

DON'T BLAME THE SIBLINGS! SOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF GENDER NON-  
CONFORMITY: DOES A HIGHER PROPORTION OF MALE SIBLINGS AND NEGATIVE  
FEEDBACK AFFECT MASCULINITY AMONG SEXUAL MINORITY MEN?

A Thesis

by

ALISHA R. COWAN

BA, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, 2019

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

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This thesis meets the standards for scope and quality of  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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## ABSTRACT

Social role theory (Eagly et al. 2004; Eagly, 1987) suggests that individuals who strongly conform to traditional gender roles uphold the hierarchy of the hegemonic male—a model of power, status, and strength—to reap the social benefits of inclusion. Inversely, violations of these roles can cause multiple negative effects of being socially outcasted, being a victim of physical violence, and suicidal ideations (Fiske et al. 2002; Vaughn et al. 2017). Therefore, such experiences lead to a heightened salience of masculine consciousness—consistent presentation of masculinity—for greater social approval (Taywaditep, 2002; 2001). This study aims to explore the relationship between a gay man’s experiences with their sibling’s social feedback about their gender nonconforming behavior and a gay man’s subsequent levels of masculinity. Results of the study failed to provide evidence that sibling composition and negative feedback by siblings affected a gay man’s level of hegemonic masculinity or masculine consciousness.

*Keywords: Social Roles, Gender Roles, Hegemonic Masculinity, Sexual Minority, Siblings*

## DEDICATION

The following study is dedicated to my family: Husband; Grady, and children; Genevieve, Sheridan, Evynne, Peregrine, Heathcliff, and Ryder. Without their love and support, this work would not have been completed.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
CHAPTER I: SOCIAL ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS.....	1
Social Role Theory.....	1
Gender Role Conformity.....	3
Hegemony Among Sexual Minority Men.....	4
CHAPTER II: INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVES.....	7
Masculine Consciousness.....	7
Sibling Relationships .....	8
CHAPTER III: OVERVIEW AND HYPOTHESES.....	11
Hypotheses.....	11
CHAPTER IV: METHOD .....	12
Design.....	12
Participants .....	12
Measures.....	14
Hegemonic Masculine Ideology (HMI) Scale .....	14
Masculine Consciousness (MC) Scale .....	15

The Recalled Childhood Gender Identity/Gender Role Questionnaire-form for males....	16
The Experienced Rejection Scale.....	16
Procedure.....	17
CHAPTER V: RESULTS.....	18
Analysis.....	18
CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION.....	22
Conclusion.....	22
Limitations.....	23
Future Directions.....	24
REFERENCES.....	26
APPENDIX A: THE NEW DIAGRAM OF SEX, GENDER, AND EQUALITY.....	36
APPENDIX B: HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IDEOLOGY MEASURE.....	38
APPENDIX C: MASCULINE CONSCIOUSNESS SCALE.....	41
APPENDIX D: THE RECALLED CHILDHOOD GENDER IDENTITY/GENDER ROLE QUESTIONNAIRE (FORM FOR MALES).....	43
APPENDIX E: THE EXPERIENCED REJECTION SCALE.....	50



## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Estimated Marginal Means of Negative Feedback from Older and Younger Siblings..	18

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Participant Demographics with Means and Standard Deviations .....	12
Table 2. Participant Demographics from the New Diagram of Sex, Gender, and Equality .....	13
Table 3. Correlations Among Variables of Interest .....	19

## CHAPTER I

### SOCIAL ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Within the culturally-proliferate heteronormative patriarchal hierarchy of masculinity, you are either 'in', or you are most definitely 'out.' Hegemonic masculinity is considered the top tier in the hierarchy of what qualifies a male as a 'real man.' "[i]t embodies the currently most honored way of being a man, it requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitim[izes] the global subordination of women to men" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; p. 832). In trying to attain the archetype of the hegemonic male, a sexual minority man may vacillate between what 'feels right' and what is socially acceptable as 'right.' Deviation from others' personally perceived injunctive norms (i.e., expectations of behavior) and traditional gender stereotypes will more than likely result in social disapproval because these expectations are not fulfilled (Jacobson et al., 2011; Fagot, 1977).

#### **Social Role Theory**

The postulates of social role theory have surmised that sex-typed social roles, gender hierarchy, and a division of labor have emerged from a set of socioeconomic and ecological factors that interact with the physical sex differences of women and men (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2004). Together, these variables form the subtle and historic ideology of the hegemonic male. In other words, the cultural acceptance of cognitive beliefs, attitudes, and stereotypes among the expected roles of men and women do not typically vary from the normative recognition that men should fulfill *agentic* social roles of assertion, control, and confidence, whereas women should fulfill *communal* social roles of caregiving, affection, and sensitivity (Eagly et al., 2004; Bakan, 1966). Specific injunctive norms of gender roles may vary in different contexts (i.e., men as head of household; men should not show affection towards other men) but remain fueled by the

ideology of the hegemonic male—brawn stature, earned respect, attained power, and achieved status—are the goals that must consistently be met and upheld to maintain their relevance as a ‘real’ man, even as a gay or bisexual man. Social non-conformity can initiate and feed a deleterious cycle of victimization. Despite the great leaps and bounds of institutional social and sexual equality, sexual minority individuals continue to suffer as anathemas, vacillating between exposure of their true self and representing a false self.

At end, the ideology of hegemonic masculinity (HMI) can be seen as a problem that needs a solution due to its negative associations and effects seen in local, regional, and global societal levels; alternatively, hegemonic masculinity may not be seen as a problem, but as a historical genre shaped and upheld by human social behavior (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In addition to underrepresentation of gay or bisexual men, modern studies concerning the influence of developmental experiences with siblings are sparse. The sibling relationship of individuals should be considered because it is another important, long-term environmental influence that can affect one’s formulation of self through childhood and adolescence. Sibling relationships are one of the most important family subsystems that impact the wellbeing of individuals (Cilali et al., 2019; Stormshak et al., 2009; Koch, 1956), through differential avenues of support or spite.

The purpose of this study will be to investigate two variable impacts regarding 1) whether a higher proportion of male siblings and 2) whether perceived social feedback concerning gender non-conformity each has influenced a man’s level of hegemonic masculine ideology adherence and his degree of masculine consciousness because of their gender non-conformity.

## Gender Role Conformity

Gender and sex roles are systematically shared and experientially learned beliefs in which men and women possess specific characteristics of being 'male' or 'female.' When similarities and differences of gender and dispositions are categorized within the self, attributions are formed, externalized, and used to uphold gender stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 2011). Gender roles and gender stereotypes can affect behavior when people incorporate them into their self-concepts and use them as personal standards against which to evaluate their own behavior (Eagly et al., 2004), as well as their experience of other people's expectations (Eagly & Wood, 2011).

Under the umbrella of social role theory and gender role socialization is gender conformity. Reiger et al., (2008) defined gender conformity as men and boys who are relatively masculine or relatively unfeminine, as well as women and girls who are relatively feminine or relatively unmasculine. Gender nonconformity, on the other hand, refers to an incongruence between the (biological) sex assigned at birth and the expressed gender role (Bos et al., 2019; Rieger et al., 2008). Collective research (Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Purcell, 1996; Rieger et al., 2008; Rosario et al., 2014) has shown that deviance from the male social role by the performance of non-conforming gender behaviors during early childhood is indicative of homosexuality or bisexuality. Evidence from home videos of gender non-conforming behavior performances during childhood and adolescence has been used to predict homosexuality in individuals (Reiger et al., 2008; Rosario et al., 2014), although not all researchers agree that deviation from traditional gender roles is indicative of sexual identity (Gottshalk, 2005). Gottschalk (2005) highlighted the importance of context when investigating gender non-conforming behaviors: first, the meaning given to childhood gender non-conformity by the participants themselves,

followed by recognition from the researcher regarding the changing historical, social, and political ideological context in which gender non-conforming behaviors occur.

Gender nonconformity can be perceived as social deviance (Harry, 1983) or disruption of the traditional hierarchy, thus resulting in rejection of social inclusion. In a comparison study of heterosexual and homosexual samples of men, it was found that childhood gender nonconformity was significantly correlated to paternal, maternal, and peer rejection (Landolt et al., 2004). Specifically, peer and paternal (but not maternal) rejection due to childhood gender nonconformity independently predicted adult attachment anxiety. Due to peer rejection and pressure to conform at home and school, sexual minority men respond with the tendency to “defeminize” themselves by assimilating into and upholding traditional heteronormative male roles (Duva, 2016; Whitam, 1977) or “hiding” their homosexuality (Bakacak & Öktem, 2014). Without peer support, men show an increased adherence to masculine norms, such as increased aggression (van Doorn, Dye, & de Gracia, 2020) --a precept of hegemonic masculinity.

### **Hegemony Among Sexual Minority Men**

Although the Western restrictions of male vs. female social normative roles have greatly improved in the last 50 years, the hegemonic masculine archetype has maintained its top tier position in the of social hierarchy. Through historical and developmental processes, the drive to be masculine has always been motivated by the need to establish discrete and distinct boundaries from all that is feminine (Kimmel, 2018). In a study of elementary school students, the cognitive devaluation of feminine characteristics was recorded in boys and girls as young as nine years old (Braun & Davidson, 2017). Results from investigations of hegemonic, anti-feministic attitudes have consistently shown significant correlations with homophobia (Falomir-Pichastor & Mugny, 2009; Vescio & Schermerhorn, 2021) and sexual aggression (Smith et al., 2015). In turn, the

'masculine is good, feminine is bad' dichotomy (Bem, 1983; James, 1997) continues to be proliferated and substantiated by the gender role performances and social feedback experienced on micro and macro-levels throughout societies.

Despite their own minority status, sexual minority men endorse hegemonic masculinity due to social conformity pressure of the culturally structured masculine hierarchy that presumes certain characteristics qualify a male as a 'man.' Sexual minority men have their own internal hierarchy, whereby masculinity is maintained through upholding the male model standard of power, brawn, and status, whereas feminine sexual minority men ("femmes") are the outcasts within this internal hierarchy. Femmes are shunned by the out-group of heteronormative people and by their in-group of same-sex attraction through various avenues, including attributions made towards specific groups of people (Fiske et al., 2002; Vaughn et al., 2017) and internalized stigma (Eslen-Ziya & Koc, 2016; Hunt et. al., 2020; Sánchez et al., 2010). The occurrence of negative social feedback, particularly concerning the sexual minority man's behavior, could become internalized as being unable to meet masculine expectations. If he is unable to find solutions of masculine resolve or acceptance, maladaptive behaviors of self-loathing and ruminations could ensue (Timmins et al., 2020).

Other compounding effects on negative attitudes towards effeminate or masculine sexual minority men include depression, low self-esteem, and generally higher rates of suicidality among the sexual minority population (Bos et al., 2019; Sánchez et al., 2010; Balsam et al., 2005; Harry, 1983). Large global subsets of cultures and societies abhor and even criminalize homosexuality, furthering the stigma of gender role deviance, and propagating violence towards people whose behavior or ideology does not conform to social role standards. As aforementioned, the acceptance of gender roles, the devaluation of femininity, and the adherence

to HMI begins in childhood, which makes societal structural change a very difficult task. For men of a sexual minority, the stressful effects of his own and others' HMI attitudes are compounded internally within the self and externally in his self-presentation and daily social interactions.



## CHAPTER II

### INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

#### **Masculine Consciousness**

From an interpersonal perspective of social role theory, feedback from social experiences is categorized and restructured into one's concept of self (Eagly et al., 2004). A man's concept of self is at least partly defined by his acceptance or rejection of cultural ideals and his own 'level' in the attainment of the heteronormative, hegemonic masculine male archetype within social structures (Messerschmidt, 2019). These thought-comparisons of the self and others are internally evaluated and re-negotiated into the observer's self-schema. The differences in positive and negative feedback are integrated into one's core beliefs (or values) that preclude the development and oscillation of one's prejudicial attitudes.

One example of socialization feedback/schema integration is masculine consciousness-- the salience of one's perception of subjective masculinity-- when men observe other men in a situation and form internal dialogue comparisons of their masculine ideals in and to other men (Taywaditep, 2002; 2001). Despite their own perceptions of being outcasted because of their deviance from traditional masculinity, it has been found that internalized homophobia is positively related to adherence to male role norms (Vescio & Schermerhorn, 2021). Further, the degree of internalized sexual stigma is positively related to the degree of internalized homophobia (Eslen-Ziya & Koc, 2016; Vescio & Schermerhorn, 2021). Thus, because of their different (and likely negative) experiences of socialized stigma throughout their life, the salience of 'being masculine' or showing 'manliness' in social situations may become more prominent to an adolescent who has recognized his deviation from the norm and may have suffered the consequences thereof. Sexual and gender minority adolescents may have to maintain

hypervigilant attention to the ways in which they present, behave, and interact with peers for fear of rejection and safety (Russell & Fish, 2019), including self-surveillance to offset the impression of being seen as feminine (Lamb & Plocha, 2014; Lanzieri & Hildebrandt, 2011). By keeping masculine consciousness (MC) at the forefront, meeting the expectations of the others through this avenue can also be surmised as a default coping mechanism: a gay man may form an internalized stigma and project these feelings about his identified sexuality (Sánchez et al. 2010) as a learned assimilation strategy of acceptance in the heteronormative patriarchal environment society.

A person's concept of self is partially developed by the type of social feedback one receives from others. For boys and men, masculine consciousness is a specific subjective perception that seeks approval from other men purely based on society's standards of HMI. For the developing male child, meeting his family member's gender role expectations can be their first hurdle of internal conflict for feelings of inclusion and acceptance.

### **Sibling Relationships**

From early childhood, siblings tend to share many socialization experiences, which may vary due to numerous individual differences that occur in one's lifespan. Similar to how positive and negative feedback from parent figures shapes children's attitudes and values (Bigler, 1998), the sibling relationship can also be seen from the same gender-role socialization perspective. Studies of same-sex attraction and sibling relationships are highly based on androgenic models (Whisman, 1996; Gottschalk, 2005) with multiple investigations of birth order and gender ratio (Blanchard et al., 1998; Kahn et al., 1972; Koch, 1956), and inquiries into the hetero sibling's evaluation of the gay sibling (Wheeler et al., 2019; Hilton & Szymanski, 2014). The sibling relationship (and the rivalry) is perceived as historically accepted (Tucker et al., 2015) or part of

the ‘growing up’ process, but it does serve as an important variable in one’s developmental trajectory for adult emotional and behavioral outcomes.

Feelings of acceptance or exclusion will motivate future transactions of communication and behavior between siblings. Independent of one’s sexual identity, the positive or negative feedback from a sibling can have enduring benefits or consequences, especially if the sibling is older. McHale et al. (2001) conducted a 2-year longitudinal study to investigate gender role attitudes, sex-typed personality qualities, and sex-typed leisure activities of adolescent (10-12 years old) and middle childhood (8-10 years old) sibling pairs within the same household. They found that older siblings’ orientations were more powerful predictors of second-borns’ gender role attitudes, sex-typed personality qualities, and masculine leisure activities than of their parents.

Differences in sibling gender have also been found. Investigations of the influences of sibling dyad pairs have shown that F-F sibling pairs perceived more closeness than M-M or M-F sibling pairs (Cilali, 2019; Riggio, 2000). In addition, LGBT participants’ higher level of perceived closeness to a particular sibling was positively correlated to a perceived higher level of sibling approval for their sexual behavior (Toomey & Richardson, 2009). LGBT individuals felt more acceptance and approval from their sister (vs. brother), but there were no differences found that concerned whether the sibling was older or younger. In conclusion, it appears that a positive sibling relationship could serve as a protective factor against mental and physical health risks for individuals that endure heterosexism prejudice (Hilton & Szymanski, 2014).

On the other hand, research has shown that sexual minority children are often victimized by their own family members, including sibling perpetrators (Finklehor et al., 2005; McGeough & Sterzing, 2018). From a national sample of 2,030 children aged 2-17, Finkelhor et al. (2005)

found that almost half of their participants had experienced assault by a sibling. This study highlighted the interrelationships of childhood victimization, wherein 1 in 10 (103 per 1,000) experienced an assault-related injury and 1 in 7 (138 per 1,000) experienced child maltreatment within the past year of the study's conduction. Alternative research has shown that compared to their heteronormative siblings, sexual minority men experience more physical abuse (Chaffin et al., 2004), sexual abuse (Bos et al., 2019; Balsam et al., 2005), and emotional abuse (Balsam et al., 2005; Landolt et al., 2004). In some instances, the root of the abuse could be tied to the victim's performances of gender nonconformity, wherein a dominant individual performs the abuse to maintain the constitution of manliness and a superior position (Pelligrini & Long, 2002).

## CHAPTER III

### OVERVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

#### **Hypotheses**

The purpose of the present study was to explore whether the presence of male siblings, along with negative feedback received from such siblings, may play a role in the development of hegemonic masculinity and masculine consciousness in sexual minority males. From the perspective of the participant, this study seeks to investigate if a greater proportion of male siblings or negative feedback from their sibling(s) due to performing gender non-conforming behaviors within their shared social experiences are related to a man's salience of masculine consciousness and adherence to hegemonic masculinity ideology.

H1: It was predicted for a sexual minority man, the number of siblings he has and the proportion of male siblings he has would be positively related to his levels of hegemonic masculinity and masculine consciousness.

H2: It was predicted that a sexual minority man with a higher proportion of female siblings would show less endorsement of hegemonic masculinity and masculine consciousness, due to a less 'threatening' or 'competitive' environment present in female majority families.

H3: It was also predicted that for a sexual minority man, the number of siblings he has, and the degree of negative feedback experienced in childhood because of his gender nonconformity, would be positively related to the degree of hegemonic masculinity ideology and masculine consciousness displayed.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHOD

#### Design

This study used a correlational design to explore the proportion of sibling gender and sibling feedback as possible mediators of the relationship between the number of siblings a participant has and the degree of endorsement of masculine consciousness and hegemonic masculinity ideology.

#### Participants

The participants for the present study consisted of 182 homosexual males ranging in age from 18 – 80 years ( $M = 34.05$ ,  $SD = 12.056$ ). The most frequent responders of the study were within the range of 18 – 35 years (65.9%). Most participants were White men (69.2%). Most participants in this study had at least one brother ( $n = 76$ ; 41.5%) or at least one sister ( $n = 78$ ; 42.9%). Participants' birth order number ranged from 1 – 7, with first-born participants being the most frequent ( $n = 70$ ; 38.5%), followed by second-born ( $n = 65$ ; 35.7%). See Table 1 for more specific information.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics with Means and Standard Deviations*

Participant Characteristics	<i>N</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	182	18	80	34.05	12.056
Brothers	182	0	6	1.14	1.062
Sisters	181	0	5	1.04	1.021
Birth Order Number	181	1	7	2.07	1.223

Participant demographics were collected with items from the New Diagram of Sex, Gender, and Equality (Bryan & Mangine, 2016) for a clearer understanding of each participant’s perspective of their gender and sexual identity, attraction/orientation, and sexual behavior with associated categorical and continuous scales (**Appendix A**). For example, selections of gender identity (subjective sense of one’s own gender) included “identifies as a man”- “genderqueer”- “identifies as a woman.” For this study's purposes, sexual identity (how one identifies one's sexuality) was categorized by three options (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Participant Demographics from the New Diagram of Sex, Gender, and Equality*

Demographic Characteristics	N	Freq.
Age	182	
18 - 26	47	25.8
27 - 35	73	40.1
36 - 44	34	18.7
45 - 53	10	5.5
54 - 62	10	6.1
63 - 71	5	2.7
72 - 80	2	1.1
Ethnicity	182	
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2	1.1
Asian	10	5.5
Black/African American	17	9.3
White/Caucasian	126	69.2
Hispanic or Latino	17	9.3
Multiracial	10	5.5
Gender Identity	181	
Identifies as a man	155	85.6
Identifies as a woman	10	5.5
Identifies as genderqueer	16	8.8
Gender Expression	182	
Stereotypically “masculine”	143	78.6
Stereotypically “feminine”	11	6.0
Gender Fluid	28	15.4

Demographic Characteristics	N	Freq.
Sexual Activity	182	
Sexual with women	12	6.6
Sexual with men	85	46.7
Sexual with two or more genders	82	45.1
Not sexual with others (Asexual)	3	1.6
Sexual Identity	182	
Gay/Lesbian/Homosexual	85	46.7
Bisexual	81	44.5
Pansexual	16	8.8

## Measures

### Hegemonic Masculine Ideology (HMI) Scale

The HMI scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ) is a 30-item pool created from four scales: *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)*; Click & Fiske, 1996); *Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS)*, Thompson & Pleck, 1986); *Traditional Egalitarian Sex Role Scale (TESR)*; Larsen & Long, 1988); *Macho Scale (MS)*; Villemez & Touhey, 1977). Pooled items were chosen by a panel of judges (1 professor, 4 graduate students) to best assess HMI, based on their appropriateness to gay male respondents (Taywaditep, 2002; 2001). All responses of the HMI scale were presented in random order and rated on a Likert scale: 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). Information about the scales used for pooling HMI is found below. For more specific items information, see **Appendix B**.

### *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory*

The constructs of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism were used in this scale to ascertain the degree of the endorsements of patriarchal values held in one's attitudes toward men, women, and gender relations. Higher scores reflect stronger endorsements of patriarchal values. The original 22-item ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996) has shown high internal consistency across multiple studies, with alpha coefficients ranging from .80 - .90 (Taywaditep, 2002; 2001).



### ***Male Role Norm Scale***

Three traditional masculine norms are measured with 26 items to assess one's attitudes towards men: *Status* (the need to achieve status and respect from others); *Toughness* (the expectation that men be self-reliant and tough—mentally, emotionally, and physically), and *Antifemininity*--believing that men should avoid stereotypically feminine activities (i.e., knitting, scrapbooking) and occupations (i.e., day care worker, secretary). The MRNS was developed specifically to exclude opinions and attitudes towards women (Thompson & Pleck, 1986), and has an acceptable alpha coefficient ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

### ***Traditional Egalitarian Sex Role Scale***

The original 20-item Likert scale (split-half reliability = .91) was created to assess the degree to which one's sex-role attitudes are more vs. less traditional or egalitarian (Larsen & Long, 1988).

### ***Macho Scale***

The Macho Scale ( $\alpha = .90$ ) is a 28-item Likert scale created to assess patriarchal ideals and attitudes among participants, along with power dynamics between genders (Villemez & Touhey, 1977).

### **Masculine Consciousness (MC) Scale**

Items selected from the Public Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein et al., 1975) and the Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974) were adapted to create an 18-item self-report survey on a 10-point continuum (1-Not at All True, 10- Definitely True). Themes of preoccupation and concern with a masculine self-presentation formed the basis of the MS scale; therefore, some language of the items was changed to better fit the construct of masculinity. For example, "I usually worry about making a good impression" (Fenigstein et al., 1974) was changed to better

fit the increased self-focus with masculinity-relevant behaviors or standards, such as actions that would confirm one's masculinity or impress other that one was masculine (Taywaditep, 2002, 2001; **Appendix C**). In this study, responses were adapted to scores ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) – 7 (Strongly Agree) with higher scores being indicative of greater MC. The MC scale was found to have good internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

### **The Recalled Childhood Gender Identity/Gender Role Questionnaire-form for males**

To establish a more contemporary measure of recalled childhood gender identity for men and women, Zucker et al. (2006) composed a 23-item questionnaire that is reflective of the female or male-typical responses of childhood gender convention or ‘normality’ that simultaneously reveal atypical responses, especially in within-subjects study designs ( $\alpha = .81$ ). Items are measured on five-point or six-point Likert scales (**Appendix D**). For this study, items were altered to include brothers and sisters (i.e., As a child, compared to my brother(s), I felt...).

### **The Experienced Rejection Scale**

The original Experienced Rejection Scale was comprised of seven items ( $\alpha = .72$ ) that focused on ridicule, marginalization, and exclusion from the Leidse Mobbing Schaal (LEMS; Hubert, 1996) and the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Treatment (LIPT; Leymann, 1990). Items adapted for the study of sibling feedback due to gender non-conformity included, “If I ever displayed gender non-conformity, my sibling(s) would make disapproving comments about me” and “If I ever displayed gender non-conformity, my sibling(s) would exclude me.” Items are measured continuously on a five-point scale: 1= Never happened to me, 5 = Always happened to me. For the complete list of items, see **Appendix E**. For this study, negative feedback (i.e., experienced rejection) by siblings was separated into four categorical groups: older brother ( $\alpha =$

.94), older sister ( $\alpha = .95$ ), younger brother ( $\alpha = .90$ ), younger sister ( $\alpha = .91$ ), with good overall reliability ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

### **Procedure**

A link to the anonymous survey, “Social Experiences with Your Sibling(s),” was shared through Prolific, a global online survey database. Participation through these sources was completely voluntary and participants were compensated for their time (\$2.70). For this study, the collected data included sexual minority men's responses only ( $n = 182$ ). Participants were notified of informed consent and anonymity. They were asked to complete a series of self-report surveys to determine their recalled experiences of gender non-conforming behaviors and perceived sibling feedback. First, the participants completed demographic questions and were then required to select the number of siblings in their family unit from a forced-selection toggle list (1 – 10+). After, the male participant selected the number that corresponded to his own birth-order number. For example, if he was the first-born child, he would choose the number “1,” etc. The participants then completed the following scaled surveys: Masculine Consciousness (Taywaditep, 2002; 2001); Hegemonic Masculinity Ideology (Taywaditep, 2002; 2001); Recalled Childhood Gender Nonconformity (Zucker et al., 2006); Experienced Rejection (Bos et al., 2004). Then, the participants were asked to rate the current status of their relationship(s) with their sibling(s) on a scale of 1 (Positive) to 5 (Negative).

## CHAPTER V

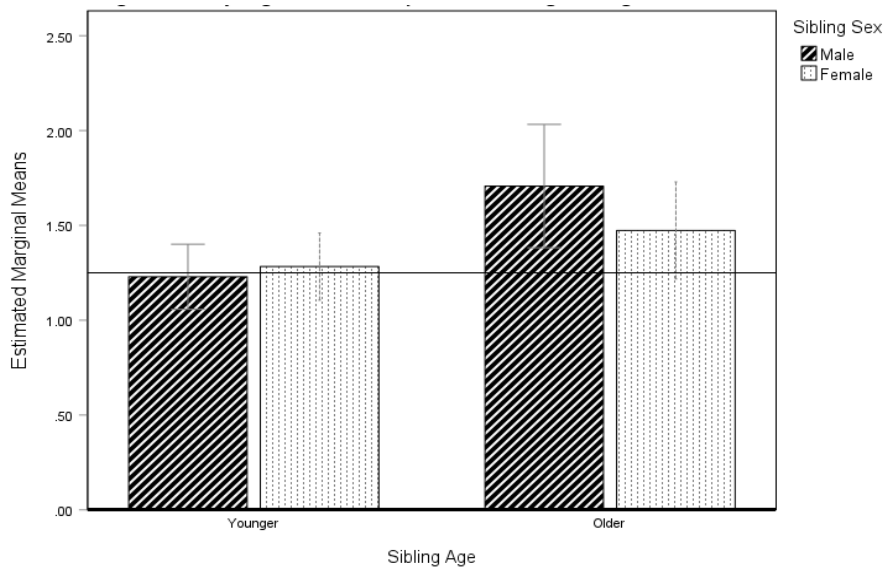
### RESULTS

#### Analysis

To examine the pattern of treatment participants received from their older and younger sisters and brothers, a 2 (Sibling Age: older vs. younger) x 2 (Sibling Sex: brother vs. sister) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. This analysis revealed a large main effect for sibling age,  $F(1, 40) = 9.581, p = .004, \eta^2 = .193$ , but not sibling sex,  $F(1, 40) = 1.156, p = .289, \eta^2 = .028$ . No significant interaction between sibling sex and sibling age was found. As can be seen in Figure 1, participants received greater negative feedback (experienced rejection) from their older siblings when they exhibited gender nonconformity.

**Figure 1**

*Estimated Marginal Means of Negative Feedback from Older and Younger Siblings*



*Error bars: 95% CI*

A correlational analysis was conducted for all variables of interest within the study

(Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Correlations Among Variables of Interest*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. TNOS	—										
2. BON	.437**	—									
3. POS	-.043	.081	—								
4. POB	.043	-.081	-1.000**	—							
5. RGNC	-.038	-.063	-.043	.043	—						
6. HMI	.079	-.042	-.041	.041	-.270**	—					
7. MC	.110	.088	-.030	.030	-.125	.533**	—				
8. OSNF	-.015	.226*	.140	-.140	.397**	-.054	.076	—			
9. YSNF	.056	-.171	.179	-.179	.309**	.000	-.012	.504**	—		
10. OBNF	.109	.382**	-.073	.073	.407**	.012	.107	.518**	.083	—	
11 YBNF	.033	-.135	-.058	.058	.407**	-.137	-.115	.535**	.543**	.393**	—

*Note:* TNOS = Total Number of Siblings; BON = Birth Order Number; POS = Proportion of Sisters; POB = Proportion of Brothers; RGNC = Recalled Gender Nonconformity; HMI = Hegemonic Masculinity Ideology; MC = Masculine Consciousness; OSNF = Older Sister Negative Feedback; YSNF = Younger Sister Negative Feedback; OBNF – Older Brother Negative Feedback; YBNF = Younger Brother Negative Feedback.

\*\* p-value is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed)

\* p-value is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed)

Correlational analyses showed numerous positive relationships between the constructs of interest. As expected, HMI was found to be positively correlated with MC ( $r [n = 182] = .533, p < .01$ ) and a negative relationship was found between HMI and RGNC ( $r [n = 182] = -.270, p < .01$ ). However, significant relationships were found between RGNC and negative feedback from all categories of siblings (OSNF;  $r [n = 97] = .397, p < .01$ ; YSNF;  $r [n = 88] = .309$ ;

OBNF;  $r[n = 103] = .407, p < .01$ , YBNF;  $r[n = 109] = .407, p < .01$ ). At end, a sexual minority man's levels of masculinity did not appear to be related to a higher proportion of brothers or number of siblings, but negative feedback from siblings did appear to be related to gender nonconformity in childhood.

To approach whether there were differences among participants with varying sibling composition among participants, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted for each criterion variable (MC, HMI) to evaluate the effects of the following predictor variables: total number of siblings (IV1), birth order number (IV2), and recalled gender nonconformity (IV3). Prior to the analyses, the continuous predictor variables (i.e., all sibling categories of negative feedback and recalled gender nonconformity) were centralized. The addition of sibling feedback into the model was dependent upon the conditions of sibling composition. For example, the Sister(s) Only condition was limited to include older sister negative feedback (IV4) and younger sister negative feedback (IV5) only, whereas the Brothers Only condition was limited to include only older brother negative feedback (IV6) and younger brother negative feedback (IV7). For the criterion variables MC and HMI, the conditions of having either brothers only or having sisters only showed no significant contributions with the predictor variables. An additional analysis was conducted to include all types of sibling composition into a model. In this model, the results showed that recalled gender nonconformity (RGNC) was the only significant predictor variable. Specifically, the relationship showed that less RGNC was associated with higher HMI ( $\beta = -.491, p = .015$ ). This suggests that less gender nonconformity is associated with more adherence to the traditional male role norms.

It is also worth mentioning that the participants in this study did not dramatically deviate from normed gender behaviors. For example, most participants never, or very rarely

experimented with makeup ( $M = .79$ ,  $SD = .904$ ), and their appearance was usually somewhat masculine ( $M = 2.09$ ,  $SD = 1.042$ ). Most participants showed favor towards “masculine” friends, role models, and activities, but felt they were less masculine when they compared themselves to other boys ( $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = .897$ ). These results may speak to social stigma, in that ‘being masculine’ or showing ‘manliness’ in social situations may be prominent to an individual who has recognized his deviation (within himself) from the traditional gender role norms.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to examine the relationships between proportions of brothers/sisters, negative feedback, hegemonic masculinity, and masculine consciousness among sexual minority men. The results did not support the hypothesis that the higher proportion of brothers or negative feedback from siblings would increase these measures of masculinity. Within this study, it was found that older siblings were more associated with giving negative feedback to their younger siblings when they participated in gender nonconformity. A negative relationship was found with recalled gender nonconformity and hegemonic masculinity ideology. These results are true to ecological validity: Older siblings tend to be the aggressors in sibling relationships (Finklehor et al., 2005). It also makes sense that someone who conforms more to traditional gender role norms (HMI) will be less likely to participate in gender nonconforming behaviors.

#### **Conclusion**

The lack of significant results in this study contrasts with previous research that has suggested a relationship between the number of older brothers and the development of masculinity in sexual minority men (Blanchard et al., 1998; Kahn et al., 1972; Koch, 1956). One possible explanation for these discrepant findings is that the effect of sibling composition on masculinity may be weaker than previously assumed. In addition, nearly half of the participants were first-born with only one other sibling (that was typically female).

Deviation from the male social role by the performance of non-conforming gender behaviors during early childhood has been indicated regarding homosexuality or bisexuality (Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Purcell, 1996; Rieger et al., 2008; Rosario et al., 2014). This study did find support that deviation from others' norms and traditional gender stereotypes resulted in



significant social disapproval (Fagot, 1977; Jacobson et al., 2011) and gender nonconformity was not shown to have a positive relationship with masculine consciousness and hegemonic masculinity ideology (Taywaditep, 2002; 2001). Another possibility is that the relationship between sibling composition and masculinity may be more complex than previously assumed.

In conclusion, the results of this study suggested that a greater proportion of brothers and negative feedback from siblings are not significant predictors of hegemonic masculinity and masculine consciousness among sexual minority men. This contrasts previous research that indicated an influence of sibling sex and composition (Kahn et al., 1972). Instead, this study highlighted a general equilibrium of behaviors and thoughts among sexual minority men that are not socially provocative or deviant, as typically attributed to this group (Harry, 1983). This study showed that the transactional relationship between older and younger siblings, specifically negative feedback, is experienced, but not insomuch as to create long-lasting deleterious effects. Although negative feedback occurred, two-thirds (69.4%) of the participants felt that their current relationship(s) with his sibling(s) was at least mostly positive.

### **Limitations**

The current study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the sample was limited to self-identified sexual minority men, these results may not generalize to other populations. Next, self-report measures may have introduced bias into the results, as participants may have been influenced by social desirability or demand characteristics. Finally, the current study was cross-sectional in nature, and it is impossible to draw causal conclusions from these data.

## **Future Directions**

Further research is needed to better understand the complex factors that contribute to the development of masculinity among sexual minority men, and to explore the potential mediators and moderators of the relationship between social relationships and masculinity. For example, it is possible that the effect of brothers on masculinity is mediated by other environmental factors, such as exposure to other masculine norms, role models, or peers (Van Doorn et al., 2020). Future research could explore these possibilities by examining other potential mediators of the relationship between sibling composition and masculinity. There are good reasons, however, that the findings should be considered valid. Internal reliability estimates for all scales were consistently high, which appeared to rule out the role of sibling composition and negative feedback in relation to sexual minority men's schema of masculinity. Additionally, the ecological validity of sibling relationships was upheld in that participants did indeed perceive that they received more negative feedback from older siblings.

Research investigating the intersections of sexual minority men beginning in childhood is important because childhood and adolescence are formative years that establish the trajectory for adult functioning. Gender role stereotypes are modeled and internalized through micro and macro social relationships. Deviation from traditional male role norms can cause the male child to experience multiple negative effects that may stem from exclusion from their family member in childhood and continued by their peers in adolescence (Boyd et al., 2019; Purcell, 1996; Tucker et al., 2015). Further, multiple studies have shown that victimization is constituted with numerous intersections of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse that is significantly greater among sexual minorities, making them more susceptible and more vulnerable to future experienced of abuse and patterns of elevated suicidal ideation (Bos et al., 2019; Pelligrini &

Long, 2002; Timmins et al., 2020). To promote a significant generational social shift of inclusion, gender equalization and acceptance needs to be introduced at an early age-reinforced through supplemental educational outreach and normalization through media platforms.

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## APPENDIX A: THE NEW DIAGRAM OF SEX, GENDER, AND EQUALITY

(Bryan & Mangine, 2016)

Note: (\*) indicates that the statement or response choice was not included in this study.

### Biological Sex (Anatomy, Chromosomes, Hormones)

1. Male
2. Intersex
3. Female

### Gender Identity (Subjective sense of one's own gender)

1. Identifies as a man
2. Identifies as a woman
3. Genderqueer

### Gender Expression (Communication of gender and gendered traits)

1. Stereotypically "masculine"
2. Stereotypically "feminine"
3. Gender Fluid

### Attraction/Sexual Orientation towards people who identify as women\*

1. Not at all attracted
2. Not often attracted
3. More than often attracted
4. Very attracted

### Attraction/Sexual Orientation towards people who identify as men\*

1. Not at all attracted
2. Not often attracted

3. More than often attracted
4. Very attracted

Degree of Sexual Attraction/Arousal\*

1. Asexual
2. Not often sexual
3. Somewhat sexual
4. Very often sexual

Sexual Behavior (Erotic and/or sexual activity)

1. Is sexual with women
2. Is sexual with two or more genders
3. Is sexual with men

Sexual Identity (How one identifies their sexuality)

1. Straight/Hetero\*
2. Gay/Lesbian/Homosexual
3. Bi-sexual
4. Asexual\*
5. Queer\*
6. Pansexual

## APPENDIX B: HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IDEOLOGY MEASURE

30-item pool (HMI; Taywaditep, 2002; 2001)

\* indicates reverse-worded and reverse-scored items, reflecting the absence of hegemonic masculinity ideology.

Instructions: Below are various opinions about men, women, and society, as well as some personal experiences that you might have had. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by circling a number that most corresponds to your answer.

Response choices:

1 = Strongly Disagree

4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree

2 = Disagree

5 = Slightly Agree

3 = Slightly Disagree

6 = Agree

7 = Strongly Agree

Items from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996)

Hostile Sexism (HS) subscale:

1. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
2. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
3. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
5. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men. \*
6. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.



7. Women are too easily offended.

Benevolent Sexism (BS) subscale:

1. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
2. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.
3. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess

Items from the Male Role Norm Scale (MRNS; Thompson & Pleck, 1986):

The Status Norm Scale: Need to achieve status and others' respect.

1. A man should never back down in the face of trouble.
2. A man must stand on his own two feet and never depend on other people to help him do things.
3. Success in his work has to be man's central goal in this life.
4. A man should always try to project an air of confidence even if he really doesn't feel confident inside.
5. It is essential for a man to always have the respect and admiration of everyone who knows him.

The Toughness Norm Scale: Expectations that men should be mentally, emotionally, and physically tough and self-reliant.

1. A good motto for a man would be "When the going gets tough, the tough gets going."
2. When a man is feeling a little pain he should try not to let it show very much.
3. I think a young man should try to become physically tough, even if he's not big.
4. Nobody respects a man if he frequently talks about his worries, fears, and problems.
5. A man should be totally sure of himself

Traditional Egalitarian Sex Role Scale (TESR; Larsen & Long, 1988):

1. Ultimately a woman should submit to her husband's decision.
2. It is just as important to educate girls as it is to educate boys. \*
3. In groups with both male and female members, it is more appropriate that leadership positions be held by men.
4. Men make better leaders.
5. As head of the household, the father should have the final authority over the children.

Macho Scale (Villemez & Touhey, 1977):

1. I would prefer a job where I didn't have to compete with women.
2. I would be much more comfortable with a male boss than with a female boss.
3. A woman who becomes a mother has no more reason to give up her career than a man who becomes a father. \*
4. For the most part, it is better to be a man than to be a woman.
5. A competitive woman is harder to get along with than a competitive man.

## APPENDIX C: MASCULINE CONSCIOUSNESS SCALE

(MC; Taywaditep, 2002; 2001)

Response choices:

1 = Strongly Disagree

4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree

2 = Disagree

5 = Slightly Agree

3 = Slightly Disagree

6 = Agree

7 = Strongly Agree

1. I want to be thought of as a regular, down-to-earth, masculine guy.
2. I often wonder whether people think I am masculine.
3. It is embarrassing when I inadvertently do or say something feminine.
4. My public behaviors are usually guided by what I think a masculine man might do.
5. I take extra effort to make sure people don't see me as a "sissy."
6. I would feel good if someone presumed I was heterosexual.
7. I always make sure I appear masculine when I meet people for the first time.
8. It is important that people recognize the masculine side of me.
9. I sometimes modify my public manners to give off that extra "masculine" appearance.
10. When I hear my own recorded voice, I listen to see how masculine it sounds.
11. I work on my appearance to look like regular, masculine men.
12. For me, being masculine goes hand-in-hand with my self-esteem.
13. In the presence of others, I sometimes deliberately act in a masculine manner in the things I do.
14. When I see myself in a photograph, I sometimes try to size up how masculine I appear.

15. I am sometimes concerned that I am not appearing masculine enough.
16. I would feel unsettled if somebody I know said that I was not very masculine.
17. Sometimes, I may do things that suggest "I am not gay" to strangers.
18. I would be humiliated if someone commented that I was somewhat feminine.

APPENDIX D: THE RECALLED CHILDHOOD GENDER IDENTITY/GENDER ROLE  
QUESTIONNAIRE (FORM FOR MALES)

(Zucker et al. 2006)

\*Adapted for sibling analysis

\*\*Item was excluded if participant did not have a sister(s) or a brother(s).

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about your behavior as a child, that is, the years “0 to 12.” For each question, circle the response that best describes your behavior as a child. Please note that there are no “right or wrong” answers.

1. As a child, my favorite playmates were

- a. always boys (1)
- b. usually boys (2)
- c. boys and girls equally (3)
- d. usually girls (4)
- e. always girls (5)

2. As a child, my best or closest friend was

- a. always a boy (1)
- b. usually a boy (2)
- c. a boy or a girl (3)
- d. usually a girl (4)
- e. always a girl (5)

3. As a child, my favorite toys and games were a. always “masculine” (1)

b. usually “masculine” (2)

c. equally “masculine” and “feminine” (3)

d. usually “feminine” (4)

e. always “feminine” (5)

4. Compared to other boys, my activity level was

a. very high (1)

b. higher than average (2)

c. average (3)

d. lower than average (4)

e. very low (5)

5. As a child, I experimented with cosmetics (make-up) and jewelry

a. as a favorite activity (5)

b. frequently (4)

c. once-in-a-while (3)

d. very rarely (2)

e. never (1)

6. As a child, the characters on TV or in the movies that I imitated or admired were

a. always girls or women (5)

b. usually girls or women (4)

c. girls/women and boys/men equally (3)

d. usually boys or men (2)

e. always boys or men (1)

7. As a child, I enjoyed playing sports such as baseball, hockey, basketball, and soccer

a. only with boys (1)

b. usually with boys (2)

c. with boys and girls equally (3)

d. usually with girls (4)

e. only with girls (5)

8. In fantasy or pretend play, I took the role

a. only of boys or men (1)

b. usually of boys or men (2)

c. boys/men and girls/women equally (3)

d. usually of girls or women (4)

e. only of girls or women (5)

9. In dress-up play, I would

a. wear boys' or men's clothing all the time (1)

b. usually wear boys' or men's clothing (2)

c. half the time wear boys' or men's clothing and half the time wear girls' or women's clothing  
(3)

- d. usually wear girls' or women's clothing (4)
- e. wear girls' or women's clothing all the time (5)

10. As a child, I felt

- a. very masculine (1)
- b. somewhat masculine (2)
- c. masculine and feminine equally (3)
- d. somewhat feminine (4)
- e. very feminine (5)

11. As a child, compared to other boys my age, I felt

- a. much more masculine (1)
- b. somewhat more masculine (2)
- c. equally masculine (3)
- d. somewhat less masculine (4)
- e. much less masculine (5)

\*\*12. As a child, compared to my brother(s), I felt

- a. much more masculine (1)
- b. somewhat more masculine (2)
- c. equally masculine (3)
- d. somewhat less masculine (4)
- e. much less masculine (5)



\*\*13. As a child, compared to my sister(s), I felt

- a. much more masculine (1)
- b. somewhat more masculine (2)
- c. equally masculine (3)
- d. somewhat less masculine (4)
- e. much less masculine (5)

\*14. As a child, I

- a. always resented or disliked my brother(s) (5)
- b. usually resented or disliked my brother(s) (4)
- c. sometimes resented or disliked my brother(s) (3)
- d. rarely resented or disliked my brother(s) (2)
- e. never resented or disliked my brother(s) (1)

\*\*f. I did not have a brother

\*\*15. As a child, I

- a. always resented or disliked my sister(s) (5)
- b. usually resented or disliked my sister(s) (4)
- c. sometimes resented or disliked my sister(s) (3)
- d. rarely resented or disliked my sister(s) (2)
- e. never resented or disliked my sister(s) (1)

\*\*f. I did not have a sister

16. As a child, my appearance (hair style, clothing, etc.) was

- a. very masculine (1)
- b. somewhat masculine (2)
- c. equally masculine and feminine (3)
- d. somewhat feminine (4)
- e. very feminine (5)

17. As a child, I had the reputation of a “sissy.”

- a. all of the time (5)
- b. most of the time (4)
- c. some of the time (3)
- d. on rare occasions (2)
- e. never (1)

\*\*18. As a child, my brother(s) made me

- a. always feel good about being a boy (5)
- b. usually feel good about being a boy (4)
- c. sometimes feel good about being a boy (3)
- d. rarely feel good about being a boy (2)
- e. never feel good about being a boy (1)

\*\*19. As a child, my sister(s) made me

- a. always feel good about being a boy (1)

- b. usually feel good about being a boy (2)
- c. sometimes feel good about being a boy (3)
- d. rarely feel good about being a boy (4)
- e. never feel good about being a boy (5)

20. As a child, I had the desire to be a girl but did not tell anyone

- a. almost always (5)
- b. frequently (4)
- c. sometimes (3)
- d. rarely (2)
- e. never (1)

## APPENDIX E: THE EXPERIENCED REJECTION SCALE

(Bos et al. 2004)

Instructions: Please select the answer that best applies to your experiences growing up with your sibling(s).

1 = Never happened to me

4 = Often happened to me

2 = Seldom happened to me

5 = Always happened to me

3 = Sometimes happened to me

1. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling used abusive language toward you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older brother, please leave item blank.
2. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling used abusive language toward you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older sister, please leave item blank.
3. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling used abusive language toward you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger brother, please leave item blank.
4. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling used abusive language toward you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger sister, please leave item blank.
5. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling excluded you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older brother, please leave item blank.

6. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling excluded you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older sister, please leave item blank.
7. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling excluded you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger brother, please leave item blank.
8. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling excluded you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger sister, please leave item blank.
9. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling made fun of you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older brother, please leave item blank.
10. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling made fun of you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older sister, please leave item blank.
11. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling made fun of you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger brother, please leave item blank.
12. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling made fun of you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger sister, please leave item blank.
13. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling made disapproving comments toward you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older brother, please leave item blank.
14. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling made disapproving comments toward you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older sister, please leave item blank.

15. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling made disapproving comments toward you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger brother, please leave item blank.
  16. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling made disapproving comments toward you when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger sister, please leave item blank.
  17. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling asked annoying questions about your behavior when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older brother, please leave item blank.
  18. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling asked annoying questions about your behavior when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have an older sister, please leave item blank.
  19. Please indicate the degree to which a sibling asked annoying questions about your behavior when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger brother, please leave item blank.
- Please indicate the degree to which a sibling asked annoying questions about your behavior when you displayed gender non-conformity. If you did not have a younger sister, please leave item blank.