

Working with Female to Different Gender Students: Language, Development, Inclusion



Session Overview

- This session focuses on students who are gender variant, specifically who gender express or gender identify as a member of female to different gender (FtDG) communities (e.g., transman, male-to-female, and genderqueer).
- The foundation for the discussion draws upon the results of a 2006 project involving a survey of 3,474 individuals who self-identified as members of transgender communities.
- The session will raise awareness regarding language used by FtDG communities, review developmental processes, and provide recommendations for gender inclusive schools.

Where are we going...really

- Review the Research - or lack thereof?
- Methods – but not a lot
- Who is the focus? – Maybe you?
- Common FTDG Experiences – at least in this *very small* data base
- Touchstones – Huh?
- So what? – LESS TALK, MORE ACTION!!!!

Limited Research

- Mallon (1999) suggested that research to date has yet to propose the creation of healthy, nonstigmatizing models of transgender identity development
- Hershberger and D'Augelli (2000) – trans youth
- Devor (1997 & 2004) fourteen-stage model of transsexual identity formation
- Bilodeau & Renn (2005) *Analysis of LGBT Identity Development Models and Implications for Practice*
- Hiestand & Levitt (2006) model of Butch Identity Development

Limitations of Previous Research

- Lack of examination of the different and more varied gender experiences of transgender youth.
- The assumed expectation that gender reassignment/confirmation surgery is the final outcome of the process and that transitioning is not complete without it.
- Assumption that individuals who transition no longer identify as transgender.
- Lack of examining multiple and intersecting identities related to race, ethnicity, nationality, ability status, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, etc.

Current Project

- Our approach in undertaking this research was that crossdressing, transsexuality, and other transgender identities are no less “natural” or “legitimate” than the dominant gender categories of woman and man.
- Detractors may contend that we lack adequate critical distance or are biased by virtue of being members of gay/queer communities...

We feel that our positions give us insights that have been absent from much of the literature on transgender lives.

Current Project

- Our connections to the communities enabled us to involve many transgender people in the research who otherwise may have been reluctant to participate, fearing further exploitation by academics.
- To a large extent, our “insider” status enabled us to conduct what is, to date, the largest study of people who are transgender in the United States.

Limitations of Current Project

- Classist – use of web based survey
- Title of survey perhaps excluded people who no longer identify as gender variant but as their *true* gender identity
- Self-selection bias
- Questions we wished we would have asked

Methods

November 9, 2005 thru February 28, 2006

Mixed Methods (Survey & Interviews)

- “Snowball Sampling”
- “Invitation to Participate” letter was forwarded to transgender, bisexual, gay, and lesbian organizations
- Participants who wanted to be interviewed were invited to contact the researchers

Number of Participants N= 3474

Methods

“Female” to Different Gender (FtDG)

Respondents who self-identified as “female”
birth sex

Respondents who currently gender identify
as “not woman”

FtDG Participants

“Female” to Different Gender (FtDG)
Survey n = 697

“Female” to Different Gender (FtDG)
Interviews n=86
46 e-mail
37 phone
3 face to face

□ Tranny boy

□ Boi

□ Transmen

The Power of Language

□ Drag kings

□ Butch

“Female” to Different Gender

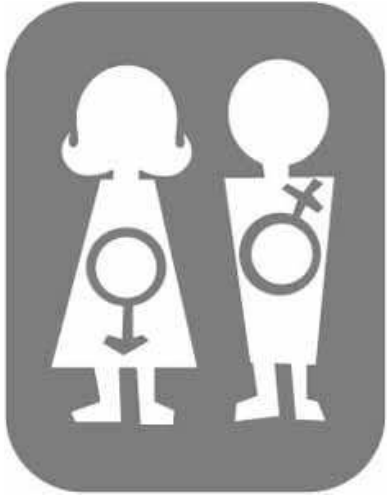
□ not female

□ FTM

□ Genderqueers

□ Androgynes

□ Bigender



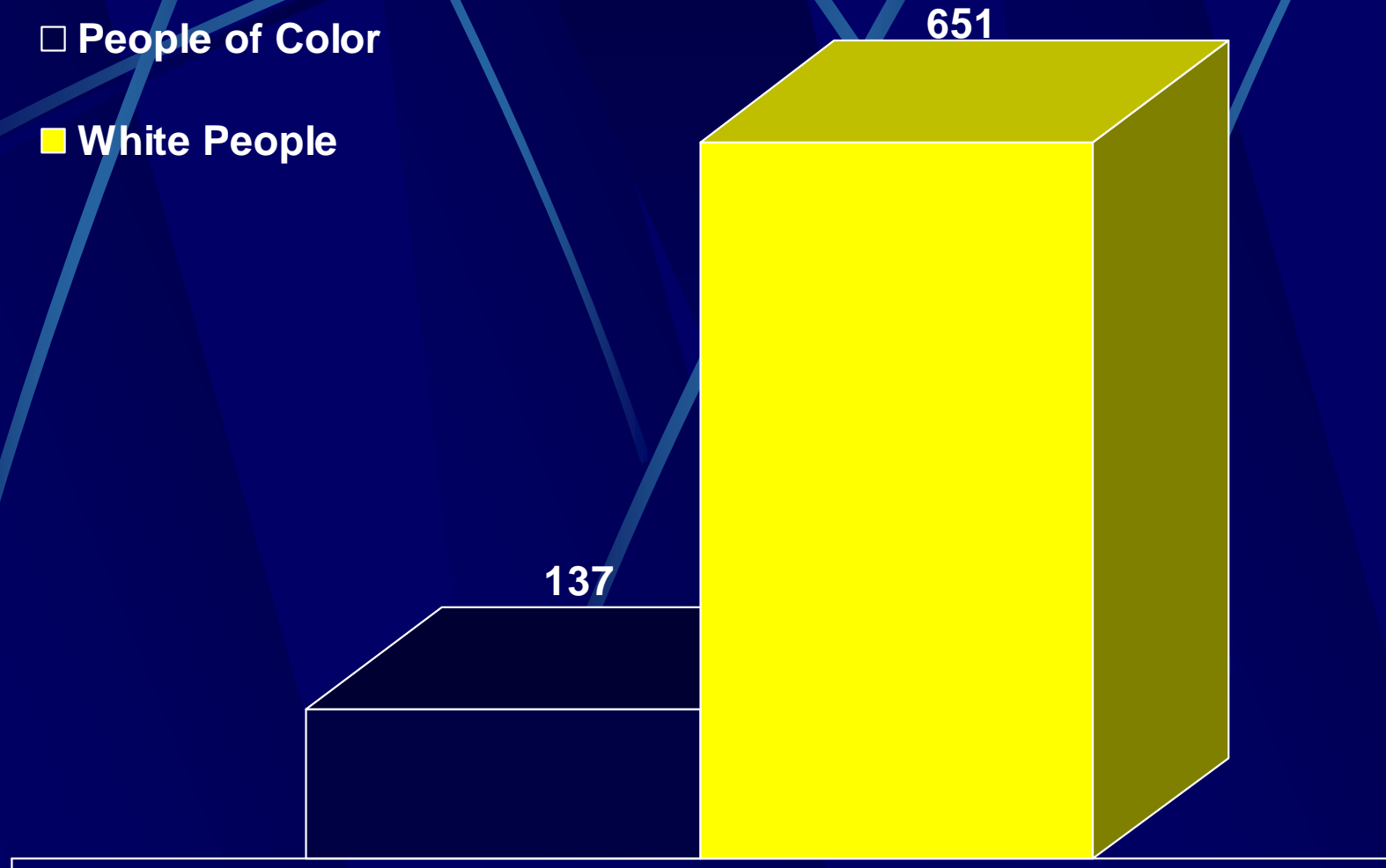
Demographics of the “Female” to Different Gender Sample



What is your Race?

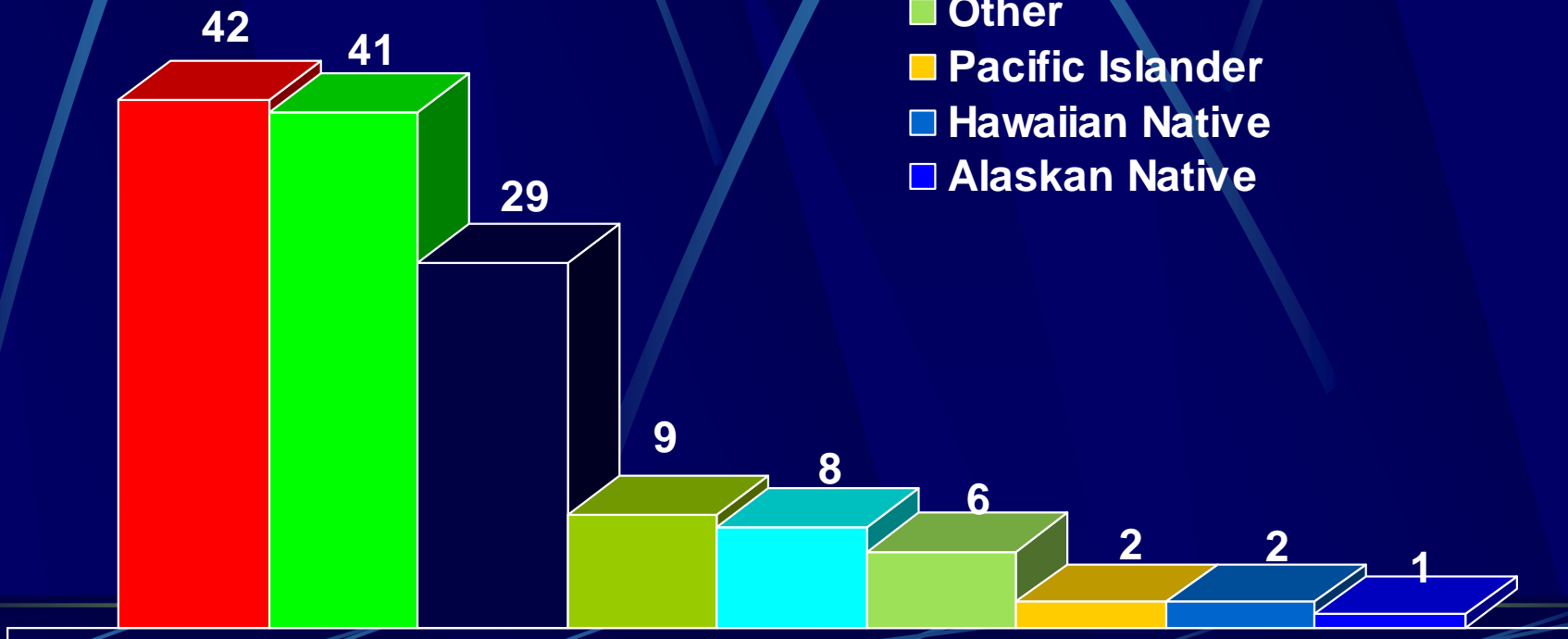
□ People of Color

■ White People



FtDG of Color (n)

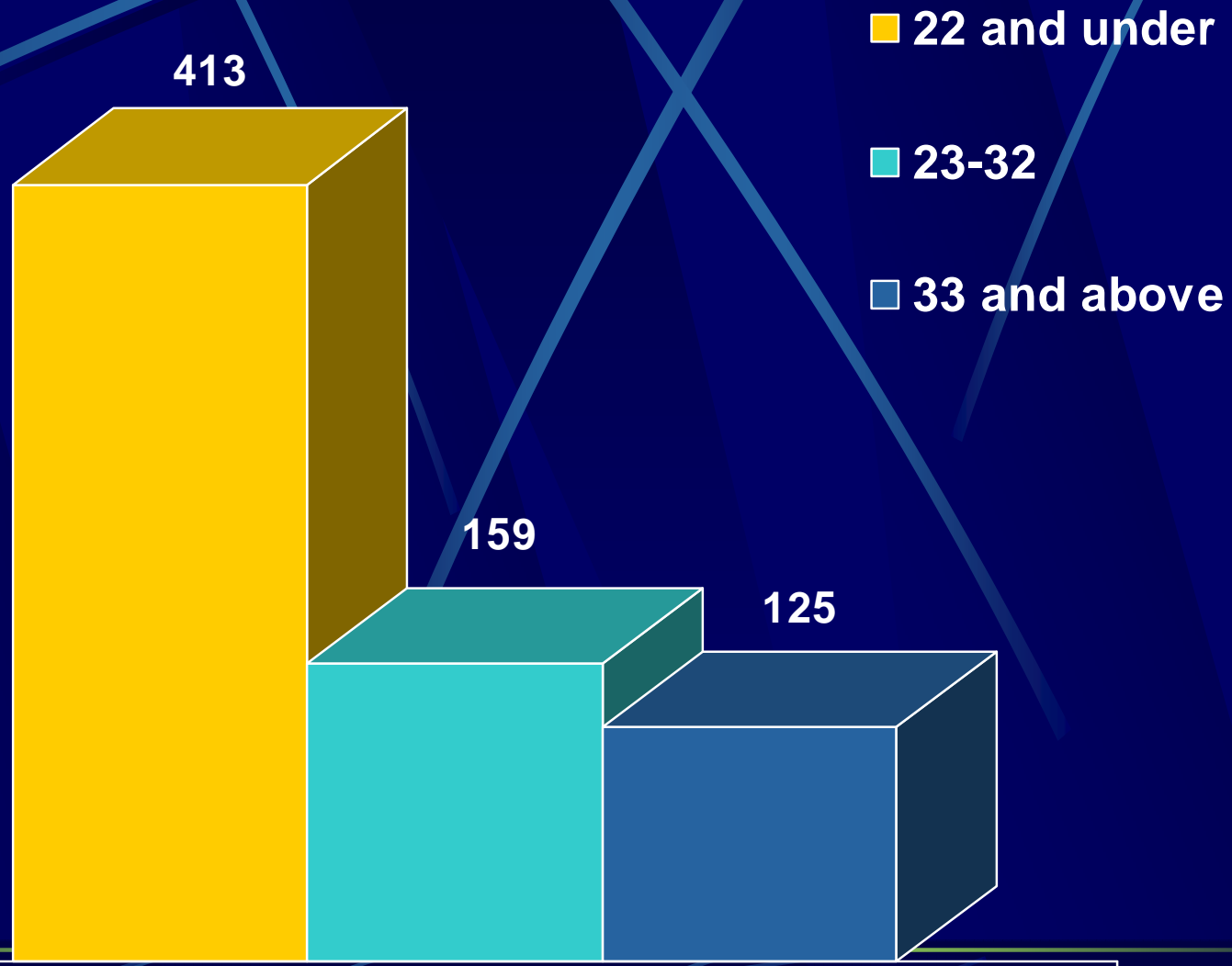
- Latino/Hispanic/Chicano
- American Indian
- African/African American
- Asian/Asian American
- Middle Eastern
- Other
- Pacific Islander
- Hawaiian Native
- Alaskan Native



Review by Age Categories

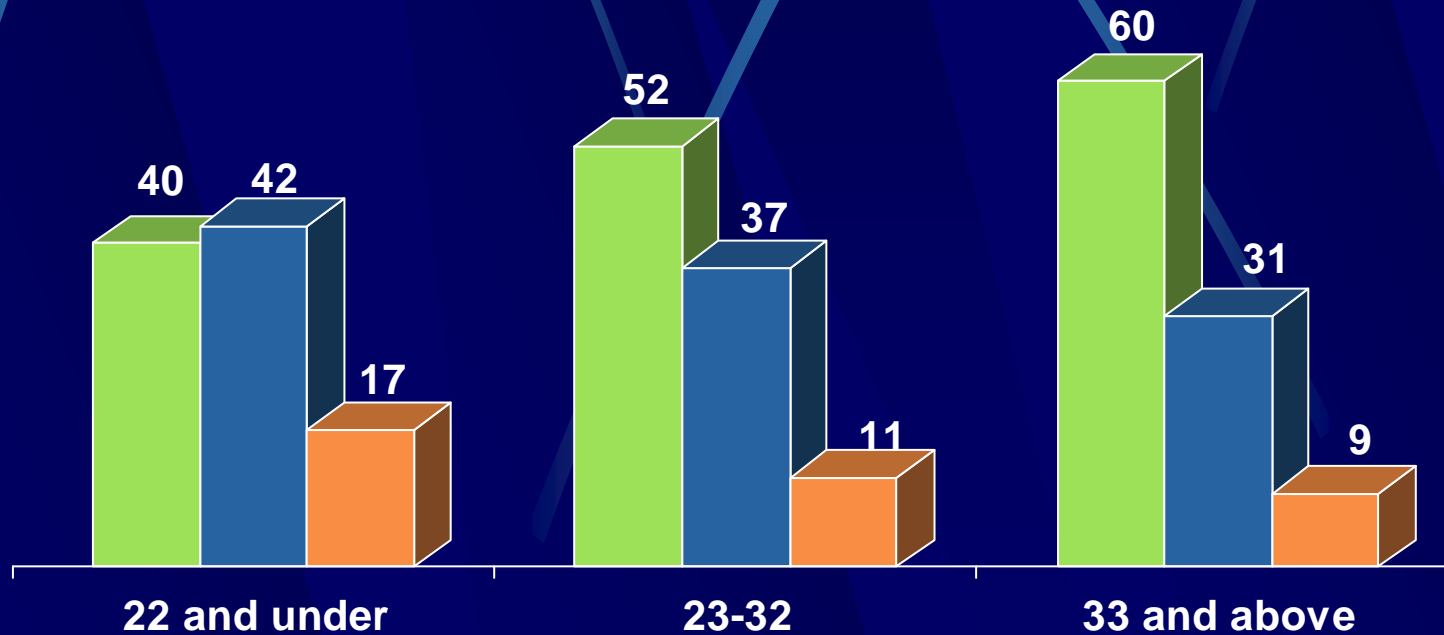
- The remainder of the presentation will explore the differences among FtDG identities based on age groups
- Given our focus we are assuming that most of the 22 and under respondents are students given the method used to invite participation.

What is your age (n)?



Gender Identity by Age (%)

- Male
- Transgender (please specify)
- Other (please specify)



Gender Identity

“Transgender... please specify” (n)

	22 and under n=175	23-32 n=59	33 and over n=39	Total N=273
Female to Male; F2M; FTM	75	27	14	116
Genderqueer	48	8	2	58
Trans... (man, male, sexual, guy, gender, fag, boy, boi, vestite, identified dyke, gendered woman)	36	6	10	52

Gender Identity “Other... please specify” (n)

	22 and under	23-32	33 and over	Total
Genderqueer	26	6	2	34
Both female and male	7	2	1	10
Neither female or male	7	1	0	8

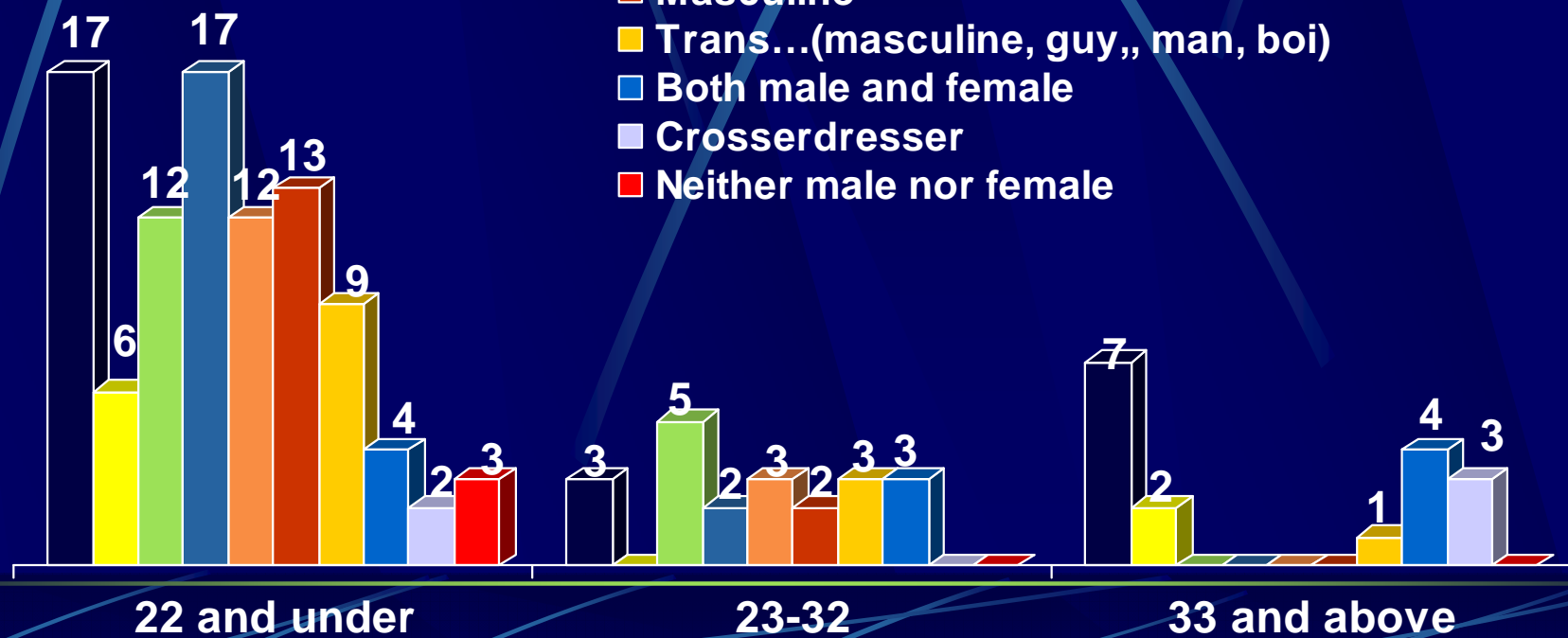
Gender Expression

		Male	Transgender , please specify	Other	Female	Total
22 and under	n	228	93	78	13	413
	%	55.2%	22.5%	18.9%	3.1%	100.0%
23-32	n	115	21	19	4	159
	%	72.3%	13.2%	11.9%	2.5%	100.0%
33 and above	n	94	18	7	6	125
	%	75.2%	14.4%	5.6%	4.8%	100.0%

Gender Expression

“Transgender... please specify” (n)

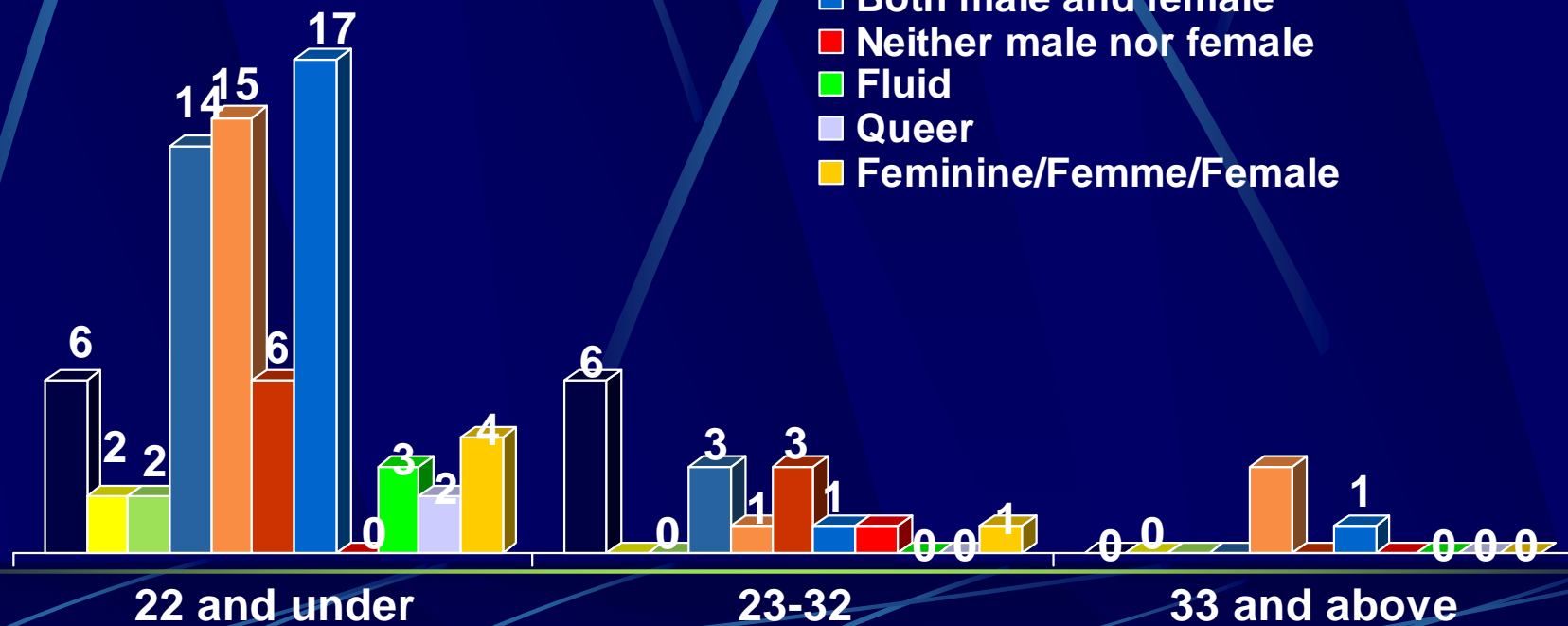
- Male
- Butch
- Female to Male (F2M. FtM)
- Genderqueer
- Androgynous
- Masculine
- Trans...(masculine, guy,, man, boi)
- Both male and female
- Crossdresser
- Neither male nor female



Gender Expression

"Other, please specify?" (n)

- Male/Man
- Butch femme
- Female to Male (F2M. FtM)
- Genderqueer
- Androgynous
- Masculine
- Both male and female
- Neither male nor female
- Fluid
- Queer
- Feminine/Femme/Female



Listen to the Voices

- “I lived openly as a dyke for more than 20 years and no number of shots in the ass will ever change my history...nor do I have any interest in that happening...I’ve been without my lesbian ID card for several years now, but I can’t really call myself straight either. I really have no concept of ‘straight’ as a life experience so ‘heteroqueer’ seems to fit best. I am a guy who likes girls who like ‘special’ guys” – Michael
- David stopped identifying as FTM. He “lives as a man” but doesn’t state that “[he is] a man.” He describes himself as “a different kind of man.” He doesn’t like labels because he feels that they impede development.

Listen to the Voices

- “I had an epiphany, realizing I had not transitioned from female-to-male, but from female-to-not-female . . . What ‘not-female’ means to me is that I would have ended up happily male if I’d been born and raised male, but since I was raised female, that has affected my world view and brain development such that I cannot be the man I would have been otherwise.” (Reid)
- “I used to identify as a dyke very strongly and still do, just in a different way. I was occupying a more female space, but now a more masculine space, but not really as male. I did and still do identify with the idea of genderqueer. I like it better than saying I am a man, which I don’t really feel like I am, but I don’t feel like a woman really either.” (Eric, genderqueer)

Sexual orientation by age (n)?

		Other	Heterosexual	Bisexual	Gay	Lesbian	Asexual	Total
22 and under	n	189	70	79	34	29	11	412
	%	45.9%	17.0%	19.2%	8.3%	7.0%	2.7%	100.0%
23-32	n	44	58	27	21	7	1	158
	%	27.8%	36.7%	17.1%	13.3%	4.4%	.6%	100.0%
33 and above	n	23	48	30	9	8	6	124
	%	18.5%	38.7%	24.2%	7.3%	6.5%	4.8%	100.0%

Sexual Orientation *“Other please specify” (n)*

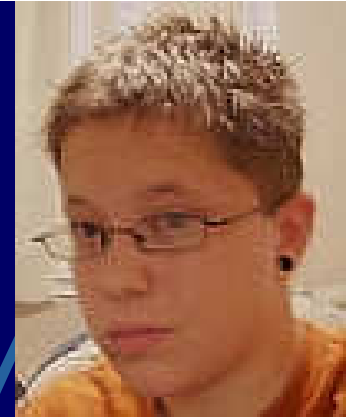


Listen to the Voices

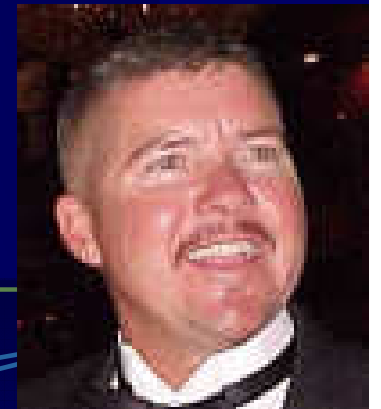
- Dan had an affair with a woman and began to think he was a lesbian. He became involved with the woman on a regular basis and realized that there was “more to it” than his sexuality.
- Adrien didn’t know about trans people as a teen, so he thought he was a very butch lesbian and found a home in the lesbian community after coming out at age 15.

To whom are you most sexually attracted?

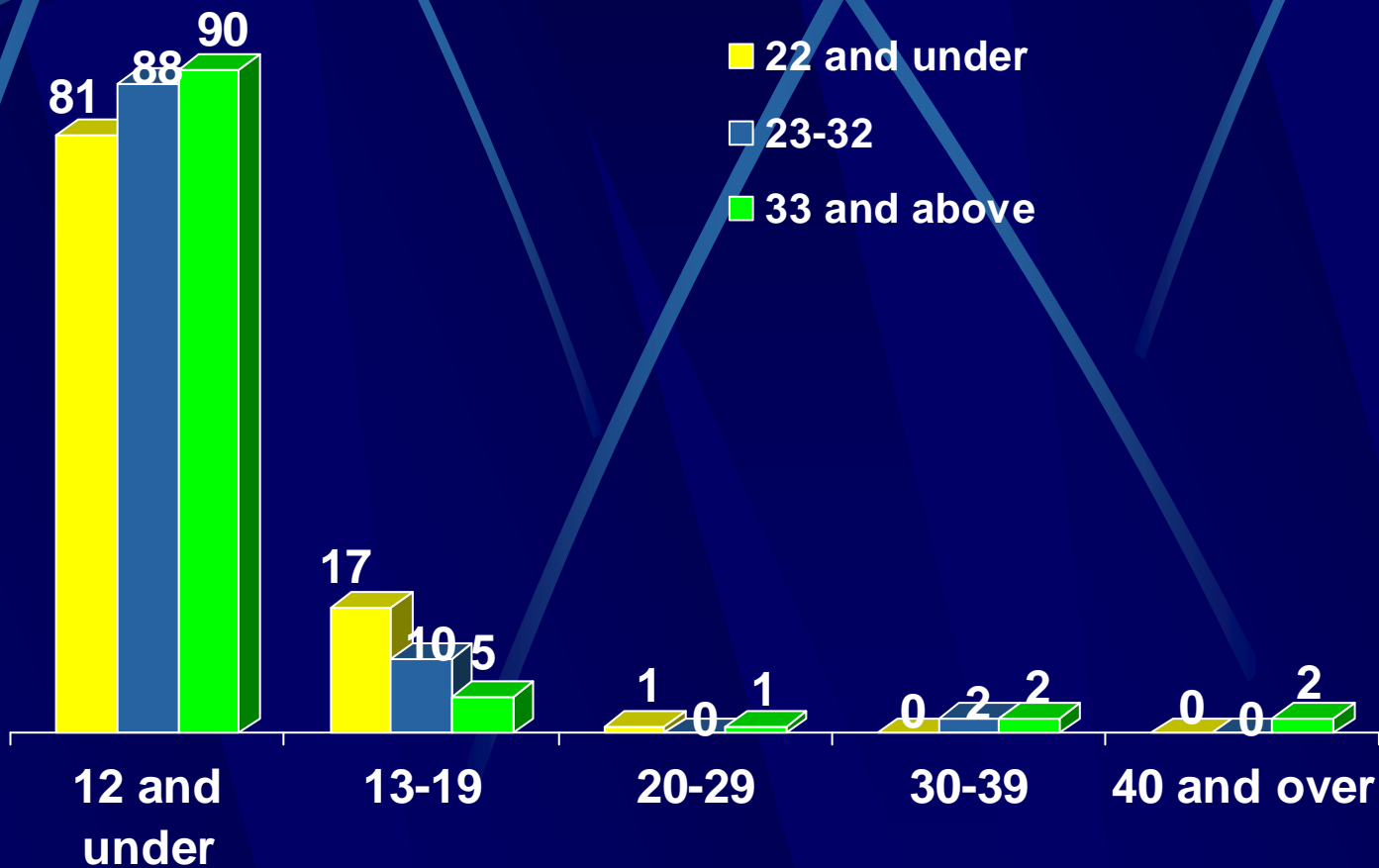
		Women	Both men and women	Men	Uncertain	Total
22 and under	n	206	108	59	37	413
	%	49.9%	26.2%	14.3%	9.0%	100.0%
23-32	n	92	32	31	4	159
	%	57.9%	20.1%	19.5%	2.5%	100.0%
33 and above	n	72	23	22	7	125
	%	57.6%	18.4%	17.6%	5.6%	100.0%



EXPERIENCES WITH TRANSGENDER DEVELOPMENT



When Participants Began To Feel "Different" (%)



How Respondents Experienced This “Feeling of Difference”

	Fearful		Marginalized		Angry		Suicidal		Comfortable		Curious	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
22 and under	220	53	210	51	180	44	160	39	84	20	209	51
23-32	66	42	82	52	65	41	49	31	33	21	49	31
33 and above	41	33	52	42	51	41	26	21	15	12	52	42

How Respondents Experienced This “Feeling of Difference” Other

- Confused
- Depressed
- Isolated/Lonely
- Ashamed

Listen to the Voices

At 4 or 5 years old, Dan told his mother that the doctors had gotten it wrong and that he was a boy and not a girl. He “just knew”.

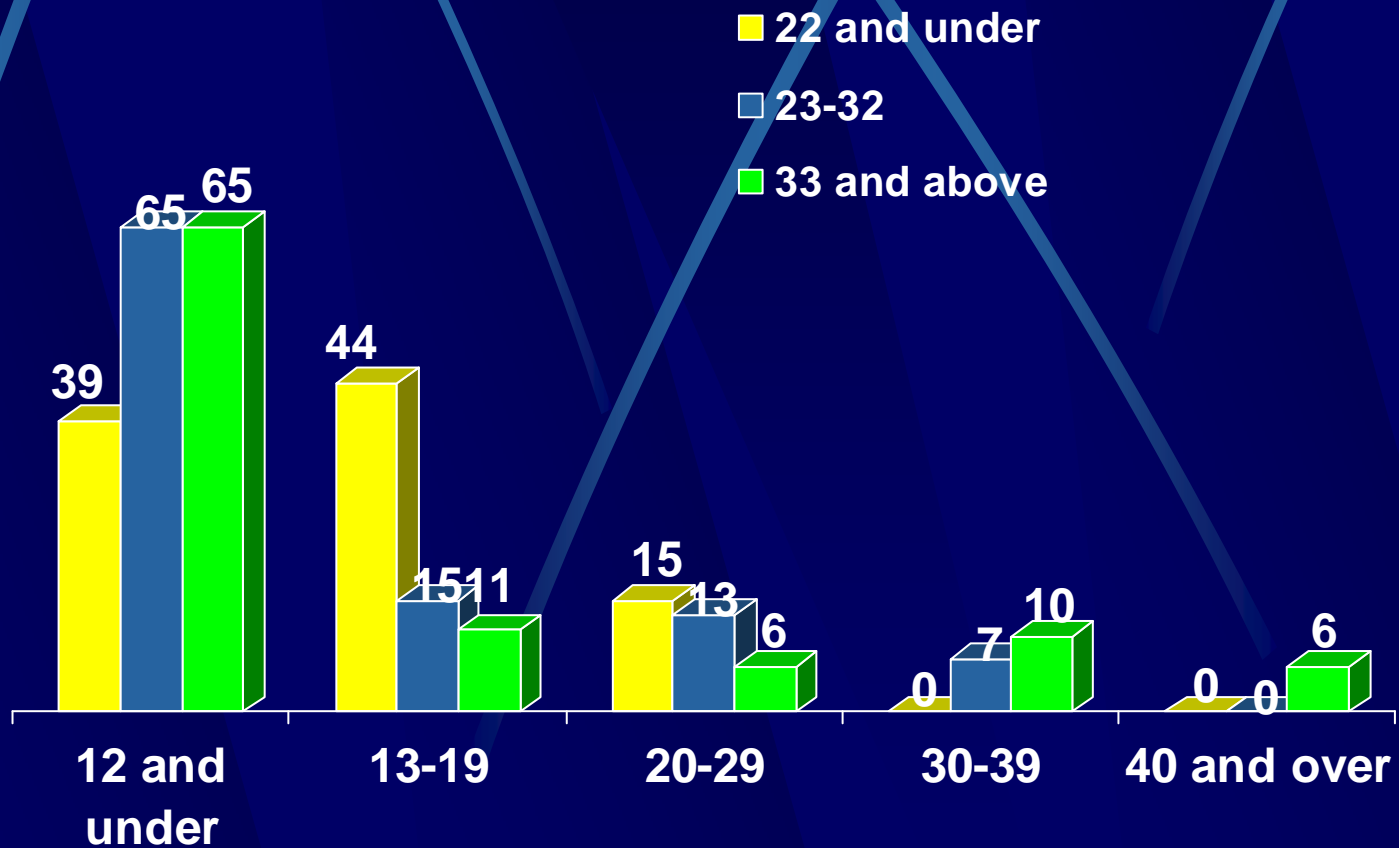
At age 4, Ted remembers standing in front of mirror wearing a cap and acting like a bad guy. He thought it was “a lot more fun to be a guy.”

Tom always felt uncomfortable as a woman. Growing up, he couldn't imagine being a woman.

Loren felt different “from as long as I can remember.” But as such a young age, he “didn't know what was different about me.”

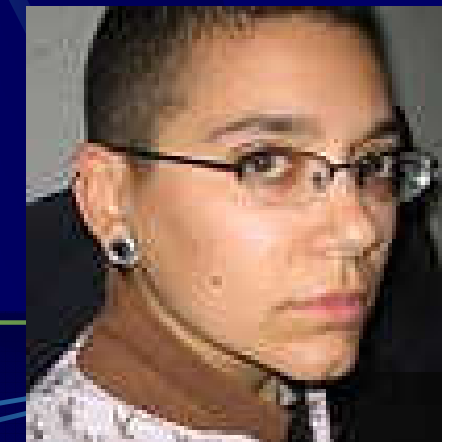
“From as far back as I can remember, I always believed I was a boy. I became confused when I realized that my body parts were not consistent with the identity I had.” - Turner

When Participants Began to Feel “Uncertain” About Their Gender Identity (%)





***What led to this “Feeling of
Uncertainty”***



Puberty

Around the time of puberty, with my peers seemingly excited about the whole subject, I grew increasingly miserable. Everything that was happening to me was WRONG, I knew it in my bones, in my soul.

Before puberty, I felt like a boy. When puberty hit, and I developed breasts, I felt betrayed by my body, but also felt that I needed to/was expected to learn to fit into said body. It didn't work very well.

I got pissed off when I started developing breasts and when I got my period it felt so wrong I thought for sure I wasn't really originally born a girl and that my parents must be giving me some kind of pill in my food or something to make me have a period.

I hated puberty and everything that it did to my body. I dreaded my first period and was so distraught when it happened that I missed some school. I tried to hide my breasts from the second it was clear they were there.

Puberty was a huge trigger. I began binding my chest and fearing my period. I didn't know why, and when I found out about trans people, I finally found my place

Puberty

Puberty. I developed breasts and began to menstruate, I became confused.

Puberty. I didn't mind looking like a girl until it started actually meaning something, until I started developing. I became intensely jealous of my male friends (as well as attracted to them)-- it really hit home that I wanted to be a man.

I saw that I related to boys and understood the boys much better than I did the girls. Also, I thought that I would go through puberty like a boy. I had no idea that an individual didn't get to choose the type of puberty they would go through.

I did not feel comfortable with my own body. This is the time, where adolescents typically begin to need to feel comfortable with their body, and I did not

Socially Constructed Gender Roles

Gender roles forced upon me by relatives or friends.

Gender roles suck. They're funny until you realize some people think you have to adhere to them

Getting in trouble for wearing my Dad's clothes

I was a lot more interested in traditional boy toys and activities (transformers instead barbies, playing sports instead of house)

My earliest memory of gender is when I was four, shaving my face in the bathtub. I cut myself, of course, and my mother told me that I couldn't shave my face because I was a girl.

Up until I was about 5 or 6 I was certain that I was a little boy. My parents didn't really make me conform. When I got to school I was just one of the boys until it was made very clear to me by the other kids and teachers that I was not a boy.

This body isn't mine My body should be different

As a child, I felt that my body didn't match up with the gender identity I wanted to express. It was terribly confusing to be told that my body dictated certain social roles and expectations that I felt weren't right for me.

Everything a girl was supposed to be didn't feel wholly right and a deep and burning desire to be and be seen as a boy.

I never felt like a girl, it made no sense to have to sit to pee, to have to wear girl underwear and not the batman undies like my guy friends. I didn't like dolls, and I hated girls clothes.

This body isn't mine My body should be different

Ever since I was very little I didn't understand why I was assigned female. I remember one day when I was seven or eight, thinking that my genitalia might just be an underdeveloped penis, and then remembering that I had long hair.

From birth, for as long as I can remember, I felt like a boy inside.

I wanted to be a boy. In middle school I used to bind and pack, though I didn't have a language for the practice, or a community of resources, or even knowledge that other people like me existed, at the time.

I just always felt like a boy on the inside, but knew that biologically I was female. This confused me as to how to identify, whether I was female or male.

I never could identify as a girl. I just knew I was a boy. What made me uncertain was that my body stated otherwise

Finding Others Like Me

A person I had a crush on came out as FtM, which opened up the possibility in my head that female-assigned people weren't necessarily women. From there I started questioning my own gender, and realized I definitely didn't feel like a girl.

A speaker on a trans youth panel said some things that fit me perfectly, and I started to wonder if I too was trans

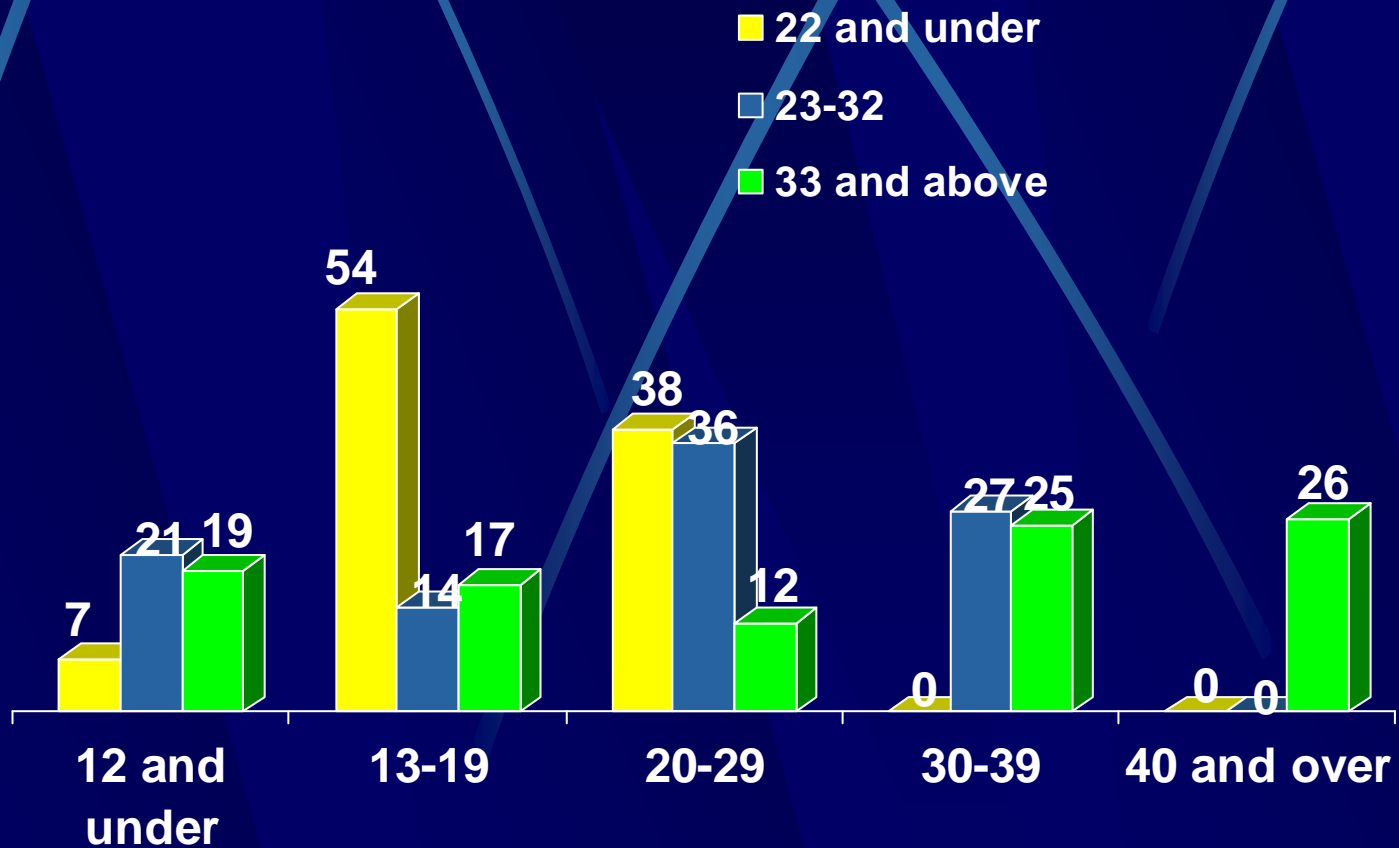
I found out that ftm's existed when I saw Boys Don't Cry. Before then I hadn't really thought about it. Or if I did at all I figured it must be tied up with the fact that I liked girls

I had a close trans friend for the first time and when I considered the possibility that I identified as male it made sense of my usually unexpressed self-image that I've had s long as I can remember.

Listen to the Voices

Andre feels the same as he did when he was 3 or 4 years old. His identifying as male hasn't changed. He felt his body did not match how his body was perceived, rather than his body not matching his mind. As a child, he felt he "had to be crazy to be male in a female body." He "knew [he] wasn't supposed to talk about it, so didn't."

When Participants Began to Think They Might Be “Transgender” (%)



How did you react when you first thought that you were transgender?

	Fearful		Marginalized		Angry		Suicidal		Comfortable		Curious	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
22 and under	261	63.2	125	30.3	103	24.9	78	18.9	132	32.0	250	60.5
23-32	76	47.8	35	22.0	31	19.5	25	25.7	50	31.4	81	50.9
33 and above	55	44.0	36	28.8	23	18.4	16	12.8	41	32.8	57	45.6

***How did you react when you first thought
that you were transgender?
“Other, please specify”***

▣ Elated

▣ Excited

▣ Ecstatic!

▣ Finally, an explanation!

▣ Happy

▣ Hopeful

▣ Relieved

▣ At peace

▣ Confused

▣ Freakish

▣ Sad

▣ Scared

▣ Secretive

Touchstones of FtDG development

Cognition of difference

I don't fit

Uncertainty regarding gender identity

Am I a lesbian? If not, what am I?

Recognition of self as FTDG

*AHA! I have something to explain who I
am*

Cognition of Difference

Knew they were “different”

- Quantitative data = 12 and under
- Qualitative data suggests much younger

Cognitive affects

- Negative self-image
- Confusion

Behaviors

- Tomboy

“Uncertain” about gender identity

Cognitive affects

- physical incongruence with “female” gender identity
- discomfort with body
- confusion about identity and gender roles

Behaviors

- experimenting with lesbianism

The “AHA” moment

Cognitive affects

- Positive self-image
- Affirmation of self

Behaviors

- Rejection of identifying as lesbian
- Gender variant inquiry
- Seek community
- Binding, cutting hair, changing my wardrobe
- Experimenting with male gender roles
- Transitioning (e.g., hormones, gender confirmation surgery) or not transitioning

Working with FtDG Students

**Beyond policy,
bathrooms, and forms**

Become “Trans-affirmative” or “Trans positive”

- Examine your own attitudes toward transgender people
- Learn the importance of language
- Learn about salient issues for working with transgender students
- Develop skills to work with transgender students

Understand Salient Issues

- Lack of adequate support systems
- Family issues or impact of trans identity on families
- Social and emotional stressors via pervasive pattern of discrimination and prejudice; society that is generally not accepting of gender variant behavior
- Medical concerns (e.g., hormone administration, aesthetic surgery, and SRS)
- Career issues (e.g, “coming out”)

Develop Skills

- Adopt a student-centered approach to let the student tell his story
 - listening, empathy, and safe environment
- Gain knowledge of referral resources and consultation at the local, state and national levels
 - hormonal treatment & surgical reassignment procedures
 - support systems for HIV prevention, sexual assault prevention, and experiences with discrimination

Develop Skills

- Help students externalize transphobia
 - Help alleviate feelings of shame, isolation, and secrecy
- Assist students in hir adjustment to hir new gender, OR affirm a unique transgender identity
- Be aware that not all transgender people have the same experiences and consciousness about gender identity and the transgender movement

Seek out special training for working with students who are transgender s (e.g., conference, workshops)

Curricular Recommendations

- Use innovative ways to educate students
- Videos that explore the experiences of transgender people and the transgender movement
- Invite transgender speakers and transgender panel
- Recommend books
 - ✓ *My Gender Workbook: How to Become a Real Man, a Real Woman, the Real You, or Something Else Entirely* (Kate Bornstein)
 - ✓ *Trans-Sister Radio* (Chris Bohjalian)
 - ✓ *Transgender Reader* (Susan Stryker & Stephen Whittle)
- Facilitate discussions on transgender issues
- Assign cultural immersion activities where students interview transgender individuals or visit transgender organizations
- Others?

Institutional Considerations

- Work for “gender identity” and “gender expression” to be included in the non-discrimination policy
- Develop trans-specific and trans-inclusive programming
- Develop a web based resource guide for new and prospective students
- Provide training for staff and students about issues facing the transgender community

(Beemyn, Domingue, Pettitt, and Smith, 2005)

Our Role In Affirming Transgender Lives

- By valuing transgender identities as healthy and positive, albeit socially stigmatized, the place of student affairs professionals becomes to challenge socially discriminatory practices and to replace prejudicial attitudes with an understanding of different gender experiences
- Instead of pathologizing transgender experiences as “gender identity disorder,” student affairs professionals can offer positive models of non-traditional genders and support students in developing a gender expression that feels comfortable to them

FtDG Conference

Gender Odyssey

<http://www.transconference.org/>

- Gender Odyssey is a national conference focused on the thoughtful exploration of gender. We strive to create an empowering environment where people of all genders can share their experiences and learn from the experiences of others.
- Through dialogue, peer-led presentations, and sharing skills and expertise, we work to create broader and evolving language, social support, and life pathways that support all gender identities. By doing so, we hope to strengthen ourselves and develop communities that celebrate all expressions of gender at any age.
- August 30-September 1, 2008 – Seattle, Washington

Questions...?



Last Thoughts

“Resistance begins with people confronting pain, whether it’s theirs or somebody else’s, and wanting to do something to change it”

--- bell hooks, “Yearning”

Thank You!

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Power Point presentation available at
<http://www.umass.edu/stonewall/translives>