A Gender Not Listed Here:
Genderqueers, Gender Rebels, and OtherWise in the National Transgender Discrimination Survey

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In the landmark 2008 National Transgender Discrimination Survey, respondents were given the latitude to write in their own gender if the predefined categories were not representative. This article reanalyzes the survey data to determine the experiences of those respondents who chose to write in their own gender. By examining several key domains of the study—education, health care, employment, and police harassment—it becomes evident that gender variant respondents are suffering significant impacts of anti-transgender bias and in some cases are at higher risk for discrimination and violence than their transgender counterparts in the study.

In 2008, the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (the Task Force) launched a nationwide study of anti-transgender discrimination in the United States. Over a six-month period, 6,450 transgender and gender nonconforming people answered a seventy-question survey, reporting on their experiences of discrimination and abuse at home, in school, in the public sphere, and in the workplace, as well as with landlords, doctors, and public officials, including judges and police (Grant et al. 2011).

The results stunned even those working in the trenches with the most targeted and marginalized transgender people. Despite having attended college or gained a college degree or higher at 1.74 times the rate of the general population (47 percent versus 27 percent), respondents revealed brutal impacts of discrimination, experiencing unemployment at twice the rate and living in extreme poverty ($10,000 annually or less) at four times the rate of the general population. These and other experiences impacted study participants gravely, as 41 percent report having survived a suicide attempt.

For this landmark effort, NCTE and the Task Force attempted to collect the broadest possible swath of experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming people with the initial, qualifying question: “Do you identify as transgender or gender nonconforming in any way?” A series of identifiers followed, including Question 3 (Q3), which will form the basis of our exploration in this article.

Q3 asked, “What is your primary gender identity today?”
Response rates for the four options were: male/man, 26 percent; female/woman, 41 percent; part time as one gender, part time as another, 20 percent; and a gender not listed here (GNL), 13 percent.

Q3 garnered 860 written responses to GNL, many of them creative and unique, such as twidget, birl, OtherWise, and transgenderist. The majority of these respondents wrote in genderqueer, or some variation thereof, such as pangen- der, third gender, or hybrid. Still others chose terms that refer to third gender or genderqueers within specific cultural traditions, such as Two-Spirit (First-Nations), Mahuwahine (Hawaiian), and Aggressive (Black or African American).

Our purpose in examining the experiences of respondents who replied to Q3 as “a gender not listed here, please specify” is threefold. First, we would like to share the experience of creating a survey instrument that afforded respondents great latitude in articulating their gender identity in order to create a cache of data that speaks to the nuances of identity formation among transgender and gender nonconforming people at this moment in our communities’ evolution. Language, age, culture, class, location, and community all shape identity among gender variant people and by asking several demographic questions alongside a broad series of identity signifiers, a data set has been created that begs to be asked complex questions.

Secondly, we wondered how Q3 gender not listed here (Q3GNL) respondents are constructing and describing their gender identities. Might there be some coherence among the Q3GNLs? What does the diversity of identities among Q3GNLs tell us about community, identity, and survival among gender variant people in the United States in this moment?

Finally, we wanted to look at the experiences of Q3GNLs in terms of the various domains the survey explores, such as education, health, and housing, as well as experiences with police, to see if Q3GNLs are faring better or worse than their transgender and gender nonconforming peers who did not write in their gender.

The findings we describe in what follows affirm the relevance of creating nuanced gender categories in collecting data on transgender and gender nonconforming people. By providing study participants multiple options for identifying and describing their gender identity, the resulting data shows that those who wrote in answers to Q3 have both unique demographic patterns as well as distinct experiences of discrimination. These important realities would have been rendered invisible by cruder or more simplistic instruments.

**Posing the T Question**

In late 2007, a group of advocates and researchers gathered in the conference room at the Task Force to construct an original survey instrument for a study coproduced with NCTE. This partnership was facilitated by the proximity of the offices of the two organizations (upstairs/downstairs) and by the strong networks of transgender advocates and researchers that both organizations brought to the table as staff, volunteers, interns, and (pro bono) consultants on the project. For a
little over a year, advocates and researchers with decades of experience in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) movements at the grassroots and national levels wrestled over hundreds of potential questions and their formulation. This group included organizational leaders, legal advocates, experts in social science research and statistics, feminist and antiracism organizers, health and community-based researchers, therapists, interns of various backgrounds and training, and community organizers. The combination of highly trained scholars and community-based end users of data was a particularly powerful mix that, in the end, attracted the largest group of participants in U.S. history to a project on transgender life and experiences of discrimination.

No one in the room and no one providing feedback by phone or e-mail was completely satisfied with the final questionnaire. Everyone had to “give up” questions that were of vital importance from their particular vantage point in their movements and organizations. At times, the struggle to find appropriate language to facilitate participation and elicit nuances of experience frazzled nerves and tested relationships. After the survey was fielded, for example, there was a collective groaning regret that a question on religious affiliation fell off the table in the final draft. The study team struggled to create an instrument that was accessible, both in terms of literacy and length, to community members whose experiences are the most suppressed and marginalized, while at the same time capable of recording the breadth of anti-transgender targeting. The team’s internal critique of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (NTDS) questionnaire is detailed in Appendix B: The Survey Instrument—Issues and Analysis of the full report (Grant 2011).

No part required more strenuous negotiation than the initial four questions of the study, which included a qualifying question for participants and then sought to establish identity “containers” for respondents so that we might study the impacts of discrimination across a broad spectrum of gender identities. These questions were constructed so we might identify highest-risk identity categories and, with this data, uncover needed policy and legal changes.

The context in which the survey was created demanded attention on the matter of identity. The federal legislative battle of 2007 regarding the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) exposed political fault lines within the community and also created a rallying cry for transgender advocates and their allies. Forces inside LGBT communities seeking a short-term, “historic” win in Congress led to transgender protections being dropped from ENDA, as some believed that it would not have enough votes to pass with the transgender inclusion. ENDA with the transgender protection dropped did pass the House but failed in the Senate.

Additionally, twenty years of pressure on both state and federal governments to collect data on LGBT people’s experiences was gaining steam and critical mass, resulting in a smattering of youth, family, and health surveys on LGB experiences and only the merest experiments in posing the “T” question. In 2007, there was great internal debate in the community that reflected the dynamics of the ENDA battle, with many prominent lesbian and gay researchers arguing against pressing governments on
transgender questions, given that there was so little consensus about how to adequately pose them.

In this context, the group created a multilayered set of questions that may or may not be replicable in other settings. Advocates are constantly told by state and government actors that questions on LGBT experience are “sensitive” and dissonant for participants in mainstream population-based studies; in fact, they are considered so distressing that they risk ending participation in a study, whether on paper, by phone, or in person. However, several reviews of studies posing sexual orientation questions have debunked this myth (Williams Institute 2009). The next barrier governments often present is expense. Our relatively “small” LGBT community “can get” only one question in which to identify ourselves given the expense of adding us to large, population-based studies (i.e., the National Survey of Family Growth, the National Health Interview Survey, or the survey gold standard, the census). Because sexual orientation and gender identity are constructed as “distinct” identities by both our communities and society at large, logic follows that there must be at least two questions to locate LGBT participants in any study.

The group that formed the NTDS questionnaire endeavored to inform the current debates about posing the T question in both community-based studies and population-based work by crafting a community-based questionnaire that might attract participants through a layered set of identifiers that were likely recognizable to many gender variant people. While understanding that small, community-based questionnaires may be more nuanced instruments than larger, population-based surveys, we hoped the success of the survey would challenge local, state, and national researchers whose proposed set of survey options create only the narrowest avenue for members of our communities to engage and make visible our realities.

In the end, though many researchers viewed the questionnaire as prohibitively exhausting in terms of length (seventy questions total) and exclusionary in terms of its literacy level, the study attracted a record-breaking number of participants only a week after its fielding (3,500 participants at the one-week mark in November 2008). The final sample of 6,456 includes participation by people living on the streets and those with low levels of educational attainment and low incomes, perhaps demonstrating the energizing and attracting capacity of questions that incorporate gender variant people’s language and processes of identity creation.

**METHODOLOGY**

Respondents for the survey were recruited in collaboration with 800 active, transgender-specific or transgender-related organizations nationwide that announced the survey to their membership. The survey link was also disseminated through 150 listservs that reach the transgender community in the United States. The survey was made available online and on paper. The final sample consists of 5,956 online responses and 500 paper responses.
We posed the following four questions at the start of the survey:

**Q1:** “Transgender/gender nonconforming” describes people whose gender identity or expression is different, at least part of the time, from their sex assigned to them at birth. Do you consider yourself to be transgender/gender nonconforming in any way?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No. If no, do NOT continue.

**Q2:** What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

**Q3:** What is your primary gender identity today?

- [ ] Male/man
- [ ] Female/woman
- [ ] Part time as one gender, part time as another
- [ ] A gender not listed here, please specify ____________________

**Q4:** For each term listed, please select to what degree it applies to you (not at all, somewhat, strongly).

- [ ] Transgender
- [ ] Transsexual
- [ ] FTM (female to male)
- [ ] MTF (male to female)
- [ ] Intersex
- [ ] Gender nonconforming or gender variant
- [ ] Genderqueer
- [ ] Androgynous
- [ ] Feminine male
- [ ] Masculine female or butch
- [ ] A.G. or Aggressive
- [ ] Third gender
- [ ] Cross-dresser
- [ ] Drag performer (King/Queen)
- [ ] Two-spirit
- [ ] Other, please specify ____________________
Q3GNLs have significantly higher educational attainment than their peers who did not write in their gender. . . Nonetheless, Q3GNLs are living in the lowest household income category at a much higher rate than those who did not write in their gender.

In *The Lives of Transgender People*, Genny Beemyn and Susan Rankin (2011) also examine respondents and interviewees whose identities challenge the constructed male-female gender binary. In referring to these respondents, they proposed the term female-to-different-gender and male-to-different-gender to complement the transgender-identified constructs of female-to-male and male-to-female (Beemyn and Rankin 2011). In this article, we explore the identities and impacts of discrimination on those who wrote in their own gender response for Q3. More research is needed to look closely at those who also selected and/or wrote in their own gender response on Q4, who at first glance appear to be quite different from Q3GNLs. Accordingly, there is a great deal more diversity of experiences around nonbinary gender identity and experiences of discrimination to be explored in this data set.

In this study, we employ Pearson’s chi-square tests of independence to measure within-sample relationships between Q3GNLs and those who did not write in their gender for Q3. Pearson’s chi-square tests are only generalizable when using random samples. The test’s ability to find statistical significance may also be limited when utilized with a nonrandom sample. Yet, the test can be used to crudely measure a statistical relationship between two variables within this sample and provide hypotheses for future research (Lájer 2007).

**I AM Q3GNL: THE COMPLEXITIES OF IDENTITY**

In terms of gender spectrum, Q3GNLs identify more often on the transmasculine spectrum than overall participants in the study (see Table 1). In fact, participation is flipped in terms of the full sample, with 73 percent of Q3GNLs reporting assigned sex at birth as female and identifying on the transmasculine spectrum and 27 percent assigned male at birth and identifying as transfeminine. In the full sample, 60 percent of respondents were assigned male at birth and locate themselves on the transfeminine spectrum, while 40 percent were assigned female at birth and identify along the transmasculine spectrum.

In terms of age, Q3GNLs were younger than those who did not write in their gender. Fully 89 percent of Q3GNLs were under the age of forty-five, while 68 percent of those who said “man, woman, or part time” on Q3 were under the age of forty-five.

Q3GNLs were less likely to be White (70 percent) than those who did not write in their gender (77 percent) and more likely to be multiracial (18 percent compared to 11 percent). They were more often Black (5 percent) and Asian (3 percent) than those who did not write in their gender as
well as the overall sample (4 percent and 2 percent, respectively), but less likely to identify as Latino/a (4 percent compared to 5 percent).4

Q3GNLs live in California and the Northeast, the Mid-Atlantic states, and the West (including Alaska and Hawaii) at higher rates. Q3GNLs live in the Midwest and the South at a lower percentage rate than do their counterparts who replied “man, woman, or part time” to Q3. Q3GNLs have significantly higher educational attainment than their peers who did not write in their gender, and as
noted above, the full sample has a considerably higher level of educational attainment than the general population. Nonetheless, Q3GNLs are living in the lowest household income category (under $10,000 annually) at a much higher rate (21 percent) than those who did not write in their gender (14 percent), which may be partially attributable to the high percentage of young people among Q3GNLs in the study.

In terms of gender identity, 337 Q3GNLs (39 percent) identify wholly or in part as genderqueer. An additional twenty-five respondents wrote in “queer” to Q3, which might be interpreted as “my current gender is queer,” an equivalent of genderqueer. If we read this intent correctly, then an additional 2.9 percent of Q3GNL respondents identify specifically as genderqueer (42 percent of Q3GNLs, 6 percent of the sample).

Other written responses that conceptually align with genderqueer include: both/either/neither/in-between/non-binary (n=82), androgynous or blended (n=70), non-gendered, gender is a performance or gender does not exist (n=23), fluid (n=19), Two-Spirit (n=18), bi-gender, tri-gender or third gender (n=16), genderfuck, rebel, or radical (n=10). Many respondents combined one of these descriptors with queer or genderqueer in their responses, as a way to further describe their genderqueer identity.

Several Q3GNLs claim a genderqueer identity while expressing the belief that they possess no gender. There appears to be no tension for many Q3GNLs between simultaneously identifying as fluidly gendered, multiply gendered, performing gender, or having no gender. Accordingly, the study illuminates rich variation within genderqueer identity and raises questions about identity and impacts of discrimination. How do those whose identities present a more explicit confrontation or critique of current gender paradigms (i.e., genderfuckers or rebels) fare relative to their peers? How does nuance or multiplicity in gender identity and expression play out when interacting with gender policing structures and forces? These and many other questions await further study.

Among Q3GNLs, several respondents wrote in their own unique genders including: birl, Jest me, skaneelog, twidget, neutrois, OtherWise, gendertreyf, trannydyke genderqueer wombat fantastica, Best of Both, and gender blur. These identifiers speak to the creative project of gender identity creation. While much of the data in the study catalogs serious and widespread violations of human rights, this data testifies to resilience, humor, and a spirit of resistance to gender indoctrination and policing among respondents.
Q3GNLS AND DISCRIMINATION

This final section offers a preliminary look at discrimination faced by study participants who chose a gender not listed in Q3. The analysis here merely scratches the surface of this extensive data set, but by looking at several arenas for experiences of discrimination, including education, employment, health care, police, and violence, we hope to create a foundation for our team and others to make deeper explorations (see Table 2).

Education

Although the NTDS was only open to respondents aged eighteen and older, we asked everyone to reflect on their experiences in K-12 schools. Q3GNLs who attended K-12 expressing a transgender identity or gender nonconformity reported higher rates of harassment and sexual assault than their counterparts in the study. Q3GNLs experienced harassment at a rate of 83 percent. This compares to 77 percent of those who did not write in their own gender. Sixteen percent of Q3GNLs reported surviving sexual assault at school, compared to 11 percent of those who did not write in their gender.

Because these experiences took place early in respondents’ lives, perhaps often before they were fully expressing their gender identity, one might expect these rates to be consistent with the rates for those who identified as FTMs because of the high concentration of female-assigned-at-birth Q3GNLs. This is true for harassment, where the Q3GNL rate of 83 percent is very close to the FTM rate of 84 percent. Yet the reported rate of sexual assault for Q3GNLs was a full six percentage points higher than that of FTMs in the study, raising questions about specific sexual
assault risks for genderqueers assigned female at birth in K-12 settings.  

**Employment**

While we found virtually no difference between Q3GNLs and the full sample in terms of workforce participation, we did find that Q3GNLs “lost a job due to anti-transgender bias” at lower rates (19 percent) than other respondents in the study. They are, however, more likely to be “out at work” (76 percent) than their counterparts in the study (56 percent), while enduring the same level of harassment and abuse at work as the full sample: 90 percent report having experienced some form of anti-transgender bias on the job. Anti-transgender bias includes verbal harassment, denial of a promotion, physical and sexual violence, or having taken steps to avoid these outcomes by individuals delaying their transition or otherwise hiding who they are. This suggests that while Q3GNLs are less negatively affected by being “out at work” in terms of possible job loss, transgender-identified people as a whole in the study often have “lost a job due to bias,” especially MTF transgender participants.

Q3GNLs are more likely to have participated in underground or informal economies for income. Twenty percent of Q3GNLs said they had been involved in drug sales, sex work, or other off-the-books work at some point in their lives. This compares to 15 percent of those who did not write in their gender and 16 percent of the overall NTDS sample. However, the rates of sex work for Q3GNLs and the full sample are the same. This counters mainstream discourse on the gender of sex workers in trans communities (widely viewed as MTF transgender) and the role of underground economies in sustaining people with genderqueer identity.

**Health and Health Care**

In the health section of the survey, respondents reported on direct forms of discrimination in medical care as well as health disparities, which may be interpreted as impacts of cumulative effects of discrimination.

Q3GNLs reported being refused medical care due to bias at a rate of 14 percent, a lower proportion than those who did not write in their own gender (20 percent). However, they are more likely to avoid care altogether when sick or injured because of the fear of discrimination (36 percent of Q3GNLs compared to 27 percent of those who did not write in their gender).

Q3GNLs are slightly more likely to be HIV positive (2.9 percent) than those who did not write in their gender (2.5 percent). Additionally, 11 percent of Q3GNLs did not know their status, compared to 9 percent of those who did not write in their gender.

Q3GNLs are slightly more likely to have attempted suicide at some point in their life (43 percent) than those who did not write in their gender (40 percent). Both of these figures strike a stark contrast against the 1.6 percent rate of suicide attempts over the lifespan for the general U.S. population (McIntosh 2004).

**Police**

Among respondents who had interacted with police, Q3GNLs are more likely to have experienced harassment (31 percent) than those who did not write in their gender (21 percent). Correspondingly, Q3GNLs are more likely to feel very uncomfortable going to the police for
assistance (25 percent) than those who did not write in their gender (19 percent). This data indicates that harassment and police abuse of genderqueers is a major problem that has not been fully examined relative to the better-documented problem of police harassment against transgender women.

**Violation**

One of the regrets we maintain about the survey instrument is that it did not pose a question about overall experiences of violence. Instead, we asked about physical and sexual assaults due to bias that occurred in several different contexts, including at school or in the workplace, as described above, as well as in various spaces of public accommodation and in the context of domestic violence. Looking across these contexts provides some sense of the overall rates of violence perpetrated against Q3GNLs.

Thirty-two percent of Q3GNLs report having been physically assaulted due to bias, compared to 25 percent of those who did not write in their gender. Fifteen percent of Q3GNLs report having been sexually assaulted due to bias, compared to 9 percent of those who did not write in their gender. Again, relative to their study peers, the higher rates of violence suggest the need for rigorous examination of violence against genderqueers.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In the earliest moments of crafting the National Transgender Discrimination Survey questionnaire, research team members wondered whether the NTDS should collect data on gender variant people who did not identify as transgender. Study team members theorized that transgender-identified people were likely to face more significant discrimination and abuse than gender nonconforming folks; our belief, based on anecdotal work in our communities, was that genderqueers generally were faring better than their transgender FTM and MTF peers. In the end, the team decided that it would be important to compare the experiences of genderqueer and transgender respondents and to examine how anti-transgender bias impacted people across a spectrum of gender identities.

This preliminary look at the experiences of Q3 write-ins affirms the importance of the study qualifier, “Do you identify as transgender or gender nonconforming in any way?” By examining just a few of the key domains of the study, such as education, health care, employment, and police, it seems clear that gender variant respondents, including those who see their gender as hybrid, fluid, and/or rejecting of the male-female binary, are suffering significant impacts of anti-transgender bias and in some cases are at higher risk for discrimination and violence than their transgender counterparts in the study.

We hope this article encourages other researchers to look closer at this data set for answers to the questions raised here about Q3GNLs in this study and to undertake new work to uncover and illuminate the lives, resiliencies, and vulnerabilities of genderqueers. A possible outcome of the work here, given that 6 percent of respondents overall identified specifically as genderqueer, might be that future survey instruments studying gender variant people include a specific checkoff for genderqueers. Other outcomes might include future studies of participants who wrote in for both Q3 and Q4, who certainly have much to tell us about the state of genderqueer and transgender life in the United States and
the specific resiliencies and challenges of genderqueers, gender rebels, and OtherWise.

REFERENCES

ENDNOTES
1 The information and figures in this article rely heavily on the data collected for and published in “Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.” Where information is derived from other sources, those sources will be noted. Otherwise, assume the data stems from the aforementioned report.
2 The group included Mara Keisling, Eli Vitulli, Nicholas Ray, M. Somjen Frazer, Jaime M. Grant, Lisa Mottet, Justin Tanis, and Steven K. Aurand. Susan Rankin, Hawk Stone, Scout, Shannon Minter, and Marsha Botzer also responded to drafts of questions by phone and e-mail consultation.
3 Though the research team and staff members conducted widespread outreach efforts, including to rural areas, to recruit survey respondents from a variety of regions, literacy levels, and socioeconomic backgrounds, there are certainly segments of the transgender population that are not represented or are underrepresented in this survey. Therefore, while this is by far the largest sample of transgender experience collected to date, and its racial composition mirrors that of the general U.S. population, with respondents hailing from all fifty states and the District of Columbia, it is not appropriate to generalize the findings in this study to all transgender and gender nonconforming people because it is not a random sample.
4 Respondents who checked a single-race option are described within a single race category, such as Black, Latino, or American Indian/Alaska Native. Respondents who checked more than one race option are described in the multiracial category of the study. Different researchers’ analyses of the data report higher Black, Asian, and Latino participation by adding together Black-only, Latino-only, and Asian-only data with multiracial respondents who also claim these corresponding identities (i.e., Black-only plus Black-multiracial participants may be the focus of another researcher’s analysis of the data to discuss Black trans experience). For the purposes of this article, NTDS researchers use single-race only option participants to describe Black, Asian, and Pacific Islander, Latina/o, and American Indian and Alaska Native respondent experiences. We use multiracial percentages to describe respondents who checked any of these categories along with an additional race category (including White).
5 They wrote: genderqueer, Gender Queer, Genderqueer, and Gender-Queer, often following with additional descriptors such as genderqueer/genderfluid, genderqueer woman, genderqueer lesbian, genderqueer trannyfag, genderqueer/both/neither, etc.
6 Female-assigned-at-birth Q3GNLs experienced harassment in K-12 schools at a rate of 85 percent and sexual assault at 13 percent.