


IM M | I AM MALE

Athletic Binding Tank

A design centered on the FTM consumer.

By: Mallory Keesling, Maia Loesche, India Simpson

What is FTM?

- **FTM is an acronym for the trans female-to-male identity.**
 - People who identify as FTM are AFAB (Assigned Female at Birth) and can have the gender identity of Transman or Transmasculine.
 - **Some people who identify as transman/transmasculine bind their chest to flatten breast tissue and appear more masculine**
 - This practice helps with body/gender dysphoria
 - **Not all people who are FTM are transitioning**
 - Some are gender fluid or gender nonconforming (GNC) and prefer to look more masculine
 - **Being transgender has NOTHING to do with sexuality**
 - Trans people do not feel like they identify as the gender they are assigned at birth
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Trans Positive Clothing Research Talk

What we found...

- People change their body shape for both appearance and safety
 - Mental health, physical violence.
- Binding of hips and/or chest is not always safe
 - Injury, bruising, breathing problems
- Need to approach both people and situations avoiding binaries and avoiding prejudgements
- Binders are more than just a garment, and can become part of a person's identity. Some wear multiple binders and even sleep in them even though they are only to be worn for 8 hours.



Meet our Interviewees



Persona #1

- Student, uses they/them pronouns
- Mostly casual, androgynous clothing but turning to buying more men's clothes.
- Wears a binder daily
 - Many issues with comfort, limiting on what can be worn with it
- Problems with clothing:
 - “For dress shirts – women’s cut is too tight, has small shoulders, and is too short. While men’s cut is too large in the shoulders and flares out at hips, just like suit jackets do”
- Finds problems with dress clothing like suit jackets and pants, as well as athletic clothing
- Clothing is gender-nonconforming and enjoys prints and vertical stripes

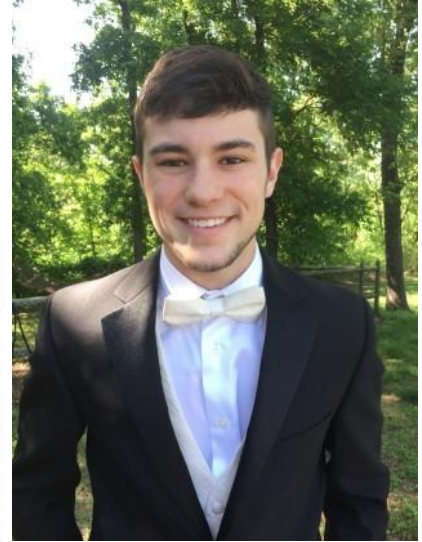


Persona #2: Arin Andrews

- Arin - Brooks Brothers' 2014 campaign
- Arin is a transgender FTM teen
- Experienced bullying that many transgender teens and adults face
 - Family, friends, and schoolmates did not understand and had a hard time accepting it
 - Asked to leave school because the bullying was so severe
- Documented his transition and experience with testosterone using videos
- Eventually underwent top surgery



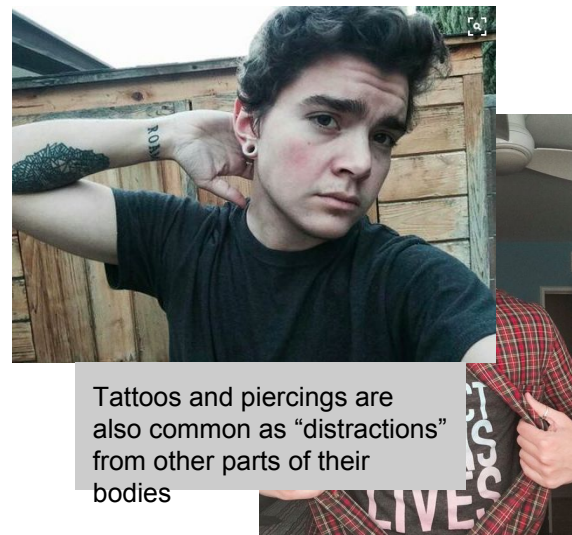
Arin in the 2014 Spring
Barney's campaign



Persona #3: Elliot Fletcher

- Born and raised in Los Angeles, CA.
 - Now a trans advocate, musician and actor. He has been in Faking it, Shameless and the Fosters.
- Went to an all girls high school and came out as trans when he was 17 after two suicide attempts.
- Had top surgery so doesn't need a binder

“Since I can remember, I’ve been a boy”



Tattoos and piercings are also common as “distractions” from other parts of their bodies



He rolled up the sleeves, a common fix for sleeves that are too long

Persona #4: Jayson Thompson

- 24 year-old college student
- Began transition in 2015; Started T in 2016
 - Transition included name change and dressing masculin
 - He takes “T” or testosterone shots which changes the body shape, deepens the voice, promotes hair growth
- Has not had top surgery and wears a binder
 - Jayson would love to be able to wear tank tops but cannot because of the binder
- Larger shape makes it difficult to wear fitted clothing or suits.
- Prefers wearing casual clothing and cotton fibers.
- Likes to workout but cannot wear a binder while being active
 - Will only go to the gym if it’s late or empty; which is not convenient



“I wear bigger clothing to hide my shape”

Persona #5: Ryan Jacobs

- Popular teen FTM YouTube vlogger/LGBTQ advocate
 - Has 71,954 subscribers
- Began transition in 2015
 - Has been documenting transition for 2 years
- Took T for a year and later got top surgery recently
 - Wore mainly scoop neck t-shirts and button ups before transition, to hide binder
 - After top surgery, his videos usually feature him in V-neck t-shirts and tank tops
- In a clothing haul video Ryan stated that it is easier for him to shop because of his smaller shape.



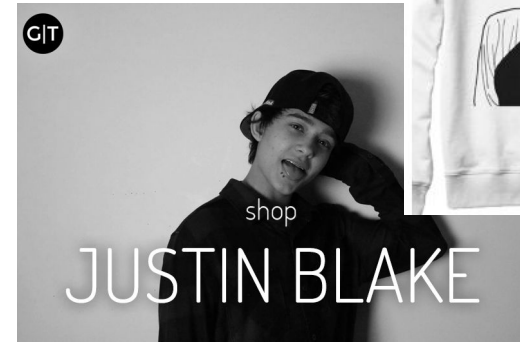
Persona #6: Keelin Godsey

- US National Hammer Throw athlete, barely missed the Olympic team
- Began T in 2012
- Describes the difficulties and challenges of being a trans man in everyday environments as well as in the athletic world.
 - “You MUST bind, no excuses, no whining. Since real men don’t have boobs of course so we must not, [we wear] a crushing binder that feels like or is cutting off circulation. [It gives you] chaff from all the spandex in the summer, labored breathing, back pain, crushed and cracked ribs; all in the name of being breast-less”



Persona #7: Justin Blake


- Age: 17
- Where: Youtuber from Minnesota
- Came out to his family and friends his sophomore year going into junior year.
- Junior year he came out to his school
- Classmates didn't understand, and he ended up finishing online junior year and transferring starting senior year
- Informative videos on his transition focusing on topics such as how to come out at school, how to choose a binder, and what it's like on T, and eventually getting top surgery
- Currently: selling merchandise online and is famous on social media with 665k followers, started a YouChannel called "Blake's Brothers"
- Style: big t-shirts, hoodies, joggers, hats, piercings, but still appears he is playing around with who he is exactly from instagram



Persona #8: Phillip

- 22 year old college student
- Trouble with binders - would not wear white or anything with a lower neck before undergoing top surgery


“100% not safe to bind, as it compresses the lungs. The best binders out there have stretchier material in the back that helps prevent pressure on the back and lungs that can potentially cause serious issues”

- Wearing garments pre-top-surgery, avoided tight fitting shirts that may expose or show the outlines of the binder.
 - When I was pre-op, I refused to go to the gym, and when I would run outside, I preferred discreet places, as it is dangerous to run with a binder on, [Working out in the past] I had worn compression tanks, to keep me flatter but help me sweat more while still being able to breathe properly.
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Persona #9: Danni

- 23 year old Marketing Manager from Bloomington-Normal, IL
 - Says local people are not as accepting of his transition and has been physically attacked
- Just started first week of T.
- When shopping he has problems find clothes that make him look male rather than “butch”.
- Uses G2CB binder
 - Danni says the brand is expensive but they work the best
 - He is willing to invest in clothing that provides the look he wants.
- Wears binder while working out.

“I would loosen up areas like the chest and the hips, but try to tighten up areas like the crotch. I’d also not make the tank top drop so low and the “sleeves” of the tank tops at least thick enough to cover the binder straps.”



Purpose Statement:

- For this project we are striving to create a garment that improves the wearer's experience and life through increasing comfortability and safety.
- Binders must be taken into consideration for both physical comfort, as well as the wearer's outward physical appearance.
- By creating an athletic tank top with a built in binder, it allows the wearer to go sleeveless in confidence knowing their binder will be safely hidden.



What's on The Market Now?



GC2B

- Description: Double panel binder made with a nylon spandex blend and cotton for extra flattening effect.
- Cost: \$33
- Sizes: XXS-5XL



We are pleased to officially announce that our gc2b binders are now available in nude! Our newest line consists of five unique options, All Nude. With this addition, your devoted binder brand proudly offers a total of eleven colors to our community. At gc2b we aim to continue to accommodate and celebrate the vast spectrum of humanity, to always serve and liberate our phenomenal supporters, and as always, to design with the true you in mind. So go ahead and take it off, we got you covered.

gc2b
TRANSITIONAL APPAREL

Man Sculpture

- Description: Dual panel binder with MaxPanel inner compression layer for maximum flattening. Lycra, polyester, and nylon blend.
- Cost: \$45-67
- Sizes: XS-XXL



- Create an effective product
- Create a comfortable product
- Keep the product fashionable
- Keep the product affordable
- Keep the product durable



Underworks

- Description: High Power FTM Chest Binder
- Medical grade fabric for strong compression performance
- High quality construction, Made in the USA
- 70% Nylon 30% Spandex Made in USA
- Sizes - Measure Chest: X-small 28-30 / Small 31-33 / Medium 34-36 / Large 37-40 / X-large 41-44 / 2x 45-48 / 3x 49-52
- Cost: \$17.99
- Sizes: XS-3X



Design References



\$24.99



\$27.99



\$25



\$25



\$30

Examples of current tank top offerings on the market that hinder the FTM wearer, as a binder would be visible when wearing the tank top.

Current Problem



Lane: Youtube review

- Age: 17
- Size: Medium, small chested
- Usually doesn't bind in the winter, but does in the summer
- Doesn't bind when working out, works out at home to avoid people



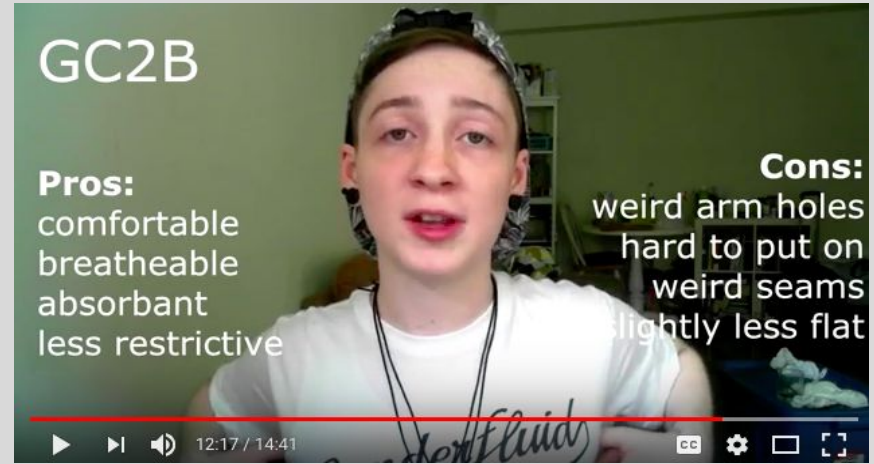
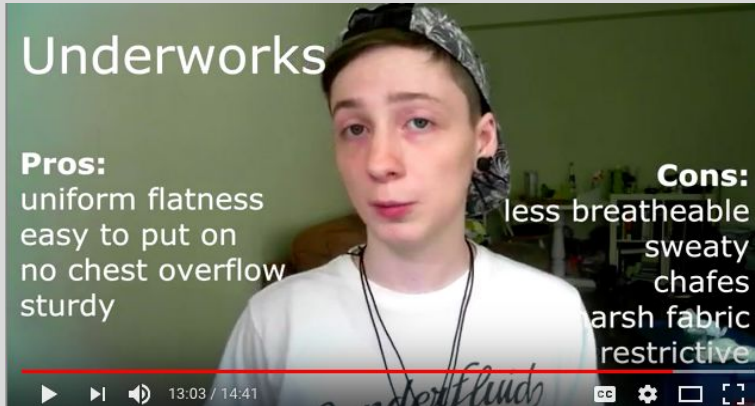
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcOU3wvpNdc>

Even though he is small chested he has to bind in the summer and it has lead to serious back problems...

“Underworks is supposed to be more comfortable and safe”

Underworks: Medium

Complaints: makes you sweat, not absorbent, hard material and harsh on the skin, can cut into the armpit, more restrictive for breathing compared to the others, weight on the shoulder lead to shoulder surgery from the binder



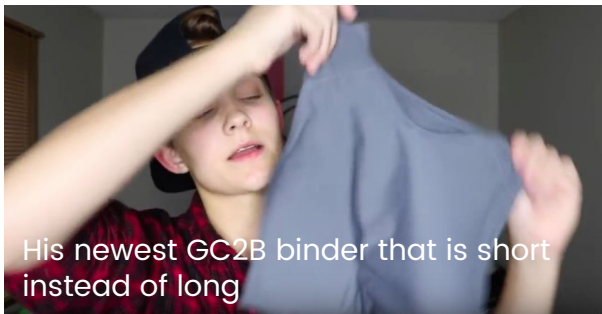
“Binds weird but might get used to it”

GC2B: Medium

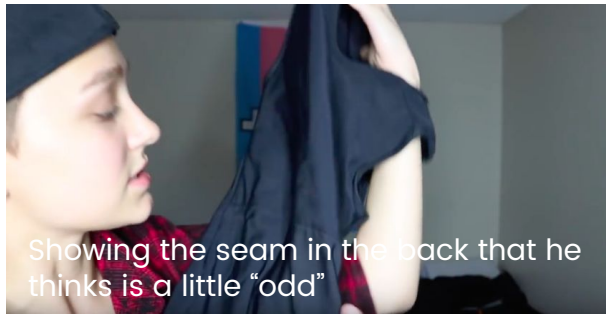
A “battle” to get on over your head, smaller fit even at the same size as the Underworks binder, the armpit holes are too low, can’t bind up without getting side boob, exposing, more comfortable fabric and absorbent, weird seams at the side and back that are distracting, when you put on a shirt you can see the sleeve unless you bind down,

Justin Blake: Youtube review

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bh9FUNdroQ>



His newest GC2B binder that is short instead of long



Showing the seam in the back that he thinks is a little "odd"



This is the Gc2b binder after a year and a half of wearing....

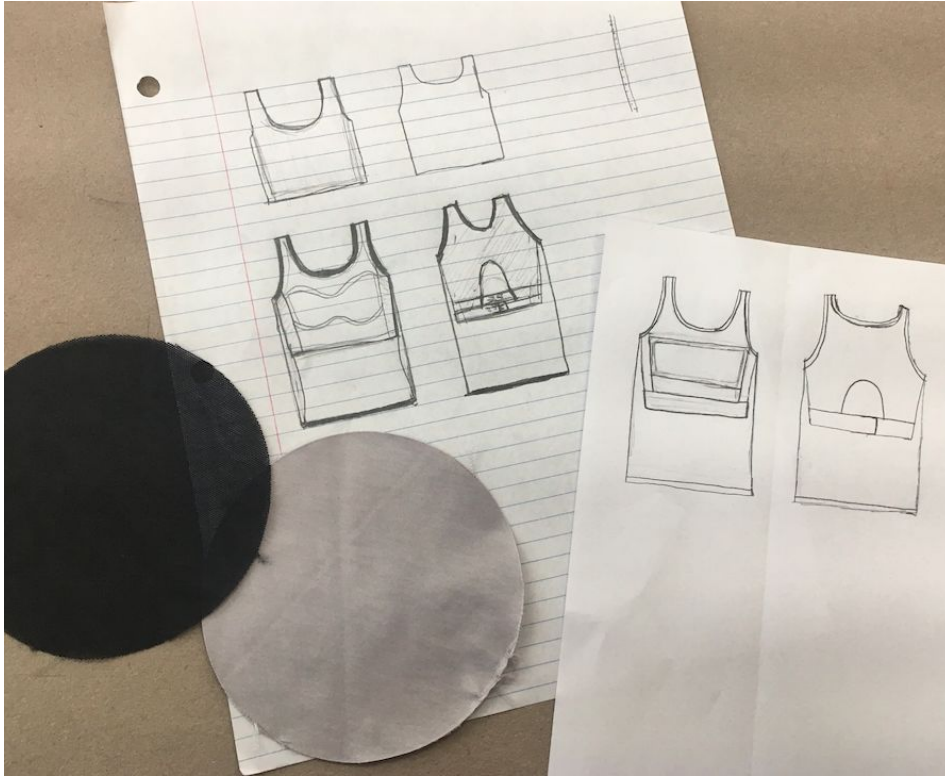
Underworks Binder:

- Compresses all the way down for a flatter look
- Very little stretch
- Rough material that digs into the armpits
- Very tight at first and the pressure hurts your ribs

Gc2b Binder:

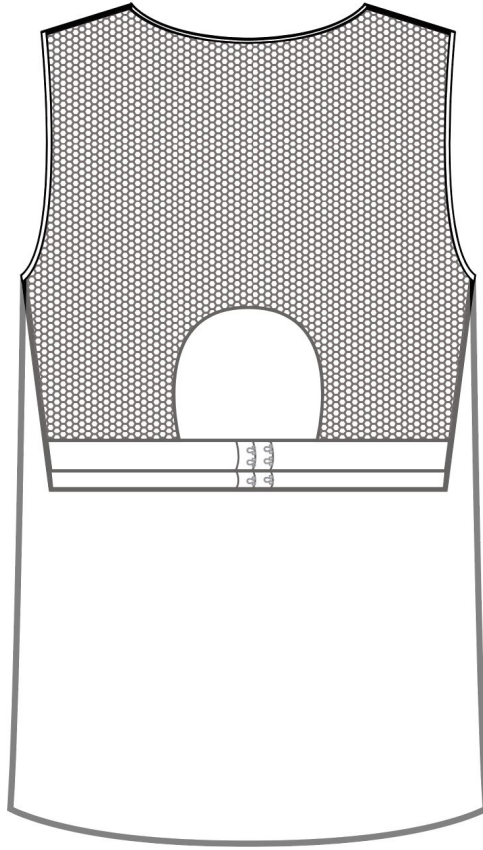
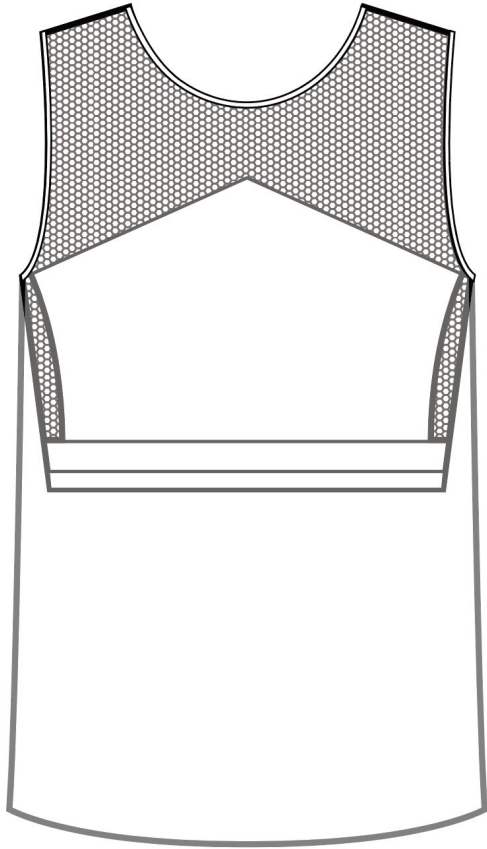
- Too thick of straps and high neckline
- Comfortable to workout in
- You can't hide the binder under anything that's available now
- The full length binder is too silky and rides up so he prefers the half top binder even though it takes a lot of effort to get on

Design Process



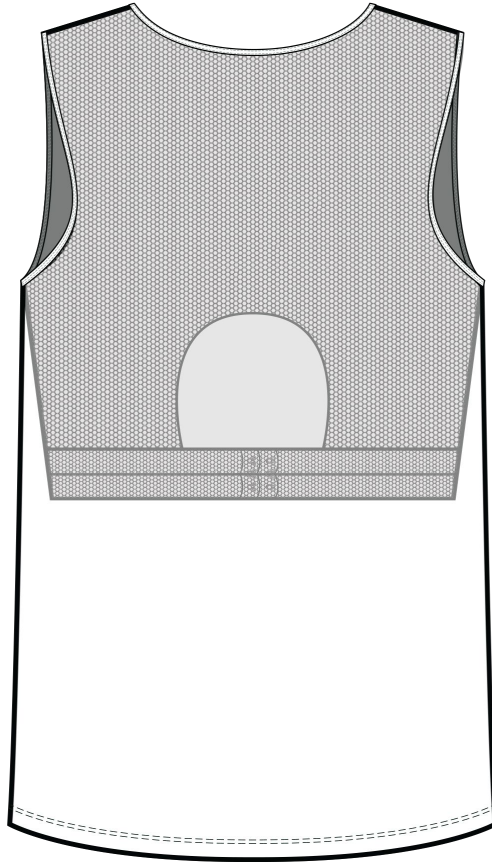
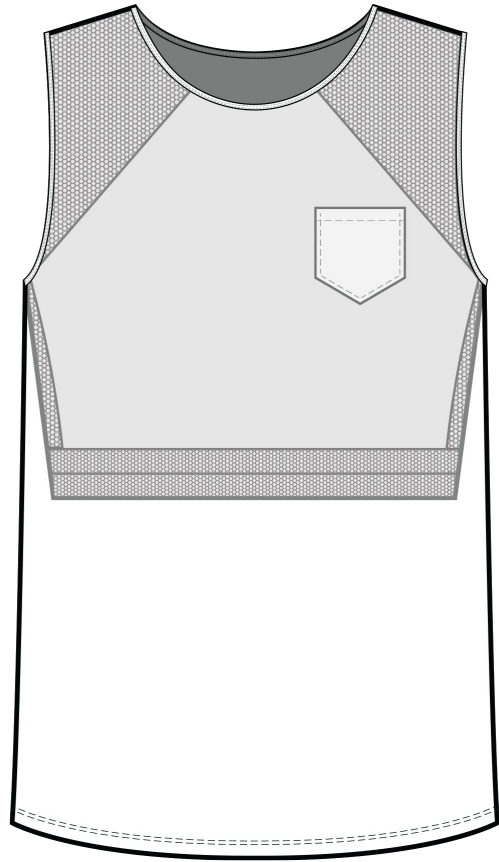
Simple sketches show the initial concept; creating a tank top with a built-in binder to let the wearer be comfortable and confident in a gym or workout setting.

Design lines are used in combination with mesh to provide ventilation as well as comfort.



Prototype
Design:
Original





Prototype
Design:
Final



Patterns



Prototype Design: Trial 1



Binder

Prototype Design: Trial 1



Tank

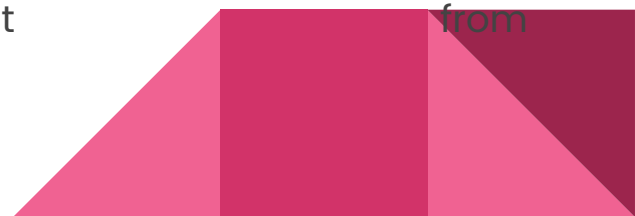
Changes

Binder:

- The mesh insert at the bottom of the binder was too long, making the fit too loose and baggy, so it was taken out of the design.
- The elastic was too loose as well, so we decided to create one thicker elastic band and by using a zigzag stitch to sew two bands together.
- We also chose to add a non-slip rubberized elastic straps to the compression panel of the binder to keep from shifting and feeling exposed.
- We took up the keyhole in the back to leave more room for movement when taking the garment on and off.

TANK:

- Extended the length by 1 ½” and took in the sides ½” to keep it from flaring too much.



Final Design



Final Design



Conclusion

We wanted to create a garment that FTM consumers would be able to wear during a workout or on hot summer days. We didn't want to create a binder that was difficult to put on or that was too tight, but we also wanted it to fit the consumer's' needs and do its job - bind.

Constructing the binder some challenges due to the knit and stretch fabric that was used, and our machines do not have all the proper stitching options.

Overall, the binder goes on easier than traditional binders, binds well, and is comfortable when wearing. A problem we did have is the front elastic created rippling and tugging in the fabric and added some bulk. If we continued to create a 3rd sample, a thinner, non slip material could be added into the new design to help erase this problem. The back key hole also gapes slightly on the sides, as the fabric is so thin, and the pattern could be fitted and adjusted further.

The research we gathered for this project was very intriguing. As a group we learned a lot about the FTM community, what issues they face, and how badly designers need to work to meet their needs. Through our interviewees and youtube research, everything learned was taken into consideration during the design process. IMM did the best we could to accommodate the binders not showing, making them more breathable, and easier to get on.

