Over the Binary: The Lives of Trans Students Today

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GET YELLED AT

GET BEAT UP

Definitions

Gender

describes the beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that a specific culture attributes to individuals based on their perceived sex. Gender includes:

- <u>Gender assignment</u>: the gender designation given to someone at birth

- <u>Gender roles</u>: the expectations imposed on someone based on their gender assignment

Definitions

- <u>Gender attribution</u>: how others perceive someone's gender

- <u>Gender identity</u>: how someone defines their own gender

- <u>Gender expression</u>: how one chooses to express one's gender identity through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, body characteristics, etc.

Definitions

Trans, Trans*, or Transgender People

- An umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity and/or expression is different from the gender assigned to them at birth.

- Trans people include transsexuals; crossdressers; agender, demigender, and genderqueer individuals; and others who cross or go beyond traditional gender categories.

Definitions

Transsexual People

- Individuals who identify with the "opposite" gender extreme. Transsexual people often undergo hormone treatments and gender-affirming surgeries to align their anatomy with their core identity, but not all desire or are able to do so.

Trans Women: Male-to-female (MTF) transsexual people or transsexual women -- individuals assigned male at birth who identify as female.

Trans Men: Female-to-male (FTM) transsexual people or transsexual men.

Definitions

Non-Binary Gender and Gender-Nonconforming People

- General terms for individuals who do not fit into traditional "male" and "female" gender categories.

- Do not always identify as transgender.

Definitions

Genderqueer Individuals

- Individuals who identify outside of a gender binary by seeing themselves as neither male nor female (but as a third gender or as gender fluid) as both, or as somewhere in between.

Agender Individuals

- Individuals who identify as genderless or gender-neutral.

Definitions

Cisgender Individuals

- People who identify with the gender that was assigned to them at birth (i.e., people who are not transgender).
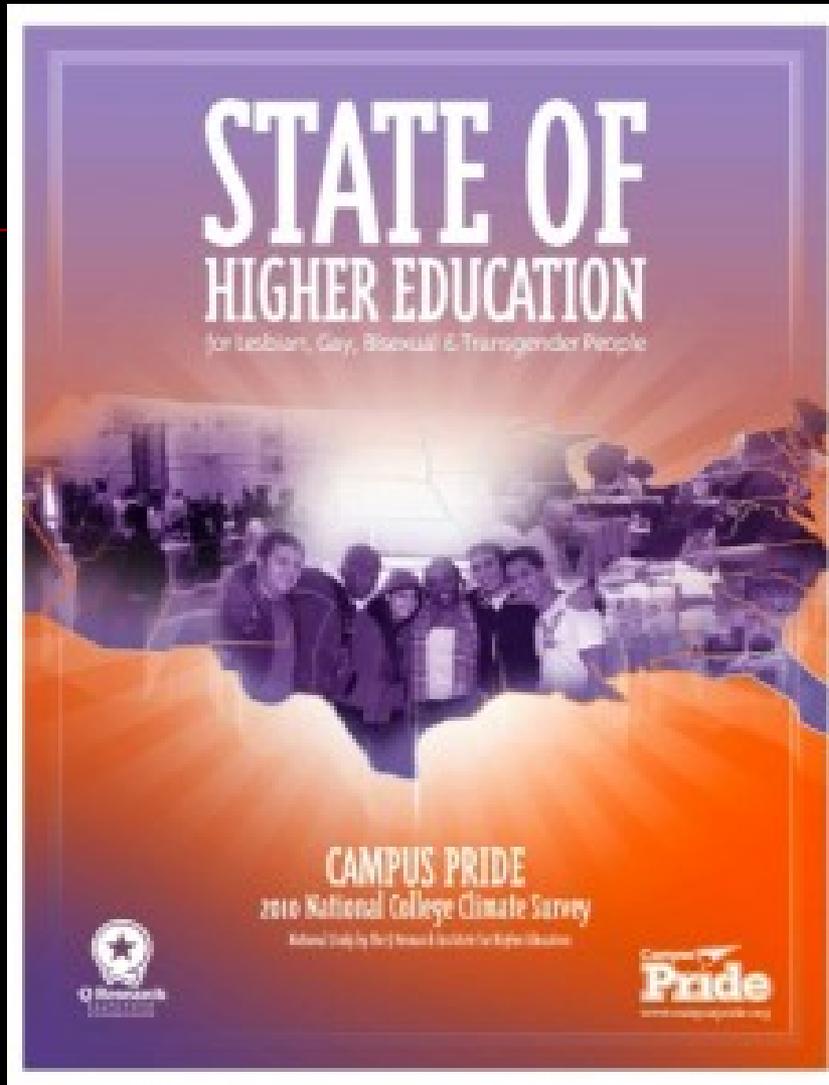
Genderism

- The societal, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege cisgender people and subordinate and disparage transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

Research

State of Higher Education for LGBT People

Rankin, Blumenfeld, Weber, & Frazier

Campus Pride, 2010

Key Findings

- 31-39% of the transmasculine (TM), transfeminine (TF), & gender-nonconforming (GNC) respondents had experienced harassment on campus.

- 17-22% of trans-spectrum respondents who had experienced harassment feared for their physical safety on campus.

Key Findings

- 65% of the TM students, 55% of the TF students, and 18% of the GNC students avoided disclosure of their gender identity because of a fear of negative consequences.
- One-third of trans-spectrum participants have seriously considered leaving their institution because of the negative climate.
- More than half of trans-spectrum respondents felt comfortable or very comfortable with the overall campus climate at their institutions.

Work by Yulonda Rios

The Lives of Transgender People

Genny Beemyn & Sue Rankin

Columbia University Press, 2011

Milestone Similarities

Feeling gender different from a young age and seeking to express this difference through dress and behavior

Repressing or hiding these feelings in the face of hostility and/or isolation

Recognizing that there are transgender people

Getting to know about and know other transgender people

Milestone Similarities

Deciding on a specific identity

Overcoming denial and internalized genderism to accept oneself as transgender

Having one's presentation match one's identity

Deciding whether/when to tell others and developing new relationships after disclosure

Developing a sense of wholeness within a gender normative society

Trans College Students Today

- Gender-nonconforming, male-assigned children may have had some support for being gender different.

- Likely to have had some understanding of their gender difference as children or youth.

- Less likely to be in denial or be confused.

- Less likely to misidentify at all or for long.

- Having recognized themselves as trans from a young age, they are coming to college expecting support and resources.

Trans College Students Today

- Recognize that there is not one way to be trans.

- May not see the need to have surgeries or take hormones to be a "real" woman or man (or see the need to be a gender at all).

- Typically refuse to accept a gender binary.

- Many identify outside of a gender binary and live between the two gender extremes of M/F.

- May want gender-inclusive pronouns used for themselves (they/them, ze/hir, etc.).

The Genderqueer Age and Gender Divide

- *The Lives of Transgender People*: all genderqueer participants were under age 32; 86.5% assigned female at birth (AFAB)

- *Injustice at Every Turn*: 89% of "gender not listed" between 18-45; 73% AFAB

- Kuper, Nussbaum, Mustanski 2012 (n=292, mean age of 28): 73% of genderqueer participants AFAB

Work by Yulonda Rios

Campus Queer: The Experiences and Needs of LGBTQ+ College Students

Johns Hopkins University Press

College Students with Non-Binary Sexual and/or Gender Identities

- 208 students, ages 17-25, were interviewed from 84 different colleges

- 111 identified outside of a gender binary, including genderqueer, agender, gender fluid, non-binary trans, demigender, and androgynous students

- 102 also identified outside of a sexual binary

- Average age at which they began using their current gender identity label: 19 years old

- 91 of the 111 use gender-inclusive pronouns for themselves, most "they/them/their"

College Students with Non-Binary Sexual and/or Gender Identities

- 51% of the non-binary gender students were out or mostly out about their gender identity to at least one parent, and 49% were not out to any parent

- Where all respondents learned about their identities:
  - a website(s)--59%, a friend(s)--24%, met a person/people who identifies that way or who educated them--24%

- Where all respondents received support for their identities:
  - a friend(s)--79%, an LGBTQ+ group(s) --39%, a website(s)--28%, a campus LGBTQ+ center/office--27%, their partner(s)--17%, a family member(s)--17%

How Colleges Fail Non-Binary Gender Students

1. Providing Gender-Inclusive Bathrooms
2. Recognizing that Pronouns Matter
3. Expanding Name and Gender Options on Records
4. Offering Gender-Inclusive Housing
5. Raising Awareness and Education

Gender-Inclusive Bathrooms

▼ Mentioned by the most interviewees

▼ "Gender-inclusive" and not "gender-neutral"

▼ Have a written bathroom policy that protects trans students from discrimination. Sample policy:

"The University of Massachusetts, Amherst strives to create and sustain a campus environment that supports and values all members of our community. One aspect of creating a supportive environment is providing safe, accessible, and convenient bathroom facilities. Students, staff, faculty, and campus guests should use the bathroom facilities that correspond to their sex or gender identity, or utilize bathrooms that are designated gender-neutral or gender-inclusive."

Gender-Inclusive Bathrooms

▼ Have a policy requiring at least one gender-inclusive restroom (a bathroom open to students of all genders) in all newly constructed or significantly renovated buildings, including residence halls.

▼ Have single-occupancy men's and women's restrooms converted into gender-inclusive ones by installing locks and changing signs.

▼ Have gender-inclusive restrooms in at least half of the administrative and academic buildings on campus.

Gender-Inclusive Bathrooms

▼ Have bathroom signs that do not use male and female stick figures: http://www.mydoorsign.com

▼ Have an online list/map of campus gender-inclusive restrooms.

Pronouns Matter

▼ Pronoun examples: he/him; she/her; they/them; ze/hir (not "male" or "female" pronouns).

▼ They are the pronouns that I use, not "my preferred pronouns."

▼ Only two colleges (UVM and Hampshire) have a process to indicate pronouns on records.

▼ Almost all of the non-binary gender interviewees said that pronouns were not asked by faculty in any of their classes, including in Women and Gender Studies.

▼ Many did not feel comfortable approaching a professor with their pronouns.

Pronouns Matter

▼ Require all faculty to attend a non-binary trans training session.

▼ Encourage faculty to have a name and pronoun policy and to have it on their syllabi.

"**Names and Pronouns**: Everyone has the right to be addressed and referred to by the name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity, including the use of gender-inclusive pronouns. Class rosters have a student's legal first name, unless they have entered a preferred/chosen first name on SPIRE. Pronouns are not included on rosters, so students will be asked to indicate the pronouns that they use for themselves whenever they are asked to share their names. A student's chosen name and pronouns are to be respected at all times in the classroom."

Name and Gender Options on Records

▼ Enable students to have a name other than their legal first name on institutional documents (ID cards, class rosters, directory listings, unofficial transcripts, diplomas, etc.) and to make this change themselves online. This should be the only the name that appears and without quotation marks.

▼ Have more than "M/F" as choices on forms and records, including admissions applications.

Name and Gender Options on Records

Suggested wording for admissions and other forms:

Gender Identity (optional): _____

or, when such an open-ended question is not possible:

Gender identity (optional; choose all that apply):
___ agender
___ genderqueer or gender fluid
___ man
___ questioning or unsure
___ trans man
___ trans woman
___ woman
___ an identity not listed: please specify _____
___ prefer not to disclose

Housing

▼ Enable students to indicate their gender identity on their housing application.

▼ Have an easy process whereby trans students can automatically be housed in keeping with their gender.

▼ Move away from "single-sex" residence halls or floors.

▼ Require residence life staff to regularly offer activities and post educational material to raise residents' awareness of trans experiences.

Gender-Inclusive-Housing

▼ Offer a gender-inclusive housing (GIH) option (housing in which students are assigned to rooms without regard to gender) that is open to both incoming and returning students.

- ✓ Recognize that GIH is not the same as trans housing.
- ✓ It should be offered in different parts of campus and, if possible, in different types of housing (doubles, suites, apartments).
- ✓ GIH should include gender-inclusive bathrooms/ showers.

Awareness and Education

▼ Require all Student Affairs staff, Public Safety officers, and other front-line personnel to regularly attend a training session about trans topics.

▼ Incorporate gender identity topics into orientation sessions for new students, staff, and faculty.

▼ Have an online campus resource guide for new and prospective trans students.

▼ Regularly sponsor non-binary gender (not just LGBTQ) speakers, performers, and other programs.

Specific Best Policies & Practices

Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse:
http://www.campuspride.org/tpc

LGBT-Friendly Campus Pride Index:
http://www.campusprideindex.org

"Suggested Best Practices for Supporting Trans Students" (Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals)
http://www.lgbtcampus.org/policy-practice-recommendations

Questions?

Feel free to email me:

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