getting photographed in like these fancy suits so it's just kind of like that whole dynamic of like on—one is more active and one is more passive and it's just like so unhealthy

Interviewer: yeah yeah so in many ways maybe perhaps negative stereotypes are perpetuated through

Interviewee 3: mm-hmm maybe not everyone's clothing but the way we present clothing to people yeah

Interviewer: okay that's interesting so anything else

Interviewee 3: I think I'm good

Interviewer: okay great

Interview 4

Interviewer: so let's begin as you may remember from the survey this is about basically any non cis person and how they interact with the retail environment and that includes everything from how its lite the people who work there to how its laid out to the product itself and but Before we jump into that I guess it's just pressing ask how would you describe your gender identity and what it means to you

Interviewee 4: okay so I consider myself gender fluid generally between like woman and like some sort of agender kind of orbiting womanhood

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: like yeah that's really how I would describe it and to me I don't know it it means what it sounds like that means I guess I don't have any deep meaning that seems relevant here

Interviewer: yeah that's fine and then what are your preferred pronouns

Interviewee 4: she her they them

Interviewer: okay great and then so jumping into the store part when you're planning to go to shopping so before you go to a store you perhaps go online what sort of planning goes into that

Interviewee 4: well I generally just make plans on like what I want to try on what I'm looking for generally I usually just like go straight to that section and maybe I'll browse the clearance sections on the way

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: I generally like plan out how I'm going to get there like am I going to drive before I moved here or like taking the bus bus I'm going to take and that's generally all that goes into it for me

Interviewer: all right and when deciding on products is it as an as-needed basis is it just sort of like are you are very I guess well the academic term is hedonistic shopper but shopping for enjoyment

Interviewee 4: yeah I don't generally shop just because especially not lately because like I just don't have the money for it I used to really hate shopping

Interviewer: oh

Interviewee 4: like a lot I used to just despise shopping for clothes shopping for shoes I realize now that that was probably tied into dysphoria and now that I'm like kind of went along in my transition I feel like I'm a lot more comfortable shopping and like picking up the clothes that I actually want to try on yeah and like just generally the clothes that I feel are available to me are a lot more interesting and like feel like I want to try them on basically

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: yeah so like if I had the money for it I would just kind of grab buy whatever yeah but for me it's mostly just like okay I know I need this this and this need replaced in my wardrobe so that's what I'm going to try on and like I'll try stuff on and like I will be tempted to buy stuff that I don't necessarily need but like I try to exercise restraint and not just buy it

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: for the sake of it

Interviewer: do you ever save up for anything if you find things you like but perhaps it's a little bit

Interviewee 4: not really

Interviewer: and then when it comes to sort of how you shop like what sort of research goes into it or what sort of influence does it have for instance you follow an influencer on Instagram or do you read a blog or anything like that

Interviewee 4: no I don't really follow any sort of fashion advice blogs or like articles or whatever

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: so no not really yeah this is kind of like what I think looks good on me and we would match things that I already have

Interviewer: yeah well then with that how would you describe your style

Interviewee 4: just kind okay so you know the futch scale are you aware of that

Interviewer: no

Interviewee 4: okay okay so it's like sort of a meme but it's like basically just like this scale from like high femme to stone butch in the middle is just like the perfect blend of the two futch

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: it's just like a meme that lesbians do and like placing like random characters on it like I would place myself like on the butchy femme side of that scale scale is like slightly more femme than not

Interviewer: and how do you spell the name of that

Interviewee 4: futch f u t c h like butch but with an F

Interviewer: all right

Interviewee 4: like the port mantaou of femme and butch

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: yeah the futch scale so like kind of Butchie femme is how I describe

Interviewer: yeah yeah

Interviewee 4: uh like a lot of plaid like I wear now like a lot of these like just like a lot of plaid throw overs I'm a big fan of corduroy especially on pants yeah

Interviewer: okay and how do you decide where to shop

Interviewee 4: just general accessibility and like affordability I guess like I know I'm going to target going to target anyway because I can get all these other things and like it's generally a little bit cheaper there

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: or like well I'm at this mall anyway let's check out h&m you know like stuff like that and just generally knowing like okay this place will probably have things that fit me

Interviewer: okay

Interviewee 4: because another thing that I struggle with as a trans woman is like a lot of the times clothes just don't have the shoulder width to fit like yeah so I wind up shopping in plus-size sections even though I'm d-- I don't really come off as very plus-sized I just kind of have to to get something that to get tops there right actually my shoulder width

Interviewer: gotcha

Interviewee 4: which is another struggle because like that also comes with certain bust size limitations which I I'm not quite my boobs aren't quite big enough to fill this shirt out so it's like oh great yeah so it's like generally knowing what sort of sizes places have on hand

Interviewer: yeah and what are the stores you frequent then

Interviewee 4: probably most common are target h&m probably and Torrid Torrid just because like mo-- like a lot of my shoes actually why I wind up getting a Torrid even though they're not like a shoe store they're still like because they are geared toward plus-sized women all of their shoes come in wide like all of the shoes that they have there are wide which is it's really hard to find women's shoes in 12 wide yeah except at Torrid so I wind up going there a lot when I wanted a new pair of shoes yeah

Interviewer: yeah okay and so yeah so if I'm a fly on the wall and you're just at one of these stores going for a typical shopping trip walk me through sort of your traditional trajectory through a store

Interviewee 4: okay so I mean I usually start at the front and work my way to the back yes kind of just trying to think of like how most stores that I go to are laid out

unless I'm going for something very specific I'll just like start at the front and work my way to back just kind of like stopping things that like piqued my interest on the way

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: and then by the time I get to the back and like I've got like a basket full or whatever like I'll just go try stuff on and like depending on whether what I like or not if there's something that doesn't quite fit I'll go back to where I saw that and like grab a different size usually I don't have to try stuff on more than once but like if it's really kind of dubious if this different size is going to fit and I'll try that on again but yeah it's usually just a very like lackadaisical kind of just like kind of wandering through the store and grabbing what piques my interest unless I'm looking for something very specific like I'm like I'm only here to look at bras so I'm just going to go straight to the bras you find stuff that is my cup size band size

Interviewer: yeah okay

Interviewee 4: yeah

Interviewer: and then do you rely on anything to help you sort of find your way through store or yeah I mean unless you're pretty familiar with the store

Interviewee 4: not usually cuz like if I'm just kind of wandering through I'm probably going to look through the entire store anyway or most of it yeah so like I don't generally use it like not any sort of signage or anything if there's something very specific I'm looking for and I can't find it I might wave down an employee oh yeah

Interviewer: and when it comes to shopping what do you like to see in a retail setting

Interviewee 4: what do I like to see plus size clothing like a decent plus-sized selection generally like employees who aren't like scrutinizing my presence and like I'm not being like escorted to the dressing rooms or anything like that because that feels like for me that feels very scrutinizing like oh god they're going to see that I'm trying on all these femme clothes what if they aren't reading me as a woman oh god oh god like that is very scary and like very early on in my transition that was like a barrier to me trying stuff on it was like the worry about being clocked or like questioned by like employees as I'm going to try stuff on. like ideally in an ideal world I could be completely anonymous going into the dressing room gender wise or just not have the employees see what I'm bringing in the rest into their dressing room

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: I know that that's never going to happen because of like shoplifting concerns and all that stuff but like that's the ideal I feel like not having people around me know what I'm trying on

Interviewer: anything about the store itself that you really like to see

Interviewee 4: about the store itself um general like accessibility like wider shopping lanes I guess I don't know if I aisles that's what the word I was going for that's the only thing that really comes to mind as far as like yeah

Interviewer: so like room to browse

Interviewee 4: yeah room to browse room for like like mobility devices to get through like wheelchairs or crutches or canes what yeah what have you

Interviewer: okay

Interviewee 4: room for people with different mobility means also is important to me

Interviewer: yeah yeah and then sort of on the flip side what do you not like to see in a store

Interviewee 4: opposite of that so very cramped spaces very cramped spaces few dressing rooms like a long wait to be to get into a dressing room like oh great I need to stand here with all these femme clothing that might or might not think I "should" be wearing should in air quotes for the recorder um yeah like just stuff like that a lot of like large wait times I guess are annoying for me yeah I hate seeing clothing size selections where like it's very skewed to one end of the scale or the other you know that is annoying to me

Interviewer: yeah and then with either of these past few things are like or dislike anything sort of like sensory based so like

Interviewee 4: sensory based

Interviewer: like lighting like many stores have like specific lighting fixtures or scents I think of music for hearing you know

Interviewee 4: yeah music probably ought to be like on the quieter side I think like I get why they put in music because it's like psychology stuff like it should probably be more on the subliminal side of that maybe

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: definitely I do think the harsh lighting is not a good thing it doesn't impact me personally very much but like very harsh lighting or like lighting that's way too dim is definitely not great for shopping in yeah scents with asthma I don't think that's a good idea I have never shopped for clothes his store that had scents in it as far as I'm aware yeah

Interviewer: not every store uses them

Interviewee 4: yeah I don't think I've remember ever going to a store and being like wow this place smells like something unless is like a restaurant

Interviewer: yeah yeah

Interviewee 4: you know

Interviewer: and then when it comes to sort of I guess in stores you know they have signs both sort of like pants [inaudible] and they also have like the tableaus of the clothing selection there's things like mannequins

Interviewee 4: yeah opinions on mannequins and tableaus I don't think I have any opinions on this

Interviewer: no that's totally fine

Interviewee 4: I don't think I have any opinions on this

Interviewer: Um and then I guess sort of taking us all together if you were crafting the perfect store for yourself what would you say

Interviewee 4: okay for me specifically

Interviewer: yes

Interviewee 4: if like as many like as wide a range of size selections as possible for like every style ever like the that is in stock anyway but like like as like wide versions of all the shoes and on wide versions of all the shoes like go up to like beyond what most stores have in terms of like shoe sizes and like just generally more things that are wide shouldered definitely stuff with longer sleeves is appreciated just like more femme clothing that is made for women that are kind of my shape basically like with my height and my shoulder width like a lot of things

are either the shoulders are too narrow or like the sleeves are way too short or just shirt is in general too short

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: like just more long plus-sized clothing definitely that applies in terms of pants as well like longer pant legs is definitely appreciated longer skirts even the ones that aren't meant to be like because like when I wear a miniskirt is a very miniskirt it was to about like not quite halfway down like my calf err thigh not calf yeah

Interviewer: I got to jist yeah okay and I'm Blanking on what that follow up was so l'mma move on to the next one

Interviewee 4: happens

Interviewer: so in thinking about sort of holistically speaking how do you what do you think about how clothing is laid out in stores so well we'll say target since you brought that up as a place you shop

Interviewee 4: yeah

Interviewer: and that includes sort of any sort of thing so racks mannequins shelves anything like that the sections

Interviewee 4: the way that most stores my experience like treat plus size clothing it seems to be very like let's get this out of sight out of mind like the je-- like plus-sized clothing is usually like tucked away in some back corner or like well behind a couple of other racks in the case of target the way those are laid out way in the back and then there's like a couple cases like a rack or two and it's also right next to the maternity clothes so yeah I think that's not super great actually now that I think about it yeah I think it would be better to like nicer to have plus-sized clothing display maybe a little more prominently especially like as a way of like recognizing and the demand for it because like there's like a lot more people shop in the plus-size section then you would think given it's like proportion of the store floor space I guess

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: yeah like I think that's definitely like under recognized under like under displayed I guess and definitely like there there's not as much of a selection and like within the plus-size section as like you would hope yeah

Interviewer: and then what experiences positive or negative have you had in stores related to your gender identity

Interviewee 4: ooh well okay let me talk about the double-edged sword that is group gendering so like when I'm shopping like with my mom or something and like a store clerk walks up and is like oh hello ladies like that's kind of affirming except sometimes it will follow up with oh I'm sorry I'm sorry sir and yeah you know like like that great oh great I'm being recognized oh wait she corrected scare quotes herself but also like if you're what if I'm with a couple non-binary friends who may be like twig as like read as female to that clerk like hello ladies and then they don't correct themselves then I'm being gendered right but not my friends so like it's kind of a you know like I don't know like it's great for me but like it's hitting my friends so it's not great at all really

Interviewer: is there a way you would feel better if they addressed a group of people

Interviewee 4: I think just trying to avoid gender in addressing groups of people in general is a smart move even if they do like like regardless of how much they look like a certain gender or like all together oh don't do that

Interviewer: yeah any other experiences even positive

Interviewee 4: nothing that really stands out yeah my retail experiences in general have been very tame

Interviewer: yeah so by that you mean nothing terrible

Interviewee 4: yeah I mean I mean yeah

Interviewer: but nothing Wow that's amazing

Interviewee 4: yeah nothing that stands out

Interviewer: okay and in previous interviews some people have talked about either through sort of just some sort of signaling for people who are non-binary or trans or even just non cis more broadly sort of signaling that and how do you feel about that would that be something that appeals to you or

Interviewee 4: signaling like on my like on my part or on like employees part or like

Interviewer: well one previous interview in particular mentioned like even just something very simple on the outside of the store or even something as simple as

in those tableaus having someone who you know you know somehow you know not

Interviewee 4: representing

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: yeah okay not necessarily like super conspicuous like really marketing heavy yet some something sort of like

Interviewer: like having [inaudible] as one of the models or something yeah

Interviewee 4: yeah I mean that would be that would be nice like having like trans people in the modeling of clothes like that would that would be nice it would be nice to like have that like like recognition I guess

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: yeah not necessarily in a like pandering kind of way like like oh look like having a whole marketing campaign based around it like oh look at us we're like so trans progressive and like the thing that lush is doing right now like are you familiar with the thing lush is yeah like I I'm not a fan of that but like make like trying to make the company look good for it just like be a little more subtle about it like have us in your advertisement sure just don't like make it a thing you know

Interviewer: yeah or yeah don't

Interviewee 4: because that feels very yeah because that feels very tokenizing to me yeah

Interviewer: so it's sort of like signal it but don't like

Interviewee 4: yeah don't make it the focus of a marketing campaign in and of itself

Interviewer: and then with that are you aware or have you ever shopped for even maybe not shopped but at least browse either in-store online any sort of trans-specific brands or clothing

Interviewee 4: I have not actually

Interviewer: would that be something you'd be interested in or

Interviewee 4: meh

Interviewer: if they make the clothes you want but

Interviewee 4: yeah like if it's like yeah if they have it it if it's in a store sure but I'm generally not going to like go out of my way yeah like yeah don't I know I'd have to think about that one

Interviewer: yeah

Interviewee 4: yeah I probably wouldn't like go out of my way to seek it out especially because like with things like that that I've seen before it tends to be very much like oh yeah we you can buy this online on our website and I hate shopping for clothes online because just because like it's such a hassle to return stuff and you can't try it on beforehand I I didn't like it so like if I order something there and it doesn't fit you know that's pain in the ass to return

Interviewer: yeah so you prefer that

Interviewee 4: yeah I prefer like I would prefer to see that in stores rather than online like most brands have done that I'm aware of so far

Interviewer: okay and you started touched on this how how do you feel about sort of dressing rooms and you mentioned sort of that uncomfortability with perhaps a long line and you're holding products and there's that sort of inside monologue people not

Interviewee 4: yeah like people clocking you while you're waiting for it or just being misgendered or like the worst like actually like actively approached and questioned about why you're trying these things on like that's the worst I don't know why like you wouldn't do that to a cis person right like no one's going to ask a cis woman why she's trying on these jeans or whatever you know at least I hope not yeah I think definitely a lot of that comes from just like not being super confident or like feeling super safe trying clothes on as a trans person like people do get aggressive about presentation and like our existence and like trying on certain clothes can sometimes just be a giveaway to the fact that we're trans or not trans I don't know but just having that as like a signaling that I'm not even particularly fond of doing like I can signal being trans in ways that I feel comfortable with like when I put on clothes like when I put on certain outfits I know but it's not really helping me pass or whatever it's it's whatever it's my choices but it's my choice to put that on but if I'm holding clothes and just the act of holding clothes waiting to try them on is signaling then I'm not necessarily comfortable with that all right you know and also just like for social anxiety reasons just like having retail employees like escort me to dressing rooms especially gendered dressing rooms that's uncomfortable for me because then that's like them having like having an like personal like a person-to-person interaction they're going to notice what I'm what I'm holding they may or

may not be judging my choices as far as presentation or fashion decisions or what-have-you and like that makes me uncomfortable and don't like gender dressing rooms are like a whole nother beast because like especially for being escorted to them then that's the employee like making a judgement call what gender are you

Interviewer: yeah so do you prefer a gender-neutral [dressing room]

Interviewee 4: yes absolutely

Interviewer: okay and well I thought I had a follow-up but I'll just ask there's anything else you'd like to share about from this conversation

Interviewee 4: I guess with regards to mannequins thing I guess I'll follow up on that because I do think I actually have opinions like have more plus-sized mannequins have mannequins that aren't just like rail-thin cuz like most of your shoppers aren't shaped like that mannequin

Interviewer: yeah yeah

Interviewee 4: yeah I think I think having mannequin like having larger sized mannequins would be good yeah

Interviewer: yeah so having more diversity and more representation representation

Interviewee 4: yeah yeah yeah

Interviewer: and then I guess much of what you said is will probably go into this but if you were to right now you're going to stand in your soapbox you get to talk to all these companies if you were addressing them personally and say you know if you could say one thing to them what would you say

Interviewee 4: more plus size clothes cowards that's that's my sentence that's what I would tell them

Interviewer: that's good

Interviewee 4: more plus size clothes you cowards and I would drop the mic

Interviewer: that would be a very good strategy that's good

Interviewee 4: yeah

Interviewer: okay well if you have any more like you want to share

Interviewee 4: I can't think of anything

Interview 5

Interviewer: so thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview since Robbie Pettys-Baker so as you may remember from the survey this study is about non-cis people broadly and sort of their opinions on retail environment everything from the product to how its laid out to how things are generally presented and even ambient cues like lighting or even things like employee interaction so very holistic look and but before we get into that I would like you to let me know if you could tell me your gender identity and your preferred pronouns

Interviewee 5: I am non-binary agender and I use they/them pronouns pretty like those are the main ones

Interviewer: and then if I could ask you to speak up just a little bit

Interviewee 5: yeah of course

Interviewer: and then when you think about your gender identity what does it mean to you

Interviewee 5: um I guess it just means like how I feel like it's not like presenting and like passing is pretty important to me but it's also like like a social aspect like

Interviewer: what do you mean by social aspect

Interviewee 5: well because like how you interact with people and like how people like use your pronouns and like there's like different genders and stuff

Interviewer: yeah gotcha and then jumping into main topic what planning goes into choosing a story you will or will not shop

Interviewee 5: yeah um I guess I mostly just shop at stores that like have like a style that I like like to go into but like as far as like choosing store like based on like how they like separate clothing I don't really do because most places separated by like women's section and like men's sections and I don't really see any that don't

Interviewer: yeah so how would you describe your style then

Interviewee 5: I guess just I shop a lot in with the men's section pretty much and like I don't know I I go to I go to the women's section also but like mostly men's

Interviewer: okay so what sort of like clothing any particular

Interviewee 5: yeah like sweaters and Jackets it's a lot like like unisex shirts a lot so that usually what I wear

Interviewer: and is there anything that will prevent you from going to the store

Interviewee 5: um maybe like the environment like people that go there like I like the style like express you know that like men's like shop or whatever but like I think going into the store I don't like technically feel comfortable like going there

Interviewer: okay

Interviewee 5: just cuz like especially at least the Mall of America they have like express women's and men's but they're like kind of like two different stores so like it's weird

Interviewer: gotcha gotcha and do you do any sort of pre-planning are you the type of person to say shop for fun or you think about well I need a new sweater so I'm going to buy a

Interviewee 5: more shop for fun

Interviewer: okay and do you do any sort of online shopping or is it mostly

Interviewee 5: I do online shopping as well

Interviewer: okay and then what store would you say you frequent

Interviewee 5: online or?

Interviewer: Either

Interviewee 5: It's hard to say now because I used to go to H&M a lot but like there's been that big like scandal or whatever like just like like stealing artists work and stuff and so I don't go there and then like urban outfitters too I go there sometimes

Interviewer: and then well when it comes to things like that scandal do you actively do research into stuff like that or is that more word-of-mouth

Interviewee 5: um I do some research into it like I hear like I see word-of-mouth like like on Twitter or something like that and then I'll look into it and I'm like form my own opinion on it

Interviewer: gotcha and then when is so if I were sort of a fly in the wall and you are going on a normal shopping trip let's say what is your sort of process of traversing a store

Interviewee 5: I kind of usually gravitate towards the mens section usually and then like I don't usually look at the women's section I'd say but unless I like to see something over there that like catches my eye like usually not

Interviewer: yeah and with that would you say like you are you very direct with your path you sort of just wander

Interviewee 5: i-i think i'm pretty direct like just like I looked through like they got like to look around the mens section just like look through things and then like I do sometimes I wander just around it depends on like what I'm shopping for like most of the time I just shop for fun but like if I'm like looking for new pants or something like I'm pretty direct

Interviewer: yeah and do you use anything to help you navigate through a store like do actively look for sale signs or other types of signage like that or even I mean you mentioned if something catches your eye you might go directly to it

Interviewee 5: yeah yeah I really really like sale signs I kinda like like I'll go through stuff and even I'll look at the like stuff that's on sale but like and now I look at the stuff that's on sale like I also just look at like things aren't on sale

Interviewer: so you're mostly just looking for something you like

Interviewee 5: yeah

Interviewer: okay and in thinking about retail settings what do you like to see

Interviewee 5: like in regards to

Interviewer: everything so you're walking into a store and things that just makes you go thumbs up I really like this

Interviewee 5: okay just like nice displays I guess like you know how they have mannequins I guess like those style nicely that kind of like interests me like if I see something like cause like looking at items just by themselves it's like oh what will I wear this like when you see like a mannequin like that styled nicely you kind of like get an idea of how to use that

Interviewer: any other things sort of like to see

Interviewee 5: lighting I guess is nice it's not really nice lighting I like there's like some stores that like are like really dimly lit I guess and that's just like it's not appealing

Interviewer: yeah so when it comes to mannequins you like do do you mean simply the style or do you mean more of like for like sometimes they'll have more elaborate displays with sort of I guess the lifestyle look

Interviewee 5: oh I don't like that just like this style I look at

Interviewer: all right so you just like the clothing displayed prominently

Interviewee 5: mm-hmm

Interviewer: okay anything else you can think of

Interviewee 5: not particularly

Interviewer: all right and then sort of on the flip side what do you not like to see in a retail environment

Interviewee 5: I'm not sure right now can we come back to it

Interviewer: yes we can definitely come back to it and sorry and then well you sort of already mentioned this when it comes to the mannequins but what do you think of how clothing is displayed in stores not just of mannequins but things like their table setups they have well some stores have like tableaus with like pictorial contents of people in their clothing or even just racks give so you have any sort of thoughts about how its presented in stores

Interviewee 5: I guess the way that they present things is like like I guess like mannequins are like drawing you mean to like look at the items on the racks and the displays that are there so I think that's like and then you like look at all the things that are there and you like and I think like like pictures of like people like wearing is like it kind of gives you like this oh that's like how I could

Interviewer: yeah so you like it

Interviewee 5: um not necessarily because it's not like I guess it they're not usually true to life I guess it's like you know it's a model and you know it's not like real life like they're like hyper edited and stuff like that so

Interviewer: yeah so so you it's not that you don't like it but it's not something you're crazy about is that about it

Interviewee 5: yeah

Interviewer: anything else sort of about how its displayed in store generally

Interviewee 5: it's usually like separated like by gender and like separated like in two sides of the store but like generally I see them like like have the same kind of displays for either side so it's like I guess it like doesn't make sense to do so to me just because it's like if you're gonna have like like why wouldn't just like have all the pants like somewhere instead of like putting them into like these are like pants for men and pants for women

Interviewer: yeah so that so you prefer it if it was by product

Interviewee 5: yeah

Interviewer: okay is there any particular I guess you sort of mentioned it but could you perhaps elaborate on why you like that

Interviewee 5: I think it would just be it's like easier and it's like I guess like you don't need to have like different like because like how men's and women's pants are like they're like very different like the sizings like it's like by like width and like like how it is from mens it's like two different things and that's like easier to like find a sizing but like with women's pants its just like arbitrary numbers that don't really make sense and don't correlate within like different stores because it's like a size like eight could be different from this in this store than it is from a different store so it's like hard to know your size and then I guess just like like it doesn't make sense to like separate it all like based on that I guess just like by like product and my style I guess like the types of clothing I guess makes sense but like it's just clothes and like fabric so it doesn't make sense to assign a piece of fabric to a certain gender and like make it off limits sort of like it like provides a barrier I think and I think you could get like a lot more like people would feel a lot more freedom in like expressing how they like how they feel and who they are with clothing if it wasn't like separated that way

Interviewer: okay and then have you thought about what you don't like to see in a retail environment at all

Interviewee 5: I guess separation of gender like yeah

Interviewer: And when you think about previous shopping experiences you have had is there anything either positive or negative related to your gender identity that is happened [inaudible]

Interviewee 5: what was the question

Interviewer: so what experiences positive or negative have you had in stores related to your gender identity

Interviewee 5: just like sometimes like I have a lot of friends who are trans as well so like when we go shopping we shop together and then we like like some of us will go to the men's section and like there's like people sometimes who are like oh are we on the wrong side of the store or something like is this the women's section and like okay and it's like I don't know just like comments like that like not directed towards me but like I don't know

Interviewer: do you hear people talking

Interviewee 5: yeah

Interviewer: like other shoppers

Interviewee 5: yeah

Interviewer: and anything else positive or negative

Interviewee 5: not that I can think of

Interviewer: and then just a topic that has come up a lot in previous interviews has been sort of dressing rooms do you use dressing rooms and stores and what are your opinions generally on dressing rooms I suppose

Interviewee 5: yeah I use dressing rooms um lately I found like most dressing rooms that I go in the stores that I go to are like gender neutral so therefore like either gender I guess or like anyone but like as far as like it I know like there's like separation of genders in like dressing rooms and like stores like Macy's and like those kind of stores and usually there I just avoid like dressing rooms

Interviewer: so you prefer gender-neutral dressing rooms and will will and then when it comes to gender dressing rooms I should say does how I guess how does that impact your overall experience shopping

Interviewee 5: I mean I'm less likely to shop at places like Macy's and JC Penney because of the gendered like dressing rooms like if like I go to those stores and I

find something that I like I usually just like shopping in there I don't like want to go to the dressing room so I don't buy anything like oh I didn't try it on so I don't know how it was

Interviewer: and this I guess distaste is the only word that's coming up in my mind but distaste of going there is there any particular reason why you feel that way

Interviewee 5: like I found like a lot of the Styles don't match up with what I like in most of those stores anyways so like it's that and then like the gendered dressing of it just not feeling comfortable going to either one

Interviewer: yeah okay and another thing that's been brought up in previous interviews is just fit issues generally do you find yourself having fit issues in finding the clothing you want to purchase

Interviewee 5: yeah yeah the only like fit issues I guess like pants I used to buy like men's pants a lot but I find that they don't like fit the same way like just like like hip to like length ratio isn't very good and like the ankles tend to be like really wide like not really what I like and then like um shirts is like you have to like go to like small or extra small to it get what you need and it like even then it doesn't really fit very well and just like the length of shirts is very long

Interviewer: yeah yeah so how've you dealt with these issues on your own in a store if you find a product you like but some one of these could use comes up

Interviewee 5: I sometimes just like try on like three different sizes for something and then if it like doesn't work like sometimes if it's like oh it kind of looks ok then I'll like buy it and then like I can like fold it or something like this and like make it work but like if it doesn't if it just doesn't look good then I just wont buy it

Interviewer: and when it comes to sort of or I guess jumping back away I forgot to ask is there any sort of source you go for style perhaps not advice but just sort of to observe so for example perhaps you follow it influencer on Instagram or you look at what your friends or you read a magazine

Interviewee 5: yeah I think I my friends wear a lot and also I look at like there's like fashion like videos like on YouTube that I just have like watch a lot which gives me it gives me more ideas rather than like um tips and like stuff like that

Interviewer: yeah is there any specific example of like a type of video

Interviewee 5: um it's like how to style like these shoes like with these like like how to style these shoes so that I got and I like look it up on youtube do and I'll watch

it and like it shows a bunch of like different like outfits that people wore with it so like kind of like that

Interviewer: yeah and then is so you sort of mentioned lighting is there any other sort of or or sort of I guess maybe not as overt like a mannequin is rather over but lighting is perhaps a bit less so is there anything else like that you find you prefer don't prefer in stores

Interviewee 5: I prefer more um like I don't like racks I don't really like just because you have to like look through everything to like you find stuff so I kinda like when it's kind of like layed out like that and you can see everything in one glance

Interviewer: and then sort of another previous topic of discussion has sort o been people mulling over how to sort of generally may support or otherwise appeal to non-cis consumers specifically and people have sort of talked about that fine line between you know pandering and sort of I guess the term is either pink washing or rainbow washing if you're familiar with it it's sort of like putting the sheen of support as opposed to sort of true like for offering new products or we're presenting you with a space to feel comfortable in if you have new sort of thoughts on that

Interviewee 5: I don't think it's good to just like but like is it like pink washing my face so like pink washing what is

Interviewer: so uh like pink washing a similar term you may upgrade is like green washing so saying oh we're so in that case it's over so eco-friendly with a most eco-friendly look at that aren't we great we're the best look at this I mean you know and it becomes very much about about the we're saying we're doing that than the actual doing it I guess

Interviewee 5: yeah yeah

Interviewer: and when and pink washing has tended to refer to LGBTQ community very broadly and but the core idea is sort of a varnish of support and that might be real in some sense of the word but at the end of the day that's not necessarily true like support in this in this case within a store

Interviewee 5: it just seems like they're trying to do it just to get more like way more like consumers from those like different like groups of people rather than like actually caring about like the problems so like they might like say like they're like oh we're LGBT friendly or stuff like that are they creating products for it but it's like they're not really like they're not doing anything actively to like help the non-cis community that in different ways like I don't know I hadn't really heard anything of that but like I don't know like if they've like I don't know like do they make like clothing

Interviewer: it can be clothing sometimes it's just the way an ad campaign is run so for example there's that idea of being included within an ad so you know non-cis person might appear as part of an advertising campaign but then the difference is sort of how its presented versus yeah look at us we're so shiny look at that we got one of you guys look at that versus here's a group of people who are wearing our clothes

Interviewee 5: yeah

Interviewer: making it yeah I guess making it a bigger deal then in a way that feels disingenuous perhaps so you haven't really seen that yourself

Interviewee 5: not really

Interviewer: well that's good I would hope that people aren't doing that it's not not helpful but I guess tied to that topic there is that concept of how do we support non-cis consumers in the retail environment in a way that helps them and isn't just about taking their dollars you know so is there anything that you feel that stores could do to support you in that way

Interviewee 5: I feel like the biggest thing is just like removing the barrier of gender between the sections of clothing as far as like fit goes like I feel that's a bigger problem and if just like one or two stores could like figure out you know it's just like I think it would be like you'd have to like make a certain like fit because like I understand the way like clothing is fit but it's just it doesn't make sense for like everyone who wants to shop at somewhere just because if there's many different body type so like problems with like fit just don't make sense because even but even within like the trans community there's like many different body like sizes so it's hard

Interviewer: yeah yeah do you think there's anything that could help alleviate that beyond sort of breaking down that barrier so anything that you feel could help maybe not fully resolve but at least work to address that sort of sizing and fit issue

Interviewee 5: um probably like tailoring like certain clothing like if it was like originally designed for like men just like making it like so it can fit like different frames of people's body rather than just like it set of like normal like sizes for like cis-men and then the same thing for women's clothes

Interviewer: of course and then I suppose one thing we haven't talked about is employees in retail environments do you do you find yourself often asking them for help or interacting with them

Interviewee 5: not usually I usually like I'm not looking for like a certain thing so I'm just like going around so like I don't usually interact with employees except that like a cash register

Interviewer: okay and then I suppose to sort of cap everything else if you were to sort of you know to like a brief but sort of stand on your soapbox and talk to actual retail companies and just sort of say your piece what would you say to them you know we're in a boardroom and all those people are there is there anything you'd feel is important to tell them

Interviewee 5: Just like [inaudible] to make sure it's like you're not like you're not like I can't think of the word... prohibiting like, not like prohibiting, but like stopping certain groups of people from buying certain types of clothing because like how it's fit cause It like takes out from what you're going to make from like products like in profits from those people if they're not going to buy it just because it doesn't fit them like if it's not fit for those types of people

Interviewer: and then with that is there anything else you feel throughout our discussion that you would like to share or anything else you'd like to touch on again

Interviewee 5: No I think I'm good unless you have something