"Trans Students"

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Twenty years ago, a chapter on research into the experiences of trans college students could not have been written. Only a handful of articles about trans students were published prior to the mid-2000s (Lees 1998; Nakamura 1998; Carter 2000; Beemyn 2003), and these relied largely on anecdotal evidence in suggesting ways that colleges and universities could become more trans-inclusive. Since then, a rapidly growing number of studies have focused on trans students, which has been made possible by more and more students openly identifying as trans and being willing to share their experiences. However, many of these studies have based their findings on small, non-representative samples (e.g., Bilodeau 2009; Pryor 2015; Nicolazzo 2017), and thus are limited in their ability to consider possible distinctions among trans students based on differences in identities (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, race, class, religion) and the types of institutions they attend (e.g. public vs. private, 2-year vs. 4-year, religiously affiliated vs. secular). Only in the last decade, as researchers have undertaken large-scale studies of trans students (e.g., Beemyn 2019; Goldberg et al. 2019) and national surveys of college students have added questions on gender identity (e.g. Cantor et al. 2015; Oswalt and Lederer 2017; Stolzenberg and Hughes 2017), has there begun to be a body of research that considers the diversity of trans students and makes comparisons between trans and cis students.

In this chapter, I examine the research on trans students, looking at everything from the experiences that they bring with them to higher education, to their experiences applying to and choosing a college, to their experiences on campus. In terms of college environments, I discuss

the literature on the institutional barriers that trans student face, including not having access to safe restrooms and housing, being repeatedly misgendered, and encountering high rates of verbal, physical, and sexual harassment. Research shows that the hostile campus climates often experienced by trans students lead many to have negative mental health outcomes (e.g., Effrig et al. 2011; Diemer et al. 2015; Oswalt and Lederer 2017), but recent studies (Nicolazzo 2017; Nicolazzo et al. 2017) have focused on how trans students practice resilience to survive cisnormative and genderist college environments. It is critical to understand both the effects of harassment and discrimination on trans people and how they mitigate the impact on their well-being in order to persist in college.

Coming into College

Trans students' college experiences are greatly affected by their high school experiences, particularly in respect to whether they were out or perceived by others as trans. As a result, a consideration of the lives of trans college students needs to begin with an examination of their interactions with secondary school institutions and students. Such an analysis is particularly important because a significant number of trans youth never make it to college; they drop out of high school or decide against pursuing a college education because of their negative high school experiences (James et al. 2016).

Large-scale studies (McGuire et al. 2010; James et al. 2016; Kosciw et al. 2016) have found that high school students who openly identify as or are suspected by others of being trans encounter pervasive harassment, violence, and discrimination. Among respondents to the U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS; James et al. 2016), the largest study to date of trans people in the country, 77% indicated that they had been verbally harassed, physically attacked, or expelled

from high school, with those who also identified as American Indian, Middle Eastern, multiracial, or having a disability reporting even higher rates of negative experiences.

The USTS does not break down the prevalence of harassment and violence by when participants were in high school, so it is not possible to consider possible differences over time. However, GLSEN's (formerly the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) 2015 National School Climate Survey (Kosciw et al. 2016) shows that the targeting of trans high school students remains widespread today and that trans students are more likely to be victimized than other students. Despite more awareness of and attempts to address the issue by teachers and administrators in recent years (e.g., Black et al. 2012; Greytak et al. 2013), a majority of the students surveyed by GLSEN reported that they had been verbally harassed by other students at school because of their gender expression. Moreover, school officials also engaged in anti-trans harassment and discrimination through negative comments and through policies that denied the right of trans students to be treated in accordance with their gender identity. More than a third of the participants indicated that trans students at their school were prevented from dressing in a manner and using the bathrooms and locker rooms that reflected their gender identity and were not referred to by the names and pronouns they used for themselves (Kosciw et al. 2016).

Such victimization has been shown to have negative cumulative effects on trans students. For example, 17% of the respondents to the USTS who were out or perceived as trans in high school stated that they left school because of the mistreatment they experienced. Reflecting the added impacts of misogyny and racism, trans women and trans individuals who also identified as American Indian, Middle Eastern, Black, and multiracial were even more likely to have left school due to harassment and violence (James et al. 2016). Other studies (Grossman and D'Augelli 2006; McGuire et al. 2010) have found that some trans students who experience a

hostile climate transfer to more accepting charter and alternative schools rather than dropping out, but this rate is still staggering, given that the overall high school dropout rate is 6.5% (U.S. Department of Education 2016).

While the GLSEN survey is a study of current high school students, and thus is unable to describe the experiences of trans students who have already left school, it offers insights into the experiences of those who may be dropping out. Among the LGBTQ students who stated that they were not planning to graduate or were unsure if they would graduate, over half cited a hostile school climate as a factor in their decision. An even greater percentage reported depression, anxiety, and stress as factors, which, if not directly caused by the harassment and discrimination they experienced, were seemingly exacerbated by it (Kosciw et al. 2016). In addition, the mistreatment of trans students can contribute to negative academic outcomes, such as missed classes and poor grades, which can lead to their flunking out. The trans students in the GLSEN survey who reported higher levels of harassment and assault because of their gender expression also indicated missing more days of school because of safety concerns and having a significantly lower GPA than students who were less frequently victimized (Kosciw et al. 2016). Having a low GPA severely limits the colleges to which a high school student can gain admittance, which may lead some trans high school graduates to give up on further education altogether.

Along with the impact of a low GPA, the long-term effects of victimization also discourage trans high school students from pursuing a college degree. A longitudinal analysis of psychological distress and victimization among LGBTQ adolescents (Birkett et al. 2015) found that those who had experienced greater victimization, which included many of the trans

participants, reported continued high levels of psychological distress, which by comparison tended to decrease over time for those who had been less victimized. Trans high school students who are struggling with anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues because of harassment and discrimination are often less well positioned to attend or be interested in attending college than students who are not having to address such concerns. This point is borne out by the GLSEN survey (Kosciw et al. 2016), in which the students who reported experiencing a higher severity of victimization based on their gender expression were nearly twice as likely (10.0 vs. 5.2%) to indicate that they did not plan to continue on to college or to a vocational or trade school, compared to those who reported experiencing less severe victimization.

Further discouraging trans high school students from attending college is the genderism and anti-trans bias of the educational system itself. Susan Marine (2017) identifies three junctures at which trans high school students may encounter obstacles that inhibit their access to higher education: receiving college guidance, applying to colleges, and matriculating. While the possible impediments at each juncture may not prevent a trans student from going to college, the ways in which theses institutional processes marginalize and erase such students may affect the college they decide to attend and their feelings about doing so.

Marine notes that while the current professional standards for high school guidance counselors address the need to counteract bullying and help create safe school climates for LGBTQ students, they do not direct counselors to be capable of assisting trans students in choosing a college that will be supportive of them and fit their needs. There are online resources that high school students can use themselves to help determine the extent to which colleges have trans-inclusive policies and practices, most notably the Campus Pride Index (www.campusprideindex.org; Garvey et al. 2017) and the Campus Pride Trans Policy

Clearinghouse (Campus Pride 2017b). However, only about 300 of the more than 4000 U.S. colleges have chosen to participate in this index as of 2017, and these tend to be the institutions with more policies in place to support LGBTQ students, as they have an incentive to be included on the index because they will receive a comparatively high rating. Thus, even with a growing number of online resources, trans high school students still need – and often do not receive – help from guidance counselors in thinking about the trans-inclusive policies they want from a college and determining the extent to which different campuses will be supportive environments for them as trans individuals. The failure to provide this assistance contributes to some trans students enrolling in colleges that are especially unwelcoming to trans people, leading to their having less of a sense of belonging on campus than other students, and a greater desire to transfer or drop out. In a large-scale study of LGBTQ people in higher education (Rankin et al. 2010), trans students, especially first-year trans students, were found to be much more likely than cis lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and asexual students to indicate that they were seriously considering leaving the institution in which they were currently enrolled. Specifically, 26% of transmasculine-spectrum, 19% of transfeminine-spectrum, and 28% of gender-nonconforming first-year students reported that they thought about quitting their college.

The marginalization and erasure of trans people is even more pronounced in the college application process (Marine 2017), as prospective students are required to indicate their legal sex – whether their birth certificate lists them as female or male – on admission forms to comply with federal reporting requirements. While a growing number of colleges and college systems, including all 2- and 4-year state institutions in California, also give students the option to indicate their gender identity on their admission form (Campus Pride 2017b), the need for trans people to endorse a gender binary and deny their identity in one of the first questions they

are asked in applying to college sends a signal that there is not a place for them in higher education. The result, as Marine (2017) states, is that trans students are deterred from "bringing their full selves to the college application process" (p. 224).

The last juncture where genderism inhibits access to higher education is in the process of transitioning to and engaging with their college (Marine 2017). Even before a trans student steps foot on campus, they are typically confronted with institutional gender binaries and the denial of their gender identity. If they plan to attend a summer orientation session, they will likely be placed in overnight housing according to their sex assignment, with no opportunity to be housed according to their gender identity. The same is true of the housing assignment they receive for the school year. Because the college's admission application likely did not give them the ability to indicate the name they use for themselves, mailings about housing and other aspects of campus life will use what trans people refer to as their "dead" (i.e., birth) name. When they arrive on campus to begin the school year, their dead name will be the one that confronts them on the door of the residence hall room to which they did not want to be assigned, and it will be the name that their residence hall advisor and other students will use for them, unless they choose to correct them by outing themselves. Similarly, their dead name will likely be the only one that can be listed on course rosters, so that the student will constantly be misnamed and misgendered in classes, again unless they are willing to out themselves to their instructors. Thus, in almost every interaction with the institution, trans students are invalidated and rendered invisible. Is it any wonder then that so many trans students consider leaving the college in which they enrolled, and that some do switch institutions or drop out entirely?

The results of a national survey of incoming, first-year college students (Eagan et al. 2017; Stolzenberg and Hughes 2017) demonstrate the ongoing negative effects of harassment

and discrimination that many trans students bring with them to college, as well as how these students have persevered in the face of adversity to make it to college. In 2015, the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey began asking students from more than 200 colleges and universities whether they identify as transgender. The survey data provide the first large-scale snapshot of the emotional and mental health, academic preparedness, and political and civic engagement of the trans students who are entering higher education. Reflecting the impact of institutional and individual genderism, the CIRP found that trans students report poorer emotional and mental health compared to their cis counterparts (Stolzenberg and Hughes 2017). A majority rated their emotional health as below average or in the lowest 10% relative to other students, whereas a majority of the sample overall rated their emotional health as above average or in the top 10% relative to other students. This huge disparity is also reflected on measures of mental health. Nearly half of incoming trans students indicated that they feel depressed frequently, as compared to less than 10% of all students. In addition, the trans participants were much more likely to state that they felt overwhelmed in the year prior to college (55 vs. 34%).

Despite reporting greater emotional and mental health issues than their cis peers, however, the trans respondents often displayed significantly greater resiliency and agency. They had similar GPAs to the overall sample, with a slight majority of both groups indicating that their GPA was an A− or higher, and they more frequently connected with others, both through socializing with friends and through online social networks. The trans participants were also much more likely to be politically and socially involved. For example, nearly half reported having engaged in some type of activism within the year prior to college and scored high on a

measure of civic engagement, as compared to less than a quarter of students overall. The trans participants more frequently stated that it was “very important” or “essential” to influence the political structure and social values, keep up to date with political affairs, and help promote racial understanding (Stolzenberg and Hughes 2017). Thus, while many trans students enter college struggling with the emotional and psychological effects of the harassment and discrimination they experienced growing up, they remain engaged with society, seeking to bring about change to improve their lives and the lives of others.

Variability of the College Experience

Along with being affected by their high school experiences, trans students’ college experiences are obviously also influenced by both the type of institution and the specific institution they choose to attend. While all colleges remain rooted in a gender binary and none do enough to create a welcoming and inclusive campus environment for trans students, especially nonbinary students (Bilodeau 2009; Beemyn 2019), some do much more than others to create a supportive climate. For example, the Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse (Campus Pride 2017b) lists more than 250 colleges that have a gender-inclusive housing option, about the same number that enable students to use a chosen name instead of their dead name on campus records and documents, and several dozen that provide a means for students to indicate the pronouns they use for themselves on course rosters.

An examination of the colleges on these lists shows major differences between the types of institutions that have and do not have trans-inclusive policies. Not surprisingly, institutions with trans-inclusive policies tend to be large state universities and small liberal arts colleges, in urban areas, and in the Northeast, West Coast, and parts of the Midwest. Relatively fewer

campuses with trans-inclusive policies are religiously affiliated institutions and community colleges, in rural areas, and in the South, the Great Plains, and Mountain West (Campus Pride 2017b).

To date, limited research has considered institutional differences as a factor in the extent to which colleges are supportive of trans students. Abbie Goldberg, Genny Beemyn, and JuliAnna Smith (2017) surveyed more than 500 undergraduate and graduate trans students and asked them whether their school had 17 different trans-supportive policies and practices. They found that private, 4-year, non-religious institutions had the most trans-supportive services and supports and that public and private 2-year colleges had the fewest – even fewer than 4-year religiously affiliated institutions.

Research on the campus climate for trans students indicates similar institutional differences. Secondary data analyses (Beemyn 2012; Garvey et al. 2015) of a large-scale study of LGBTQ people at both 2- and 4-year institutions (Rankin et al. 2010) found that community colleges have climates that are largely unsupportive of trans students, based on classroom experiences, faculty interactions, and the general lack of student support services provided by these institutions. Many religiously affiliated colleges are presumably also particularly inhospitable places for trans students, but no published study has yet focused on the climate for trans students at such institutions. Studies show that cisgender lesbian, gay, and bisexual students at religiously affiliated institutions often receive little institutional support and sometimes encounter open opposition from college officials (Miceli 2009; McEntarfer 2011); it is likely even worse for trans students, given that trans people are generally less accepted in society than cis LGB individuals (Flores 2014). Tellingly, more than 100 religiously affiliated colleges have been granted or are seeking an exemption from the federal civil rights protections provided by

Title IX in order to be able to discriminate against LGBTQ students; many of these requests came after the law's prohibition against sex discrimination began to be interpreted as including discrimination based on gender identity (Stack 2015; Campus Pride 2017a).

Beyond the type of institution they attend, the experiences of trans students in higher education are also greatly affected by a number of other institutional and individual factors, including their academic interests, campus connections and involvements, personal identities, and level of outness. Research suggests that trans students generally have more positive experiences in smaller classes (Pryor 2015) and in courses and majors in the social sciences, arts, humanities, and education, rather than in courses and majors in STEM fields (Linley and Nguyen 2015; Duran and Nicolazzo 2017). Trans students benefit as well when they receive support from faculty members in and outside of the classroom (Linley et al. 2016), when they connect with other LGBTQ people (Pryor 2015; Nicolazzo 2017; Nicolazzo et al. 2017), and when they form romantic and social relationships with supportive peers (Duran and Nicolazzo 2017).

Studies similarly show that trans students' experiences vary by gender identity, with trans women and nonbinary trans individuals more likely than trans men and gender-nonconforming individuals to report instances of harassment and discrimination. For example, nonbinary trans students are more likely to be misgendered than binary trans students, as others fail to ask them how they identify and typically categorize them as female or male (Beemyn 2019; Goldberg 2019). Moreover, because their gender expression may not be stereotypically masculine or feminine, nonbinary trans students also report being more concerned than binary trans students about their safety on campus, and some decide to present themselves in more masculine or more feminine ways than they desire in order to lessen the risk of harassment (Goldberg 2019).

At the same time, trans female students more often experience mistreatment in relation to gendered campus facilities. In analyzing data from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (Grant et al. 2011), Kristie Seelman (2014) found that, compared to the gender-nonconforming participants who had attended college, trans female participants were more than three times as likely to have been denied access to gender-appropriate campus housing and nearly three times as likely to have been denied access to campus restrooms. Because of the pervasiveness and severity of harassment and discrimination, trans women are more likely than members of other trans groups to drop out of college (James et al. 2016). Seelman suggests that the targeting of trans women relates to how they are often not seen by the larger society as "real" women and how "women-only" spaces are policed to exclude them. These experiences reflect what Julia Serano (2007) calls transmisogyny: the ways in which the hatred toward trans people and hatred toward women intersect in the oppression of trans women.

The intersecting of genderism and racism similarly results in trans students of color experiencing discrimination more frequently. Seelman (2014) found that trans people of color were nearly 1.4 times as likely as White trans people to be denied access to gendered campus facilities because of their gender identity. Trans people of color, particularly American Indian, Latinx, African American, and multiracial individuals, were also more likely than White trans people to report having left college as a result of repeatedly encountering harassment and discrimination (James et al. 2016).

A final factor that has a significant role in the college experiences of trans students is their level of outness. If someone is not known as trans, they are unlikely to encounter harassment and discrimination based on their gender identity; conversely, the more someone is thought or known to be trans, the more visible they become and the more likely they are to

encounter anti-trans bias. Many trans students who are transitioning or who identify and present as gender nonconforming will be readily seen as trans. But other trans students, who can and who want to keep others from knowing their gender identity, have a reduced risk of negative consequences. For example, nearly half of the respondents to the USTS (James et al. 2016) who indicated having attended college stated that none of their classmates knew that they were trans. Among the participants in the 2010 State of Higher Education for LGBT People (Rankin et al. 2010), 65% of transmasculine students, 55% of transfeminine students, and 18% of gender-nonconforming students stated that they did not disclose their gender identity in order to avoid harassment and discrimination. The significantly lower percentage for the gender-nonconforming students seemingly reflects the desire of many of them to be open about their identities in order to avoid being placed within a gender binary, even if this means an increased likelihood of experiencing mistreatment.

Institutional Barriers

Even though more and more traditionally college-aged individuals are coming out as trans (Flores et al. 2016), and often demanding that colleges do more to address their needs, higher education remains a largely hostile environment for trans students. Studies have shown that trans students have more negative perceptions of curricular inclusivity, classroom climate, and the overall climate on their campuses than do cisgender LGB and heterosexual students, and that they have a significantly lower sense of belonging within their college communities (Dugan et al. 2012; Garvey and Rankin 2015a). More than a third of trans students indicated that they seriously considered leaving their institution because of its negative environment for trans people (Rankin et al. 2010).

While hundreds of colleges and universities have implemented some trans-supportive policies and practices in recent years, most institutions still offer little or no support to their trans students (Campus Pride 2017b; Goldberg et al. 2019). Moreover, even those that have taken steps to be more inclusive of and welcoming to trans students have a long way to go before they truly are. For example, in considering the experiences of trans students at two large, Midwestern public universities that have implemented some trans-supportive policies and practices, Brent Bilodeau (2009) found that genderism still permeated every aspect of life on these campuses, including in classrooms, campus employment and career planning, student organizations and communities, and campus facilities. The nonbinary trans students in the study had an especially difficult time finding campus support, as the institutions remained firmly entrenched in a gender system that assumes students are either male or female. It is noteworthy that these colleges had made some progress in recognizing and addressing the needs of trans students; institutions that have done little or nothing to support such students are presumably even more toxic environments.

Campus Restrooms and Housing

Discussions about the needs of trans people are often reduced to the issue of restrooms, with transmisogynists arguing that the passage of trans rights laws will lead to individuals who are not women – cis men pretending to be women – and whom they see as not "really" women – trans women – using women's restrooms (Montgomery and Blinder 2016; McCarthy 2017). That said, restroom access is a critical concern for many trans people because they often experience harassment and discrimination in trying to use women's or men's rooms, and they cannot

reasonably hold a job or attend school if they are constantly worrying about having a place to pee in peace. More than a quarter of the respondents to the 2015 USTS (James et al. 2016) reported that they were denied access to a restroom, had their presence in a restroom challenged, or were verbally, physically, or sexually assaulted in a restroom in the previous year. Because of such experiences, or a fear of them, a majority indicated that they sometimes or often avoided using a restroom. They "held it," which ultimately led some to develop urinary tract or kidney-related problems, and limited what they drank and ate to prevent needing to go to a restroom, which can likewise have negative long-term health effects.

Another study (Herman 2013), which involved 93 trans people in the Washington, D.C. area, similarly found that a majority of the participants reported health problems due to trying to avoid using public restrooms. These individuals had decided that they would rather risk their physical health than risk experiencing physical violence in a restroom. As one respondent stated, "I have kidney problems already. I know it's not good for me to hold it, but the alterative could be much worse" (p. 75).

Restroom access is also an extremely important issue for trans college students. Research indicates that many trans students experience harassment when they seek to use gendered campus restrooms, such as being stared at, questioned about their gender, told they are in the wrong facility, or ordered to leave (Bilodeau 2009; Finger 2010; Seelman et al. 2012; Seelman 2014, 2016). Kristie Seelman (2014) found that about a quarter of the respondents to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (Grant et al. 2011) who had attended college stated that they were "not allowed to use the appropriate bathrooms or other facilities" on campus at some point because of their gender identity or expression. The survey only asked about the denial of access to facilities, so it did not account for verbal and physical assault within

restrooms, which was reported by 12% of all participants (not just those who had attended college) in the USTS (James et al. 2016).

Because of the threat of discrimination in gendered restrooms, many trans students will use only gender-inclusive facilities, but most colleges fail to provide enough of them. The more than 500 undergraduate and graduate trans students surveyed by Goldberg et al. (2019) rated having "gender-neutral/gender-inclusive bathrooms in most campus buildings" as the most important trans-inclusive policy or practice among 17 listed, but only 45% of the participants indicated that their college had taken this step. In a study I did (Beemyn 2019), which involved more than 100 nonbinary trans students, a majority stated that what most made them feel unsupported by their college was a lack of gender-inclusive restrooms. Many of the students were able to indicate the exact location of all of the gender-inclusive facilities on their campus, because these were the only ones that they felt safe and comfortable using, and their college had so few of them. Moreover, the gender-inclusive restrooms that did exist were not always well-marked or conveniently located. Some of the students reported that they made sure to go to the bathroom before they left for classes and that they planned their day so that they could get back home in time to avoid needing to use gendered facilities, which caused them tremendous stress and personal discomfort.

As with restrooms, having a safe place to live is a basic need for trans students that is often not met by colleges. Many trans students report being assigned housing and roommates based on their assigned sex rather than their gender identity, not having access to a gender-inclusive or single-room housing option, having to use the "wrong" gendered bathroom in a residence hall, and being harassed by other residents without much recourse (Seelman et al. 2012; Seelman 2016; Beemyn 2019). For example, in the Goldberg et al. (2019) study, less than

half of the participants stated that their college enabled trans students to be housed in keeping with their gender identity/expression, while about one-fifth of the respondents to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey who sought to live on campus stated that they were denied gender-appropriate housing, presumably by college officials (Seelman 2014).

By failing to provide gender-inclusive restrooms and housing options, institutions not only discriminate against trans students and expose them to potential harassment, but also may negatively affect their mental and physical well-being in the long term. Using data from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, Kristie Seelman (2016) discovered that individuals who had been denied access to a campus restroom because of being trans were 1.45 times more likely to have attempted suicide at some point in their lives than those who were not denied access. Those who had been denied access to gender-appropriate campus housing because of being trans were 1.64 more likely to have attempted suicide. The survey did not ask when the participants had attempted suicide, so access discrimination cannot be said to have caused suicidality, but these findings should still give college administrators pause. Institutions that do not have written trans-supportive policies and practices, and that do not actively ensure that these measures are followed, risk causing irreparable harm to their trans students.

Institutional Misgendering

In my study of nonbinary trans students (Beemyn 2019), their biggest complaint about their colleges, after the lack of gender-inclusive restrooms, was being misgendered in classes, because there was not a way for them to indicate the names and pronouns they went by on course rosters and faculty members did not ask them to indicate their names and pronouns at the beginning of courses. Eleanor Finger (2010) similarly found that a mismatch between their

chosen name and their legal name on course rosters and other institutional records was one of the most stressful situations encountered by the trans students she surveyed. Such students were placed in the awkward position of having to come out as trans to faculty members whom they did not know in order to prevent being outed in front of their whole class or being referred to by the wrong pronouns. Many trans students are reluctant to disclose to their professors, not knowing how they will react, so endure being misnamed and misgendered in their classes, even though this often makes them feel invisible and marginalized (Beemyn 2019; Seelman 2019).

Nonbinary trans students are more likely to experience misgendering from both faculty and other students because, operating from a gender-binary framework, many cis people refer to them as "she/her" or "he/him" (Goldberg 2019; Seelman 2019). For example, in Abbie Goldberg's (2019) study of trans grad students, 44% of the nonbinary respondents stated that they were often misgendered by faculty members, and 45% indicated that they were often misgendered by other students; among the binary trans grad students, the figures were 8 and 4%, respectively, with more than half saying that they were never misgendered. Similarly, Tre Wentling (2015) found that, among more than 500 trans students, only 15% of nonbinary respondents reported that their instructors always used the appropriate pronouns, as compared to 63% of binary ones. Nonbinary individuals assigned female at birth and trans men who attend women's colleges are even more likely to experience misgendering by others because of the institutional assumption that all students identify as female and go by "she/her" (Marine 2009; Weber 2019).

In order to limit being misgendered, trans students rate having the ability to change their name on campus records (including ID cards and course rosters) without a legal name change as one of the most important trans-supportive campus policies – but a majority of the students in the

Goldberg et al. (2019) study said that their college did not offer this option. In fact, less than 10% of all colleges do so, and only about 1% give students the ability to indicate their pronouns on course rosters (Campus Pride 2017b). Enabling students to list a chosen name and pronouns on non-legal campus records and documents is permissible in all states and is possible in all major student information software systems, with little expense (Beemyn and Brauer 2015). Thus, an institution that wants to be trans supportive has no legitimate reason not to enact such policies so that trans students are not forced to be made invisible by being misgendered or hypervisible by being outed.

Negative Campus Climate

Of course, indicating a chosen name and pronouns on course rosters, or coming out as trans to a faculty member in the absence of this option, does not ensure that the faculty member or other students in the class will respect how a trans student identifies. Many trans students, especially nonbinary trans students, have described incidents where a faculty member purposely addressed them by their dead name or the wrong pronouns (Pryor 2015; Beemyn 2019; Seelman 2019). Even graduate students, who typically have a closer relationship with faculty members than undergraduates, commonly report being misgendered and misnamed. More than a quarter of the grad students surveyed by Abbie Goldberg (2019) stated that, even though they had asked the professors in their program to use the appropriate pronouns and name, they continued to misgender and misname them, as well as to use genderist language in their classes, such as referring to the students as “ladies and gentlemen.”

The frequent invalidation of their gender identities by professors contributes to gender-nonconforming students perceiving the classroom climate as more negative than do gender-

conforming students (Garvey and Rankin 2015b). All five of the trans students interviewed by Jonathan Pryor (2015), for example, described feeling disrespected and marginalized in their classes by both faculty and other students. The professors had little understanding of how to be supportive of trans students, and some reinforced a hostile, cisnormative classroom environment by refusing to use the names and pronouns requested by students and by making anti-trans remarks. Some cis students similarly did not respect the gender identities of their trans classmates and made harassing comments. It is noteworthy that the trans students experienced this negative classroom climate despite having taken steps to minimize mistreatment, such as by seeking to take large classes, where they would not be called on and potentially misgendered by professors, and by avoiding online courses, which often require the use of a student's legal name, and courses in STEM fields, which they believed had instructors and students who were more antagonistic toward trans people. The extent to which genderism pervades academia is evident in that some trans students report being misgendered in the presumably most supportive classroom context: small classes in Women and Gender Studies (Pryor 2015; Beemyn 2019).

Outside of the classroom, trans students also encounter a "chilly," if not hostile, campus climate. Among the respondents to the USTS (James et al. 2016) who had attended college or vocational school and who indicated that people at their institution thought or knew they were trans, nearly one-quarter stated that they were verbally, physically, or sexually harassed while they were students. The participants who identified as American Indian, Black, and Middle Eastern were even more likely to report having experienced campus harassment. In the 2010 State of Higher Education for LGBT People (Rankin et al. 2010), the respondents were asked whether they had observed someone being intimidated or bullied because of their gender identity; answering in the affirmative were 38% of the gender-nonconforming participants, a

third of the transmasculine participants, and more than a fifth of the transfeminine participants. More than three-fourths of each group had also observed derogatory remarks being made about someone's gender identity.

In addition to frequently experiencing physical and verbal harassment, trans students report extremely high rates of physical, sexual, and intimate-partner violence (Griner et al. 2017). One of the largest studies of sexual assault and sexual misconduct on college campuses that explicitly included trans students was conducted for the Association of American Universities (Cantor et al. 2015) and involved 27 institutions and more than 150 000 students, nearly 1400 of whom identified as a transgender woman, a transgender man, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, questioning their gender identity, or a gender not listed; these various groups were together abbreviated as TGQN by the researchers. The study found that the TGQN students had the highest rates of abuse in all of the areas considered: sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, and intimate-partner violence. For example, more than three-fourths of the TGQN undergrads indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment, as compared to 62% of the cis female undergrads, and 39% of the TGQN seniors reported experiencing non-consensual sexual contact at least once during their time at college, as compared to a third of the senior cis women.

At the same time, few of the TGQN respondents had faith in the system on their campus to support and protect the rights of trans people (Cantor et al. 2015). The TGQN students were the least likely gender group to believe that a report of sexual harassment or sexual assault would be taken seriously, that a fair investigation would be undertaken, or that college officials would protect a victimized student's safety and address the factors that may have led to the attack. In addition, the TGQN students were the most likely gender group to state that an alleged

perpetrator(s) or others would retaliate against a victimized student in response to a report of sexual harassment or sexual assault. Given that many colleges fail to be trans inclusive in their policies and do little to address the negative campus climate experienced by trans students, it is not surprising that these students would not trust their institution to support them even when they had been sexually victimized.

Mental Health Outcomes

The negative campus climates that many trans students face can cause them to experience psychological distress when they are unable to find means to cope with the strains thereof (Effrig et al. 2011). In considering the stresses placed on lesbian, gay, and bisexual people because of the prevalence of anti-LGB attitudes and behaviors, Ilan Meyer (2003) identified two types of stressors: distal, which are external to the individual (such as harassment and discrimination), and proximal, which are internal, related to the individual's own identity and self-perception. Proximal stress results when an individual internalizes the hostility they experience from society, leading them to have a lower sense of self-worth and a variety of negative mental health outcomes. More recently, research has examined how minority stress contributes to mental health concerns among trans people, including trans college students (Effrig et al. 2011; Herman 2013). For example, Jessica Effrig et al. (2011) found that twice as many of the trans students in their clinical and non-clinical samples indicated that they had engaged in self-injurious behavior and seriously considered suicide as compared with the cis student participants, and three times as many reported a suicide attempt.

The largest body of research on the mental health of trans college students comes from the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment (ACHA-

NCHA), which is administered annually at more than 100 colleges, and which began asking how participants identify their gender in 2008. Using ACHA-NCHA data from 2008 to 2011, Elizabeth Diemer et al. (2015) examined rates of eating disorders and related behaviors among college students based on gender identity and sexual orientation. They found that trans students, as compared to cis students of all sexual orientations, had by far the highest rates of being diagnosed with an eating disorder in the previous year and of using diet pills, taking laxatives, or vomiting to try to lose weight in the previous month.

Sara Oswalt and Alyssa Lederer (2017) also used the ACHA-NCHA to evaluate the mental health of trans students; along with anorexia and bulimia, they considered 10 other mental health conditions: anxiety, ADHD, bipolar disorder, depression, insomnia, OCD, panic attacks, phobia, schizophrenia, and substance abuse/addiction. Over a 6-year period, from 2009 to 2014, the trans survey participants reported being diagnosed or under treatment in the previous year for all conditions but insomnia at a much greater rate than the cis participants. Anxiety and depression were especially rampant among the trans students, with more than a third indicating that they had been diagnosed/treated for each – about three times the rate among cis students. These studies point to the difficulties that trans students often face in trying to cope with the rejection and marginalization they commonly experience in college.

Resistance and Resiliency

While many trans people do not persist to college or persist in college because of minority stress, others do, and are successful in earning a higher education degree. Research is just beginning to consider the factors that contribute to trans students being resilient in college environments that are often cisnormative and genderist (Nicolazzo 2016, 2017; Duran and

Nicolazzo 2017; Nicolazzo et al. 2017). Z Nicolazzo et al. (2017) focused on kinship as a framework for understanding trans college students' persistence and success. They found that by establishing on- and off-campus kinship networks with other trans people, and sometimes also with supportive cis individuals, trans students gain support and develop a sense of belonging that they often do not experience otherwise at their institutions. Kinship may be developed in physical spaces, such as LGBTQ and trans-specific student groups, the campus LGBTQ center, and LGBTQ student conferences; in virtual spaces, particularly social media sites; and through the emotional support systems the students have established for themselves. This study demonstrates that, in seeking to create trans-inclusive and welcoming campuses, college administrators must not only focus on changing policies and practices that exclude and marginalize trans students, but also recognize the importance of peer networks. Staff and faculty should help trans students connect with one another, foster the creation of trans-inclusive campus spaces, and involve trans students in developing more supportive college environments.

Along with creating kinship networks, trans students practice resilience as a strategy to cope with institutional and individual instances of genderism. Z Nicolazzo (2016, 2017) found that the nine trans university students whom ze interviewed over the course of one or more semesters developed various ways to use resilience, depending on the context and their own needs for self-care and self-protection. Some disclosed their gender identity in classes and other campus settings to affirm themselves, avoid being misgendered, and educate cis people, while others chose not to indicate that they were trans in order to try to avoid harassment and discrimination.

Resilience was also evident in whom they chose to disclose to and tell about themselves. Trans people, like members of other minoritized groups, are typically expected to educate people

in the dominant society about their experiences, but doing so can be emotionally and psychologically draining, and many trans people tire of explaining themselves to cis individuals. The participants in Nicolazzo's study (2016, 2017) practiced resilience by being selective regarding with whom they discussed their gender identity. They saved their time and energy for cis people who demonstrated support and good intentions and who were likely to help them feel a sense of belonging in campus environments in which they otherwise felt marginalized and rejected. As one of the students in the study stated, "I will educate you if you are genuinely open-minded about it … But, if you're just blissfully ignorant, I could care less about educating you, because I don't want [it] to be a waste of breath" (Nicolazzo 2017, p. 113).

Despite their resiliency, or perhaps because of it, four of the nine students in Nicolazzo's (2017) study left their college, with only one of the four subsequently returning to complete their degree. The institutional and individual oppression they encountered was seemingly too much to overcome in order for them to persevere. However, as Nicolazzo points out, their decision to drop out could also be seen as an act of resilience; faced with two negative options, they chose what they needed to do to protect themselves and survive.

Anneliese Singh and colleagues (Singh and McKleroy 2011; Singh et al. 2011, 2013) have also considered the resiliency of trans people, particularly trans college students and trans people of color. Similar to Nicolazzo's research (2016, 2017), Singh et al. (2013) found that the 17 trans male and nonbinary trans students whom they studied had good experiences in college overall, despite the lack of trans-affirming campus environments, because of the supportive communities of friends, family, and college personnel that they had established for themselves. Being connected to other trans students and cis allies within their peer group was particularly important for resilience, as the participants had individuals with whom they could discuss the

anti-trans discrimination and harassment they experienced and did not feel that they had to face an often hostile campus climate alone.

Connecting with other trans people may be especially critical for trans students who also belong to other minoritized groups and who may feel marginalized within the larger trans community. In a study focusing on trans people of color who had experienced traumatic life events (though none were currently college students), Anneliese Singh and Vel McKleroy (2011) found that a common means of resilience among the respondents was being part of an activist trans community of color. By having ties to other trans people of color, they "had a place to receive support when they experienced verbal, physical, and/or sexual harassment" (p. 39). Support from family members was also central to their resilience. Other common ways that the participants practiced resilience included taking pride in both their ethnic/racial and gender identities, recognizing when they were encountering racial/ethnic and gender oppression, having access to health care and financial resources, and being spiritual and having hope for the future.

Conclusion

While trans students are now the subject of large-scale and national studies, researchers have only scratched the surface in trying to understand their experiences, particularly in terms of recognizing the differences in experience resulting from the different ways that they identify and the different types of institutions that they attend. But even though much more research is needed, we know enough now about the harassment and discrimination that trans students experience on campus and how they can internalize the hostility directed at them for colleges to start taking immediate action. Institutions need to be addressing their negative campus climates, challenging their cisnormative and gender-binary structures, and fostering kinship among their

trans students. We owe it to those who have been willing to share their stories to make their voices heard.

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