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

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Non-Binary Identities

Non-binary gender identities: includes individuals who identify as genderqueer, agender, gender fluid, non-binary trans, demigender, and androgynous.

Non-binary sexual identities: includes individuals who identify as pansexual, bisexual, asexual, queer, demisexual, gray asexual, sexually fluid, and polysexual.
LGBTQ+ Identities at UMass

First-Year Students (N=5,999)

Trans-Identified (5,768 answered):
32 (.6%)

20 non-binary: 5 genderqueer, 4 agender, 4 non-binary, 3 gender fluid

12 binary: 6 trans men and 6 trans women
LGBTQ+ Identities at UMass

Non-Heterosexual Identities (5,521 answered):
408 (7.4%)

Most frequent identities:
Asexual: 135
Bisexual: 115
Gay: 83
Pansexual: 50
Lesbian: 25
Campus Queer: The Experiences and Needs of LGBTQ+ College Students

Genny Beemyn

Johns Hopkins University Press
Criteria:

- identify their gender and/or sexuality as outside of a binary
- currently attend a two- or four-year college, or graduated within the last three years [all were currently in grad school]
- are between the ages of 17-25

Information and a link to the online survey were sent to the directors of LGBTQIA student services at 74 campuses (29 in the Northeast, 15 South, 15 Midwest, and 15 West). Fifty-four agreed to recruit students directly or indirectly through social media or listservs.
Study Participants

- 360 college students, from 119 different colleges, completed the survey.
- 208 of these students, from 84 different colleges, chose to participate in a follow-up interview to provide more information about their experiences growing up and in college.
Study Participants

- More than one person was interviewed at 42 schools; one person was interviewed at 42 schools
- 38 of the schools are in the Northeast, 15 are in the Midwest, 16 are in the West, and 15 are in the South
- 50 of the colleges are public and 34 are private
- 8 of the schools are community colleges, 4 are religiously affiliated schools, 3 are women’s colleges, and 1 is an HBCU
- 59 of the 84 (70%) colleges are listed in the Campus Pride Index; average rating 4.4 out of 5, 21 earned a 5
Study Participants

- Average age: 20.4 years in survey, 20.3 in interviews
- People of color: 26% in survey, 27% in interviews
  - of the students of color, 17 are Asian American, 16 biracial, 9 Latinx, 7 African American, 6 multiracial, & 1 American Indian
- Assigned female at birth (AFAB): 87% in survey, 88% in interviews
  - Beemyn & Rankin, *The Lives of Transgender People*: 86.5% AFAB
  - NCTE & the Task Force, *Injustice at Every Turn*: 73% AFAB
Of the 208 students interviewed:

- 111 identified outside of a gender binary—and 102 of these individuals also identified as outside of a sexual binary, so 199 of the participants were non-binary in their sexuality

- 97 identified as a binary gender identity: 79 as cisgender, 14 as FTM/trans men, 2 as female (AMAB), and 2 as another identity

- 91 of the 111 non-binary gender participants use non-binary pronouns for themselves; most (91%) use “they/them/their”
Age at which Identified as a Non-Binary Sexuality

- Average age when participants began to use their current sexual identity label: 17.5 years old

By specific identities:
- bisexual: 16.8
- pansexual: 17.5
- queer: 17.6
- asexual: 18.2
- demisexual: 18.3
Age at which Identified as a Non-Binary Gender

- Average age when participants began to use their current gender identity label: 19 years old

By specific identities:
- genderqueer: 18.3
- gender fluid: 18.8
- non-binary trans: 19.1
- agender: 19.4
- androgyne/androgynous: 19.4
Being Out to a Parent(s)

- 51% of the non-binary gender students were out or mostly out to at least one parent (58% of the students of color).
- 70% of the cis students were out or mostly out about their non-binary sexual identity to at least one parent (48% of the students of color).
- Of the 99 students who identified outside of both sexual and gender binaries and who discussed their family:
  - Half were out or mostly out to at least one parent about both
  - A third were out about their sexual identity but not their gender
  - Only 2 people were out about their gender but not their sexuality
In cases where there was a difference in parental acceptance for the student’s sexual and gender identities, sexual identity was almost always more accepted.

**Why the students were not out to a parent(s):**
- a parent(s) holds anti-LGBTQA+ attitudes
- a parent(s) has conservative religious beliefs
- a parent(s) comes from a culture that is intolerant toward LGBTQA+ people
- believe that a parent(s) would not get or not take their identity seriously
- think that a parent(s) would be uncomfortable with their identity
153 respondents were out to at least one parent about their sexual identity and/or gender identity.

How they characterized their parents’ level of support:
- 44% are supportive or very supportive
- 14% do not completely get or are uncomfortable
- 12% are unsupportive or completely intolerant
- 9% are OK but not great
- 3% ignore the issue and will not discuss it

(8% of respondents reported a difference in support for their gender and sexual identities, and 8% reported a difference in support between a mother and father)
Learning about Their Identities

- Where they first learned about their gender and/or sexual identity (could provide more than one answer):
  - a website(s): 58%; a friend(s): 24%; met a person/people who identifies that way or who educated them: 24%

- Individuals with less visible non-binary identities, like asexual, agender, and demigender, were much more likely to learn the terms online, typically on Tumblr.

- The students who had adopted terminology that, at least as of now, is not widely known even among trans people (e.g. condigirl) invariably learned it online.
Support for Their Identities

Where respondents received support for their gender and sexual identities (could provide more than one answer):

- a friend(s): 79%
- an LGBTQ+ student group(s): 39%
- a website(s): 28% (11% of the students of color)
- a campus LGBTQ+ center/office: 27%
- a partner/former partner: 20%
- a family member(s): 17%
- a faculty member: 7%
- their therapist or a campus counseling center: 4%
- a staff member (other than LGBTQ+ center staff): 2%
What Colleges Need to Do

- All but one of the 111 students with non-binary gender identities said that their college was not doing enough to support them, and they named the many ways that institutions operate from a gender binary and fail to recognize trans people.

- The 79 cis students with non-binary sexual identities had difficulty thinking of ways that their college could better support them, beyond greater education on sexual diversity, as sexuality was not forefronted in many institutional contexts.
How Colleges Fail Non-Binary Gender Students

1. Not Providing Gender-Inclusive Bathrooms
2. Misgendering and Misnaming
3. Maintaining a Gender Binary on Records and Forms
4. Not Offering Gender-Inclusive Housing
5. Not Educating about Gender Diversity
6. Not Providing Trans-Inclusive Health Care
7. Lacking Trans-Supportive Spaces
How Colleges Fail Non-Binary Gender Students

1. Not Providing Gender-Inclusive Bathrooms (GIBs)

NEGATIVE
- Because of state plumbing codes, we have relatively few gender-inclusive bathrooms in academic buildings and only a few in residence halls.

POSITIVE
- Most single-stall bathrooms being changed to GIBs.
- GIBs included in renovations and future construction.
How Colleges Fail Non-Binary Gender Students

2. Misgendering and Misnaming

POSITIVE

- Students can have a chosen name on campus records and documents and change their gender marker.

NEGATIVE

- Chosen name not always used by software.
- Pronouns not on course rosters and people do not ask.
- Can only change between M/F.
How Colleges Fail Non-Binary Gender Students

3. Maintaining a Gender Binary on Records and Forms

POSITIVE

- We will be asking sexual & gender identity questions on our Common Application supplement in 2017.
- Most forms in Student Affairs do not ask M/F.

NEGATIVE

- Forms elsewhere at UMass still use a gender binary.
- How will gender diversity be recognized?
4. Not Offering Gender-Inclusive Housing (GIH)

**POSITIVE**

- We offer GIH in several places on campus, including on the Spectrum floor.

**NEGATIVE**

- GIH is never filled; most trans and gender-expansive students live in other halls, where they feel unsafe in bathrooms.
How Colleges Fail Non-Binary Gender Students

5. Not Educating about Gender Diversity

NEGATIVE

- Students, staff, and faculty do not learn about trans people at orientation sessions.
- Title IX education needed on gender identity/exp.

POSITIVE

- SACL offices are generally well-educated.
- We have trans point people in key places.
TGQN (“transgender, genderqueer or nonconforming, questioning, or not listed”) undergraduates experienced the highest rates of sexual assault and misconduct on all measures:

- acts involving penetration by force or incapacitation
- nonconsensual sexual contact by absence of affirmative consent
- nonconsensual sexual contact involving coercion
- stalking
- sexual harassment
- intimate partner violence
During the 2014-15 academic year, 19% of TGQN undergrads indicated experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact at least once, as compared to 17% of cis women undergrads.

Seniors: 39.1% of TGQN seniors reported experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact at least once during their time at college, as compared to 33.1% of senior cis women.

Only 15% of TGQN students reported an incident of sexual harassment to campus authorities. TGQN students were the least optimistic about a report of sexual harassment being taken seriously, and they were the most likely to say that retaliation would occur if they reported.
How Colleges Fail Non-Binary Gender Students

6. Not Providing Trans-Inclusive Health Care

**POSITIVE**
- We cover hormones and surgery.
- UHS can prescribe and monitor hormones.
- CCPH has a trans-identified therapist.

**NEGATIVE**
- Trans cultural competency among UHS staff is not where it needs to be.
7. Lacking Trans-Supportive Spaces

**POSITIVE**
- We have the Stonewall Center.
- We have a trans support group, and there are trans student groups at the Five Colleges.

**NEGATIVE**
- Lack of supportive spaces on campus for non-binary students, especially non-binary students of color.
Questions?

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