Evaluation Case Study

Instructions

To begin, familiarize yourself with the case study that follows. At the end of this reading, you will find further instructions.

The following is excerpted from the PEFF Phase 2 proposal of Sarah Peitzmeier (PEFF Fellow 2021, School of Nursing). Sarah submitted this proposal in 2021, when PEFF was being incubated in the Center for Academic Innovation and the proposal outline was a bit different. This excerpt contains relevant contextual information about the proposed initiative's scope, desired goals and impacts, and relevant partnerships.

Initiative Title

"Imagine a world in which we can all breathe": Disseminating the findings of the Binding Research to Advance Transmasculine Health (BREATHE) Cohort through art to reach transgender communities

Abstract

Many transmasculine people practice chest binding, i.e. flattening the chest for a more masculine or less feminine gender expression. This practice has mental health benefits, but sometimes results in negative physical symptoms. We conducted research tracking what binding practices are associated with greater or lesser risk of physical symptoms in order to make recommendations about safer binding. This project collaborates with a queer/trans graphic artist to develop an "evidence-based zine" or graphic novella to disseminate results of this research to transmasculine communities, and evaluates the use of the zine as novel health education tool.

Opportunity and Initiative Summary

- What is the overall focus and scope of the Initiative?

Some 87% of transmasculine individuals (i.e., individuals assigned a female sex at birth who identify on a spectrum of masculinity or as nonbinary) practice chest binding, or use of non-surgical methods to reduce the size of the chest as a means of gender expression, at some point. This is often accomplished by use of tight garments called binders, but some use sports bras, athletic compression wear, duct tape, ace bandages, or other means. In our seminal study with 1,800 transmasculine individuals who practiced binding, 52% bound every day. Binding can be critical for reducing dysphoria; increasing comfort and safety in public; and reducing anxiety, depression, and suicidality, but 97% of participants also reported negative physical health impact from binding, ranging from back pain (54%) to rib fractures (3%).

Our community-engaged research seeks to understand where different binding practices fall on a spectrum of safety and risk, so that transmasculine individuals can make informed, empowered decisions on how to bind to maximize benefit and minimize risk. We recently finished collecting data for a three-phase longitudinal, mixed-methods cohort study called the Binding REsearch to Advance Transmasculine HEalth (BREATHE) cohort. Study findings explore the meaning of binding in transmasculine people's lives, health, and gender journeys, and quantify what binding practices may be safer to use so that people can make an informed choice about the risks and benefits of binding in a particular way.

The proposed work will provide support to engage a trans/nonbinary graphic artist to disseminate the findings from BREATHE to the transmasculine community as a graphic novella.

- What problem or opportunity are you trying to solve?

There is a dearth of evidence-based, gender-affirming information about binding that is easily accessible to the people who need it most - individuals who bind. We envision a graphic novella as a powerful format to share our findings on the complex trajectories people follow in their binding journeys, help individuals clarify their goals and desires around binding, and help them identify strategies that they can use to reduce the risk of physical harms related to binding. Exploring novel arts-based ways to represent the findings of health research could spark more ethical and accessible representation of participants, democratize findings, and multiply the potential impact of the research for marginalized communities in exciting ways. There is extensive "graphic medicine" literature depicting patient narratives for a variety of conditions, which has been found to effectively convey nuanced health information to patients. Arts-based research dissemination has been used successfully for other public health studies

e.g. around disaster recovery, as well as educational and sociological research on topics such as student debt and homelessness.

Using art to craft new, more effective models of dissemination to the people who need it most. Public health research is typically disseminated solely through peer-reviewed articles behind journal paywalls. Despite movements toward open access journals, which seek to increase access, the average person does not find the language or structure of journal articles to be understandable or compelling. Reworking the findings into an arts-based medium can effectively reach the communities with and for whom this research was conducted. A graphic novella empowers these communities to make choices around binding that better help them reach their goals around mental health, gender, and safety while also taking care of their physical health.

Ethical representation of research in marginalized communities. There is a particular urgency to develop alternate forms of representation of findings in marginalized communities. Research published in academic journals is often twisted and mis-cited by anti-transgender groups. An Altmetrics search of Twitter posts that share our previous research on binding show that about 70% of 342 tweets about this study were from anti-transgender individuals. These tweets suggest that because binding can have negative physical side effects, transgender people are mentally ill for engaging in this practice. Graphic novels have the potential to resist this kind of manipulation and misinterpretation with the visceral visual and emotional impact of the illustrations and the showcasing of participant voices. Arts-based dissemination has the potential to reach uninformed people, including family and friends of trans individuals, who may be confused by binding practices. Comics can emotionally engage and help them understand why binding can be critical for mental health and safety, fighting transphobic ideas in society.

Culturally congruent. “Zines” (from “magazines”), i.e. self-published, often photocopied and hand-bound softcover short books, have a rich history in queer and trans communities over the last 100 years. Marginalized from traditional publishing houses, these communities created material by and for one another, often sharing personal stories and advice. Stemming from this history, there has been an explosion of queer graphic novels in the past decade. Our work is in the spirit of that tradition, making this a culturally congruent mode of dissemination.

- What are the key goals/outcomes?

Conceptual goals

To increase knowledge of the:

1. risks of binding
2. positive aspects of binding
3. action steps that can be taken to reduce harm and increase positive aspects
4. diversity of ways to engage with binding (no "one right" narrative)

Attitudinal goals

1. Foster appreciation for positive aspects of binding
2. Reduce fear/alarmism (or alternatively, minimization of any risks of binding) and replace with appropriate awareness of risks (as supported by evidence)

Capacity building (particularly for trans youth)

1. Increase reflexivity around binding practice (articulate motivations, goals, how will I know if my current binding practice is still working for me)
2. Increase capacity to self-care around binding practice (addressing physical harms, mental/social/emotional complexities, asking for help or seeking healthcare if necessary)
3. Increase capacity to consider binding as one tool for gender affirmation in a larger toolbox, in order to reduce reliance on or rigidity in binding in cases where it is causing harm and encourage flexibility in approach to binding to maximize benefits/reduce harms

- What factors led to the development of this Initiative?

Community-engaged research around binding has been a thread of PI Peitzmeier's research for approximately four years. This has consistently been the thread of her research that has garnered the most direct contact from individuals who bind, their parents, or their clinicians, in the form of tweets and emails to Peitzmeier. About two years ago, Peitzmeier read an article about the potential of graphic novels for disseminating research findings, and she immediately thought about how this medium would fit really well with this audience and topic. In discussing this idea with community advisory board members, it seemed to also resonate with community members. It has been a goal of her research platform ever since to develop this initiative.

- What is the desired deliverable/output of the Initiative? Who is the intended beneficiary or audience of this desired deliverable/output?

The pdf of the novella will be made freely available online under a creative commons license to maximize reach. We will also attempt to secure a publisher for paper copies for purchase, for those who would rather use a paper copy (Kobabe has suggested Limerence Press, a queer

sex-ed comics-focused small press). We plan to engage in a social media campaign and contact major trans advocacy organizations to get the word out about the resource.

The intended primary audience is transmasculine individuals who bind. We particularly want the zine to speak to younger people who may be more isolated and do not have access to broader trans community or evidence-based health information; however, we want the zine to speak to all ages. A secondary audience would be parents of youth who bind and clinicians who take care of trans individuals who bind.

University and Public/Community Partnerships

Artist. We are thrilled to be working with Maia Kobabe (e/em/eir pronouns). Maia is a published graphic novelist who wrote a memoir entitled Gender Queer describing eir journey toward understanding and embodying eir identity. As a member of the trans/nonbinary community, Maia has relevant life experience with this topic and the intended audience. We have already had extensive conversations with Maia, and e is excited to collaborate. PI Peitzmeier will provide draft text and content for the zine, which Maia will edit and shape before creating the artwork/final product.

Community advisory board members. The CAB has been working with us throughout the lifecycle of this research project. Members were selected to represent a diversity of racial and gender identities within the transmasculine umbrella. Because it has been some time since the project started, we will check in with all CAB members in the fall to see if they can commit to working on this phase of the research. New members may be recruited through reaching out to community-based organizations. CAB members play a critical role providing feedback on the draft novella and making sure it speaks well to diverse segments of the community.

Continue to the next page for instructions.

Instructions

Now that you have familiarized yourself with the material:

Step 1: Craft the beginnings of an evaluation plan for this initiative in the table, using three aspects of the standard for the evaluation of public engagement as a guide (design, delivery/outputs, impacts).

a. Note: There are many different possible things that you might choose to evaluate in each of the three aspects of the standard. **For this activity, please select and focus on only one item for each of the three aspects.**

Step 2: Take notes in the table below.

	What might you want to evaluate about this aspect of the initiative?	**Why would you want to know this?**	**What indicators would you use to track this?**	**How will you assess possible change(s) in your selected indicator(s)?**
Design				
Delivery / Outputs				
Impacts				