

Training therapists about gender affirmation and inclusivity

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

My name is [Sofia Isabel Melendez Ron](#). I am a graduate student at Toronto Metropolitan University working with my research supervisor, Professor [Dr. Maria Gurevich](#), in the Department of Psychology. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study, which aims to *collaborate with gender diverse people to develop case studies used to train therapists about trans and nonbinary health*.

The tool has 3 case studies of trans and nonbinary patients. Each case includes the following:

- a. questions about what the respondent (a mental health professional) would do to help the trans or nonbinary patient
- b. educational feedback to guide the respondent toward an inclusive and affirmative approach

This study is being completed in partial fulfillment of Sofia's degree requirements. It has been reviewed and approved by the Toronto Metropolitan Research Ethic Board (REB 2023-026). The funding structure for this research positions the research supervisor as Dr. Maria Gurevich who can be reached at mgurevic@torontomu.ca

ELIGIBILITY

For this research, we are seeking ten people over the age of 18 who are fluent in English written language and have at least one of the following social positions and/or identities:



- Anyone who is trans, nonbinary, genderfluid, genderqueer, agender, trans femme, trans masc, agender, demifluid, and/or has a gender identity that differs from the social expectations of the gender you were assigned at birth.



- A mental health professional with experience in gender affirming care¹ (e.g., clinical social worker, counsellor, psychotherapist, clinical psychologist, health psychologist).

Importantly, your acceptance or refusal to participate will *not affect* your professional, employment, or educational standing, nor any relationships that you may have with any of the researchers.

¹ Gender affirming care means to collaboratively and holistically address the social, mental, and medical health needs of trans and nonbinary people. This process involves respectfully affirming their self-attested gender identity and engaging in cultural humility in a welcoming health care setting where they can engage with care on their own terms (International Transgender Health Group, 2022)

WHAT YOU ARE BEING ASKED TO DO

You are being asked to **voluntarily** complete an online survey. The survey involves you **providing expert feedback** on up to three case studies of trans and nonbinary patients, each with the following:

- (i) multiple choice and open-text questions about what the clinician would do to help the trans or nonbinary patient
- (ii) educational feedback on each case study



Completing the online survey should take between **60 to 90 minutes**.



You may discontinue at any time by closing your browser window or selecting decline response for the remaining questions. All of the questions on the survey have a 'decline response' option. You can go back to previously completed pages by pressing the 'back' button.



You are essential to this research because you hold expertise in trans and nonbinary health and/or trans-inclusive and -affirming healthcare. It is essential to have trans and nonbinary people self-voicing and leading the development of this tool so that it may be strengths-based and have gender-transformative impacts on mental health training and research.



The educational tool you will review is based on Intersectionality, Queer Theory, and strengths-based approaches that have already been reviewed by trans and nonbinary people.

If you wish to participate, please share your email address in the [eligibility questionnaire](#) to receive the link to the survey via email. Alternatively, you can send an email to transhealthstudy@torontomu.ca to receive the link for the online survey. This is to (1) prevent robots from taking the survey, (2) mitigate people taking the survey multiple times to receive compensation, and (3) ensure each person who takes the survey can receive compensation.

We foresee that this phase of the study will be completed in September 2023.

INCENTIVE FOR PARTICIPATION

For contributing your expertise, time, and effort to this research, you will be **compensated \$50.00 CAD** for participating. The money can be provided in the form of a \$50 gift card (virtual Mastercard) or with a \$50 donation to [Trans Lifeline](#) made on your behalf. Trans Lifeline is a transgender-led organization that connects trans people to the support resources they can use to survive and thrive. This includes a peer support hotline, community resources, and financial support for legal document changes. If you do not want to complete specific parts of the feedback or choose to skip a case, you will still receive the \$50 compensation. To choose between the gift card (virtual Mastercard) or



the Trans Lifeline donation, please select the relevant option at the end of the online survey with the case studies.

You will have 1 year upon survey submission to confirm receipt of your virtual Mastercard at transhealthstudy@torontomu.ca. Letting us know you received the virtual Mastercard will allow us to delete your email address from our laboratory's secure server. We will reach out monthly (for up to 12 months) with a gentle reminder to let us know if you have received the compensation. If you selected the option to donate your compensation to Trans Lifeline, then we will delete your email address up to 2 weeks from finalizing data collection.

If you wish to withdraw your data if you abandon the study before completing the full online survey, you can indicate this at multiple time points throughout the survey: before starting the online survey, after the first case study, or at the end of the survey. You can still receive full compensation if you wish to abandon the study part way through completing the survey. To do this, you must skip to the end of the survey to receive the compensation. Once you complete the survey, you cannot request your data be withdrawn from the survey as we will not be able to link responses to each participant.

This study is funded by the Jean Royce Fellowship, the Council of Ontario Universities, and the Jackman Foundation Psychology Research Excellence Grant.



YOUR IDENTITY WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

Your participation in this study is strictly confidential. The investigators will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of your records. You will not be identified in any summaries, publications, or reports of this research as all data will be anonymized and aggregated in all outputs of this study. We recommend you complete the online survey in a location with visual privacy.

This study is not anonymous for two main reasons:

- ***We will ask you to share your email address so we can send you (1) the link to participate and (2) the virtual gift card (Mastercard).*** Sharing your email address means you will no longer be anonymous, but this information will remain strictly confidential. Only the Principal Investigator, Sofia Melendez, will have access to your email address and send you the gift card. Your email address will not be linked to your responses as it is collected on a survey that is separate from the survey with the educational tool. Other than your email address, we do not explicitly ask for information that can be identifying (e.g., name, address, ethnicity, specific gender identity). Email addresses will be deleted on a weekly basis once you confirm you have received compensation or two weeks after data collection is complete if you



decide to have your compensation donated to Trans Lifeline. If you do not confirm you received your gift card, your data will be deleted after 12 months.



- Secondly, we are inviting known experts to contribute meaning that your participation may not be anonymous to the investigators. The investigator not involved in this type of recruitment (Sofia Melendez) will confidentially send out the virtual Mastercards to ensure participants do not feel unduly obligated to participate in the research.

If you wish to be identified as a contributor to the development of this educational tool:



- Please email transhealthstudy@torontomu.ca and indicate you would like to be acknowledged for your contributions to the development of the tool.
- This voluntary option aligns with the self-voicing principle where research goes beyond ‘inclusion’ and ‘engagement;’ communities construct and author their knowledge and define their own actions.
- Unless you explicitly indicate that you want to be acknowledged as a contributor, your identity will be strictly confidential and will not be identified in any outputs of this research.

The research team will have access to the data, and the Toronto Metropolitan University Research Ethics Board (REB) may request access to study data to ensure that the researchers meet their ethical obligations in conducting this research. REB is bound by confidentiality and will not disclose any personal information.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. Once the research is complete, this teaching and testing tool will be the first assessment-based resource for mental health professionals to learn about trans health. The tool ***may be used in training courses, self-assessments, and program evaluations***. It may provide a necessary resource for curriculum developers, program coordinators, and educators to enhance mental health professionals’ training.



By improving trans health education, we can move toward a trajectory that **recognizes and targets historical and current oppression impacting trans people’s wellbeing**. Improving trans health education may also enable mental health professionals to alleviate some major barriers the trans community faces to accessing and receiving adequate healthcare.

POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU

Potential risk: Having a negative emotional reaction to a particular case (e.g., feeling anxious, upset, or uncomfortable).



- The tool that will be presented outlines several situations about trans and nonbinary people undergoing challenges within the healthcare system. These situations contain sensitive subjects that may be distressing for some people.
- To mitigate this:

- Each case in the educational tool contains a specific content warning. You can choose not to give feedback for a whole case or specific pieces of the case. You can also stop taking the survey at any point. You will still receive full compensation even if you choose not to provide feedback for particular parts of the survey. If possible, we ask that you give feedback for at least one of the case studies.
- Trans-affirmative support resources will be provided at the end of the instrument in case you need to debrief or support.

Potential risk: Your personal identity being revealed directly or inadvertently.



- There is a low risk that people with intersecting identities could be identified based on raw data, given that we are recruiting known experts in trans health. We never explicitly ask for identifying information, but you may choose to discuss a relevant situation or information that could be identifying (e.g., “In my experience as a Mexican trans person living in Guelph ...”).
- There is also the risk of the researchers knowing whether you participated or not, as we will be sharing the link to the online survey through the email address you provide (e.g., if your email address contains your name).
- To mitigate this:
 - **Your survey responses and contact information will not be linked.** They will be collected using separate surveys.
 - As with every part of the online survey, all responses will have an “I prefer not to respond” option. There are also open text boxes and you can skip these questions without repercussions.
 - **Email addresses will be deleted once you confirm that you have received compensation** (or if you decide you want to donate your compensation).
 - Any identifying information provided will be de-identified in publications, knowledge mobilization, and outputs related to the study to reduce the chance of people from the public being able to identify you.

Potential risk: Already-existing relationships between you and the researcher (i.e., dual role)



- Based on previous studies with trans communities and the recruitment methods, trans people who know the investigators are likely to participate. These relationships could be personal and/or professional. This could risk the situation where you feel unduly obligated to participate in the research.
- To manage and mitigate this risk:
 - Your participation is **completely voluntary and confidential.**
 - Your decision to participate or not will **not impact any existing relationships** that you have with any of the researchers.
 - Your decision to participate or not will not affect your professional, employment, or educational standing.
 - Your decision to withdraw from the study will not impact any existing relationships that you have with any of the researchers.

- The investigator who is NOT involved in your recruitment, Sofia Melendez, will confidentially email you the virtual gift cards; this means the investigator who recruited you will not be able to confirm whether you have participated or not, as they will not be involved in your compensation. This approach may help mitigate any feelings of being unduly obligated to participate in the research.

HOW YOUR INFORMATION WILL BE PROTECTED AND STORED

This survey uses Qualtrics™ Survey Software, which has its headquarters in the United States of America with a data centre located in Toronto, Canada. Back-up data from Qualtrics is stored in the Amazon Web Service, which is located in Montreal, Canada.

Due to the affiliations of Qualtrics with the USA, authorities under the provisions of the USA Freedom Act (formerly known as the Patriot Act) may access the survey data.

To further protect your information, all data will be stored on the SHiFT laboratory server, a secure online server that is protected by Toronto Metropolitan University's firewalls and network infrastructure. Electronic data will be password protected. Only the investigators named in this study—Sofia Melendez Ron, Maria Gurevich, Jane Mao, and Dan Goldgruber—will have access to the data collected. Data shared between researchers will be securely transmitted through Toronto Metropolitan University's Google Drive. Any future publications will include collective information (i.e., aggregate data). Your individual responses (i.e., raw data) will not be shared with anyone outside the research team.

When the research is completed, the researcher/s will keep all data for up to 5 years after the study is over. The document storing participants' email addresses that were collected in the eligibility questionnaire will be deleted (1) after one year, (2) once the participant confirms they have received their compensation, or (3) if the participant chooses to donate the money to Trans Lifeline. Survey answers cannot be connected to your identity or email address.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. It is not possible to withdraw consent or have your data removed from the survey once you fill out any part of the survey, as all responses on the actual online survey (not the compensation-related survey) are anonymous.

At the beginning of the online survey (not the eligibility questionnaire), you will be asked whether you consent to participate in this research study. You are providing your consent to participate by clicking the 'Yes' button for that question. You have not waived any legal rights by consenting to participate in this study.

QUESTIONS

Research findings will be disseminated through peer review publications and knowledge mobilization briefs. You will be asked at the end of the survey if you would like a copy of the research findings. If so, we will ask for your email again at the end of the survey. Your email address will not be linked to your responses on the online survey.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact Sofia Melendez at transhealthstudy@torontomu.ca or 416-979-5000 ext. 557570

If you would like to reach out to Sofia's research supervisor, please email mgurevic@torontomu.ca

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Toronto Metropolitan University Research Ethics Board at rebchair@torontomu.ca (416) 979-5042.

Please print a copy of this page for your future reference. An online copy of this Letter of Information is also available at <https://queeringtherapy.wixsite.com/study>

If you experience distress while taking the survey, you can access Trans Lifeline

- Canada (877) 330-6366
- US (877) 565-8860
- If you are not trans, nonbinary, or genderqueer, you can still call the above numbers and ask for the "Family & Friends Line"
- For additional resources, go to <https://translifeline.org/resources/>