Literature Review:

Promoting Campus Diversity

Nikie Reyes

University of Hawai‘i at Manoa

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Introduction

Colleges and universities all over the United States have aimed towards creating and enforcing policies and practices that promote diversity and equity of its students. According to the Digest of Education Statistics published by the National Center for Education Statistics, there are 4,314 degree-granting institutions (2008). Out of the 4314, only 280 colleges and university across the United States have non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and expression (Transgender Law and Policy Institute, 2009).

Campus Orientations are held at the beginning of each semester for new and transfer students to educate them about the student code of conduct and campus policies that all students are expected to adhere to. Although the orientations cover policies against violence, harassment, and discrimination, gender diversity and equity are topics not widely discussed. The majority of education that is taught regarding gender education centers on mainstream topics that are associated with the physical and health aspects of the LGBT community. The majority of education is about gender terms, sexual orientation, AIDS, and sexual reassignment surgery. Little to no information is taught about transgender issues.

The purpose of the instructional module is to develop and evaluate a web-based, instructional module designed to educate students of the University of Hawaii at Manoa about gender diversity and equity on campus, and to raise awareness regarding transgender specific issues in education.

Defining Sex and Gender Identity

There are significant differences between one’s sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The three are independent of one another, and the terms can not be used interchangeably. Sex refers to the biological makeup that an individual was physically born
Gender identity refers to a person’s actual or perceived sex. In other words, it is based on what the individual identifies him or herself to be in regards to identifying with a masculine or feminine image, outwardly appearance, or behavior. Sexual orientation is independent of sex or gender identity. It is the emotional and psychological attraction to either sex. The term transgender is an umbrella term that describes people whose anatomies, gender identity, or appearances differ from a naturally born male or female (Goodrum, 2002).

**Gender Dysphoria**

The transformation of a transgendered individual's life begins with the feeling of gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is also known as gender identity disorder, gender incongruence, or transgenderism. People with gender dysphoria experience anxiety, uncertainty or uncomfortable feelings about the biological sex they were born with. Gender dysphoria is classified as a psychiatric condition, and over the years, the number of individuals coming out and seeking support has increased. Interestingly, men are five times more likely to experience gender dysphoria than women (Blunden and Dale, 2009).

**Transsexual**

Transsexuals are transgender persons who live or wish to live full time in the gender opposite to their birth sex. Individuals that are biologically born female, but wish to live and be recognized as a man are called female-to-male transsexuals (FTM), or transsexual men. Individuals that are biologically born male, but wish to live and be recognized as a woman are called male-to-female transsexual (MTF), or a transsexual woman. The transformation of a FTM or MTF to match their physical bodies to reflect their gender identity is performed by utilizing a variety of methods, most popularly, hormone therapy treatments. Transsexuals also opt to have gender reassignment surgery to align their bodies with their preferred gender identity. (APA,
Transvestite

The American Psychology Association defines people who wear the clothing of the opposite sex or exhibit other cross-gender behavior as transvestites. The difference between a transvestite and a transsexual individual is that they do not possess the need or wish to live full-time in the gender opposite their biological sex. The motive to become a transvestite varies from wanting to express occasional cross-gender feelings for fun or for emotional comfort, or for sexual arousal. The vast majority of cross-dressers are biologically male who choose to continue their lives as a male.

The College Transition

Graduating from high school and transitioning into your first year at college can either be an exciting or dreadful. Issues that transgendered students face extend outside of just the concern for social acceptance. For many students, the transition to college is a highly stressful process (Hudd et al., 2000). According to the NYU Child Study Center, students are introduced to new environments and social settings that impact them emotionally, mentally, and physically. When a student is not able to adjust and cope with their new settings and surroundings, this can cause a great amount of stress that can lead to physical and psychological distress and decreased self-esteem (Schafer, 1996).

For transgender students, the transition period is much more significant than the experience of a normal student. Issues that transgendered students face extend outside of just the concern for social acceptance. Some of the difficulties they deal with is having to analyze social norms, discover their identity, and determining a group affiliation (NYU Child Study Center).
**Transgender Issues in Education**

Unlike the lesbian, gay, or bisexual populations, the transgendered community is more at risk of becoming victims of harassment, violence, and discrimination. Transgendered students are more likely to become targets or victims of hate crimes and social prejudice because of the physical or behavioral characteristics they possess that easily distinguish and readily identity them as transgendered (It’s Time, Illinois, 1997).

While working as the coordinator of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual and Transgender Students Services at the Ohio State University, Brett Beemyn received a number of complaints about incidents that the transgender students encountered. One student received a culturally insensitive remark when he was called a “fag” and “queer” because he looked effeminate. This student was a FTM in transition. Another student struggled with knowing what to indicate on her college admission form because biologically he was born male, but had been living as a transgendered woman, an FTM for over a year. Another student avoided using certain public bathrooms because of hostile comments that he received about his gender.

**Hate Crimes**

Sadly, in the United States, there were two cases of in-school bullying that influenced two children to commit suicide in the month of April alone. Both cases happened within a week of each other. The first case was of a boy from Springfield, Massachusetts named Carl Joseph Walker Hoover. The second case of suicide was of an 11-year old boy named Jaheem Herrera from Atlanta, Georgia. Both boys experienced in-school bullying and accusations of being homosexual by their peers. They were verbally harassed on a daily basis, and repeatedly called “gay”.

“LGBT respondents indicated that the hostile climate at their college or university had a
significant impact on their academic performance. Nearly one in five cited frequent class absence and needing to take an extended break from school, while one in ten cited not graduating in time (taking 5 or more years)” (Campus Climate Report).

**Gender Neutral Facilities**

Like everyone else, transgender people need to use public restrooms, but often times their appearance can make others believe they are in the “wrong bathroom”. This misunderstanding has led to the arrest of transgendered individuals for trespassing or false accusations of attempted sexual harassment. Colleges and universities should have at least one gender neutral, unisex, or family bathroom that can be used by transgendered students that are not comfortable with using the male or female facilities (Mottet, 2004).

Housing is also another issue that transgender students have difficulty with when arranging room accommodations. Colleges and universities that provide housing should modify housing intake forms to allow students to indicate whether they would feel comfortable living with an LGBT student. Alarmingly, at least one out of four heterosexual identified students do not want to share a living space with an LGBT student. By modifying housing intake forms to include questions related to LGBT acceptance, these students will be affirmed in their identities and their safety in housing will be actively protected. Alternatively, colleges and universities could offer gender neutral or LGBT-specific housing for students. This would allow LGBT and allied students to find accepting housing (Campus Climate Report, 2009).

**Diversity Instruction**

Being an advocate for the transgender community involves striving for acceptance, support and inclusiveness of all people. The goal surrounding the effort of the instructional module is aimed towards developing and promoting educational efforts that raise awareness level
and increase the sensitivity towards gender variant students on campus (Washington and Evans, Beyond Tolerance, Chapter 11).

In Lucier’s study “Technology: A Potential Ally for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students”, he validates the need for online resources to the transgendered population. He states that resources for information can be critical to students questioning their sexuality or gender identity. Naturally, transgendered students will want to find information, but at the same time, keep their questioning secretive for personal and safety reasons (1998).

The instructional module should target not only heterosexual students on campus, but extend to the transgender community in need of additional resources for academic and transition support. Due to the absence of the presence of the transgender community on campus and their inability to publicly voice their concerns, colleges have been slow to recognize, much less, provide support to transgendered students (Bauder, 1998). The creation of an online resource for transgendered students will provide a location for them to seek the support they need, and additionally, educate others students in the academic community of the University of Hawaii with information to pass along to others.

**Web-based Instructional Module**

The best method for creating an instructional module and disseminating information to a wide audience is by publishing it to a web page over the Internet. A web page is accessible 24 hours a day to anyone with a computer or smart phone that has the capability of accessing data over the internet, either wired or wirelessly, through a web browser. The internet provides a medium for students to search for information anonymously regardless if sites are accessed through a computer on campus, or a personal laptop from the comfort of their own home. In other words, the use of electronic media to publish an instructional module is an effective way
for individuals to anonymously acquire information that they otherwise would not want to
globally obtain (Lees, 1998).

Glimps and Ford, professors at Tennessee State University, state that “technology-based
instruction, which includes the incorporation of sound instructional design and proven learning-
centered techniques, is an important strategy to use when teaching students about diversity.”
This belief stems from their observation that students in this generation are digital-natives that
are conditioned to learning through multimedia and interactive resources. In order for the
instruction to be effective, they suggest that modules must illustrate how diversity issues have
affected communities, and how they are vital to the nature of individual identities (2008).

**Educational Objectives in Learning**

The development of the content of the instructional modules will be based on Bloom's
taxonomy of learning domains. The main objective of the web-based instructional module is to
cause a shift in the way individuals view the transgender community, in hopes of developing an
understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect, which is an attitudinal objective that coincides with
the affective domain. The affective domain encompasses things that we process emotionally and
internally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes (2001).

**Conclusion**

There is a strong need to educate the community of the University of Hawaii about the
multicultural makeup of the school that extends not only to race, but also gender diversity.
Overall, the instructional goal of the module is to minimize social prejudice directed towards
students by advocating tolerance and acceptance, and a mutual understanding of all people
regardless of race, gender identity, or sexual orientation readily identify them as transgendered.
References


Students Journal, 34, 217-227.


