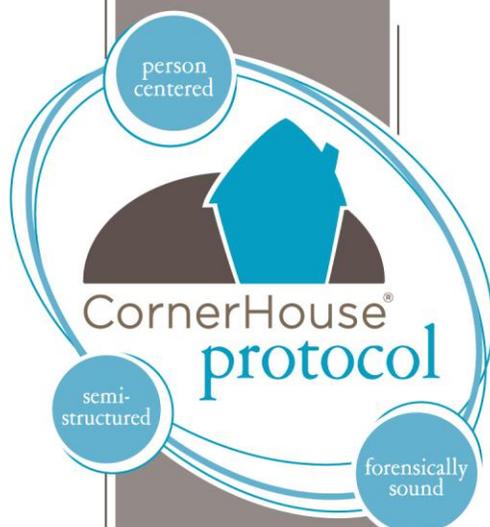


Reflections on Emerging Issues



Gender Identification

The practice of forensic interviewing is never static -- as knowledge and experience grows, the field evolves. Here at CornerHouse, we strive to keep learning and improving our practice. We are constantly seeking information, considering best practice, and making decisions regarding possible adjustments to the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™. Such is the case in regards to gender-related methods and language. While the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™ has always provided the flexibility to adjust to/for individual differences, we have become increasingly aware of the potential issues and barriers that a binary gender identification process may create for some individuals. Concerns regarding stigmatization and associated psychological stress (Grant, 2010; McLemore, 2014; Timmins, 2018; Wiseman, 2010) have motivated CornerHouse to consider, pilot, and implement modifications that allow for greater inclusion.

Within the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™, Anatomical Diagrams may be utilized in a number of ways. The introduction of these diagrams has been historically based in boy/girl, man/woman, male/female language. However, the usefulness of the diagrams is in their visual representation, not their labeling or categorizing. With simple shifts in language, the diagrams remain useful, without creating potential barriers.

- For example, in the *Seek Information* stage of an interview, the recommended sequence of methods may include "Anatomy Identification," utilizing the diagrams.
 - With preschool children, that method has historically been preceded with "Gender Identification." The primary purpose of Gender Identification was to assist in the assessment of a child's ability to effectively utilize representational tools within the interview. This same purpose can be accomplished without binary language. Instead of asking, "Which is a boy/ Which is a girl... Which is most like you?" as the diagrams are displayed, the child is simply asked, "Which has parts (most) like you?"
 - With slightly older children or other individuals, the anatomical diagrams can be introduced with a neutral invitation to utilize the diagrams without having to label by specific gender. For example: "On the one that has parts like you, tell me what you call..."
- Similar adjustments can be made in the *Explore Statements* stage, when anatomical diagrams or dolls may be utilized for demonstration or clarification. With a couple options, the individual is invited to provide their own identification: "On the one most like/with parts like you, show me what you mean by..."
- As always, the individual is allowed to expand or clarify in their own way. If their language or identification is more specific, the interviewer simply follows their lead, without assumption or judgment.

As previously indicated, the elimination of "Gender Identification" and the subsequent adjustments have already been incorporated in forensic interviews conducted at CornerHouse. We have not experienced any significant impact on the process or results, and this has now become a recommended method in the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™. While it is not a significant change, becoming proficient with the language adjustment may take some practice. It is suggested that self-evaluation, peer review, and/or other forms of oversight and feedback will be helpful.

References:

- Grant, J., Mottet, L., Tanis, J., Herman, J., Harrison, J., Keisling, M. (2010). National transgender discrimination survey. Report on Health and Health Care. National Centre for Transgender Equality Washington DC
http://2fwww.thetaskforce.org/downloads/resources_and_tools/ntds_report_on_health.pdf
- McLemore, K.A. (2014). Experiences with misgendering: Identity misclassification of transgender spectrum individuals. *Self and Identity* 14(1), 51- 74.
- Timmins, L., Rimes, K. A., & Rahman, Q. (2017). Minority stressors and psychological distress in transgender individuals. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 4(3), 328-340. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000237>
- Wiseman, M., & Davidson, S. (2011). Problems with binary gender discourse: Using context to promote flexibility and connection in gender identity. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17(4), 528-537.