

2016

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THE JOURNEY OF TRANSITIONING: BEING A TRANS-ATHLETE IN COLLEGE SPORT

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Master's Project

Submitted to the School of Human Movement, Sport, and Leisure Studies
Bowling Green State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In

Sport Administration

April 14, 2016

Abstract

The NCAA's stance on transgender athletes is such that universities should adopt new policies and practices to best provide equal opportunities for all transgender students wishing to compete on a collegiate athletic team. However, there is very little research about transgender athletes in college sport. This case study serves as the voice of one collegiate-athlete who is transitioning from female to male while continuing to be a Division I athlete. The limited research on transgender athletes provides some insight into their experiences before, during and after the athlete came out as transgender (e.g., Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012; Semerjian & Cohen, 2008). However, these accounts were not given as they were happening, they were reported after the fact. This study followed one transgender athlete through his transition, which included social transition and testosterone therapy and treatment. The participant partook in eight semi-structured interviews spread across nine months. This article discusses two overarching themes (collegiate sport and transition) that emerged from our narrative analysis (Smith & Sparkes, 2009) and touches on many smaller subthemes. The implications of this study will be of interest not only to researchers, but also university administrators, coaches, and teammates of individuals who transition during their collegiate career. The participant's description of his journey throughout the transitioning process will provide important, in depth narratives for all to consider moving forward.

The Journey of Transitioning: Being a Trans-Athlete in College Sport

I need people to know that what I'm doing is a first. I want to gain visibility for the trans community and show people outside of it that trans people exist in sports too. I want to share my story with people and let them know about how I got here, what it has been like so far; anything that will put the transition into a positive light, and give the readers knowledge, and insight into my transition. I always hope that people don't view me as just my transition. That's what happens to a lot of trans people. We are seen by people and generally intrigue people based solely upon what our bodies look like, not who we are as people. It's very challenging to be happy with my progress sometimes because I am not yet where I want to be, but I'm also not where I used to be. When I am sad about my body, I try to remember that. Each day is a step forward. I'm always moving in the right direction whether I can see that right away or not. -BD

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues are prominent topics in today's world. With sport often being a mirror of society, it is crucial that LGBTQ acceptance is something that is taught from a young age, so athletes are exposed to these matters from the beginning of their athletic careers (Canadian Centre For Ethics In Sport, 2012). The conversation surrounding transgender males and females is one that has gained attention in recent years with the help of continued research, athletes coming out, and with the recent emergence of transgender celebrity Caitlyn Jenner. The timeliness of the conversation surrounding transgender and transsexual people, paired with the perceived sensitivity of it all has made for a complex topic that is often misunderstood by many. While there are stories in the media about trans-athletes after they have come out, issues surrounding transitioning while maintaining collegiate eligibility have not yet been well covered and "trans-literacy remains low" (Enke, 2012 p. 2).

Arguably the first openly transgender collegiate athlete, Keelin Godsey was a track and field competitor at Bates College. Godsey came out as a female-to-male (FTM) transgender athlete in 2005, just prior to his senior season (Griffin & Carroll, 2011). Kye Allums came out nationally in 2010 as the first openly transgender athlete to play Division I basketball at the collegiate level (Moore, 2013). He was followed by Taylor Edelman, who came out publicly in 2013 as a transgender volleyball player (DeFrancesco, 2013), and most recently, Harvard swimmer Schuyler Bailar came out in 2015 (Perkins, 2015). Aside from these few examples in popular press, there is still much we do not know about the transgender athlete community. Athletes who have come out in the past are a very important piece in deciding if athletes in the future come out as well (Krane, 2015). If young transgender athletes see the media or fans reacting negatively to a transgender collegiate or professional athlete, they may be more reluctant come out as transgender themselves. However, if the young athletes see positive reactions, they might be more likely to feel comfortable coming out to teammates and coaches.

The key argument against allowing transgender athletes to participate in collegiate sport revolves around creating an unfair competitive advantage (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011; Griffin & Carroll, 2010). Some people are concerned that the inclusion of transgender athletes poses a threat to competitive equity (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). Being a transgender woman raises more red flags (male advantage) than a person who identifies as a transgender man (Krane, 2015). The NCAA handbook says:

These concerns are based on three assumptions: one, that transgender women are not 'real' women and therefore not deserving of an equal competitive opportunity; two, that being born with a male body automatically gives a transgender woman an unfair advantage when competing against non-transgender women; and three, that men might be

tempted to pretend to be transgender in order to compete in competition with women
(Griffin & Carroll, 2011, p.7)

Realistically, these concerns are non-factors and are vast overgeneralizations. Relating to the third concern, the NCAA handbook claims that no such cases of fraud have been reported (Griffin & Carroll, 2011, p.8)

This study followed one transgender athlete from his arrival on campus through the majority of his transition. Transgender athletes often keep their true identities hidden due to fear of reactions from their teammates, coaches and the NCAA. However, some do feel comfortable enough with teammates to be open and honest (Krane, in press). Thanks to BD's participation, this study showcases the ups and downs a transitioning student-athlete faces on a daily basis. The research questions guiding this study are:

- What are the experiences of an openly trans athlete?
- What are the athlete's experiences through his transition?
- What are the athlete's experiences competing for both the men's and women's teams?

This study further contributes to previous literature because it adds an important piece of research, in that this study follows the athlete through his transition process for nearly one year. A transitioning transgender athlete can be defined in many ways, as not all transitions are the same. However, this process could include a social transition where the athlete changes his or her name and pronouns, a physical transition including hormone therapy and/or surgeries, and an athletic transition where the athlete is shifting from one sexed team to the other.

Review of Literature

This research study has major implications for the study of diversity and inclusion in

sport. There is much we still do not know about transgender athletes, especially the experiences and challenges while going through the transition process. These findings could potentially guide the NCAA and member institutions in restructuring policy and creating a supportive climate for transgender athletes. While there are many articles published that discuss transgender athletes, there are very few published studies that include data from the athletes themselves. This study could fill a large gap in our knowledge base. NCAA policy, important definitions and the stories of previous transgender athletes will be explored in this section.

NCAA Policy

The opening statement in the NCAA Transgender Handbook is, “As a core value, the NCAA believes in and is committed to diversity, inclusion and gender equity among its student-athletes, coaches and administrators. We seek to establish and maintain an inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes” (Griffin & Carroll, 2011, p. 1). This is a 34-page document pertaining to the inclusion of transgender athletes in collegiate sport. Its purpose is to “provide guidance to NCAA athletic programs about how to ensure transgender student-athletes fair, respectful, and legal access to collegiate sports teams based on current medical and legal knowledge” (Griffin & Carroll, 2011, p. 2). According to the document, transgender describes an individual whose gender identity (one’s internal psychological identification as a boy/man or girl/woman) does not match the person’s assigned sex at birth.

Someone who identifies as a male-to-female (MTF) transgender person is someone who was born with a male body, but identifies as a girl or a woman. NCAA policy states that this athlete may not compete on a women’s team until the individual has completed one calendar year of testosterone suppression treatment (Griffin & Carroll, 2011). If the athlete does not wish to pursue hormonal suppression treatment, he/she is only permitted to compete on a men’s team.

A person who identifies as a female-to-male (FTM) transgender person is someone who was born with a female body, but identifies as a boy or a man. In this situation, the athlete is allowed to compete with women until hormonal transition has begun and once it begins, the athlete may compete with the men but will no longer be eligible for the women's team. The document says, "It is the responsibility of the NCAA institution to submit the request for a medical exception for testosterone treatment prior to the student-athlete competing while undergoing treatment" (Griffin & Carroll, 2011, p. 12). The institution is required to do so because testosterone is considered a banned substance. If this individual does not wish to take hormones, he/she is eligible to compete with either the men or women.

A point brought up by the NCAA that needs to be addressed is that most intercollegiate athletic administrators have not been educated enough on the topic of transgender athletes. Without this necessary training and information, how will coaches, teammates, and administrators know what pronouns to use or what locker room a trans athlete should use to change and shower (Griffin & Carroll, 2011)? Policies must be implemented by individual universities as well as by the conferences governing those schools. If universities and conferences have these policies in place, when an athlete comes out as transgender, the situation will be handled fairly and uniformly.

Important Definitions

A theme found among previous literature on transgender issues is that almost every article utilized in preparation for this study defined words such as sex, gender, gender identity and transgender. Lucas-Carr and Krane (2011) defined these words as:

- Sex: "biological, physiological, and anatomical make-up of an individual and categorizes people as males and females" (p. 534).

- Gender: “socially constructed and refers to how individuals present themselves through attire, physical appearance, and mannerisms; individuals are labeled as masculine or feminine” (p. 534).
- Gender identity: “one’s self-expression of gender” and is not “always consistent with biological sex” (p. 534).
- Transgender: “trans people often resist gender categorization” (p. 535).

This definition of transgender is relatively vague, which I believe is an important matter to point out. The definition I believe in is that a transgender person is someone who does not fit the gender and sex binary. Some transgender individuals wish to identify as strictly male or female, but others identify as gender fluid. Transgender can refer to variety of things (e.g., not fitting into a gender category, identifying as the opposite sex you were assigned at birth), depending on the person you ask. So, the definition does not mean the same thing to everybody. It is important for readers to understand the variations within transgender definitions and be educated and do not say or do anything to accidentally offend a person who identifies as transgender. Once people know the differences among these terms, they are one step closer to understanding and being empathetic not only toward transgender athletes, but also to the LGBTQ community.

Current Statistics

There have been no recent studies done to determine the number of transgender people in the United States. According to a 2011 survey conducted by the Williams Institute at UCLA’s School of Law, there are nearly 700,000 transgender individuals in the country (Gates, 2011). Miller (2015) questions this estimate because the United States Census Bureau does not ask for gender identity when distributing their surveys. “Gender identity can be fluid and hard to define

in a multiple-choice list” which also contributes to the uncertainty surrounding the number of transgender individuals (Miller, 2015, para 2). There was no available research on the percentage of athletes in the NCAA who identify as transgender, but some light has been shed in the popular press lately having to do with sport in the transgender community, thanks to well-known individuals such as MTF Caitlyn Jenner, a former USA Olympic Athlete and now reality television star.

Stories of Previous Trans-Athletes

The majority of the articles in popular press provide first-hand accounts of trans-athletes’ experiences. These narratives included stories from before, during, and after the athletes have come out as transgender. However, these accounts were not given as they were happening; they were reported after the fact. For example, Tagg (2012) examines the experiences of two retired transgender athletes. In the article, Tagg highlights two retired male-to-female transgender netballers and explores ethical issues surrounding their participation, as well as gives his thoughts on the future for transgender netballers. While the study has been a crucial component of transgender and sport studies, it lacks the real-time thoughts from the athletes when they were competing. This further reinforces the fact that the press has not reported on many individuals going through the hormonal transition while still competing as collegiate athletes. Eight years ago, Cohen and Semerjian (2008) stated,

The literature addressing the experiences of transgender individuals is growing, but there is surprisingly little reference to the arena of sport within these experiences ... It is the belief in and desire to develop a framework that brings together these two areas, which challenge and reproduce, that leads to this long-awaited exploration of trans experience and the politics of sport. (p. 145)

This belief still holds true in 2016, where research on transgender athletes is still growing. While there is little research published about athletes' current transition experiences, there is an account of an athlete who competed for both a men's and women's varsity volleyball team. Taylor Edelmann identifies as a transgender male (DeFrancesco, 2013). He attended Purchase College in New York and initially competed on the women's team. In August 2011, Edelmann's physical transition began and by winter 2012, he was officially a part of the men's team. Edelmann is a member of a very small group of athletes who have competed for both a men's and women's team of the same sport.

Most recently, the first openly transgender collegiate swimmer in U.S. history, Schuyler Bailar, came out as a transgender male in the summer of 2015 (Strauss, 2015). Bailar, a national relay record holder, was originally recruited to swim for the Harvard women's team. After his announced transition, women's swim coach Stephanie Morawski suggested Bailar join the men's team, although that would mean not performing up to his goals he set for himself. Harvard informed Bailar that he was welcome to swim on the men's team under coach Kevin Tyrrell and Bailar accepted. Bailar has received nothing but support from his family, friends, future university and teammates.

Kye Allums, who may be one of the most well known trans athletes, attended George Washington University and was a member of the women's basketball team. In November 2010, Allums became the first openly transgender man to play on a Division 1 basketball team (he came out as FTM). Opposing players and coaches never gave Allums any problems, according to an interview conducted by glaad.org (Moore, 2013). However, Allums struggled with people pointing in the stands and the media were what he struggled with. It got to a point where Allums publically said that after an ESPN profile was done on him, he contemplated suicide, saying he

felt that reporters don't see trans people as actual people, they just see them as a story on which to put their names. Now, Kye travels around to high schools sharing his story with kids in hopes of encouraging them to be proud of who they are.

The oldest case discussed here will be Keelin Godsey, a track and field athlete from Bates College (Griffin & Carroll, 2011). Godsey came out as a FTM transgender athlete in 2005, just prior to his senior season. He is a national champion, national record holder for Division III hammer throwing and an 11 time All-American. In the early 2000s when Godsey came out, there were no NCAA policies or rules regarding inclusion of trans athletes. This, coupled with fear of not being able to compete, forced Godsey to hide his true identity for the first three years of college. However, Godsey opted not to take hormones so he would still be eligible to compete with the women's track and field team. It is interesting to note that prior to identifying as transgender, Godsey believed himself to be a lesbian.

As demonstrated in the examples above, "the experiences of individuals who identify as transgender are diverse, and the experiences of one, or even a few, cannot be generalized to all individuals who identify as transgender" (Cohen & Semerjian, 2008, p. 144-145). While some transgender individuals, such as Edelman and Bailar, desire to transition from one biological sex to the other, there are other trans individuals who continue to live in the body they were born with, as Godsey did in his collegiate athletic career. This case study supports the authors' findings of being unable to generalize all trans experiences and further explores the notion that challenges "hegemonic concepts of sex and gender" (Cohen & Semerjian, 2008, p. 145).

Climate for LGBTQ Athletes in College

There are obvious challenges faced by transgender athletes. For example, a topic frequently discussed in previous research is whether transgender athletes felt they were in a safe

and comfortable environment or not (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012). Lucas-Carr and Krane discussed the fact that many transgender athletes do not feel like they are able to be themselves in their current situation (i.e. issues concerning bathroom and locker room use). One participant from their study stated that locker rooms were “supposed to be the one time that you are not worried about covering certain parts ... But when you are trans you can’t just stop, that’s in every aspect of your life” (p. 35). He went on to explain that his uncomfortableness with the situation led him to not use the locker room, and to instead change and shower at home.

Michael Sam, Derrick Gordon and Ian Thorpe are big-name athletes who recently have come out as gay over the past few years (Big List, 2014). While these athletes received praise for their bravery, they have had to deal with negativity and discrimination (Nichols, 2015; Ricci 2014). If the environment in college athletics is not welcoming for gay and lesbian athletes, why would it be any different for athletes who identify as transgender? This is why the studies that focus on transgender research are crucial to moving forward in terms of education, policy and acceptance among teammates. It is important to have literature that explores what the transition process is like for a transgender athlete so knowledge begins to disperse to athletic administrations, coaches and other athletes.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a transfeminist perspective (Enke, 2012; Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010). According to Enke (2012), transfeminism honors the variations in gender and sex and critiques heteronormativity, which fits well with this case study because the participant challenges heteronormativity by identifying as a transgender male. Gender and sex are recognized as fluid and binary sex and gender identities are not privileged. Rather, self-identity is favored. Using this approach allowed for the questioning of binaries and heteronormativity in the

context of the athlete's day-to-day experiences (Enke, 2012). This is the best approach because it privileges the analysis of the participant's lived experiences, rather than anatomy, as someone who does not fit within the sex and gender binaries. Through the lens of transfeminism, I will explore the athlete's narratives about his transition by privileging his voice and honoring his self-defined identity (Krane, 2015).

Method

Framed within transfeminism, a narrative approach (Smith & Sparkes, 2009) was used to explore the experiences of a current American college athlete who identifies as transgender. A case study was conducted to gain understanding of the experience of a transitioning transgender athlete. A case study examines an individual or a small group of people through observations and interviews to gather data (Amis, 2005). By utilizing this method, I was able to collect in-depth, first hand narratives and data. Additionally, the case study, as opposed to interviews with multiple participants, was the best way to conduct this research because there is not a large pool of transgender athletes and the process of transitioning is a unique and individual experience. Markula and Silk (2011) explain that "it is important to consider whether the research questions can be answered based on information available through previous research, other methods (such as participant observation) or through the media" (p. 83). For this case study, I have used a combination of previous literature and interviews with the participant of the study to answer the questions guiding my project. It was necessary to go to the route of a case study because I was interested in one participant's experiences.

A life history approach also was employed to gather essential background information and understand the sport experiences on the participant (Dieser, 2006), while gaining a holistic understanding of his life and sport experiences. The narratives the researcher was able to

construct were a direct result of the life history approach.

Participant

BD (a pseudonym) is a current NCAA Division I transgender athlete (cross country, track and field). This athlete, who is white, identifies as a transgender male and competed as a female in high school for four years and also at the collegiate level for two seasons before beginning hormonal transition (eight total years of total high level competition). BD grew up in a suburban neighborhood in a small American city of approximately 5,500 people and attended a public high school.

Data collection procedures

The participant partook in eight semi-structured interviews spread across nine months. The purpose of multiple interviews was to allow myself an extended timeline to follow BD during his transition journey. From March 2015 to November 2015, BD's physical, mental, emotional, and performance changes were followed and documented as they were occurring. The long-term nature of my involvement allowed for data collection through the majority of his transition.

I began by gaining university Human Subjects Review Board approval and then contacted the participant to request his participation in the study. Next, I sent the participant a consent form via email that he reviewed. Upon in-person verbal agreement to partake in the study, a meeting time and place to conduct the first interview was set.

Before meeting with the participant, I conducted a pilot interview with a transgender person who had been a collegiate athlete. The purpose of this interview was to evaluate the initial interview guide, as well as my comfort with the interviewing process. The pilot interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and the former athlete was able to provide insight into additional

questions I might ask about the transition process. Since the former athlete had been through the transition process, it allowed him the opportunity to give me first-hand accounts of topics I would want to bring up with the participant in my study.

At the first meeting with BD, I reviewed the informed consent form and asked if he had any questions or concerns, answered his questions, and then he signed the consent form. I began the interview with simple background questions, before moving to more substantive questions later in the interview so as to give the participant time to get comfortable with the interviewing process (Markula & Silk, 2011). I felt it was best to frame the interviews through a narrative and life history approach (Smith & Sparkes, 2014) so that BD was able to share stories based on his sport and medical experiences, as well as various other topics. The interview guides were developed to gather information about his thoughts surrounding his transition. The semi-structured interviews (Markula & Silk, 2011) were intended to allow BD to share stories about his progresses and challenges without feeling like he has to stick to a strict regimen of interview questions.

Following the interview, I transcribed what was said verbatim to assist in determining any follow-up questions and data analysis. Interviews were transcribed verbatim immediately after they concluded. Immediate transcription allowed for me to be prompt in completing follow-up questions, along with the subsequent interview guides. It also allowed for preliminary analysis of the transcript before conducting the next interview, which was important when deciding how to navigate through the next set of interview questions with BD. It allowed me to pick up on themes that may have been reoccurring from interview to interview.

The next step was to reach out to the participant with those follow-up questions. If I only had a few follow-up questions to ask, they were sent to the participant via email. However, if the

researcher felt the follow-up questions would be more quickly answered by meeting again in person due to the amount of questions, and the participant and I set another time to meet.

Each interview lasted between 45-120 minutes and all interviews were audio-recorded and took place in a quiet location selected by the participant. I also conducted informal, impromptu interviews lasting a short period of time (e.g., 5-15 minutes), when I saw the athlete in a setting such as various athletic environments. These interviews were used to get brief updates from BD between the pre-scheduled interviews that occurred every 1.5-2 months. They often addressed an issue that the participant had previously brought up and that I needed clarification on or an update about.

Data Analysis

The transcripts were analyzed in accordance with Smith and Sparkes' (2009) strategies for narrative analysis. The transcripts were read and reread to identify initial patterns and themes, which would later become vignettes as told by the participant. Transcripts were coded by writing key words in the margins to keep the respective themes organized from interview to interview (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). The thematic analysis followed, which included identifying themes within the transcripts. The process of identifying and constructing themes continued until all the raw themes were combined to form the main themes of the discussion. The results, which focus on main themes of collegiate sport and transition, are presented as vignettes composed from BD's own words. Data were combined from across the eight interview in order to make cohesive, flowing narratives on each theme. I arranged his quotes to form complete stories or narratives with the goal "for these stories to resonate with readers and create deeper understanding of the psychological and emotional components of [this athlete's] experiences" (Waldron, Lynn, & Krane, 2011, p. 115). As has been done in previous literature on a similar

topic (Query & Krane, in review), a layered approach was employed that alternated between the athlete's vignette's and the researcher's discussion (Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul, 1997).

Trustworthiness

It was important to find ways to increase the trustworthiness of the study. Developing rapport between BD and myself was crucial. I had spent much time around the athlete already, as I was the sports information director for the team on which he competed. So, conducting the interviews did not put the athlete in an uncomfortable situation because he and I had built a solid foundation for a professional relationship. Additionally, conducting the pilot interview and obtaining feedback from a former collegiate athlete who is FTM ensured the questions were appropriate and that I was prepared overall for the upcoming interviews. The critical friends for this study, the second and third readers, assisted in everything from construction of interview guides through the data analysis and writing processes.

Results and Discussion

Vignette #1: Coming out to friends, teammates and coaches

BD discusses his experiences with coming out as transgender.

When I initially started telling that close group of people in my dorm and that good feeling I felt with being trans, I just felt immediately that I needed to share this with other people. People need to know this is how I identify now. It just felt so good. I felt so positive about myself and it was just an epiphany like 'this is who I am. My teammates need to know this because I want them to become a part of what happens to me in the future and a part of my transition.' So that's why I decided to come out. People needed to know. My teammates are obviously a close group of friends of mine. I came here to

compete at [university] because of them. I liked the team, I liked the atmosphere, so I figured that since I was so close with them, that they needed to know about me.

It was quite scary telling that initial group in my dorm because you don't really know how people are going to react. You assume that most people in this generation, in this day and age, are relatively open-minded, but it was still quite scary. I initially talked to my RA about it and let him know 'hey, this is how I identify now. So could you please refer to me by this name with these pronouns because I would really appreciate it?' He was really cool about it and I actually consulted him for advice first for how to come out to people on our floor here because obviously I interacted with those people a lot so I felt they needed to know. I talked to him about it and he said he would contact the hall supervisor, the person who was in charge of him, and he got back to me. Originally, I was just going to do it in the floor meeting because everyone is right there so it's perfect. I can share my experience with these people and get it all done with so everyone can understand it at one time. That was actually not approved by the hall supervisor because he was afraid of how people would react and didn't want to make others uncomfortable. It's kind of stupid to be honest. If people don't like it, then just don't talk to me. So I was disappointed because that was going to make it harder for me to come out to people. What we ended up doing was me and my girlfriend and two of our really close friends decided to have individual meetings with people. They were there as moral support like 'OK, we are going to help you and say 'It's okay, it's cool. We don't need to treat BD any different now. He is still the same person.' So we ended up just having individual meetings with all of the really close people on our floor.

Everyone was extremely supportive. My girlfriend was extremely supportive immediately. Before we started dating, I obviously identified as a different individual at that time, but she did know that I had a desire to change my identity, if you will. Going into it, she already had an idea, so she's been supportive like when I told her I wanted to progress toward changing my gender identity. Pretty much everyone's first reaction was, 'let me change your name in my phone!' And I was like, 'yes, please do that!' I've received nothing but positive support from that close group of people. There was a lot of excitement. Their reactions were positive and happy. They were happy for me and so supportive. There was joy and you could sense people supported me.

Once he was ready, BD came out on social media, and chose a special day to do it.

It was March 31, which is the international day for transgender visibility. I made a status explaining to people that I had an important announcement to make and it would explain why I don't really ever use that Facebook account. I said 'I selected this day to do it because international trans day of visibility and I need people to understand that I haven't been using this account because I don't identify as this name or this person anymore. What this means is that I am trans.' I told people that I had been on testosterone for just over two months at that point, living my life fully 100 percent as male. I told them that I would appreciate their respect, support and if you want to continue keeping up with me over Facebook, you can friend my new account. I thanked them for taking the time to read it and said I was going to delete the account so don't bother sending messages saying I'm a girl not a boy. I deleted it a week or so after the post.

After he came out to the people in his residence hall, he then came out to the women's cross country coach and team.

I chatted with [Head cross country coach] and said ‘this is what I feel like my life path is going to be from now on. This is going to make me a lot happier. Can you help me come out to the women’s team to share this story to hopefully get them on board to support me in the same way? I let him know I identify this certain way now and I feel like I definitely identify strongly with being trans and we need to have a meeting with the team about this because people need to understand that now need to speak to me differently, and regard me differently and not refer to me as a female. So how can we integrate this as soon as possible so people are on the same page right away.

I had a huge meeting with the team at the end of one of our team meetings where I came out to the whole women’s team. I explicitly told them that I am trans and kind of just covered the basics with them. I was scared. [Head cross country coach] said whatever he needed to say in the meeting and then he was basically talking about how at [university] we take a lot of pride in diversity. He said we are one of those schools that seriously supports the idea and this is important because one of your teammates now is going to come up and speak and share their story with this new change that’s going to happen.

So I went up there and it was definitely terrifying because I was only a freshman so a lot of people there I was still relatively new to, especially since it was in March and we didn’t really hang out with the track people as much as I had hung out with the cross [country] people because they’re my main group of people. So a lot of those people I really did not even know. I had only talked to them a few times. So that made it more stressful for me because it was like, ‘wow, these people don’t even know me that well and here I am now ‘hey actually that information you knew about me, forget it.’ It was

scary, but I basically shared my story with them and just let them know like, “hey, I know maybe a lot of you don’t know me that well, or you knew I identified as this previous identity, but I am trans and basically what that means is that I don’t identify as a female anymore. I identify as a male. So I would appreciate it if you could please refer to me as BD, or if you’re going to talk about me to somebody else, please use male pronouns. So use he, him, his when you’re talking about me because it’s respectful.’

As I told them, I said, ‘I know the name change and the pronoun change is going to be hard to get used to’ because obviously I’d known them for seven or eight months at that point as this one person. I even competed against [women’s team teammate #2] in high school so she had known me longer than that. So I said, ‘I know it’s going to be hard on you guys. I totally understand, but please try your best. If you slip up, try and catch yourself.’ I would say for a while there it was hard, plus there wasn’t much time of school left and obviously I wasn’t going to see them over the summer so I was like, ‘are they going to screw up and forget all of this stuff?’ But they were really good about it.

There was a lot of screwing up [with pronouns] at the beginning, but they started to catch themselves and I could tell that they would think before they would say something so they didn’t say it wrong. I would say there were more screw-ups with the pronouns than there were actually with the name, which is better than nothing. I’d rather hear ‘BD’ and accidental female pronouns than anything else. So it took them a little bit of time to catch on, like I thought it would. But they were really good about it. It became second nature pretty quickly. They were cool with the entire situation and understood how to speak to me differently and not make jokes about body parts or anatomy that would insult my identity. Now, sometimes I think some of the women forget I was ever

female. I think they have made good progress with it in terms of how they see me. It's nice to know they see me the way I want to be seen.

I explained to them that it was a very long process of understanding this and it was hard to come to terms with the fact that this is who I am now. I just told them that I was really honestly excited to share this experience and share this journey with them. I would hope they support me through all of this and that they want to be a part of this entire journey. They were all extremely supportive. Everybody was like, "yeah absolutely!" I got a huge round of applause when I was done. At the end of the discussion I asked if anyone had any questions to ask because obviously this is important. I said, 'please ask questions so you can understand me as a person. So let me know if you have any questions.' But nobody did right at that moment. Later on I did receive private questions, like a one-on-one. A lot of people were confused about my sexuality. They knew me as a female who liked females. So I tell them now, I identify as a male and I like girls. For a long time, a lot of my teammates thought I was gay. That was interesting. The most common question was 'oh you're not gay?' I would say 'no I identify as a male and generally when you think of a guy who likes women, you don't think lesbian.'

I never received any body related questions. Some people, once I started testosterone, asked about if I was doing shots or gel and what it would do to me. I received a bunch of positive text messages afterwards that said, 'wow, you were incredibly brave for standing in front of us and telling us all that information. We absolutely support you and are behind you 100 percent.' As scary as that was, it really paid off. I think back on that moment often, like, "wow, remember when I was so scared to tell people that?" And here I am now, this is so cool! Everybody is behind me and are a

part of this thing. It was a really good experience. You don't always know people's opinions and beliefs on that sort of thing like whether or not I'm going to be openly rejected or treated differently because I don't identify the same way as everybody else does on that team. So it was very reassuring to receive such positivity about that.

Since his shift to the men's team, BD has felt like a bit of an outsider to the women's team.

Hanging out with them is different now. They aren't mean to me and they don't talk to me differently, but it's harder to be cohesive with them as a group because we are different and we don't have a lot of the same experiences. I still talk to them a pretty great deal. I have a really good relationship with them. They're all extremely supportive of my situation. When we had camp week [during pre-season], we had team activities that we all did. Usually toward the evening after dinner the guys' team did this and girls' team did this. Obviously I went to the guys' teams things because I am a part of the team, but it's not as fun. I honestly went to some of the women's team activity things. I was like 'oh cool you guys are having a bon fire? I'm coming over!' and they'd say 'yes come hang out with us!' They're just so inviting and fun. My teammates definitely have been there through everything. I can't tell you how many times they have helped me out with stuff. They have offered to give me loans, have given me a bunch of their old basketball shorts or other clothing items that I would benefit from.

Just as he did with the women's coach and team, BD also had divulged this information to the men's cross country coach. With the way the cross country program is set up, the head coach oversees both the men's and women's programs, but his primary focus is with the women's team. The assistant coach is in charge of day-to-day operations with the men's team. The

program has had two assistant coaches in the last two years, the first from when BD entered the university through summer 2015 and the second from summer 2015 to the present.

I got in touch with [Assistant cross country coach #1] and told him, ‘I know you’re left out of a lot of stuff here, but I just want you to know for sure that I am joining the men’s team in the fall.’ He was kind of surprised by that and was like, ‘oh, wow I didn’t really even know that.’ He was pretty left out, so I caught him up on a bunch of stuff and said basically, ‘yep, I’m joining the men’s team. I’ve started hormones and my transition is underway right now. I feel like I need to start letting the guys team know and start integrating myself into the men’s team, so how can we do this?’ So I talked to him about it, had a good conversation about it, and we decided to have a small team meeting. [Assistant cross country coach #1] is very excited to have me join the men's team and hopefully contribute to that less successful program. [Assistant cross country coach #1] was always cool to me even when I was competing as a female athlete. I wasn’t sure of his opinions on it at the beginning, but now I know he is 100 percent behind me. He told me in the future that if anyone has a problem with me on the team then they don’t belong in the program, so that says a lot about where he is at with things. I actually talked with [Assistant cross country coach #1] because I felt like he should know that I struggle with depression, about my family issues, etc. so if I have any problems in the future he knows how to deal with it. We had a really good hour and a half long conversation about my life, my struggles, and how to cut down on stresses.

I would say [Assistant cross country coach #1] has played significantly less of a role in my transition just because he is not my primary coach. He got filled in a lot recently and soon he will begin to play a more major role as opposed to [Head cross

country coach]. Both of the coaches are obviously extremely supportive though. I would say they are one of the biggest supporters. They have been there through everything. But I would say for the most part [Head cross country coach] has played the largest role. He has done a great job of trying to manage my health and be as supportive as he can be with all that kind of stuff. When it comes to transitioning he has been supportive and makes sure I am feeling okay with the testosterone and makes sure things are just going okay in my life. Like I said [Assistant cross country coach #1] is just now getting into the picture with that sort of thing.

Even though [Head cross country coach] is I'm sure disappointed about the fact that I will not be contributing to the women's team and their possible chance to win the [conference] championship in the fall, he is happy that I am happy because he has been through a lot of the transition with me. He knows that I've been to some dark emotional places, so he does care that I am happier and feel better. I had my end of the year meeting with him last week. He was glad to hear everything was progressing well, that I was seeing changes and that my life was progressing in a direction that I want it to go. We just caught up on everything. I haven't really been talking to him that much at practice. There isn't much for me to say to him. He knows I'm out there struggling. But at the meeting he asked me how the transition was going, how life was going. He was happy to hear I was employed and that my life was becoming more stable. He asked how my relationships with my parents were going, how [girlfriend] was doing, and whatnot. It was more than athletics. Like 'OK we can talk about running a little, but how are you as a person?' That was pretty much our meeting there. For the most part, everything was good. I got that rec job [position in the campus recreation center] so now I'm employed

and making money. He was glad to hear [girlfriend] and I secured a place to live.

Obviously that was a struggle for me last summer. I told him I was excited about where things were heading in the fall.

[After telling the first men's coach, BD had a meeting to come out as transgender to the whole men's team.]

It was my decision to tell them and we had that conversation back in February 2015. We decided to have a small team meeting just before the guys had to practice and I had a conversation with them and was like, 'I'm not trying to make this conversation awkward, but I'm joining your team in the fall basically and I know a lot of you understand that my name is BD and that I use male pronouns, but it may be hard for you to fully grasp who I am because you've seen me out running with the women's team. I wanted to clarify that although that's the case, I am going to be on your team competing with you in the fall as a male athlete. I'm super excited about it because that's where I feel like I belong. I want to be in that environment competing with you guys at that level. I know you guys are a good group of guys and good people.' They were all really cool about it and said, 'that's awesome. We're all really stoked for you and we're excited to have you on the team.' It was a brief meeting. I probably talked to them for 15-20 minutes about it and then I asked them at that point if they had any questions, and they didn't. So that's how I ended up filling them in.

I actually had my first practice with the men's team earlier this week on Monday (March 2015). I didn't really talk with them too much. I was just kind of trying to be in the moment and enjoy the fact that I am out here running with the guy's team. I feel a certain sense of dislike and self-consciousness toward myself when I am running with the

girl's team because they are all out there running in their tight clothes and ponytails and all of that and I don't like that. I feel a disconnect from that sort of thing, especially when guys drive-by and yell at them and make comments, it makes me feel like these people are being gay towards me because that is not how I identify at all and they don't know that so there is a lot of discomfort when I am running with the women's team. So I just took that moment when I was on the run with the men's team. I was like, 'I just need to enjoy this. I am here being recognized as a male.' I felt really good. I felt internally different about myself when I was running with the guys. I knew I was being perceived that way I wanted to be. To know that I was out there and people are reading me the way I wanted them to, it was an incredibly good feeling. I was extremely happy after that practice. It is intimidating going into that situation being a complete outsider and just trying to fit in with that kind of social dynamic, with that different dynamic, and I feel like I am supposed to fit in and fit in perfectly. I think they understand that this is an intimidating experience for me to come in to. As a person who is perceived as a female, a person who once identified as a female, a person who competed on a women's team, it's hard to come into that.

I am throwing myself into a completely new social dynamic with limited knowledge on how men socialize in general. My biggest struggle with them is we don't have the same shared experiences. As children they were obviously socialized differently, then and all the way up to adulthood, than I was. So I do sometimes have a hard time connecting with them on certain things because we don't have that same background. We are different. We have commonalities, but we are different. A lot of the experiences I had as a female carry into how I socialize and it's hard. A lot of misogyny or sexualization or

degradation of women comes up among them. It's hard for me to hear that because I know what it feels like. I've been in that position. So to just hear them casually joke about that is hard. That's probably the hardest thing for me with them. Just to know that this is the team dynamic I am entering and there isn't much I can do to change that.

I have had some talks with some guys and said thank you for being as supportive as you are because obviously this is really hard for me and I don't want to just come in kill the team vibe. I want to come in here and be a good contributor on this team. So they totally all understand and they said, 'yeah no problem we totally understand that you are coming into this thing, you care a lot about doing this, you are a cool person and have a cool personality. You are chill with us.' They appreciate that I am open about my transition.

Assistant cross country coach #1 left early in August and [university] hired Assistant cross country coach #2 a few weeks later. BD discusses how that experience was for him.

Some dude got hired, I don't really know anything about him. His name is [Assistant cross country coach #2]. Apparently the other returners all sat in on his interview and basically wanted to see if he would be a good fit for the team. I've only seen him one time. He was in the training room while everyone was getting their stuff after practice. He was in the middle of talking to [Head cross country coach] and people were just saying he seems really shy and really quiet. I don't really know what to think of him right now. All the guys have really warmed up to him. It was the four other returners who interviewed him and decided if they liked him or not so I didn't really know anything about him. I think the freshmen were unsure about him at first too because he came in hard. He said in the first meeting 'if you're here to goof around, get out now.'

Once you get past the business side of it, he's a really personable guy and I'm glad he is our coach because he is really understanding of what I'm going through. He doesn't pressure me to do things that I don't feel like I can do or wouldn't be able to do successfully anyways. But he's gotten a lot of results and the guys really enjoy him as a coach. He lets me do what I feel like would be best because it's not like I'm coming off an injury and it's not like he's ever been my coach before and he knows what I'm capable of. I don't really know what I'm capable of. He might feel like it's not his place to pressure me into doing stuff because neither of us know whether it's going to be too much or not.

While BD's comfort level with the men's team increases each day, he has concerns with coming out to the incoming freshmen.

I'm worried about it. That's also what I talked to [Assistant cross country coach #1] about when we had our meeting. In the past, I let [Head cross country coach] be the person to inform the new freshmen because I felt awkward. But I told [Assistant cross country coach #1] I thought I should be the one to do it this time around and make it more personal because I know the guys a lot less as a whole compared to the girls. For them to only listen to [Assistant cross country coach #1] say something about it seemed off to me. [Assistant cross country coach #1] gave his support and we established a lot of important stuff to say that most people wouldn't think about maybe. There was a lot of small things I wanted cleared up and just thinking about those small things stressed me out. The thought of having to come in and everyone there is going to assume, 'This BD kid is just some dude.' But then I have to say I'm not just some dude and I wish I didn't have to go through that.

The freshmen knew coming in. [Assistant cross country coach #1] mentioned to them that there's a trans kid on the team. So I basically sat them down and said 'I am not a biological male. I competed on the women's team for two years prior to this point. Obviously this is a new and weird situation for everyone here, and I understand that this is something that probably not a lot of people have ever dealt with and I want you guys to be comfortable with it and for us to have a good, open relationship. I need you guys to understand who I am and where I'm coming from.' I told them I am a serious athlete and I'm not here to make things weird or uncomfortable. I told them I know what it takes to be a good athlete. My first two years at [university] I was the number two finisher on the team at the end of the season and I placed 92nd at regionals my freshman year and 75th last year, and I was ranked the number 13 best freshman in the region. I said if they have questions, I know what the training is like so feel free to ask me questions if you have them because although this is my first year on the men's team, I still know things.

I also told them that obviously we have anatomical differences at this point and I wouldn't be showering with them. I said 'I don't want you guys to feel uncomfortable. If you want to shower, great. I'm going to go home and shower. Yes, we use the same bathroom. Yes, I have to sit down to pee. I don't get periods anymore. We are past that point. It's not something weird you need to be concerned about.' I also told them that obviously this information is for all of them to know because we share the same space, we spend a lot of time together, and we're on the same team, but please don't share this with other people. If you say something, you might not think about the repercussions. They didn't have any questions, but from that point forward everything's been chill. As far as I can tell, they see me as just another person on the team. At this point, it's pretty

challenging to see me as a female. They're probably still adjusting, but none of them are mistreating me at all. They are a great group of guys and just really nice kids. You can tell they care a lot and want to get it right. The team chemistry is actually really good. Everyone gets along well.

The switch from the women's team to the men's team proved challenging, as BD wasn't able to keep up with the men as he would have hoped. He would end up not running in the team's only home meet of the season.

I still have to talk to [Assistant cross country coach #1] about it, but I was sick and felt like absolute trash running today, and I just don't have a good base. I don't have a good, solid base. I haven't done the workouts that help you build the speed, that help you build the fitness to help you actually race well. In our team meeting for example, all the guys were like 'what do you think our team average time should be for this 5k? How about 16:20?' And I'm just like 'well your team average is going to be brought up a bit if I run.' I've never run that fast in my entire life. So I'm going to let them succeed with their 16:20. I'm disappointed because I actually did want to run at this home meet because it would've been cool to at least say I competed at the meet with the guys. I don't think it would be a good idea psychologically for me to do it. I know if I go out there I'd get my ass handed to me and I'd hate myself for it forever. What this season is going to be for me is more of a building season, getting used to being on the men's team and practicing with them full-time, eventually working my way up to the workouts. When we just run casually and stuff I'll run with them and I can keep up with their pace, so that's a milestone in itself. Obviously I need to get into the workouts and build up my speed to actually compete with them and that will take the rest of the fall semester to do.

BD explains his thoughts on coming over to the men's team and not competing up to what he thinks is acceptable.

I don't feel like I'm a good athlete. I put a lot of pressure on myself to be a really good athlete and it's hard to lower the bar and say 'I've got x, y and z going on right now, so I need to factor that in,' but in my mind, I've done this before and I need to do it again. It was actually really hard on me to know that I'm certainly not a contributor to the men's team at this point. I'm not good. I'm not remotely competitive and I hate that. So it certainly is challenging to lower the bar and just be like, 'well I'm at least on the team and practicing with them in their same space doing the same things they're doing. I can at least still run.' It's actually really hard. As an athlete, I define success by my numbers, how many people I beat and where I finished on the team. But obviously if I'm coming from behind I may need to define success differently. Maybe it's just being the best I can be.

There is not much literature related to first-hand accounts of transgender student-athletes' experiences coming out to friends and family, so it is difficult to say if BD's experiences are consistent with previous athletes or not. However, the commitment, passion, patience, and talent one must have to accomplish a feat such as being a transgender student-athlete on both sexed teams cannot be overlooked. BD has this in common with Taylor Edelman, who also was a member of both sexed teams, as he played volleyball for Division III's Purchase College (Zeigler, 2013). Edelman not only had to transition from the women's team to the men's team, but he also had to transition his game and strategy from the women's to the men's. Zeigler (2013) stated, "the women's game is more finesse with longer volleys; the men's game is a power game that puts brute strength on display," (Zeigler, 2013). Similarly, BD also needed to get his body

adjusted to the differences between competing with the women and the men; mainly the pace. He discusses how his body had extreme difficulty catching up to the men's pace in practice.

Although other transgender athletes whose stories have been popularized in the media (e.g., Kye Allums, Keelin Godsey, Schulyer Bailar) did not compete on both sexed teams, there are similarities to draw between BD's experiences and their experiences. For example, Godsey's coach was said to have been supportive in the athlete's transitions. To BD, the support from his coaches and teammates was an integral part to his successful transition process. There were also differences between BD's experiences and some of the other athletes'. Allums initially was scared to come out to his basketball coach at George Washington, despite receiving positive feedback from his teammates. It was said, "Comments from the coach about religion had made Allums feel a little uneasy. He didn't think his head coach would ever be able to wrap his head around the idea that he was coaching a man on a women's team" (Zeigler, 2010, para 15). The article goes on to explain that Coach Bozeman did not have any issues with the fact that Allums was identifying as transgender. BD says all three of the coaches he worked closely with also provided him with continuous support.

This narrative from BD provides important information on the athlete's experiences coming out to different groups of people. In this section of data alone, he had to disclose that information to his residence hall friends, residential advisor, girlfriend, women's coach, women's team, men's coaches, and men's team. Although not included in this section, he also came out to his family and other friends. Analysis of the reactions from the different groups could be helpful to people who know a transgender individual. Seeing the positive support from others may encourage cisgender people to have the same mind set when coming in contact with a member of the LGBT community.

Vignette #2: Gender identity

BD explains his views on sex and gender, and how the two have played a role in his life thus far.

The world is a very binary place. Everything is gendered. Right from birth people automatically want to know boy or girl and because of that people force conformity upon their child based on their sex. If a person was born a girl, that person needs all things gendered female. They have no choice. That's how my parents raised me for the most part. They had a little bit of leeway though because I did have a younger brother so there were a lot of things with male influences growing up, but for the most part they forced conformity on me from a young age. For example, young girls wear dresses and that was something my parents believed in. I hated everything about dresses. I remember vividly, I went to a private school for kindergarten and there were two outfit options. There was a stupid jumper or you could wear a plain shirt and pants. Nine times out of 10 I was in the shirt and pants because I wanted nothing to do with the dresses.

Barbies were huge growing up in the 90s. My parents did buy me them, but I didn't care for them at all. I was the kid who tore them apart because I didn't care. I didn't want to play with anything that was girly or feminine at all. I grew up with my brother and we're just over a year apart in age so I would play with his toys like his hotwheels. From a very young age, everything I wanted to play with or dress as was male. Even when I got into puberty I was like 'no, these changes are wrong. I hate everything about it.' It was certainly hard, especially since my parents were not supportive when I initially came to terms with the fact that I was trans and I ended up telling them that I was trans. Before I knew that it was sort of a struggle to just understand myself. It certainly made things difficult because I didn't know who I was, I

didn't know how I identified so I think that made things definitely hard before I got to college and really kind of embraced being trans.

BD shares his earliest recognition of his gender identity.

I would say probably as early as like elementary school, when I was in second or third grade I really had just a lot of guy friends. To be honest, I didn't really hang out with girls too much and obviously at that age I didn't know a lot about gender and sex and not a major understanding about what any of that was, but I did know I felt different from other girls at that time. I didn't really have any interest in playing with whatever kinds of things they played with, but because since I didn't know a lot about it, I didn't think to myself 'OK, I'm a dude obviously,' you know? But definitely from a young age I had feelings and experiences that made me feel like I was different in some respect, which I later came to understand is how I identified gender wise.

I would probably say that's the biggest way it impacted me in that I just didn't enjoy wearing women's clothing. I just felt like I always wanted to be seen as the tougher person. I wanted to be seen as the cool kid, perceived as masculine. I wanted people to be intimidated by my masculinity. So anything with sports I'd try to be aggressive so people would say 'oh I didn't expect that from a girl!' I usually wear longer shorts when I would run. Once my parents actually discovered that I liked women, a lot went downhill and they strongly disapproved of me wearing any men's clothing. They would say "you need to conform to being like a female. You need to wear women's clothing because you're a girl." So I wasn't able to wear long shorts through my entire career.

It wasn't until a few years later that he came to the realization he identified as transgender.

It was quite a process, actually. For a long time I did just identify as a butch lesbian. When I got to high school, I kind of came to terms more with my sexuality. I identified as a lesbian. I was like 'OK, this feels better.' It made me feel like I was masking it a little. I changed my entire image when I came to college. I wore men's clothing, only short haircuts, anything to flatten my chest and make it seem like I wasn't female. I felt weird when people continued to refer to me as a female like when I was out in public if I got mistaken for a guy it was awesome. It felt good. When people would refer to me as anything female, it felt weird and that was when I had to figure out why it felt weird. As I discovered later on, I don't identify as a woman so of course it felt weird. But I was like 'OK, this is good, I like women, cool.' Obviously that changed a lot about my image at that time. So through high school I just identified as a lesbian and didn't really do much about my image. Then I came to college, and right before college I started to experience a lot of issues with my body. I had done some research and I found people who felt the same way and they identified as transgender. I was like 'maybe this could be me.'

So the second part of my freshman year in about March I really decided 'yes, I think I might be trans. I went through a social experiment where I was like 'alright, how about I just choose a male name and then have people start referring to me with male pronouns and just see how it feels, because obviously if I don't like it then I'm not trans. So I came out in March to my girlfriend, a bunch of close friends in my dorm and they started referring to me as BD with male pronouns regularly and immediately I was like 'yes. I can embrace this; this is it. This feels amazing, I am trans.' That is what solidified my identity there and from that point I never looked back.

There are times where BD hasn't felt comfortable in public and below he explains a time where he encountered an awkward situation in his place of work.

I wanted to keep the fact that I was trans on the DL [down low] because it feels nice to just walk into work without saying anything. One of the girls who also works as a customer service attendant at the [recreation center] already knew because she was a part of the hiring process, but not really anyone else did. The guys went up to another girl coworker and said, 'so BD... guy or girl?' WHO ASKS THAT? That's not polite. The girl told them that if they had any questions to just ask me themselves, so I was happy she did that. She came to me and told me what happened so I had to confess to her that I wasn't a biological male. She was really supportive and said 'wow that's awesome. I'm really happy for you and 100 percent support you. I won't say anything to anyone.' But I was offended by those guys. What if I was cis? How insulting. I ended up talking with this girl and she asked if there was a polite way to ask me in case this situation ever came up again. I was like, 'no it's not their business. If I tell them my name is BD and that they should respect me as a male, then that's all they need to know.' They don't need to know my life unless I chose to tell them about it. I was let down by that all. I thought I passed well enough. That happened less than a month into me working there.

Another thing at the [recreation center] is that most people have to vein in with their fingers when they come in, but I've got a ped, which is a chip that allows access to the [recreation center] at all hours. I don't really talk about it, but I don't use the finger vein because it's attached to my legal name. They can't change my name in the system unless I get it legally changed, and that comes up on the computers. When we stand there and see anyone come in, it comes up on the computer. Peds are only given to long-time

employees of the rec, and I got one immediately. So people are like ‘how did you get this?’ And I’m like ‘it’s classified information. I really can’t share that with you. I’m sorry.’ People have been asking about it. Like it’s really not that important.

But there are also times where he sees the progress he’s made.

I feel like I am perceived differently in public. I went to Red Robin for dinner actually and the waiter read me as male the entire time and called me sir. So I haven’t been misgendered in a long time, which is excellent because that improves my confidence socially. I feel like I can enter a social space now and people are going to perceive me the proper way. It eliminates the self-consciousness of if someone is going to call me a girl.

From a young age, BD knew something wasn’t quite right. He didn’t like the feeling of people reading him as female. Once he came to the realization he was trans, there was no doubt in his mind that was who he was supposed to be all along. He was male. This instance differs from athletes interviewed by Semerjian and Cohen (2006) and Lucas-Carr and Krane (2012). The athletes in those two studies claimed to have gender identities that were “diverse and fluid” (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012, p. 26). However, they all identified as transgender, further breaking down the notion that everyone fits perfectly into a gender category. Lucas-Carr and Krane (2012) say that “sport is steeped in traditional notions of gender” (p. 27) and BD does not disagree. He states that the world is a binary place and people are gendered immediately at birth, which he feels is wrong.

Conformity was forced upon BD from birth. From Barbie dolls to dresses, his parents, and societal constructions, did everything they could to make him female. But that’s just not who he was. However, his younger brother was given hot wheels to play with, further enforcing

gender stereotypes within the family. His parents, due to societal norms, believed that girls should play with dolls and wear dresses. A participant in Lucas-Carr and Krane's (2012) study, Harvey, was assigned female sex at birth, but "identifies as fluidly transgender". He wanted to play football with the boys instead of hopscotch with the girls. Another participant, Jake, claimed to only have worn two dresses in his entire life (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012). These transgender individuals all were told they could not participate in, play with, or wear something solely due to their assigned gender at birth.

A concern BD had from his youth sport days had to do with physicality. He grew up identifying as a female, so he participated on youth girl's teams. However, he would always try to be the most aggressive one on the field or court. He wanted to make people say "Oh I didn't expect that from a girl!" Similarly, Harvey said, "I felt like the girls were not playing as hard as I wanted them to be ... I think I just wanted to play harder than the girls wanted to play" (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012, p. 29). It is interesting to note that both individuals went into these leagues with the intent to be aggressive, and they both viewed this as something the other girls did not do. Clearly, aggression in sport is a learned behavior that has ties to gender stereotypes. Lucas-Carr and Krane state, "The power of the sex/gender binary in sport is seen as it seeps beyond sex segregation and into acceptable sport behaviors. In this case, males are aggressive, females are not" (p. 29). Both BD and Harvey felt this way growing up, which is not the case, it is a sporting stereotype, as females can be just as aggressive in sport as their male counterparts.

As for how different athletes feel about "passing" and being misgendered in public, there is no current literature available on the subject. It is safe to say, however, that it has a large psychological effect on the trans individual: a positive one if correctly referred to, or a negative one if misgendered. This exact example is one reason why this study is so crucial for others to

read. This process is about learning, and if people don't understand that a simple he vs. she or miss vs. sir could destroy someone's life, it will never stop. Education is the key to ending the unintentional misgenderings that occur daily. Instead, people could be using non-gender specific words such as you, everyone, folks, friends, etc.

Vignette #3: Physical appearance + hormones

Body discomfort was an issue BD encountered from day one, and continues to struggle with.

I lived kind of in denial for a pretty long time and I started to experience a lot of body-related issues, which is usually referred to as dysphoria as being trans, meaning you don't really associate with your body. You feel like it's not your own body and you feel often trapped. Right before college I started to experience a lot of issues with my body. I had done some research and I found people who felt the same way and they identified as transgender. I was like 'maybe this could be me. This might be me.' So when I came to college I ended up changing my image, but I still went by my birth name, I still used female pronouns and I still identified as a lesbian. That was pretty much how I identified for my first semester of my college career, but it didn't feel quite right though. I didn't like that because I'm out there, I look very masculine now, I have the short hair, always wearing men's clothing and I didn't really see myself as a female. I didn't like it when other people would perceive me as that because it just didn't feel right and didn't sit well with me.

So the second part of my freshman year, in about March, I really decided 'yes, I think I might be trans because it's not sitting well with me that people are reading me as female. I don't like it, it's not comfortable anymore.' I got fairly blessed with a pretty androgynous body. I don't have extremely wide hips, a massive chest in size and there

just weren't facial features that screamed femininity. But I still was born a female so I hated my hips a lot even though they weren't very wide. My chest is the number one place of dysphoria. It is prominent so I needed to make it hidden. Most of the time when you're out in public people aren't concerned about what's in your pants. I experienced some dysphoria in the genital region, but not too much.

I plan on having the surgeries because of dysphoria. It is going to be difficult for me to be on the men's team as a person who does not have a male chest. It is a struggle for me. Even to compete in the fall is going to be tough because obviously you can't just walk in and get top surgery. As an athlete who is participating three sport seasons, there is not a lot of time to take off to have the surgery. I am hoping by the end of the year that I can have some of that done over winter break.

This past cross country season, BD was an openly trans man on a women's cross county team. His body looks like everybody else's, but he wanted to be perceived as male.

It is very stressful. Dysphoria is a lot more prominent these days now that I am still associated with the women's team. I used to run with my shirt off [in a sports bra] sometimes in the cross season, but I can't do that anymore. Mentally that is a horrible experience for me. It is hard to think that my body is still perceived as female. I keep it closed as much as I can while I am out being an athlete even if it is hot I don't care I will still wear a shirt. I hate exposing my body at all. I feel like I need to be covered at all times, but I definitely am learning to love my body more and feel better about myself in my own skin. Obviously the transition is going to take a long time for me to feel like I 100 percent love myself, but it's gotten easier as time's gone on since I am building more muscle, more facial hair is coming in and fat is redistributing. It's definitely gotten easier.

During his transition, when BD was struggling, he considered quitting the sport he loved because it was hindering his ability to look how he wanted. His feelings about his body played a role in how he was feeling.

There's research on male distance runners and their hindered ability to build muscle. I get upset that that's the case. I go to the [recreation] center and lift a few times a week, but its not enough. The point of the transition is to change my body. My body composition hasn't really changed drastically from when I started T [testosterone]. I'll see guys who are two months on T, and their bodies are great. You know why? They aren't distance running. So I'm halfway there. It's putting me in a place where I can't successfully build. It promotes my dysphoria. I've been doing this for five months now and there are guys who have been on for one and look better. If I continue running, I'll have to sacrifice a body I want to be an athlete. I'm not sure the sacrifice is worth it. I want to feel good about myself and this isn't making me feel good so I need to stop.

A month later, he decided not to quit, but still struggled with his body.

I still struggle with dysphoria a lot lately since I've been spending more time around the men's team. It's hot outside, so everyone's like 'let's go shirt free woohoo' and I'm just like 'ughhhhhh.' So I do struggle with that a lot actually. I've felt very inferior. I've felt not masculine enough, not male enough. I don't pass and I've just had problems with that lately.

After being on testosterone for a few months, with the misgenderings occurring less and less, and believing he could "pass" as male in day-to-day activities, BD's struggles with his body were mostly internal and how he viewed himself, rather than how he came off to others. Pre-transition, however, going out in public was a large source of anxiety for BD, along with the

uncomfortableness with his body. He never knew if he was going to be called Ms., her, she, etc. and the thought of being mislabeled only added to his body-related concerns. This aligns with previous literature such as Cohen and Semerjian (2008), whose participant Angela dealt with similar issues. Angela, as a transgender female originally playing on a men's ice hockey team, feared how she was "perceived by others, mostly males ... This leads to a process of body alienation similar to that of Angela's pre-transition" (140). For both BD and Angela, body dysphoria was prevalent both pre-transition and during the transition process. According to the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), treatment for gender dysphoria differs from person to person. Its "Standard of Care" document includes that the process could involve "a change in gender expression or body modifications. Medical treatment options include, for example, feminization or masculinization of the body through hormone therapy and/or surgery" (p. 168).

Appearance played a large part in BD's transition. Here, he discusses how his image has changed throughout the years. As a kid, BD did not like to dress in women's clothing, which he parents didn't always agree with.

My parents would say 'you need to wear women's clothing because you're a girl.'

So I wasn't able to wear long shorts through my entire high school running career. I often ran in short shorts just because I had to and couldn't do anything about it. For as long as I could I would wear men's clothing. When I started grade school even, I always enjoyed wearing gender neutral or even just men's clothing, so I always dressed and tried to present a little more masculine or a little more neutral if I could and I really liked that.

BD recalls a time where his family rejected his clothing choices.

I was going to go home for Easter last year and I had this really nice men's outfit planned out. I was talking to my mom about it because my parents were going to come down to [university] to pick me up and take me home for Easter dinner. At this time, my parents were really strongly against me dressing with any type of men's clothing so I knew I was going to be treading in some murky water but I did it anyway because I thought, 'well, why not ask?' So I talked with my parents about it. They were not pleased at all. My mom was furious I even asked the question.

Aside from clothing, there was one other big part of BD's appearance he felt like he needed to change, even if that meant worsening his relationship with his family.

Me cutting my hair was part of the reason my relationship with [my parents] went downhill. They found that out through my social media. I changed my picture on Twitter and my mom found that because my parents like to be very much so in my life. Although I had mentioned it to her a number of times that I wanted to cut my hair in high school, like my junior year and senior year, I said, 'mom, I really want to cut my hair short.' She said, 'OK, well I don't want you to do that.' My parents weren't supportive and I thought they might kick me out if I tried to do something like cut my hair. So they were really surprised by the fact that I actually did that. That was first huge thing and then they knew that I had bought all of these men's basketball shorts to wear and my mom was furious about that whole situation. It was ridiculous, but me cutting my hair and drastically altering my image is what set them off so much. I remember the day they moved me into college. I could tell that they were very stressed because they knew that the shackles were being removed and I could be a free person if I wanted to. I knew they were definitely a little scared about that, but after I changed my image and started living my life the way I

wanted to in the free college world, my parents were like, 'no, whatever you're doing here in college is negative.' They were stressed that the team was influencing me and encouraging me to do this stuff. They hated everything about it. Everything.

BD goes back to explain the back story on his hair cutting freshman year.

So basically what happened is, I have an older cousin who I am relatively close with. She is 21, so we have a fairly close age gap. She also went to [university] my freshman year, she was a sophomore in college. So, I basically called her and said, 'dude, I want to get my hair cut. Help me out.' She said, 'oh yeah, absolutely! I'll come get you right now, let's go.' So literally a few hours after my parents moved me into college I was like, 'let's chop the locks and go forward with life.' I was really scared to do it though because there were going to be so many repercussions and my parents were going to be pissed, but I was like, 'well, I don't care. I'm going to do it and I'm going to do it for me.' When my cousin picked me up she said, 'are you sure you want to do this?' and I said, 'yes, yes, yes I want to go!' So we went in there and told the lady, 'I'm about to do something really drastic right now. I need you to pretty much cut all of this off.' She said, 'wow! Are you really sure about that?' And I said, 'yes, I'm sure. Please get rid of it.' She then said, 'OK, I just know a lot of girls are attached to their hair.' I said, 'not me. Just get rid of it. It's fine.' So I showed her a picture of this dude who had a sweet hairstyle and after I was done I was like, 'this is amazing. I feel so free and alive and look sweet.'

I was scared, but it was a really liberating moment for me. I would definitely say I took control of my life at that point. I want to change my image, I want to do this thing for myself, and then I did it. Although I was scared of the repercussions that would

follow, I did it and felt really good about it. Obviously a lot of people, like my teammates because we all move into the dorms at the same time, luckily never saw me with long hair. They never saw that, except for [women's teammate #1] because we lived in the same place and I told her before I was getting a haircut, 'hey I'm getting a haircut.' She said, 'OK!' I'm sure she didn't think I meant chop off everything. I came back and she was like, 'whoa! You look sweet.' I was like, 'thank you!' But it was good that all of my teammates didn't really know that there was any different appearance before. It was a very liberating moment in my life.

It might seem so meaningless in the overall scheme of things, but when I got men's trainers, it was great. I no longer had the women's shoe. I was so stoked because it made me so self-conscious to wear an obviously female shoe, but my foot is small you know? I didn't know if I could get a men's size that fit, but [Head cross country coach] gave me one. I feel so complete. It's hard to explain. I feel like I don't have anything to hide. I look like everyone else now. It's huge. I feel like I look the way I should when I run, just like how my haircut made me feel like I looked the way I should.

Physically, top surgery is something BD always wanted once he knew he was transgender.

However, it is a long and complicated process. He originally wanted to have it completed by the end of 2015, but now his hope is to do the surgery by late spring or early summer of 2016.

It's a process. Obviously you can't just walk in and get top surgery. You have to have a consultation and find out what surgery is appropriate for your chest size and then obviously you have to see how much money it is going to cost you, which is going to be a frick load of money. There is that component that will be stopping me for a little while there. So I definitely need to have surgery for sure. I need to get it done. It's going to

make my sport a lot easier and I'll feel more comfortable, like I can really fully immerse myself into being a male athlete. Like when I walk into the locker room and know that it's fine to take my shirt off. I have plans to do it late spring/early summer right as school ends.

I've done so much research. There are billions of surgeons out there that are like 'sure I'll do it for you.' There are different costs and different types of operations you can get that either increase or reduce your scarring. There's a guy out in Cleveland who has really good prices and it wouldn't be too far away. There's a serious, exact timeline of how and when everything has to be done. You have to set up a consultation and they check you out to see which surgery you best qualify for and then you set a surgery date. Once you do that, then you have to pay the amount of the surgery four weeks in advance so they know you're serious, you want to do it, and I'm pretty sure there's a non-refundable thing. There's a lot of stuff that goes into it. It's very specific. If you miss one thing, they're like 'sorry, no surgery.'

I was reading through the specifics of a top surgery grant and how it works, and basically, if you get the grant, your funds are immediately sent to whatever surgeon you have selected basically stating that this individual has received this grant and this is how they're going to pay for it. As far as I know, whenever your appointment is, whenever they give you the fund thing, you're set to go. I don't know how much they actually give you. I'd assume they're aware of the general cost of top surgery, but it would depend on what type you got. There's a couple ways you can do them and not all of them are big incisions in your chest that leave scarring. Some of them, that of course are more

expensive, leave way less scarring. I'm probably going to go with the least expensive thing I can go with there.

Along with top surgery, BD knew he needed to go on hormones to continue his transition, in his eyes.

For a long time before I ever identified as trans, or before I really came to terms with my identity, I did a lot of research on other people. Obviously I didn't want to start identifying as something if it didn't really suit me or if I didn't have those same feelings as those other people that identified the same way. So I went on YouTube and watched a lot of videos of other trans guys to see, 'what are their experiences? How did they feel about themselves?' I looked at people who are on testosterone and watch their transition to see, 'do they enjoy the effects of testosterone? Is this something I really want for myself because I didn't really ever enjoy having a woman's body, especially from the time I started going through puberty. I was like, 'I hate all of these changes, please make them stop.' So definitely I did a lot of research before I started identifying strongly as trans. I knew I needed to start hormones.

I have heard a lot of opinions from a couple trans guys about when is a good time to do top surgery because obviously fat redistribution is a large part of testosterone. So you obviously don't want to be pulling a lot of fat out of your chest while your body is still in the early stages of redistributing because that can effect your results later on. I know trans guys who have gotten top surgery before they ever started hormones, four months into it, years after, it's just whenever you have the funds and time.

I would have liked to go on testosterone much sooner, but like I said, issues with my parents created a lot of roadblocks. But in terms of the timeline I did get on it

relatively quickly. Less than one year after I started identifying as trans, I started hormones which is impressive because some people don't get to start until years after they began identifying as trans. So I decided to go on it when I did because it was the soonest time I could. Obviously playing multiple sports seasons, you've got to work in there when is a good time to start this because obviously I'm throwing an entirely new hormone into my body and it needs time to adjust to that sort of thing. Obviously I had to wait until the end of cross [country] season at least because there was too much success. I was already too much of an important contributor to the team's success. I couldn't just have started then even if I wanted to. So January was the soonest I could get it started. Even after just a few months, with the testosterone comes a variety of side effects.

My anger is a lot more prominent. After I put the gel on and it begins to absorb into my body, I get impatient much faster. Things agitate me a lot easier, even if it is dumb crap. I have had less of a desire to cry, which is nice. I guess it is a good emotional outlet and sometimes you just have to cry, but there were times where I was just crying too much in my life and it was like I wish I could just not do this right now because it is getting repetitive. It's been nice that I have felt like I had not really needed to cry and get so emotionally worked up about stuff anymore. The veins in my arms are starting to come up more on the insides of my arms. My appetite has also gone up a lot. It was already high because I was an athlete, but the late-night hunger is all too real, or I'll eat food and then two hours later I will be like, 'did I even eat food?' I haven't had a period in two and a half months so the estrogen levels are low so the emotions that come with that are gone. Facial hair is a big thing. And I also think my hairline is receding some more. It used to be really round it and now it is sharper and thinning out in some places.

The side effects of the testosterone can be positive or negative.

With weight training it's certainly gotten a lot easier just because there's an obvious advantage. Testosterone naturally helps people build muscle. From an athletics standpoint, me out there trying to run has been so hard. It's something I've been struggling with since I started testosterone because of the adjustment period. It takes time for your body to get used to the fact that you're overhauling your entire body and putting a whole new hormone in there. So it's been really hard. I have not been fantastic out there. It's been a struggle for me to go to practice and think 'I'm going to suck, I'm not good.' For real... that is what I've had to deal with for months straight now; just accepting the fact that my body is not where it should be because I am adjusting. There's nothing I can do about it. I just have to deal with it and accept that it's going to be hard right now, but eventually once I get past the adjustment period I'll have built the muscle, built the speed, built the endurance. I'm just in the hard part of waiting right now. I'm waiting for my body to catch up to everything so I can be a better athlete.

One of the other reasons I wanted to quit as well was because I have not yet seen the benefits of testosterone while I'm performing, while I practice. I used to have a lot of trouble with soreness. I had a lot of that leg soreness in the spring, which I don't have now. My pace has come down a lot. I can run at a much faster pace than I could've back in the spring, but I don't have the base. My summer was kind of choppy. It was really good for the first two months, and then my body felt tired. I was asking a lot out of it. It was hard to motivate myself because I wasn't running with other people; I was just running by myself. So I'm not seeing the [performance] benefits yet. I wish that I could workout with the guys. I haven't even run a workout since the spring because my body is

just not up to speed yet. I don't have that ability to run that workout and have it be a good workout because I don't have that base.

However, he has no plans to stop taking testosterone.

If you stop testosterone, since your body becomes dependent on that, it screws you up hormonally. For example, my periods are going to stop. I will not be able to give birth to a person anymore, and if you stop taking testosterone before you have had a hysterectomy, your periods will continue. I have no desire to give birth to a child, but some trans guys want to do that. Some of the changes are irreversible though. If my voice dropped and I stopped taking testosterone, it would stay that way. Once it drops it drops forever. My features would start to feminize a little bit. There are a lot of things that you can't reverse if you go off of it, but I would never go off of it because there is that risk for reversing things that I'm trying to get rid of.

As a child, BD was forced by his parents, and a gender binary conforming society, to fit into the stereotypical female mold with clothing. His parents made him wear dresses to school, which greatly upset him. While wearing dresses forced him to fit in with the other young girls in the class, this isn't necessarily something he wanted to do. Contrastingly, the main participant from Cohen and Semerjian (2008) discusses purposefully "maintaining a masculinized self in order to fit into the binary mold matching her birth biology" (p. 139). Angela, the participant who is a transgender female, strongly wanted to blend in with the rest of her team, so she did what she could to pass as male, since they were all male. This differs from BD in that he was forced to blend in by parents, yet wanted to be himself and express his gender openly and freely.

A discussion about athletics and the physical body cannot be had without the consideration of what is clothing that physical body. For BD's specific sport, it is required to wear shorts, a

shirt and shoes. On the men's side, the shirt and the shorts are loose and the shoes are "masculine colors" typically. On the women's side, the shirt is form fitting, the shorts are skintight and the shoes are usually more "feminine." BD recalls a time when he was on the women's team, but out as a transgender athlete, and the team was training in pink shoes. He felt uncomfortable with this since pink is stereotypically associated with females and femininity and he rejected anything considered not masculine. Fortunately for BD, when he was competing on the women's team, he was allowed to wear the uniform style that made him the most comfortable -- looser fitting clothing options. Not all athletes are supported in this manner. Tagg (2012) outlines the netball rules, which state male players must wear shorts and not skirts, as defined by the sport's dress code. This would mean that a transgender female who is not on hormones would be forced to wear shorts on the court, instead of a skirt if they wanted. However, people in the sport are pushing the limits as "a feminine young transgender player wore a pair of short black shorts that looked just like a short skirt" at a recent netball event (p. 163).

The difficulty about the physical body is that no matter what you feel on the inside, people put you into the male or female binary based on your outward appearance. Cohen and Semerjian explain that when it comes to the reconstruction of the physical body, that is a negotiated and controlled process. Others decide for you what you are, where you should fit in and what you should be labeled solely based upon your physical appearance. The authors say "Angela cannot simply decide when she should be perceived as female; instead, others testify to her female body ... All of this is predicated on the conceptualization of a binary gender system" (p. 139). Based on your assigned sex at birth, things are assigned to you. However, after months of hormone therapy, BD had a breakthrough with this process. At multiple points, he talks about "passing" as male and specially, how, for example when he went out to a restaurant once and was read as

male, this occasion made him happy and relieved. To finally be read the way he felt like he should be, was a major step in his transition journey. Additionally, he said his hair cut when he arrived at college was a symbol for cutting free from his parents and their rules that were restricting his happiness.

Vignette #4: Mental + emotional changes

As one would expect, transitioning from female to male has its challenges. The mental and emotional difficulties that BD experienced are outlined in the section below.

There have been a lot of obstacles that I have had to overcome. There have been a lot of times where I wanted to give up like in the heaviest sense possible. There were times where suicide was an extreme factor in this transition. I would say it got really hard the closer I got to being able to actually start testosterone. I was finding it hard to feel any attachment to the women as I got closer to starting T. I felt like I was drifting from them. Especially last semester there were times where I struggled so hard to just be at practice and to just be in that environment with all the women. Mentally I was not there. I was not mentally in that environment and I was not on the same page as everybody else there. I said, 'I can't do this.' It was an extremely hard process.

Suicide was a huge issue for a long time. The fact that my life got to that point... I think about it and I'm like "'wow, I really wanted to go through with that.' It's terrifying that I ever wanted to go through with that. I got as far as making a plan. I had a plan and I was going to do it, so it's scary that my life came to that point. In the fall semester, I felt like every time I made progress, it escaped and got further and further away. I would take one step forward and two steps backward because an unforeseen thing happens and then

progress isn't made anymore, so it got seriously difficult to deal with right before I started hormones.

It hasn't really been recently obviously since a lot of things have gotten better in the last two months, but throughout the fall semester I really struggled with suicide. Some days I would just be like, 'ugh. I have to get up and do all this crap and not be the person who I want to be today.' I would get down on myself a lot. I got really suicidal for a while, especially in October when I had to miss a meet. I wasn't allowed to travel because I threatened to kill myself earlier that week.

So what happened was, I basically told [Head cross country coach], 'things have been rough lately. I have been having a lot of issues with my parents and I've still been feeling suicidal. I know we've had this conversation before but I feel like I want to kill myself and I don't know what to do.' So he said, 'let's go talk to [assistant athletic trainer] about this right now. Let's let her know what is happening.' She has actually been a large part of this process as well. She knows a lot about the stuff I have gone through, so we went down there to talk and I just felt horrible about myself. I was trying to hold myself together and not start to get emotional and [assistant trainer] was so scared. I felt terrible about myself and broke down. And she said, 'OK we need to take you to emergency counseling right away. I also want you to create a safety plan so I know you will not be alone for the next 24 hours until you can see your psychologist tomorrow morning.'

So I created a safety plan and visited a counselor at the counseling center, talk to this lady about all these issues I was having, which was hard because she did not know a lot of the context of that sort of stuff. We discussed steps that I could take in the next

several hours so I could be safe basically. We talked about that and she felt like I was okay now that we had talked about some things. And I felt better knowing I was able to talk to her about stuff and get that heavy emotion off of my chest. Then we called [assistant athletic trainer] back into the room and she said, 'I feel like he has made progress and shown that he would like to get better and is willing to go through things to keep himself safe.' So [assistant athletic trainer] took me back to my dorm and told me to stay around people until I could see my psychologist the next morning. And I just went about the rest of my day.

It's crazy. I feel like my life is an emotional roller coaster. Things got slowly better after that point. I was actually surprised that I was not allowed to travel because this happened on a Tuesday and we were leaving on a Friday. I felt better about myself and had made progress for several days. Nobody told me I wasn't going to travel. I had to go find out by myself on the day we were supposed to leave. I got up super early and did my prerace run and was in the training room and everything. I just had to go to classes and get some other things done that day. So I go talk to [assistant athletic trainer] and told her that my psychologist had cleared me for travel and she said, 'actually you're not traveling. [Head cross country coach] and I talked with some other supervisors about this and we feel like we don't want to damage any of the progress you have made by putting you in your own room.'

Obviously I chose to room by myself for a lot of body reasons and she just said, 'we don't want to ruin that progress by tempting you in a room alone with nobody there to try and help you if you do do anything.' So it was a major letdown actually. I was really disappointed that day. My teammates did not know why it was that I was not

traveling, so that was sort of interesting to have to talk to them about that. I said I couldn't travel due to mental reasons basically, which I later confessed to them that it was because I wanted to kill myself earlier that week. I waited until after they had come back because even with talking to coach about it, I was like 'if people ask why I'm not there, you might as well tell them I needed mental health time and time for myself to feel good mentally, so we went with that.' So I told people later on and they were scared about it, but it was a disappointing week to say the least.

I did have the option of going on depression medication and although I was diagnosed with mild depressive disorder there were some pretty serious life-threatening moments that were part of that whole thing. So that's why my psychologist offered me to go on depression medication and I had known some things about anxiety and depression medication that basically says you can become dependent on the medication after you start taking it and I did not want to be part of that. I know people who have taken it and they forgot to take it one day and then they are screwed up. Emotions are all out of control because they don't have this medication rely on. I was like, 'I don't want to become reliant on this medication when I can just visit my psychologist to try to find other ways first that can help me work through this depression instead of going straight to medication for help.'

But then, BD started testosterone.

I'm able to actually live my life now comfortably. I'm that much closer to becoming the person I feel like I am, who I should be. Even with starting hormones, my mental and emotional health has been significantly better. I feel better about myself waking up each day, like 'awesome, I am making progress.' Like today I am making

progress in my journey as a person. So it's a good feeling knowing I can get up everyday, apply the hormones, things change, things happen and I feel really good about it. I am moving forward. The biggest thing is that I'm making progress and that's the best feeling.

I feel like my emotions have been at more of a standstill and I'm not so overwhelmed with emotion because of the testosterone. I feel like I've been in the same state of mind for the last several months now. Recently I've battling with depression for whatever reason. I don't know. Obviously my life is pretty chill, but that's the thing with depression... you can just feel [made a noise close to ugh]. So I've been having struggles with that the past couple of weeks, but I'm not really sure why. I can't say my life has had any real terrible experiences, but I feel like that's probably what's changed the most. But otherwise, on an average day, I feel pretty good. I feel like my life is at a much more stable point.

One of the most known, and well-covered, cases of a transgender athlete was Kye Allums, who publicly started telling his story in 2011. Allums was candid about the fact that he had attempted suicide in the past due to depression concerning his gender identity. He said, "It was a lot of attention on me. I felt I couldn't even walk outside because I felt someone would recognize me" (Moore, 2013, para 11). Allums acknowledged that suicide is a prevalent issue in the transgender community, explaining that many people viewed him as 'just a story'" (Nichols, 2014, para 5).

While BD did not attempt suicide, like Allums did, he did contemplate it. He even got so far as to plan it out. BD says he hit a low point when he was not allowed to travel with the team because he had earlier confessed to his coach that he was considering suicide. As the story is outlined above, the coach sends BD to a psychologist, which BD later recognized as the right

thing for him at that time. He had the option of going on antidepressants, but opted not to. He did not want to become reliant on medication. There are no articles detailing these personal details from the other trans athletes that have come out before BD. The information learned from this specific athlete has the potential to educate many different groups of people.

Like Allums' life, BD's eventually leveled out. For Allums, it was when the media whirlwind began to die down. For BD, once he began testosterone, he saw the positive effects that it had on him physically as well as emotionally and mentally. There were obvious changes caused by the testosterone, included a more even-temper and getting less worked up in certain situations, but more importantly, he knew he was officially on his way to becoming the person he felt he always was, and that gave him a sense of hope. It allowed him to want to continue on in life with a positive attitude and be grateful for how far he had come.

Vignette #5: Medical professionals

Before starting the hormonal transition process, BD was required to meet with a gender therapist.

I had to visit a gender therapist for a certain amount of time to get all of these referrals to do the certain next steps in order to even get to hormones because it's not like you can just walk into a doctor's office and say, 'hey, I am trans so sign me up for some of that testosterone!' It doesn't work like that.

He has regularly scheduled visits with an endocrinologist to check his hormone levels.

My two-month endocrinologist appointment was actually a stressful visit. They had these lab results of my testosterone levels and said they were at 795 so that's really good, but then they said my estrogen levels were still really high and they were really concerned about that. So I felt a lot of stress because my endo was like 'your levels just aren't coming down as fast as they should. I just don't understand why they're still this

high.' I was like 'they're not even that high! They went from 165 to 90.' So I walked away from that appointment feeling like he was pressuring me to have changes faster. And going into this appointment I had experienced a lot of changes in the first two months and I'm not even doing shots. So the fact that I experienced as much as I did with just gel, I thought I was in a good place. I went into this thing feeling good then they tell me my estrogen is too high. They changed my dose. I used to do the entire pack all at once, but now I split the packet and do one half in the morning and one half in the afternoon. It evens it out a little more. I won't know how successful that is until I go back in July. But yeah, I went into this appointment feeling good and came back feeling crappy. It made me feel like maybe I made the wrong choice with the gel.

The pressure I was feeling from my endocrinologist plays into changing from gel to injections because at my two month check-up he was saying I was behind in seeing different changes. Since I've seen more changes since that last appointment though, I just don't know if it's necessary to change to the shots. But that financial component is enticing. I went back in July and he was like 'your levels look really good.' They actually dropped a lot. They went from 795 to 435, which is a lot better. So he was like 'your estrogen is where it should be and your testosterone is at a much better place. We're going to keep on this dose and I'll see you in January!' I was surprised and he said 'yeah for your one year we'll do a check-up then.' I was like 'well that's a really long time span, but you're the doctor here, so why not!'

Throughout the transition process, BD saw a psychologist from the university.

I am super glad I was ever referred to my psychologist in the first place because I needed a lot of help and I was in a very dark time in my life. He has been very cool about

everything. When I met him he knew me as my birth name because it was not disclosed to him that I identified as trans. After I established that I was trans, he updated all the files and my information and he has not screwed up one time since with my name or the pronouns. He fully sees me as male and has been supportive and reassuring with my identity. I still see him regularly, like every week. I started visiting him the first week of April 2014 and after I came out as trans I started talking to him about stuff because I needed to get the ball rolling and getting closer to starting hormones. So I talk to him regularly about stuff, filled him in on my life background and everything that I've endured up to that point and then talked about how I identify as trans now and how can I move forward with this.

It was hard for me to talk with him about all of the crap I had gone through with my parents because every time I go through something with them I try to forget about it and not think about it ever again because it's painful. So I have to bring that stuff back up and talking about it to him is just really hard. He works here in [city] so I ended up seeing him over the summer. After I had seen him for a couple months he diagnosed me with mild depressive disorder. I was not surprised when he diagnosed me with that because obviously I have a lot of serious emotional issues but it's a struggle. I don't want to become reliant on medication when I can just visit my psychologist try to find other ways first that can help me work through this depression set of going straight to medication for help. The reason I started going to a psychologist was when I started identifying as trans, I also further disclosed to [Head cross country coach] that I was experiencing thoughts of needing to kill myself. Starting from that point I started seeing a psychologist. That's the primary reason why, but he also was there to help me with the trans related issues.

A few months into their sessions, BD saw a shift in his mood.

Lately things have been on an upward trend, I don't want to jinx things but I'm meeting him in a few days, then after that we are going to start going every two weeks instead of every week, which is fine. There aren't really enough terrible mental and emotional stuff going on for me that I need to talk to somebody. I feel like my life is at a much more stable point. There's not really anything major that happens where I'm like 'I need to talk to someone.' I still like being able to go in and talk with him because that's how I deal with my stress – I talk to other people about it. So it's still nice to have an outlet, but I'm glad I don't have to see him as often.

Since he came out as trans, BD has wanted nothing to do with his birth name.

I don't like it. I hate when other people use it. It comes up often because it is still my legal name. I am still attached to it. So when I go to the endocrinologist or when I have to call them to ask them something, I have to give them my information. So I have to say that name. I have a medical record number attached to my name so I just give them the record number and they're like, 'OK, you are coming up in here as birth name' and I am like, 'yes, that is me, thank you. Can we just please move on?' I hate so much that I'm still attached to it.

There are still awkward experiences where I'll get calls from health places, like the local hospital, where this lady called and she didn't understand how my voice was attached to an obviously female name. I had to verify my birthday because she didn't think it was actually me. Instances like that in the health field, it gets weird at the social level, but in my everyday life no one mistakes me for a female.

My endocrinologist actually understands the reason I am in there and correctly referred to me by BD and uses male pronouns. When it comes to the training room, obviously [assistant athletic trainer] is aware and is correct about things. [Head football athletic trainer] refers to me correctly. But a lot of student trainers don't know, which is weird for me because obviously I don't always think about who knows me. Sometimes I am just in my own mind like, 'OK, I am a dude here I am.' I remember a time in the training room where I needed some work done and this girl said to another trainer, 'can you help her?' I wasn't even thinking about it. I was so stressed out in the moment that I didn't even correct her. It shatters my entire life and they don't even know.

There is a "Standards of Care" (Coleman, E., et. al., 2011) for transsexual and transgender individuals that was released by the WPATH, formerly known as Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, which describes that a psychiatric evaluation must be completed before any treatment. BD followed this protocol, as he regularly visited a psychologist on campus before beginning hormone therapy. The document highlights the role of medical professionals who work with children, adolescents and adults with gender dysphoria, and focuses on mental health and guidelines that describe mental health professionals "should have familiarity with gender nonconformity, act with appropriate cultural competence, and exhibit sensitivity in providing care (Coleman, E., et. al., 2011, p. 179).

It is important for medical professionals to be "knowledgeable about current community, advocacy, and public policy issues relevant to these clients and their families" so that they can better relate to the clients they are seeing (Coleman, E., et. al., 2011, p. 179). If these medical professionals aren't comfortable with the patients or knowledgeable on the subject matter, situations can arise similar to what BD experienced with the constant misgendering on the

telephone or at doctor offices and the pressure from his endocrinologist. Due to feeling like he wasn't progressing quickly enough, BD switched from gel testosterone to injections. Doctors cannot underestimate how seriously each word of everything they say is taken by the patients.

In order to see his endocrinologist in the first place, BD needed a referral from his psychologist. This protocol remains consistent with all other individuals who wish to begin hormone therapy to transition from one gender to another. Additionally, if BD wishes to have top surgery, he would need one referral from "a qualified mental health professional" (Coleman, E., et. al., 2011, p. 182). For top surgery and sex reassignment surgery, also referred to as bottom surgery within the trans community, since it is a more serious and complicated procedure, BD would need two referrals. Coleman, et. al. (2011) say, "If the first referral is from the patient's psychotherapist, the second referral should be from a person who has only had an evaluative role with the patient" (p. 183). However, due to cost and the fact that he is still a student-athlete holding a part-time job, BD says bottom surgery is still always down the road.

Vignette #6: Plans for a national story + relationship with public figures

BD's interest in a national story was sparked by social media.

I was scrolling through Tumblr and I like to go on the FTM page and see what other trans dudes are saying and this story came up. This kid just graduated high school and had top surgery. He is actually going to Harvard to be on the men's swim team and he is the first openly trans swimmer in the NCAA. That's awesome. I found this in an article from a magazine and that made me rethink my whole life. I need to get my story out there. I don't think about it often, but after reading that kid's story and seeing how he was portrayed and the support he received, I realized I needed to do it. I want something along the lines of what he did. They listed his name, recognized who he was and

explained that “this kid had top surgery, is going to start hormones soon, wants to compete on the men’s team and laid out all the stuff he’s doing there” so if I’m going to be recognized, I want to be fully recognized.

BD volunteered to tell his story at a public event on his campus in hopes of decreasing social injustices through sport. The [university]’s athletic department was hesitant about this event because BD had yet to come out publicly as a trans athlete and they did not want him to get in over his head. They wanted to make sure BD was prepared for the media to pick the story up and potentially disseminate it to the general public across the country.

For the speaker event, I feel like [university] Athletics is mixed on how they feel about all of that. I had a meeting with a couple people from athletics and the speaker event committee to clarify what we are doing for the event. We made sure my privacy could be protected as need be, but after that last meeting we are a lot more on the same page with “here are my goals that I have for the discussion, in terms of privacy, who I want to be there, and covering all the bases.” I feel like [university] Athletics is a little more ‘we can help you with this now that we feel a little better about it.’ I feel better about that, but there are still problems with a lot of things. Like this national article I may want written. Everything comes back to this article. People are like ‘Well if you do this speaker event and people hear about it, then isn’t that your article? [Assistant athletic trainer] and I chatted about your project and she’s like ‘Explain to me how Alexx is going to be presenting this?’ I was like ‘from what I understand, she’s going to be presenting this in a classroom setting as her final master’s project.’ [Assistant athletic trainer] was like ‘is she going to publish it?’ I was like ‘you have to ask her these questions. It’s not my thing, I don’t know.’ She’s like ‘if she does publish it, wouldn’t that be your article?’

So everything comes back to ‘wouldn’t that be your article?’ They keep having all these things about how someone is going to end up telling my story that isn’t me. I’m just like ‘let’s take some deep breathes.’ They’re way more stressed about it than I am. It’ll be okay. However it happens is how it happens. You can only control people so much. If someone goes out and writes an article on me, then they write an article and that’s what happens. I’m not that stressed about it really. In terms of me actually wanting to write the article, I think it’s a good idea to wait until sometime next fall once I actually compete on the men’s team. I think that’s probably the best target time for that.

BD reached out to the Harvard swimmer who came out as a transgender athlete in 2015.

I reached out to him via a bunch of different forms of social media. I tried Tumblr, but he didn’t have one. I tried Twitter, but I couldn’t find him. So then I tried Facebook. I found him, but of course you can’t add him as a friend, you can only follow him. But, you can still message people even if you aren’t friends with them. So I messaged him on Sept. 6 and explained to him who I was and that I was excited to be able to contact him and be able to talk to him. I said we share a very unique situation and, although we play different sports, we have a commonality in that we both are collegiate trans athletes. So I shared my story with him, told him I was seven months on T, pre-op, also on the men’s team for my college, and I wasn’t expecting him to respond. I said ‘I think it’d be sweet if you’d message me because I think it’d be cool to talk to someone else who shares relatively similar experiences, so it’d be cool to hear back from you.’ A week later he messaged me back! He was like ‘hey that’s so sweet that we’re kind of in the same position.’ He was really cool about it. I told him I wanted to get an article written at some point and he said ‘yeah let me know if you need help with it because

obviously I've gone through it so let me know if I can help you with it.' We talked about the fact that he does injections because as a swimmer, of course, it would be kind of challenging to apply it to your body and then have it go into the water for everyone to enjoy. He was on T for three months at the time I was on it for seven. But he's already had his top surgery of course, which is what they were talking about in his article. So we just chatted about our experiences and it was cool to just be able to reach out to somebody else to hear someone else go through something similar and that it was a successful thing for them.

Another public figure that BD discussed in interviews with me was Bruce Jenner [as she wanted to be referred to at the time] and his coming out special with Diane Sawyer. In the interview with Bruce and Diane, Bruce asked her to refer to Bruce as Bruce and to use male pronouns. BD explains his feelings on the subject.

I was getting frustrated with the fact that they kept referring to Bruce with male pronouns. I didn't know he requested that, so I was watching this getting so frustrated. It was really triggering. So I stopped watching it and I was texting my girlfriend about it and she was like 'I keep seeing everywhere that he requested that to be done.' How do I feel about the fact that he wants that? I'm not sure. It makes me feel weird just because he is in the public eye and to be someone who identifies as trans and says 'I'm a woman, but please continue to refer to me as a man' is just crazy. That probably sent some signals to people not in the trans community like 'we don't really understand these people and now we understand them even less because person says they are woman, but person wants to be referred to as male. I don't understand what this means.' For me, it was stressful to watch that just because he is in the public eye and people are scrutinizing his

every single move. I feel like it was hard to watch and hard to hear him be okay with being referred to as a male, but then say ‘for all intents and purposes, I am a woman.’ I did not want that at all in my own transition. As soon as I decided to change name and pronouns, I was like ‘don’t ever call me those other things that are dead to me again. Don’t do it.’ So the fact that he was like that, I hate that.

One point of confusion in the interview was with whether Jenner was gay or not. BD also agreed this was confusing to the viewer.

I was actually very confused by that just because if he does eventually transition to a woman and self identifies as a female, if he marries another woman, he is a lesbian. So that was interesting that he danced around that. He said he wasn’t going to label himself and is still heterosexual. My friend, you are not heterosexual if you are a woman who likes women, you know? A lot of trans people were hoping Bruce would not screw this up for the trans community because he could be a major influence on things that happen in the trans community. He could help make a lot of progress. So they were hoping it would shed some positive light on us. I feel like a lot of people ended up being supportive for what he wanted with the pronouns and I think people understood where he was coming from because he is in the public eye.

Because of Schulyer Bailar, the Harvard swimmer, BD had the confidence to begin talking about his story in a public way. Without finding Bailar’s story, and the positive feedback associated with it on social media, it is likely that BD would not have felt comfortable entertaining the idea of coming out nationally. BD wanted what Bailar had: national support to be who he was born to be. Both Bailar and BD were recruited to compete on their respective women’s teams, but Bailar came out to his university prior to the start of his collegiate career. He

therefore never had to compete with the women and upon arrival on campus, he was immediately part of the men's team. This differs from BD in that he did not come out publicly as transgender until freshman year and did not make the team switch until after sophomore year. So BD ended up being a member of both sexed teams, whereas Bailar was recruited as a female, but will only compete as a male.

In hopes of being "fully recognized" BD opted to speak at a public event in hopes of sharing his experiences with the transition process. This was his first public speaking appearance, and the reactions and support he received from the audience paralleled the reactions the other trans athletes (e.g., Taylor Edelman, Kye Allums, Keelin Godsey) received, as shown through past relevant literature.

Like the majority of these transgender athletes, the story of Caitlyn Jenner has not been covered in academic research due to it being such a recent announcement. Not surprisingly, however, her transition has been widely covered in the mainstream media, likely due to her role as a public figure. In Jenner's interview with Diane Sawyer, there was discussion about whether Jenner considered herself a lesbian or not. In BD's eyes, Jenner is a woman who likes women, therefore reinforcing the lesbian label. However, in the interview, Jenner skated around this notion, suggesting she does not consider herself to be lesbian. BD encountered similar questions when he came out to the men's and women's team. In high school, BD identified as a lesbian because he was a female who was attracted to other females. That did not always sit well with him though and once he came out as transgender, he viewed himself as heterosexual. He is a male who is attracted to women, and in his mind, that puts him under the heterosexual umbrella.

Vignette #7: Quit vs. stay

BD struggled with the decision to continue competing as a Division 1 athlete or to quit the sport he's been playing since junior high.

Why stay? I feel like when I run, when I'm with everybody, when we're all practicing together, I'm reminded of why I enjoy being an athlete. As many benefits as there are to just quitting and pursuing that body I want and I can be myself and live my life, I really do whole-heartedly take a lot of pride in being an athlete here. I really enjoy running and I really enjoy being around the team itself. That's one of the big things that has made me feel like it's a benefit to stay on the team. I want to be a really good athlete someday on the men's side of things and I want to say that I was that kid who successfully competed on two different sexed sports teams in my collegiate career. I want to go the whole nine yards.

The environment is fun. I had a lot of fun with the women's team and I still miss the fact that I'm not on their team anymore because I formed an extremely good bond with them for two years. They were the reason I wanted to be an athlete at this school. It was hard to give that up. At the same time, the men's team is fun. They're a good group of guys as a whole. They make me feel really comfortable and welcomed there. None of them ever make jokes about me and my life. I'm respected. It makes me happy. I'm glad that I'm able to almost seamlessly transition to the other team and feel good about it and have such a positive experience. So why would I leave this?

My parents actually recently told me about a month or so ago that they are proud of me for being a collegiate athlete and that they don't want me to quit. So I think they'd be disappointed if I did and I don't think they would make any monetary contributions to help me. Money is still a driving factor. My scholarship is pretty important to me. I was

lucky that I was even able to keep it. Athletics was nice enough to understand my financial struggles and what I've had to go through to even get to this point. The fact that they were able to just say 'there's no policy that says we can let you keep this scholarship, but we're going to let you keep it anyways because you need it' was amazing. I'm really tied to it. It's a big reason why I feel like I need to play a sport because I need to have school paid for.

BD said he feels very strongly about being a Division I collegiate transgender athlete.

I take a lot of pride in the fact that I am a pioneer in this field here especially at [university]. From what I understand, I am the first openly trans athlete here at [university] so I definitely feel a certain sense of pride in that because it was hard for me to embrace my identity as trans. There's this concept of living as a stealth individual so basically you don't tell people that you are trans and just live your life as a male and people don't ask you questions. So for a long time I wanted to live my life in stealth. I was like, 'I don't want people to know. I want to erase as much of my female past as I can because I don't like that part of my life I don't want to be associated with that part of my life.' So becoming the first openly trans athlete in Division I collegiate athletics here, I was like, 'I can't. I cannot live in stealth. My information, my experiences, my journey, it is all going to be far too valuable. It will help far too many people in the future for me to just pretend like I am not trans.' So I do take a lot of pride in that because it is really a huge experience. How many people are collegiate athletes just one time in their life just for one sexed team? Where as I am going to do it twice for two different sexes. Amazing. I definitely take a lot of pride in it. I feel good about it.

He goes on to discuss how being an athlete has affected his transition process.

It effects it far differently than if I would've been a common student. I think it would've been probably a lot easier to start the transition if I was just a common student because there is a lot of behind the scenes stuff that is involved with the transition. I think because I was an athlete, it took a lot of time away from me being able to have enough time to just go to the appointments when I need to and get everything started when I needed to get it started. I feel like as a common student I would've had a lot more time to do that, but as a common student I probably would not have had the same kind of support because I do have a fair amount of support within the athletic community. Obviously I am friends with athletes on other teams as well. I don't only hang out with the cross girls, track girls, or cross guys even. I am friends with softball players, tennis players and swimmers. So I mean I gain support from them as well. They are all a part of my support base. I definitely think that although it took longer to start my transition due to having less time, I think it was still better. I'm glad that I am a trans athlete and not just a trans individual.

However, he also had reasons to quit the sport.

The biggest thing that really makes me want to quit is that realistically running so many miles is hindering my transition progress. It's not letting me build the body I'm trying to build at all. Cross country keeps my body small. With distance running, I can't build a nice body, which is one of the major points in the transition: to not look like I'm a girl. That was one of the biggest reasons why I wanted to quit just because my body image wasn't changing the way I wanted it to.

I'm not seeing the results from the T. My body feels like it's giving up. I struggle to run now. It's wrecking my body. Trying to be a collegiate athlete is hurting me more

than it's helping me. It was really good for the first two months, and then my body felt tired. I was asking a lot out of it. It was hard to motivate myself because I wasn't running with other people; I was just running by myself. So I'm not seeing the benefits yet.

Sometimes I feel like I'm asking too much out of my body. There's days where I come home and hate everything. My days start so early and there's rarely a time for naps during the day because I'm busy with everything else. I'm getting up at four or five a.m. every single day of the week except for Saturdays to participate in the sport and it's terrible. Everybody else on the team has been through puberty. They're right at the tail end so nothing is happening to them besides they're eating a lot of food, so I'm going through all the aggressive changes of puberty in a condensed one-year time period. I'm asking a lot out of my body and there are days where I think I could just be sleeping and doing my body so much more good by sleeping and having more free time to eat better food and not food that is so quick because my schedule is very demanding and I've always got to be going somewhere.

There's a lot of stress with losing my scholarship but weighing pros and cons, the pros are more. I won't beat the crap out of my body and I can work more hours at my job to make more money. I think I'll feel better about myself. I'm trying to escape this figure that I currently have. I've thought long and hard about this for a few months now. I hesitate because I need the scholarship but I can't do it anymore. I can't let money be in charge of my happiness. I've come to terms with the fact that this is what I'm going to do. I'm sitting there hogging up money and not really contributing much on the course. I just don't see any other option. This entire journey is all about making myself feel good so why stop now? Why be tied down now?

BD stated that he was happy to be a transgender athlete and not just a transgender student. He discussed the importance of his athletics family, and the positive influence his teammates, coaches and administrators had on him. This narrative relates to Keelin Godsey, who credits his sport with giving him the confidence to come out as transgender. Godsey, who competed in the hammer throw at Bates College, opted to stay on the women's track and field team so he could remain eligible for the US Olympic women's track and field trials in the hammer throw. Kye Allums also chose competing on the women's basketball team over starting hormone treatment right away. He did hope to get sex-reassignment surgery the summer before his senior season, stating "If I get surgery, it doesn't affect my play, it doesn't enhance anything, I'm just taking something off my body, like if I lost a finger" (Zeigler, 2010, para 40). Alternatively, BD gave up being a star on the women's team to make his shift to the men's team, despite knowing the uphill battle he was going to face. He struggled to keep up with the biologically male athletes due to a faster pace. His decision to remain a collegiate athlete was based on his love and passion for the sport.

While his dedication to remaining an athlete did not waiver, this may have been because BD knew that could transition to become male, while maintaining his status as a Division I collegiate athlete. This piece of the narrative can be linked to a transgender female participant interviewed by Cohen and Semerjian (2008), who reflects on a time where she didn't know if she should continue playing on a men's team or quit and finally transition to becoming a woman. She says, "I was oscillating between the two, do I be a girl or do I play ice hockey? I constantly bounced back and forth, and it wasn't until I finally realized that I could do both that I felt free" (p. 140). Both the participant in that study, Angela, and BD were able to compete for the team on which they believed they belonged.

When discussing transgender student-athletes, facility usage is often a major conversation had amongst policy makers and administrators (Cohen & Semerjian, 2008; Griffin & Carroll, 2011). Godsey was told to use a separate locker room because at the time there were no policies governing transgender athlete. He said in a USA Today article that the separated locker rooms made him feel isolated from the team and he would've preferred to stay with his teammates (Kanno-Youngs, 2015). BD, while on the women's team, opted to continue using the women's locker room. However, he chose to shower and change in the privacy of his home. On road trips, the university allowed him to stay in his own room so he had the privacy he desired. When he switched to the men's team, he still continued to change and shower at his residence on campus. Had there been unisex restroom options for BD on a regular basis, his comfort level would've likely risen around the teams.

In terms of changing, I'm lucky that I was able to structure my class schedule around the fact that I can always change for practice ahead of time and then go to practice so I don't have to change in an uncomfortable environment. Everything at [university athletic facility] is very specific either men's or women's. There's not really any in between. There are casual cis people that use the unisex bathrooms on campus. It's going to benefit everybody It's not just for me.

Angela, a transgender female who was initially competing on a men's ice hockey team, cited the men's locker room as one of the biggest obstacles (Cohen & Semerjian, 2008). The authors said that this wasn't because of the changing aspect, unlike Godsey and BD, but rather, because it "feels so strongly like male or, more specifically, men's space, that she does not feel like she fits there or that there is space for her" (p. 140). Curry (1991) focused on male bonding in locker rooms and how that relates to displaying hegemonic masculinity. Males often do this

through the objectification of women. BD references this exact issue when he deals with immersing himself into the men's team and male culture that surrounds the team. He struggled to bond with them due to the objectifying of women's bodies and use of sexually explicit language.

Another policy that is in place that has allowed BD to continue competing as a Division I athlete is that a transgender male, for example, can participate on the men's team if they so choose (Griffin & Carroll, 2011). As a person assigned female sex at birth, the option of competing on the other sex team, in this case male, is one that has been used on multiple occasions. Thanks to this policy that allowed Edelman to participate on both teams, BD says this policy has most positively effected his athletic experience because, without it, he would have had to quit the women's team if he opted to begin hormonal treatment with testosterone. NCAA rules describe that as soon as an athlete, in this case BD, begins taking testosterone, he can not compete on the women's team (Griffin & Carroll, 2011).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the experiences of a transitioning transgender athlete. By giving a voice to a seemingly voiceless collegiate transgender athlete community, this study can be used to educate people outside of the transgender community on the topic (i.e., NCAA and its member institutions). This is not to say transgender athletes are not speaking up enough; they are doing what they can and what they are comfortable with, but this study adds to the limited research out on the topic. The goal is to tell BD's story and give him a voice and platform to open up about his experiences. In conducting this case study, I aimed to shed more light on the topic of transgender athletes, which is important moving forward because that insight may be of value to the NCAA and other universities when deciding on their policies regarding transgender athletes.

BD discusses advice he would give to his young self, other universities handling a trans-athlete and the NCAA.

I'd say to hang on. That was really a lot of the trouble that I had as a kid. There's no escape. There was nowhere for me to go to get away from the harsh, emotion atmosphere that I grew up in. That's what I would reach out to my former self and say. This is an extremely trying time, I'm aware of what it is you're going through and I get how much it hurts, but there is so much for you in the future. You need to continue, persevere and get through all of this because there are a lot of good things at the end.

I would tell athletic departments to do research. There are places that are a lot more conservative, places that are a lot more liberal. I would tell them if you don't know a lot about it, don't shoot it straight down. Do research first. This person is trying to come to you with an extremely personal aspect of their life and this transition is going to make them a lot happier. If you don't know exactly what it's about, this could have serious negative consequences for that athlete. If you care enough about your athletes and your athletic department, you need to build them up and make them seem like role models on campus. Talk to the kid. Get to know him better. Understand why he wants to transition and get to [know] him as a person. The chances are, you won't have just one encounter with that person. You're going to have a relationship with this athlete. So definitely reach out to them, learn about them, understand who they are and try to see what they're looking for. What do they really want? Do they want to do hormones? Do they not want to do hormones? Do they want to participate on the opposite sex team? There's a lot of things you have to understand. That's what I would recommend. For the NCAA, they don't really need to do that much more honestly. The only thing they could've done better

was respond to [university athletic department's] request to approve my transition faster because my eligibility was on the line while they processed the request.

The biggest thing that stands out to me is that I am incredibly grateful that last October I did not decide to walk into traffic and take my own life, which I reflected on relatively recently. A couple weeks ago [October 2015] it was one year ago since I wanted to kill myself. It was huge for me when I realized that was a year ago. To just think back about how I felt, how different my life was and how much suffering and emotional turmoil I was experiencing is crazy. I thought about that and was blown away by the fact that I didn't make that choice to do that. Look at all of these amazing things that are possible now because I didn't decide to go through with it. So something like that is extremely positive of course for continuing with this thing and pursuing it.

My happiness and self-esteem has increased dramatically. I feel way better about myself and am a lot less stressed when I step out the door each day to live my life and exist. Sometimes I think to myself 'I wish I could just go back in time sometimes and tell myself it'll be okay. Future me talking to present-tense me: "It'll be okay. You're going to make it through this." I feel like I haven't had any really negative experiences so far with this. I feel like so far everything has been generally really positive, granted the few family-related problems with that. Overall, I am really happy with how my transition has gone.

From his narrative, we can see that with a supportive and open-minded university president, athletic director, senior administrators, etc., transgender student-athletes will have positive experiences. How to ensure this happens should be shared. It should be shared with other universities, athletic departments, administrators, coaches and teammates to educate them

on how their actions can affect a transgender student-athlete. While not every trans-athlete experiences the same things or even wants the same things, adding just one person's real-life experiences provide valuable information on the under-reported on topic. The research also should be shared with the NCAA in hopes that it can understand how their policies and procedures benefit or hinder a trans-athlete. In BD's case, the slow approval by the NCAA was not a huge issue because he was not physically ready to compete with the men. However, for an athlete who was able to compete, but could not because their eligibility status was not confirmed by the NCAA, that could have negative consequences for that athlete and his or her team.

The biggest thing administrators can do to make sport more trans inclusive and welcoming is to do research. As BD touched upon, it is crucial to learn about the issues faced by trans athletes, and all LGBTQ student-athletes, and how it affects them. Griffin and Hudson (2012) say, "Athletics departments have a responsibility to ensure that all student-athletes have an opportunity to participate in a safe, inclusive and respectful climate where they are valued for their contributions ... regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression" (Griffin & Hudson 2012, p. 2). This starts with research and education. Once administrators are familiar with policies, definitions, and common issues faced, they can begin to make collegiate sport a more trans inclusive environment.

Administrators need to be proactive, and there are many ways to do so. At the beginning of each season, make it known to the incoming athletes that the coaches and administrators support diversity and promote inclusion. BD's head coach did this and it went a long way in making him comfortable. Coaches should express that teammates with anti-LGBTQ views will not be tolerated at said university and will be handled accordingly. The coach's top priority should be ensuring his or her athletes are comfortable and feel safe. To see where the athletic

department currently stands with the topic of LGBTQ inclusion, they could send out a survey to administrators, coaches and student-athletes asking questions about the climate for LGBTQ student-athletes.

Creating a transgender student-athlete policy handbook specific to each university is another way to be proactive. Athletic departments can post this document online and disseminate it to all staff members and coaches. Further, at least once a year, athletic departments should host a program on LGBTQ inclusion in collegiate sport and strongly encourage all stakeholders (e.g., coaches, student-athletes, support staff) to attend. The development and implementation of these policies are great, but it has a limited effect if people are not aware of the positive changes being made. Therefore, the communication of the material to the rest of campus and the community is equally as important.

With this research study, we now know how the transition process affected one current student-athlete in everything from physical changes to mental health to various relationships in that athlete's life. This study adds to the small database of what has previously been published about trans athletes. BD's experiences will now be considered by other researchers, along with Allums, Godsey, Bailar and Edelman, whose stories have all been told in the popular press. From previous research on these athletes, it is clear that the transgender community is a supportive one that is continuously growing as outside communities become more supportive and tolerant.

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