

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

Invitation

You are invited to participate in a research project investigating: Adaptive Appearance Investment In Trans And Gender Diverse People, HRE26-022.

This project is being conducted by Dr Joe Doley (they/them) and Masters student Ms Renae Brown (she/her), from the College of Sport, Health, and Engineering at Victoria University.

Project explanation

*This project is investigating adaptive appearance investment – this means the positive ways we express our identity and self through our appearance – in trans and gender diverse adults aged 18 and over. **Adaptive appearance investment** can include things like clothing, tattoos, haircuts/styles, and we are also particularly interested in whether trans and gender diverse people experience gender affirming medical care (e.g., surgery, hormones) as part of adaptive appearance investment. **Adaptive appearance is different from maladaptive appearance investment**, which refers to the ways people change or present their appearance to conform to external pressures (e.g., peers, partners, family, societal).*

This research can provide knowledge that may be helpful to researchers in the area of body image or trans and gender diverse health, as well as clinicians working with trans and gender diverse people. We hope that this project will help researchers and clinicians better understand wellbeing and positive body image in trans and gender diverse people.

Who is conducting the study and what is their experience in the area?

We are Dr Joe Doley and Ms Renae Brown, both from the area of psychology, and have previously worked together on research investigating positive body image in gender diverse people. We support gender affirming care in all forms (including medical) for TGD people and want to centre trans and gender diverse perspectives in this work. We want to conduct this particular study because we are interested in how appearance investment (e.g., what is helpful and what is harmful) might need to be defined differently for TGD people compared with cisgender people, based on some findings from a paper we wrote together recently.

What will I be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an interview with a member of the research team, either over Zoom or at Victoria University – Footscray Park campus. This interview contains brief demographic questions, followed by questions about the ways you express your identity (including gender identity) through your appearance, barriers to

expressing your identity through your appearance, your thoughts and/or experiences on gender affirming medical care as a way for you to express your identity, and factors which allow you to engage in adaptive appearance investment. This interview will take about an hour. With your consent, we would like to audio record your interview so we can transcribe your responses.

Important note about survey and interview questions: *This project is particularly focused on how gender affirming medical care may be considered adaptive for trans and gender diverse people, but we do not need to know the details of any care you have received. We recognise that research on trans and gender diverse people can dehumanise participants by focusing solely on their medical treatment. However, we also want to give people the opportunity and autonomy to share their experiences or treatment desires. In our pre-interview survey, **you will be given the option to share the types of treatment/s you have accessed or would like to access, but you are under no obligation to provide these.** You are welcome to request a copy of the survey or interview questions ahead of time from the research team, please contact either renae.mcelligott@live.vu.edu.au or joe.doley@vu.edu.au*

Who can take part?

You can take part if you are:

- Aged 18+
- Live in Australia
- Are trans or gender diverse
- And either have **accessed** gender affirming medical care (e.g., surgery, hormones) or **desire to access** this in the future

How will the information I give be used?

Data collected will be used for the preparation of a thesis for the Master of Applied Psychology (Clinical) qualification, and may be used to prepare conference presentations or journal articles. Members of the research team will have access to the data. We will collect information that identifies you (your name and email address) – in order to contact you to arrange an interview and to send you your transcript for review. These will be stored separately from your survey and interview responses and will only be seen by members of the research team. We will ask you to choose a pseudonym (fake name) so that you will not be identifiable in any theses, publications, or presentations. Any information that may place you at risk of identification (e.g., place/specific role at work) will be removed from any publications.

The university will also collect your name and email address for financial auditing purposes so you can receive your gift card. This information will be stored separately from your survey and interview responses.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

There is a chance that you may feel some discomfort in responding to the questions that ask about your experiences of appearance investment, including how you use your appearance to

express your gender. If you feel upset by these questions, you can stop answering them at any time and you can skip any question you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw your consent to participate by exiting the interview. You may request the questions in advance should you wish to consider these. We also ask that you do not participate if you feel you will be distressed by questions about body image and your gender identity.

There is a very low risk that you could be identified by someone reading the findings of the study if they were to recognise responses identifying you. We will remove any information we believe could potentially identify you from the interview transcripts, and we will send you a password protected copy of your interview transcript to review before we share any findings so you can choose to remove or clarify any relevant information. We will also publish most demographic data, aside from your pseudonym, age range, and gender identity/pronouns, in group format. However, if you are not “out” about your gender identity, we ask that you carefully consider your participation as your safety is paramount.

If you feel any distress, it is advised that you contact:

- The Butterfly Foundation (for concerns relating to body image and eating) on 1800 334673 or visit <https://butterfly.org.au/>
- Lifeline (for general mental health concerns) on 13 11 14 or visit <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- QLife (for concerns relating to gender or sexual orientation) on 1800 184 527 or visit <https://qlife.org.au/>

What will I gain from participating?

For participating in this research project, you will be helping to increase our understanding of the ways that trans and gender diverse people engage in positive body image behaviours, which we hope will aid in interventions against body image disturbances. You will also receive a \$20 GiftPay gift card to thank you for your time.

Please feel free to contact Dr Joe Doley should you have any queries about your participation.

Dr Joe Doley

joe.doley@vu.edu.au

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Research Ethics and Biosafety Manager, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 or phone (03) 9919 4148.