

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF TRANSGENDER AND
GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

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APPROVED:

Daniel Fishman, Ph.D.

Shalonda Kelly, Ph.D.

DEAN:

Stanley Messer, Ph.D.

Abstract

Increasing numbers of college and university students are identifying openly as transgender even as they navigate significant interpersonal and institutional hostility and discrimination. Although the experiences of transgender students have been increasingly documented, university organizations have struggled to meet these students' needs. As a point of contact with administrators and transgender students, LGBTQ campus centers may be in unique positions to address structural, logistical, and political barriers to creating more accepting campus environments. This dissertation documents the consultative process with the LGBTQ center at Rutgers University. The purpose of the consultation was to (1) clarify and document the needs and experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming students and alumni; (2) determine the extent to which current campus services and policies are meeting those needs; and (3) utilize input from participants in support of programmatic and policy changes. Qualitative needs assessment methodology was used to collect data from ten transgender and gender nonconforming participants. Needs assessment data were used by the LGBTQ center to identify gaps in existing university policies and practices, as well as to draw attention to transgender student experiences at the administrative level. This study suggests that needs assessments may be utilized as flexible tools to document the needs of marginalized students.

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Introduction and Background

Recent research has noted that increasing numbers of students are openly identifying as transgender and gender nonconforming (Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; McKinney, 2005; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). Although comprehensive data on the size of the transgender and gender nonconforming student population has not been systematically collected, one report estimates the number of transgender adults to be 0.3% of the United States adult population, or approximately 700,000 individuals (Gates, 2011). With over twenty million students enrolled in colleges and universities in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), there are likely over 60,000 transgender students nationwide. This figure is likely a significant underestimation; it does not include individuals who are gender-nonconforming but do not identify with a transgender identity. Furthermore, a recent survey found that transgender individuals are almost twice as likely as the general population to have at least some college education (Grant et al., 2011), indicating that transgender individuals may be overrepresented in the general college population.

A small but emerging body of literature has begun to focus on the needs and experiences of transgender students, from the interrelated perspectives of campus climate (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010), identity development (Bilodeau, 2005; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012), student services (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005; Buzuvis, 2012), resiliency (Singh et al., 2013), engagement and leadership (Dugan et al., 2012), and daily lived experiences (Goodrich, 2012; McKinney, 2005). As the educational experiences of transgender college students are better documented and understood, it has become clear that many colleges and universities are struggling to meet

their needs, with research documenting ignorance of and hostility toward transgender issues and identities at the interpersonal, programmatic, and policy levels (McKinney, 2005; Rankin et al 2010; Rankin & Beemyn 2011). At the same time, as these students occupy increasingly visible spaces on campus, they are effecting important changes in their environments, working to shift campus policies, programs, and climates toward greater inclusivity and acceptance (Marine, 2011; Singh et al., 2013).

For many young adults, college is a time of identity exploration and significant growth (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Ternzini, 2005). Research exploring the intersections of transgender identity and college student development has found that transgender students experience unique and complex developmental challenges in higher education settings (Bilodeau, 2005; Marine, 2011; McKinney, 2005). While in college, many transgender students may come to develop, express, and integrate a more authentic gender identity. This process is deeply intertwined with exploration of other aspects of student life, such as development and expression of academic, occupational, cultural, and political identities, and negotiation of interpersonal relationships. However, as numerous researchers have noted, our understanding of the ways transgender students negotiate these developmental tasks, while confronting significant systems of oppression, is extremely limited (Bilodeau, 2005; Marine, 2011; McKinney, 2005; Singh et al., 2013).

Hampered by small sample sizes, much of the extant literature on transgender college students has not examined within-group differences with regards to factors such as age, gender identity and expression, or race/ethnicity. It is important to note that the small number of studies examining such differences have found variation in experiences of campus climate (Rankin et al., 2010); student involvement (Dugan et al., 2012);

healthcare providers (Xavier et al., 2007), and developmental trajectories (Rankin & Beemyn, 2011; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012). Narrative accounts and qualitative research support these findings, suggesting that research into “transgender identity and experiences” should be undertaken with an appreciation for the diversity of transgender identities (e.g., Bornstein & Bear Bergman, 2010; Goodrich, 2012; Howard & Stevens, 2000; McKinney, 2005; Rankin & Beemyn, 2011; Singh, 2013). Intersectional theories of identity, which emphasize the complex ways gender identity and expression intersect with disability, age, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, immigration status, geographic and national origin, and other identities, may provide a useful framework for understanding these experiences. (Grant et al., 2011; Burnes & Chen, 2012).

Comments on Terminology

Definitions and terminology surrounding transgender identities are a frequent point of confusion and contestation, reflecting what Beemyn (2003) calls a “lack of sufficient vocabulary...to describe the diversity of gender expression, especially the experiences of transpeople who do not identify as exclusively male or female” (3). The definitions and labels created to describe the many permutations of sex, gender, and sexuality are continuously evolving and, like all descriptors of identity, reflect ever-changing political and sociocultural realities. The term *transgender* (also *trans* or *trans**) has come to be used as an “umbrella” term for individuals whose gender identities and expressions are different from those assigned to them at birth (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2009), and/or who “defy rigid gender constructions, and who express or present a breaking and/or blurring of cultural/stereotypical gender roles”

(Tranzmission, n.d., in Rands, 2009). A diverse multitude of identities may fall within transgender umbrella, including *two-spirit*, *genderqueer*, *transsexual*, *MtF* and *FtM*, *cross-dresser*, *drag king/queen*, *agender*, *multigender*, and *third-gender*. One large-scale survey of transgender individuals noted respondents used over a hundred distinct terms to describe their gender identities (Rankin & Beemyn, 2011). Many individuals whose gender expressions or identities do not conform to societal expectations (e.g., *gender nonconforming*) may or may not identify with a transgender identity, yet may encounter similar challenges experienced by transgender-identified individuals (Grant et al., 2011; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012).

For the purpose of this study, I utilize the term *transgender* to encompass the broadest possible range of gender identities and expressions, including individuals who have chosen to transition from one gender to another (e.g., transsexual), individuals who chose not to transition but do not identify with their assigned gender at birth (e.g., genderqueer), and individuals who may not identify with a transgender identity but whose gender identities and/or expressions do not conform to binary societal norms. I contrast use of this term with *cisgender*, which I define as gender identity and expression in alignment with one's assigned sex and conforming to societal norms. In doing so, I acknowledge that this usage of these contested terms masks important differences among individuals and groups. Other contested terms used throughout this work include: *queer*, used to describe individuals outside of heterosexual and cisgender categories; and *LGBTQ*, an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. I use this acronym at times for simplification and brevity, with an awareness that it does not represent a full spectrum of gender and sexual identities. I want to further acknowledge

the limitations of terminology and categorization in representing individual experiences.

As Kusalik (2010), an activist and educator writes,

It is this talk of gender as an abstract set of identity categories which I find unhelpful... I am uncomfortable when I am asked which gender I am or how I identify; I have little hope that telling people which of these abstract categories I identify with will help them know me better. On the other hand, I am always happy to talk to people about my gendered experiences. (p. 56)

Campus Challenges: Hostility and Discrimination

Existing research has consistently found that transgender students experience significant interpersonal and institutional hostility in university settings. A recent large-scale survey of transgender and gender nonconforming adults of all ages conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality (Grant et al., 2011) found that 90% of respondents reported workplace harassment or discrimination, 78% experienced harassment in their K-12 schools, and 53% experienced verbal harassment in a place of public accommodation. These incidents of discrimination, bias, and harassment are associated with increased risk for negative mental and physical health outcomes. Consistent with these results, several studies have shown significant patterns of harassment and discrimination toward transgender students on college campuses. A survey of 75 transgender-identified undergraduate and graduate students found that students perceive a significant lack of knowledge, resources, and support for transgender issues on their college campuses, with participants reporting feelings of marginalization and isolation (McKinney, 2005). As part of a national study of 5149 LGBTQ individuals

on college campuses, Rankin et al. (2010) surveyed 695 individuals identified as transmasculine, transfeminine, or gender nonconforming. 39% of transmasculine, 38% of transfeminine, and 31% of gender nonconforming respondents reported experiencing harassment, compared with 20% of men and 19% of women. Transgender respondents were also significantly more likely to experience harassment based on gender identity. These incidents took many forms, including intimidation/bullying, staring, derogatory remarks, deliberate exclusion or social isolation, and hostile classroom environments.

Campus Challenges: Genderism in Higher Education

In addition to interpersonal hostility and violence, transgender students may encounter oppression through the policies and practices of their higher educational institutions. Theorists have suggested that this oppression manifests through *genderism* (also, *cisgenderism*, *gender conforming privilege*, *cisnormativity*), that is, the assumption, enforcement and reification of a binary (i.e., male/female) system of gender, erasing and negating the lived experiences of transgender individuals (Beemyn, 2003; Bilodeau, 2005; Lorber, 1994; Marine, 2011; Namaste, 2000). The expectation that individuals conform to this binary as a requisite of belonging to and succeeding in a university community is communicated both implicitly and explicitly. As Marine (2011) notes, “Colleges and universities are particularly prone to the practice of genderism, and, in a multitude of ways affecting students from the moment of matriculation until graduation, a clear expectation is communicated that students are ever only male or female and that they must exhibit gender identities coherent with their biological sex. ...[D]ividing students into male and female designations... while considered normal ways of

categorizing students in college, have profound implications for students in gender transition or who prefer to live outside the gender binary altogether” (68). The structural and policy areas discussed below have been identified by researchers as loci of genderist practice in college and university settings, and thus important areas of focus in creating positive changes on campuses. (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn, Curtis, et al., 2005; Beemyn, Domingue, et al., 2005).

Administrative policies. Administrative policies can have direct and indirect impact on the well-being of transgender college students. Many schools include “sex,” “gender,” and “sexual orientation” in non-discrimination policies, but do not have explicit protections for transgender college students (i.e., “gender identity and expression”). As discussed above, a disproportionate number of transgender students may experience institutional discrimination; campus non-discrimination policies may provide an avenue for reporting and addressing these incidents. Beemyn (2003) suggests that campus policies that do not adopt a “zero tolerance” policy for harassment and violence toward gender nonconforming people contribute to a less safe campus environment for transgender students as well as cisgender LGB students who may be targeted for gender nonconformity. Although other campus regulations dividing students into male/female only categories, including athletic and housing policies, are necessary areas of focus, it has been suggested that the creation of a university-wide non-discrimination policy protecting gender identity and expression is an important foundational step in creating a more positive campus climate (Beemyn et al., 2005; Case et al., 2012).

Documentation. Changes to academic documentation policies and procedures can lead to significant improvements in the experiences of transgender students, as well as increased awareness of transgender issues in college communities (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn et al., 2005). Changes can be made to printed and online materials, such as admissions and housing application forms; rather than forcing students to check a “male” or “female” box, students can be provided a field to describe their gender identity. Roster and registrar policies can also be adapted to allow for greater facility of name change, allowing students to adopt a preferred name that can be used in classroom settings. Beemyn (2003) suggests that such changes not only signal to transgender students a level of institutional awareness and acceptance of diverse gender identities, but also help to “educate the campus community about gender diversity” (18). Singh et al (2013) found that use of trans-affirming language throughout campus settings (e.g., academic, residential, administrative) is an important step in creating welcoming campus climate, and that students themselves are often the catalysts for positive change by advocating for respectful language with their peers, teachers, and administrators in daily interactions.

Student support services and activities. On many college campuses, LGBTQ centers often serve to educate community members, increase visibility of LGBTQ issues, provide support for LGBTQ students, and advocate for programmatic and policy changes on campus (Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenburg, 2002). Despite this, programming from these centers often ignores transgender issues, focusing instead on the needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students (Beemyn et al., 2005) This dynamic may be a result of several factors. First, transgender individuals may be underrepresented as directors and staff in

these centers (Marine, 2011). Additionally, LGBTQ center staff may lack training and knowledge on how to best provide outreach and support services to transgender students. Some transgender students on campus may also be isolated from or not identify with a “mainstream LGBT community” on campus, contributing to directors’ perceptions that there are few, if any, transgender stakeholders. As LGBTQ centers have the potential to effect large changes in campus climate and policy, they represent important areas of focus when considering institutional inclusion of transgender college students.

Transgender students may also have a wide range of experiences with student groups on campus. Many LGBT groups have only recently added the “T” to their title and may be more inclusive of transgender students in name than in actuality. These groups may overlook issues of gender identity in their leadership structure, programming and political work. Heterosexual transgender students in particular may feel unwelcome in these groups (Beemyn et al., 2005; Poynter & Washington, 2005). Even when welcome, transgender students may be tokenized or marginalized in these organizations (McKinney, 2008).

Other campus organizations may also be unwelcoming or even hostile toward transgender students. Many student groups implicitly or explicitly endorse a binary framework of gender identity and expression, including Greek organizations (fraternities and sororities), sports teams (men’s and women’s teams), professional affinity groups (women in science and engineering), cultural affinity groups, and academic departments (e.g., “women’s studies”). Administrative policies limiting who may and may not join these organizations can be an important starting point for changing campus climate and

attitudes, though research also suggests a need for on-the-ground training and education of student leaders, support staff, and administrators (Beemyn, 2003).

Housing and public accommodations. The majority of colleges and universities in the United States have genderist housing policies and facilities that segregate students according to a binary system of gender. As of this writing, only 149 colleges and universities in the U.S. have a gender inclusive housing option (Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse, 2013). Gender exclusive policies and facilities create spaces that negate the identities of students who do not identify with a gender binary. In many cases, students may be required to live in housing of their assigned gender, creating unsafe and hostile living environments for these students (Beemyn et al., 2005).

Advocates and researchers have suggested many steps that administrators and housing providers can take to create safer environments for transgender and gender nonconforming students. As housing staff and residence counselors are in direct, daily contact with students, they represent an important target population for training on transgender issues, particularly as they pertain to existing housing policies and options. Housing forms can be changed from male/female forced choice options to a fill-in-the-blank format, allowing for students to specify a gender label of their choice. Beemyn et al. (2005) suggest that transgender housing concerns be addressed on a case-by-case basis, while underscoring the importance of providing gender-neutral/mixed-gender housing and single occupancy housing options.

Bathrooms and locker rooms represent other spaces where a gender binary is often rigidly enforced. These spaces may be some of the most dangerous spaces on

campus for transgender students, who may experience verbal or physical assault, police questioning, and even arrest for using restrooms. Because of the threatening nature of these spaces, many transgender individuals avoid using public bathrooms, conferring risk of bladder, urinary, and kidney problems over time (Alegria, 2011). Some colleges are now taking steps to provide single-stall and gender-neutral bathrooms in high traffic buildings, such as libraries, cafeterias, and student unions. These accommodations can also be provided in residential facilities. Some colleges have also begun to create individual private changing and showering facilities in locker rooms to accommodate transgender students (as well as students requiring medical assistance and those with young children; Beemyn et al., 2005). However, equal access to public facilities continues to be a central area of political and legal contestation at colleges and universities across the United States (Gershenson, 2010; Griffin, 2009).

Health services. Transgender students have unique physical and mental health care needs that college and health and counseling centers struggle to meet. While increasing numbers of medical schools are including training modules on the health care needs of sexual and gender minorities, many healthcare providers are lack specialized training in working with transgender students. Although many college counseling centers utilize multicultural strategies in the provision of mental health services, therapists may be uninformed about the unique challenges facing transgender individuals. Too often, transgender students find themselves in the frustrating position of having to educate their service providers on transgender-specific issues (McKinney, 2005; Xavier, Hannold, Bradford, & Simmons, 2007).

Physical healthcare. Quantitative and meta-analytical research has documented numerous barriers transgender individuals face in accessing healthcare (e.g., Bauer et al., 2009; Grant et al., 2011; Institute of Medicine, 2011; Xavier et al., 2004). Barriers include refusal of healthcare services; unavailability of competent service providers; lack of insurance coverage for transgender-specific healthcare services; and underrepresentation and invisibility of transgender populations in medical research, training, prevention, and outreach. Transgender individuals may experience high rates of stigmatization and harassment in healthcare settings: a large-scale survey of transgender people by Grant et al. (2011) found that 28% of respondents experienced verbal harassment in a medical setting, while 50% reported that their healthcare providers lacked knowledge regarding an aspect of their healthcare needs. Furthermore, in the United States, many major third-party payers do not cover transgender-specific healthcare services, such as hormone treatment and surgery. These barriers exacerbate the impact of economic and social marginalization experienced by many transgender individuals on a daily basis (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011; Xavier et al., 2007). In higher educational settings, lack of appropriate health care may negatively impact transgender students' ability to succeed academically (Beemyn et al., 2005; McKinney, 2005; Singh et al 2013). Because transgender college students present at college health centers in various stages of transitioning and exploration of their sexual and gender identities, a range of culturally and medically sensitive services are needed. Yet multiple studies have found that healthcare providers lack the expertise to meet their

healthcare needs (Alegria, 2011; Hanssmann, Morrison, & Russian, 2008; Sanchez, Sanchez, & Danoff, 2009).

Mental healthcare. Experiences of discrimination, harassment, and stigma appear to be common across diverse transgender populations, and represent significant psychosocial stressors in the lives of transgender students. Such experiences may be compounded by economic marginalization and family rejection, contributing to the elevated risk found in transgender individuals for disorders such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and eating disorders, as well as self-harm and suicidality (Bockting et al., 2006; Grant et al., 2011; Xavier et al., 2007). Mental health issues may be related to, or distinct from, gender identity issues, depending on the individual. Bockting et al. (2006) note that issues of gender identity may also intersect with issues of body image, grief and loss, sexual concerns, spiritual concerns, and interpersonal violence and abuse. They suggest an idiographic, culturally sensitive approach to assessment and treatment of transgender individuals that explores, when appropriate, how gender identity issues intersect with the above psychological concerns. However, many clinicians are not trained to conceptualize psychopathology within the wider context of societal transphobia and stigma. A recent American Psychological Association (APA) survey of practicing psychologists and students found that only 52% of respondents had an opportunity to learn about transgender issues in their graduate school training, while only 27% felt “sufficiently familiar with transgender issues” (APA, 2009).

As in physical health care settings, transgender students may experience numerous barriers to accessing appropriate mental health care services through college

counseling centers. Many counselors may either be uninformed about the unique issues facing transgender students, or worse, may view gender non-conformity and transgender identity as pathological. Such therapists may provide therapy in an insensitive or unethical manner, inconsistent with the current Standards of Care for transgender individuals (World Professional Association for Transgender Health, 2011). In some settings, psychologists serve as “gatekeepers” in facilitating the physical transition process for transgender individuals. Many medical providers require documentation from a qualified mental health care professional stating that the individual seeking to transition is psychologically ready for transition-related medical services (Grant et al., 2011).

Transgender Student Resilience

As described above, research on transgender student experiences have frequently focused on the manifestations and consequences of genderism and discrimination. However, several scholars have cautioned against a deficit-focused narrative that does not account for the breadth and depth of resilience and resistance strategies within transgender communities (Grant et al, 2011; Marine, 2011; Singh et al., 2013). For instance, Grant et al. (2011) found higher rates of transgender individuals returning to pursue higher education as compared to the general population, despite facing significant discrimination and harassment. A sample of 91 transgender college students found overall levels of participation in “educationally meaningful” campus experiences to be equal to cisgender LGB and heterosexual peers despite significantly higher reported rates harassment and discrimination and a lower sense of community belonging (Dugan et al., 2012).

Several researchers have also noted the ways in which transgender students are active agents of change in their communities, raising awareness of gender diversity, highlighting inequalities in campus policies, and reconceptualizing ways of political and social organizing by utilizing feminist, queer, and trans-theoretical approaches (Case, Kanenberg, & Tittsworth, 2012; Singh, 2013; Singh et al., 2013). These strengths-based approaches often draw on transgender student narratives to bring attention to individual and community resilience strategies (Howard & Stevens, 2000; McKinney, 2005; Rankin & Beemyn, 2011; Singh et al., 2013). A recent phenomenological study by Singh (2013) conducted with thirteen transgender youth of color described a variety of resilience strategies used to resist significant racism, transprejudice, and ageism in educational, familial, and peer systems. These strategies include self-advocacy, identification with evolving racial, ethnic, and gender identities, engagement with queer youth communities, and utilization of social media. However, this area of research is in its nascence; a consistent theme noted in these studies is the ongoing scarcity of transgender narratives (Marine, 2011).

Needs Assessment: A Flexible Tool

A growing body of research has begun to identify the needs of transgender college students across the United States, with accompanying programmatic and policy recommendations (Beemyn, Curtis, et al., 2005; Beemyn, Domingue, et al., 2005). Yet how can student service providers, student activists, and university administrators determine the degree to which programs and policies are meeting the needs student groups at a specific university? One applied social research tool that can be utilized to

clarify current needs and bring about change in the provision of services is a needs assessment. Reviere, Berkowitz, Carter, and Ferguson (1996) define a needs assessment as “a systematic and ongoing process of providing usable and useful information about the needs of the target population—to those who can and will utilize it to make judgments about policy and programs” (6). Data collected through process can be used to explore what Royse, Staton-Tindall, Badger, and Webster (2009) define as four “focal points” of need: (1) awareness of services; (2) availability of services; (3) accessibility of services; and (4) acceptability of services. An advantage to needs assessment methodologies is that they can be tailored based needs and constraints of a given organization. Needs assessment data can be collected from primary and/or secondary sources, using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches. The collected data can be used to develop a rationale for new policies and programs, to allocate resources, to modify existing services, and to increase awareness and engagement around a specific issue (Reviere et al., 1996). In college settings, needs assessments have been used clarify the needs of a wide variety of student communities, including as graduate students (Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2006), international students (Leong & Sedlacek, 1989), women of color in engineering (Tate & Linn, 2005), and students with learning disabilities (Hadley, 2007).

The Current Project

This paper seeks to describe the findings from an exploratory needs assessment conducted with transgender, gender nonconforming, and other gender minority students at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. It also aims to articulate the process of

conducting a needs assessment and to discuss the strengths and limitations of this approach for the benefit of future parties seeking to create safer, more welcoming campus environments for students of all genders.

The project arose through a consultative meeting between this writer, a doctoral candidate at the Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, and Jenny Kurtz, the director of the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities (SJE), the LGBTQ center on Rutgers New Brunswick Campus. During this consultation, it was noted that the center had been attempting to assess the needs of the transgender student population at Rutgers, to provide appropriate and targeted services for this population, and to foster community and an atmosphere of support for the small but growing number of transgender students on campus. At the administrative level of the university, the center had also experienced difficulty codifying policies that it believed will improve the campus climate for transgender students. As described above, research has described steps for creating more accepting campus environments (e.g., Beemyn 2003; Beemyn, Domingue, et al., 2005; Singh et al., 2013). However, each university faces unique structural, political, and logistical barriers to addressing these problems. As a point of contact with transgender students, LGBTQ campus centers may be in a unique position to gain an understanding of these barriers and thereby effectively work with transgender students toward their elimination (Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenburg, 2002). The assessment aimed to clarify the following: specific interpersonal and institutional obstacles and barriers transgender students face at Rutgers; student perceptions and utilization of various student services and programs (e.g., Health Services, Counseling

and Psychological Services, Residential Life, LGBT Center); coping strategies and social support networks; and perceptions and experiences of campus climate.

Many of the issues faced by transgender students may be conceptualized as resulting from a complex interaction between the individual students and staff, the campus environment, and larger political, cultural, and economic forces, all of which occur in what Bronfenbrenner (1979) calls a *chronosystem*, or the patterning events over time in accord with sociohistorical circumstances. This needs assessment arose within a larger context of many significant—and currently ongoing—changes at Rutgers over the past decade, including:

(1) Structural changes such as the formal creation of SJE in 2005; its relocation to a larger space in 2009; the hiring of a full time director for SJE (Jenny Kurtz) as well as an assistant director and multiple support staff; the expansion of campus-wide training and liaison programming through SJE (further discussed in the Results section).

(2) Changes to university policy and state law, such as inclusion of gender identity as protected status in NJ State Non-Discrimination Law (N.J. Stat. Ann. §§ 10:5-12) and Rutgers Nondiscrimination Policy (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2012).

(3) The suicide of Rutgers student Tyler Clementi in 2010, bringing national media attention to issues of campus climate and harassment of LGBTQ students both at Rutgers and nationwide. In the years following this tragedy, the Tyler Clementi Center, a collaborative effort shared by the Tyler Clementi Foundation and Rutgers University, was established to address issues of bullying, college transition, and youth suicide, with a focus on LGBTQ youth.

(4) Anecdotal observations of increasing numbers of openly-identified transgender students attending Rutgers (J. Kurtz, personal communication, July 25, 2013). These students have been crucial in advocating for programmatic and policy changes at Rutgers to date. Several social and political student groups for transgender Rutgers students currently exist.

(5) Recent program and policy changes in multiple areas of student life, including housing, healthcare, documentation, and public facilities, discussed in greater detail in the Results section of this work.

Methodology

The needs assessment utilized individual and group interview methods to collect qualitative data about the experiences of Rutgers transgender students. Reviere et al. (1996) comment that use of qualitative methods may be optimal when conducting needs assessments with “persons and groups whose assumptions differ from those of the mainstream culture, and who, therefore, have a particular need to speak and be heard, ‘in their own voices’” (54). Qualitative methodology was also deemed logistically feasible given the relatively small sample of students expected to participate. The methodology of this assessment was “problem driven”, that is, designed to address the challenges expressed by the consultee organization, rather than to generate or test a specific hypothesis (Kidd & Kral, 2005). Multiple assumptions and tenets underpinned the design and implementation of this project:

(1) transgender and gender nonconforming students at Rutgers University have unique needs as a student population;

(2) these students may experience barriers to access student services, may hold unique perceptions of student services, and may have had negative experiences with these services;

(3) gender identity and expression are fluid, complex, social constructs that intersect with other aspects of identity and experience;

(4) existing structures and policies at Rutgers may contribute to students' sense of safety and community;

(5) transgender students are not passive recipients of services nor passive participants in research; they active agents of change in the Rutgers community;

(6) personal experiences are connected to and reciprocally influence systemic and political processes;

(7) it is feasible to document the experiences of transgender students as a means of facilitating future change in programming and policy on campus; and

(8) needs assessment techniques can be a feasible method do so, and may be flexibly tailored to the needs of the consultee organization and the participants.

Instrument Development

Interview and focus group protocols were developed to guide the data collection process. A semi-structured format consisting of open-ended questions was chosen to maximize the variety and depth of qualitative responses (Royse et al, 2009). The questions were created by this author with initial input from the consultee organization and current research on transgender college student needs (e.g., Beemyn, Curtis, et al., 2005; McKinney, 2008; Rankin & Beemyn, 2011). Additionally, stakeholders such as

transgender Rutgers alumni, members of the Gender Identity Taskforce, and administrators in multiple areas of student life (e.g., health services, housing) were contacted and asked to review and added additional questions of interest to the interview protocol, in an attempt to facilitate stakeholder involvement at early stages of the project (Kidd & Kral, 2005; Reviere et al., 1996).

A brief demographic form was also created to obtain information about race, ethnicity, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, and year at Rutgers. Providing this information was optional, except for gender identity and Rutgers student/alumni status, which were inclusion criteria for the study. Copies of the interview protocol, focus group protocol, and demographic information form may be found in Appendices A, B, and C, respectively.

Inclusion Criteria

Participation in the needs assessment was initially limited to Rutgers undergraduates and graduate students who identify as transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, two spirit, cross dressing, or other gender minority. The criteria were later expanded to include alumni, as the consultee organization expressed interest in including data from alumni participants after several alumni who remained active participants in the Rutgers transgender community after graduation expressed interest in participating. The criteria were explicitly designed to include as broad a cross-section of the transgender community at Rutgers as possible.

Although participation was open to students from all Rutgers campuses, recruitment efforts were largely confined to New Brunswick campus, as the services

provided by the consultee organization and assessed in this project are primarily limited to students on New Brunswick campus. Participants in the needs assessment were largely from the New Brunswick campus, and this paper will systematically focus on the needs of students from this campus. However, participant responses from the Rutgers Newark and Camden interviewees indicated that these campuses may have fewer resources available for transgender students on these campuses. For example, Rutgers Camden does not yet have a dedicated LGBT center or full-time staff member to create LGBT-specific programming. Given that Rutgers Camden and Newark have different housing, health, documentation, and student life policies, organizational structures, and student populations, this study's findings should not be generalized to students on all three campuses. However, students and administrators from Newark and Camden campuses will likely find the results from New Brunswick campus helpful in their own organizational and advocacy efforts. Where appropriate, I have included responses from Newark and Camden respondents in the results section of this report.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through a variety of methods. Fliers advertising the project were posted on bulletin boards in public spaces on the New Brunswick campus. A recruitment notice was also placed each week in the SJE electronic newsletter, which is emailed to hundreds of students, staff, and faculty on campus. Students previously in contact with the consultee organization regarding transgender issues were provided information about the study. Online and in-person outreach was conducted with various student and campus organizations, including cultural and LGBTQ student groups, health

services, LGBTQ housing, the Women's and Gender Studies department, the SJE LGBTQ Liaison program, and faculty and student listservs. Additionally, network recruitment using a snowball sampling technique was used; study participants were asked to pass on information about the study to others in their social networks who might meet inclusion criteria. The recruitment materials were developed with input from the consultee organization and can be found in Appendix D.

In their discussion of methodological issues in research with LGB people of color, DeBlaere et al. (2010) discuss the importance of building participants' sense of trust in recruitment, noting the history of exploitation experienced by racial, ethnic, and LGB populations in research. Given the historic erasure of transgender populations by researchers, additional attention in the recruitment process of this needs assessment was made to fostering trust in relationships with participants. In addition to requesting input from transgender community members in the development of the interview protocol, several factors helped build trust with potential participants. First, recruitment materials emphasized a central goal of the project, which was to create a forum for transgender student voices to be heard and to inform policy and program efforts at Rutgers. Second, an effort was made to develop trusting relationships with transgender student leaders and other members of the community through attendance of student meetings. Third, recruitment efforts emphasized in-person recruitment, which provided opportunities for potential participants to ask questions of the primary investigator, including issues of confidentiality, researcher interest in and prior experience with transgender populations and issues, and potential benefits to the student community through participation. These in-person meetings provided a chance for rapport building prior to the actual interviews.

Interview and Focus Group Procedures

Potential participants who expressed interest in participating were provided an overview of the project and were given a choice of participating in a focus group or private, individual interview. This option was included to maximize the inclusivity of the study, with an understanding that each format has unique advantages and drawbacks. Focus groups have the potential to clarify group norms, interpersonal processes, and cultural values, as well as to facilitate expressions of criticism and anger in ways that individual interviews or survey methods may not (Robinson, 1999). They have added benefits of being more cost- and time-effective than one-on-one interviews. Focus groups can also serve to foster connections among individuals who may share commonalities in background or experience, with potential to facilitate exchange of information and participant involvement future change efforts (Chiu, 2003). Conversely, individual interviews were included for participants who might prefer the privacy of a one-on-one interaction. Individual interviews also allow for more in-depth probing of individual responses, and are logistically simpler to coordinate (Reviere et al., 1996). All interviews were conducted in private rooms at the consultee organization or other campus buildings based on participant preference.

The project's design was reviewed and approved by the Rutgers Institutional Review Board. Following overview of the study procedures, each participant was provided an informed consent document (Appendix E), which detailed the study design, participant rights, and risks and benefits. Participants provided verbal consent to participate in the study and were provided with a copy of the consent form, as well as a

list of local resources to receive further help in case of participant distress. Participants were also asked to sign an optional consent to audiotape the interviews (see Appendix E). The tape-recorded interviews, transcripts of interviews, self-report survey, and other data collected from the participants were securely and confidentially maintained by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet and password-protected computer in a private office. After three years, all identifying paper and electronic data will be destroyed.

Using the open-end interview or focus group protocol, interviews were conducted in single sessions lasting approximately one to 1.5 hours. Participants were not compensated for their participation, but refreshments were provided as a courtesy. All participants consented to audio recording, which was recorded using a digital device. The interviews were conducted during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Data Analysis and Dissemination

Interview recordings were transcribed and deidentified for analysis. Participant interviews were analyzed using open-coding techniques. Interview material was then organized around “need areas.” These themes were derived deductively from the existing literature on transgender college student needs as well as inductively from the interview material (see Royse et al., 2009). Similarities or differences across interviews in each thematic area were examined by grouping participant responses in each area in a matrix, allowing for comparison among individuals (see Royse et al., 2009 and Reviere et al., 1996 for description of matrix-grouping techniques).

The findings from participant interviews, taken in the context of existing services and policies at Rutgers, were used to develop organizational and policy

recommendations. These recommendations were summarized in policy briefs, which were created by this researcher and shared with the consultee organization for their ongoing program and advocacy efforts at Rutgers. The findings were also made available to research participants and to other stakeholders, including transgender student groups and providers of student services. The policy briefs can be found in Appendices F - M.

Results

Demographic Data

Of the ten individuals participating in the study, seven were students currently enrolled at Rutgers and three were alumni. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 62, with a median age of 22.

With regard to gender identity, participants identified using the following terms: male (n=5); male – FtM (n=1); female (n=2); female/transwoman (n=1); and MtF transsexual (n=1). Participants also identified with a wide range of sexual orientations, including: straight (n=2); pansexual (n=1); asexual/pansexual (n=1); trans lesbian (n=1); queer (n=1); gay (n=1); often (n=1); homo (n=1); and bisexual (n=1).

With regard to race, four participants of color and six White participants completed the study. The breakdown of participant data by race and ethnicity is not reported here in further detail as it is potentially identifiable information given the size of the Rutgers community.

The majority of participants (n=7) preferred individual interviews. One focus group with three students was conducted.

Participant responses

Campus climate. Participant responses regarding general campus climate and awareness of transgender issues yielded a wide range of responses. As one participant noted, student experiences vary widely across social settings:

It depends on what subgroups you find yourself in. You can either not be bothered at all or because your interests lead you in a certain way, you can find yourself in an uncomfortable situation. Overall, I don't think it's awful. It's not good or bad. (Elle, undergraduate)

Similarly, one respondent observed that differences in available student services and academic focuses among New Brunswick campuses contribute to differences in awareness of LGBTQ issues:

[Busch campus is] probably the least safe one out of all the campuses right now. It's the least aware of any social justice issues. Because College Ave. has got everything. Cook Douglass is pretty laid back, and Douglass is the women's college and the Women's and Gender Studies department is on Cook. They're at least aware of issues. And the [LGBT] center is here on Livingston. So Busch has nothing. Even being aware of anything social justice-related. (Felix, alumnus)

Several students noted that described campus community members as ignorant or lacking understanding about transgender issues, with one participant drawing a comparison with lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues:

I feel as though these people are educated in some way by their peers in terms of gay, lesbian, bisexual issues that I've seen it. But when it comes to trans issues it's

an entire new world to them and they just don't really get it. (Kevin, undergraduate)

The most painfully drawn-out conversations I've ever had—They ask a question, you give them an answer, but they don't get it, so they keep asking you the question, just rephrased... I'm trying to explain, because they're asking you personally "how do think about yourself, what do you feel makes you your gender, do you reflect it in your appearance?" That makes you start to feel really crummy, because you start dissecting yourself, questioning yourself. (Oscar, undergraduate)

Many participants reported neutral or positive experiences at Rutgers; over half noted they chose to attend Rutgers at least in part due to its reputation as an accepting place for queer individuals:

I've always felt as though, if people have issues, they cloak them. I think that's only polite when you're working in an environment for a common purpose. If I think that you are going to hell because you're gay, it's not going to help us, to tell you that, so I might as well keep it to myself. So I've had only positive encounters with staff members and faculty. (Will, undergraduate)

I have not found anything that overtly restricted my access or that confronted me in a negative way. I think that occasionally I will feel self-conscious. Because there are times when you're in an environment and you have a feeling that people do perceive you as a trans female, and they sort of turn their head. The sense I

have is that people are generally indifferent. I don't see anyone being upset.

There's a lot of diversity here. (Danya, alumnus)

Like any college campus, the people who get involved in activities, you see the same faces at every activity. Very open minded, very liberal, very accepting of a person for who they are, not what they are. I'll just be in there and people are like, "[Arianna], come sit with us." Not even knowing that they were going to be there. So I would say for 90 percent of the campus they're open minded, and very accepting (Arianna, undergraduate)

One alumnus suggested that the resources and campus climate of Rutgers for transgender individuals has developed a positive reputation among alumni and community members as well:

A couple of [former students] said that a year ago or two they were going to Rutgers because it had a good academic program for them but that also it was a very affirming place and that everything they had heard and talked to earlier graduates and seen by coming to the campus and talking to people was very affirming for transgender people. That was really positive to hear these independent two or three students that had graduated from Rutgers with good experiences and a couple of students who said "I'm going there because it has very positive and affirming policies for transgender students." (Danya, alumnus)

Conversely, over half the respondents reported at least one instance of harassment or intimidation by another Rutgers student:

There's always a thinly veiled threat of violence. I feel like I experience this a lot. Consistently masculine guys, who will just respond to me in street situations like I'm trash. When I'm wearing a skirt, when I'm wearing makeup. (Farah, undergraduate)

I went to a party once... this guy comes up to me. I'm dressed in a very masculine way, but I guess my voice—it always gives it away. ... he comes up to me, he puts his hand up on the window.... he's like "so what's your real name, because you said your name is [Kevin]." "And I'm like, "My name is [Kevin]," and he's like "No, but what is it." I felt really intimidated. (Kevin, undergraduate)

Again, in parties, I try not to dance with people. I like dancing, so I dance with my friends. But when guys come over, I try to avoid them, because I know some shit's gonna happen.... And that usually goes sour eventually. Someone will say something, or someone's friend will come over and tap them on the shoulder, they're like, "oh that's a guy." It still hurts each and every time. It takes me to a dark place immediately. I like to think 70 percent I'm just like any other person. But that 30 percent, where someone has to make a comment to their friends, or go out of their way to shine a phone in my face, to look at my features. That happened to me recently. (Elle, undergraduate)

Classroom environment and academic documentation. 9 out of 10 participants indicated they had adopted a preferred name to reflect their gender identity. Several

participants transitioning while at Rutgers noted they had experienced difficulty having their preferred name and gender identity reflected in the academic record.

One thing that's hanging over to me... my net ID. It's given first name, last name.

I don't like to use my Rutgers email, and having that there, given name and chosen name is here, email address is the most important part. I really want to change it. And I'm not really sure who to talk to about that. The website, they said that we only change net ID in case of a legal name change, in most cases. That's something I guess I have to do before I graduate so I can have not my male name on my diploma. Oh, [and] preferred gender pronoun on attendance sheet. On the rosters, that professors use in class, I don't if there's a centralized system that they use for that.... There's definitely a field somewhere that puts my given name, or my chosen name on an attendance sheet. It would be cool if it just had either preferred pronouns... 'M' / 'F' doesn't really do it for me, because what do I put it there and at what point does that change? I don't really know. That's really difficult. I don't want to get in trouble. (Farrah, undergraduate)

Just to have something within the system by itself that you could easily change, that would be so useful... That could affect your academic, ID, and roster. I've gone up to people for this, but some people might not want to do that. That could be really scary. If your name is Amy and you want to go by Albert, that's going to be scary going up to a person, saying, "Can you call me Albert instead?" You're afraid; they're going to look at you in a certain way. (Elle, undergraduate)

Although students who change their names legally may have these changes reflected in the academic record via the registrar, many of the students interviewed indicated they had not yet gone through the legal name change process, in some cases due to the prohibitive cost and complex legal process involved. More than half of the participants had spoken with professors, staff, and students individually to request being called by their preferred names and gender pronouns, with some students choosing to reveal a transgender identity in the course of this interaction. Others indicated they had avoided sharing their preferred name and gender identity altogether, not wanting to “out” themselves in a face-to-face interaction:

The rest of the time is just asking professors in the beginning, “Can you use this name?” I’m still keeping my birth name as a part of my name but I prefer my new name to be the main name. So I tell professors up front. I don’t say anything about being trans, I’m just saying I prefer this name. One time, I told [a professor] about the name thing. Later on, a week later, she called on me, and when I didn’t say what she wanted me to say, she was like, “Can someone help him out?” I got pissed. Everyone turned around and looked at me. I felt really awful. Then she was like, “Is it him or her?” in class, in front of everyone. (Elle, undergraduate)

It’s generally uncomfortable in pretty much every class, because I have to write my birth name on everything, everyone refers to me as that... It’s not anything they’re doing, it’s just that I don’t feel like coming out in the middle of the semester. (Nate, undergraduate)

I was in...lab. I was there early and the professor was there early. And I was like, "Does it pay for me to say something?" But I was like, "This is a lab, it's a pretty small class." So I was like, "Excuse me, hi, my name will be on the roster as whatever, but I actually am trans and I go by [Oscar], and I go by he." And she was like, "Oh, okay, I'll change that in the roster and make a note of that, thanks." And that was that. (Oscar, undergraduate)

While many participants described largely positive classroom experiences, several participants had experienced transphobic interactions with faculty:

In one class, I had a professor who dropped the T bomb. She uses the t word that rhymes with granny. And I was like "hey, that's not ok to say. That's a slur." I just sort of said this to the class. At that point she was like "I wouldn't use that word against anyone unless they identified themselves as such, first." Thankfully this class had two exits, so I found the one I was closer to. I felt she did not demonstrate enough knowledge or sensitivity to the issues, or closeness with the community to use what I think is a really powerful slur. I didn't drop the class immediately. It was after a couple classes I just couldn't stand being in the classroom anymore. Because I felt like I wasn't being taken seriously. (Farah, undergraduate)

I have a professor who deliberately misgenders me when I come into class late. The first day of class this semester I was like "can you call me [Kevin] and use male pronouns such as he, him, and his?" And he's like, OK. But I come into class late maybe 3 times, like 5 minutes late. He won't call me [Kevin] and he

won't call me by my given name, but he'll call me "she" like "Oh, she's here."

And everybody will just look at me... I address it with him at the end of class, and he's like, "Well, I don't know what I'm supposed to do if you're coming to class late. I'm just on the spot calling you out on it." (Kevin, undergraduate)

Students also identified a lack of consistent policy and conflicting information sources regarding the name change process as major sources of confusion, with several students indicating they had managed to have their preferred name placed on an academic roster only after they had found a sympathetic staff member:

I was told by somebody when I went somewhere to get my name changed, not officially on rosters, and they're like "no". Then I went to the dean that I go to for academic advising, and she's like, "yeah, we can just have your name changed on the roster." So why is one person telling me one thing and another person telling me another thing? (Kevin, undergraduate)

It's hard to navigate this giant bureaucracy. There's the whole 'RU screwed' thing, it's because this is a huge school, and no one seems to know who to talk to about the one thing you desperately need to change... It's frustrating.... [I] stumbled into a change. [A specific dean] was like, "Hey, nice to meet you, I can change that for you, and just email me." So I did, and then I had to jump through some hoops. I had to go to Busch, with a transcript, and I... had an authorization with me... from the dean. And it was a little bit of a headache. ...Other people were being told other things. (Farah, undergraduate)

On the one hand, I have not made the effort to go and hunt down somebody before classes even start and be like, "I found the roster creator! Change this!" I just wait until class happens. There really seems to be nothing that Rutgers can do, if your legal name is required, it will appear as it legally is. The times when it's not, like when you go to the health offices, they make a note. (Oscar, undergraduate)

Currently, Rutgers does not have a university-wide procedure in place for students to provide a preferred name and gender for academic and identification purposes in classroom and campus settings. Students who have obtained updated legal documentation to reflect a change in name and/or gender may have their information updated in the registrar. One alumnus indicated he had successfully completed this process following his legal name change:

So records was easy. I just had to show the lady paperwork... then to get the ID changed, ... [The staff member] was like, "Yeah, I'll take care of you and get a new ID, new photo taken and everything." Basically, functionally, everything had my name changed. The funny thing is, when I graduated, when they sent me an alumni card that was not changed. Well, OK, apparently you don't talk to your alumni department. For the most part anything I had to use, functioning, that was changed. On rosters it was changed. (Felix, alumnus)

At present, the consultee agency has published information for transgender students regarding the legal name change process in New Jersey on its website. No information is available for students online regarding other ways to have preferred name or gender pronoun reflected in academic records.

Bathrooms and locker rooms. Participant responses highlighted multiple issues related to campus bathroom and locker room facilities. One common observation from participants was an insufficient number of available gender-neutral and single-use facilities.

The only complaint I've ever had with the campus is the gender-neutral bathrooms. Not identifying as a guy, I don't feel comfortable using the men's room. But I wouldn't want to walk into a women's room, and someone who doesn't know me freaks out. So I use the gender-neutral. I thought there was one in our campus center, there's actually two. They're on opposite ends of the campus, which is good. Because I was running down to the one bathroom at all times. And if someone else is in there I have to wait. Because I really hate going to the guys bathroom. (Arianna, undergraduate)

People say 'you're in the wrong bathroom.' Sometimes stares, sometimes they look at me and leave. On campus, I would walk several buildings away to use the bathroom. I would find a bathroom that's not too crowded. That doesn't get a lot of access, like basements in the building. Just generally when there's not as much people around, I feel more comfortable. I'd try to look for a handicap single unit bathroom. (Lorin, alumnus)

The majority of participants reported uncomfortable or unsafe encounters in male- or female-only bathroom spaces, with some participants indicating they tended to avoid these spaces when possible.

I would say the biggest issue that I deal with, being someone who doesn't really conform to gender, is bathrooms.... I generally use the bathroom very rarely. I know when I worked in the student center for a year, I used the gender-neutral bathroom often. I'd go in the girls room a lot. The thing that sucks is that I look too masculine to be a woman, and I look too feminine to be a man. The only thing is, girls are more polite, so they're not like walk in and walk out; they just kind of accept it. For me, I've had to establish at my first floor meeting— I was like "if you see painted toenails in the stall, it's probably me. So don't get freaked out." But I do get incredibly conscious of the fact that, when I'm in a bathroom, you can see painted toenails. It's very clear that it's me. I always get very anxious that people are uncomfortable, and I always worry that one day it's going to get to the point where it's like, "why can't you just shower in the gender-neutral bathroom?" Well, because the men's bathroom is right across from my room. (Will, undergraduate)

I guess I always feel unsafe in a bathroom, to varying degrees. Even now, bathrooms are one of those spaces where, once I enter, I'm more aware of my surroundings than I am in other places. Bathrooms just never really feel completely safe. It's really the one space that comes to mind that is like that. (Kevin, alumnus)

I still use the women's restroom and it's embarrassing. But I don't really fit in at the other one yet. (Nate, undergraduate)

One participant observed that when few gender-neutral bathrooms are available, it brings unwanted attention to students who use them:

That's where it's comfortably ignorant. We're like "we have gender-neutral bathrooms" but we have like one in the Livingston Student Center. And what makes it almost worse is they're single gender-neutral bathrooms, so, you're going into it, and you're doing one of two things. Either you're pooping, because everyone uses gender-neutral bathrooms to poop, or you don't identify as a gender. It kind of makes you feel more isolated... It is more friendly; having one gender-neutral bathroom is better than having none. But having one single gender-neutral bathroom means that the person going in is now being looked at because they're going into a gender-neutral bathroom. (Will, undergraduate)

Several students indicated they avoid locker rooms and athletic facilities due to a lack of available gender-neutral facilities. Currently, no single-use or gender-neutral locker rooms are officially available for student use, representing a significant barrier for students who are interested in participating in any athletic activities or physical education courses at Rutgers:

In the locker room, because I took out a recreational pass at Rutgers last summer, hoping to use their treadmills and fitness equipment, but I felt uncomfortable, and ended up not going as much. When I went into the locker room, some females that were in there they stared at me. (Lorin, alumnus)

There's of course the locker room question. Even beyond that, if I were to show up to a gendered thing, what's the right strategy, how would I be interpreted?

Even if it's not necessarily a particularly gendered organization, it's a new crowd, how do I deal with this? It's a scary thing. How much of it is gender related and how much of it is just social anxiety, which is of course related, I don't know.

(Farah, undergraduate)

However, one participant reported receiving individual use of a single-stall locker room after disclosing her gender identity to a dean:

I didn't use the fitness center, because I won't go in the guy's locker room. I just won't do it. It's way too uncomfortable for me. Vice versa with the girls. If I'm there with three girlfriends, yeah, they're cool, but what about the other two girls who don't even know who I am. The dean actually found out in the pool area there's a locker room—men's and women's— but the door locks behind you. There's one toilet, one sink, one shower and four lockers. The manager of the fitness shower knows I'm... transsexual. Every time I come in, he's like "Hey [Arianna], let me open up the pool room for you." Very accommodating. Like I said, everybody's been so friendly there. It's overwhelming almost, how accepting the staff and students are. (Arianna, undergraduate)

Current New Jersey state law and Rutgers University non-discrimination policy explicitly include gender identity and expression as protected categories (Rutgers, 2012; N.J.S.A 10:5-12). While there is no history of transgender bathroom access court cases in New Jersey, Griffin (2009) suggests that the expansive non-discrimination law in New Jersey includes protections for transsexual, transgender, and intersex individuals using restrooms that match their gender identities or expressions (noting, however, that these protections are less clear or established for genderqueer or non-gendered individuals).

Participant responses reflected confusion regarding the existence and impact of this policy, as well as concern that other members of the Rutgers community are not aware of these existing protections:

Also, I know it's not written down, but say a trans woman went into a woman's bathroom, and someone flipped out. If she runs out and finds a worker, how is she going to handle the situation? That's what I would like to know. (Elle, undergraduate)

Alternatively, knowing who is in charge of the bathrooms, who is the bathroom police? Will I get in trouble if I go in the women's bathroom? I don't know. Do I talk to RUPD? Do I talk to a dean? I don't know. Like I said, I don't think I'm at a point where I pass much, where I'm really gendered. (Farah, undergraduate)

In response to direct student feedback and early interviews during the needs assessment project, the consultee organization compiled and listed on their website a directory of all single-use and gender-neutral bathrooms on the Rutgers - New Brunswick campus. Currently, the SJE is also working with the Director of Residential Life and the Rutgers Student Senate to further expand access to gender-neutral bathrooms (J. Kurtz, personal communication, July 25, 2013).

Student life and campus organizations. Participants were asked about their participation in a wide variety of social, cultural, and political student groups on campus. Student responses highlighted the importance of these groups in providing social support and feelings of belonging. At the same time, participants encountered barriers specific to

issues of gender identity and presentation while participating in student activities. Below, the results from student responses in the areas of Greek life, cultural and LGBTQ-specific student groups, and athletics are presented.

Greek life. Previous publications have highlighted the challenges facing transgender students interested in participating in fraternities and sororities (Fielding & Pettitt, 2008; Rankin & Beemyn, 2011). Nearly all fraternities and sororities are structured as single-gender spaces. As one participant discussed, these gender-segregated spaces and groups create barriers for transgender and gender nonconforming students interested in joining a Greek organization:

I would have wanted to join a fraternity or sorority. If you're gay or lesbian you can easily join those gender specific groups. As a gender variant person, it's kinda hard to decide what group because I don't fit in the sorority because they're all very feminine, that's what separates me... I'm not completely male. Going for a fraternity is a little bit like a mixed experience. So a little bit stuck there. (Lorin, alumnus)

Rutgers has over eighty fraternities and sororities, including one fraternity, Delta Lambda Phi, for “gay, bisexual, and progressive men.” Two respondents indicated they were currently members of Greek organizations. Both students spoke positively about finding strong networks of support through these organizations as they navigated social stressors:

I joined a sorority this semester. And surprisingly, they've been really accepting. I have a friend who was in it before I decided to join. ... We never really talk about

it unless I bring it up as a conversation point. So that's been surprisingly positive. The only negative thing that has come from that is that other groups, like, I have a person from my high school was in a fraternity that we had a mixer with. Even though he was nice to me when he saw me, he told his brothers and it spread across the school, and even to other schools. Like, "oh they have a tranny in the sorority." (Elle, undergraduate)

My fraternity... huge part of my life, one of the best decisions I ever made. Incredible family, got me through some very uncertain times for me.... They gave me this big push to go talk with my parents. I was like "I can't I can't!" And they were like "yes you can! ... I did. It went well. I love them a lot. My "big" is literally my older brother. I'm so close with him, he's stuck with me for life. (Oscar, undergraduate)

Cultural and LGBT groups. The majority of participants indicated they participate or had participated in cultural affinity and religious student groups on campus. Responses indicated that these groups are an important source of support for transgender students:

I used to go to a [Rutgers cultural student group] ... People were nice there. I started going even before my transition, and during... They were pretty accepting. Even as I got deeper into my transition, everyone was nice, called me by my preferred name. (Elle, undergraduate)

However, several students described challenges in participating in cultural groups due to anticipated and actual reactions to their gender identity and/or presentation:

I also stayed away from [my ethnic] community because I knew a lot of them from [my community prior to college]. It was kind of an isolating experience, because I didn't know any trans people, I didn't really know how to find other trans people. I eventually got back into the... community, but that was after starting the whole medical transition. I went into that even later. I started participating in stuff late junior year, even more behind. It was only after stuff was changing and I was feeling more comfortable with my own body that I was even willing to take the chance to face people that I did know from before. (Felix, alumnus)

I don't really like going to [cultural] events, because I feel like that's where I get the most shit from people. So even though it's my culture and I like being around other [people in my community], I am always more afraid. Because I know they're more likely to say something about me.... All my friends always want to go to them, but I'm always really wary about it. The way I dress when I go out, I get a lot of attention from people, and I just know that eventually shit's going to happen. So I just hate going to those things. At other events, if they don't know me, no one is going to talk to me. But there, people will approach me, and if they see something wrong with me, they're going to make it a big thing. They're going to yell it to their friends, their friends are going to come over and laugh. It's just

really nerve-wracking and really scary. I tend to avoid it. Sometimes my friends can convince me but I'm always really scared. (Elle, undergraduate)

All respondents reported current or past participation in an LGBTQ student group. Rutgers has a large LGBTQ community and over ten LGBTQ student groups. These include LLEGO, the LGBTQ People of Color Union; Queer Jewish and Queer Asian student groups; and the undergraduate Queer Student Alliance (QSA). Additionally, over the past several years, the Rutgers Gender Identity Discussion Group has been meeting regularly and currently has over 30 members on its group website.

The majority of students reported positive experiences with the larger LGBTQ student groups on campus. Students indicated that these groups serve an important role in making and maintaining friends with other queer students.

Even though I'm trans and that's different from the LGB part, orientation versus expression and identity, I'm still active in the [LGB] community as well. I have a lot of friends in that community. (Arianna, undergraduate)

I went to the [QSA] meeting, it was a lot of people, it was a great experience, found out from them about other groups, went to LLEGO, and then there you go, I'm in the queer epicenter of everything, and met friends. (Oscar, undergraduate)

One student also appreciated the efforts made by a student organization to be inclusive of students of all genders:

I started attending LLEGO meetings last spring. I knew I needed to form social networks, and to find a safe space. And experiences are so far so good. The policy in the spring semester was—every meeting—what's your name, preferred gender

pronoun, and some icebreaker. Just to have a space where that was a question, that's great. (Farah, undergraduate)

Conversely, one participant noted feeling alienated at student group meetings, but noted he had positive experiences through other non-LGBTQ-focused activities:

The queer community, as a group, I find that they're not open minded, which is weird— This is a very one-sided view. I've only been to QSA two or three times, and all the three times I was just turned off. I just felt so isolated. Nobody really said hello. It wasn't the people that I usually surround myself with. My experience at Rutgers has been much more based in other things than my sexual orientation or my gender. The environments that I've been drawn to haven't been that community and I've never felt drawn into it. The friends that I have, be they gay, straight, lesbian, transgender, rainbow, have just been people I've encountered in other ways. (Will, undergraduate)

Several students also spoke about the transgender and gender nonconforming community at Rutgers. Several trans-feminine respondents observed that the trans-female community is less visible than other subgroups:

I feel like there are a lot more trans students here but they are either not out completely or they're like "I'm so passed" that I don't need to be. Because there's a lot of trans people who are like, "I don't need to have community with trans people, we're all trying to move on. Let's not make this a thing." I've seen that. So I think that may be why it's not so big. I wish it was a little bigger. When I've been to the past [Gender Identity Discussion Group] meetings, it's usually been

transmen. That's cool and all, but I would like to have more people like me.

(Elle, undergraduate)

As a trans feminine person, it seems like trans females are much less out than trans males. If I had to think about who I talk with and the things I see, and the discussions I've gone to, I often feel like I'm one of maybe one of 5 or 6 trans females in a room that maybe has 15 or 20 trans males. I don't know what the reason is, but it's surprising.... I wonder if that's an indication that trans females feel a little intimidated. (Danya, alumnus)

Multiple respondents who participated in the Gender Identity Discussion Group found an important means of support through a commonality of experience, including two members of the focus group:

Farah: There are many ways in which I sometimes feel like I don't exist in the same wave that other people exist. Does that make sense?

Kevin: Like in an existential way?

Farah: Yeah, like in an existential way. I carry around an ID full of cards that don't have my name on them. I think that, congregating with other people who deal with similar shit, like we've just established, is really cool.

Kevin: I don't know what I would do without a group of people who also look at their ID cards and say "this isn't me, why am I carrying this around, help me please." ... Everyone just seems comfortable. Everybody is on the same wavelength, the same page.

Another participant in the Gender Identity Discussion group emphasized that the transgender community at Rutgers is open to discussing issues of oppression and social justice, while being accepting of students from a wide array of gender identities and presentations:

For the most part, the [trans] community itself is very supportive of gender nonconformity in general. And is extremely, for the most part, knowledgeable about social justice in general. It's not like we've had someone who's come in, has already transitioned, and adheres to a huge gender binary, and is like, "I don't understand anything about queer theory." We haven't had anything like that yet. (Felix, alumnus)

Many students spoke more generally about the necessity of having an accepting group of friends in contributing to their sense of comfort and belonging on campus.

[Following an incident of harassment] I had to go to my friends who were hosting the party, and they had to kick him out, because I felt unsafe. They're my friends, are very queer friendly and progressive, they don't stand for that. (Kevin, undergraduate)

Because I'm so comfortable with my circle of friends, I've been able to actually reach the place where I'm like "I'm going to like what I like because I like it, and not worry about 'do I look manly enough.' I'm going to wear whatever I got what I like. (Oscar, undergraduate)

I'm less interested in particular topics and more interested in finding friends to do things with. Finding friends to go to clothing stores with, finding friends with similar concerns. Like we can be bathroom buddies, we can both use the right restroom. Because with the two of us, we're suddenly a gang. (Farah, undergraduate)

Sports and athletics. Half of the participants spoke about experiences with athletic activities and organizations. As described in the Bathrooms and Locker Rooms results section, issues of gender-segregated locker-room use present a major barrier for transgender students interested in participating in athletic activities. In addition to this issue, interviewees articulated concerns about how they might be perceived by teammates while participating in athletic events:

I joined a couple clubs. I joined [a martial arts club], but once I was going to start the hormones, I dropped out of it. Because I felt—they weren't bad, the people in [the group] would probably be the most supportive people ever. It's just that martial arts has to do bodies, and my body was going to change, and I didn't know how I was going to take the changes or how they were going to take the changes. (Felix, alumnus)

I've been thinking about joining an intramural sports team. But some of them are either men's only or women's only, and I can keep up with other guys, but how welcoming would they be? That's my concern. (Oscar, undergraduate)

No [athletic activities] since way back, since taking ownership of a trans identity.

I'll have to get back to you on that. I've got a feeling I'm not going to use the shower rooms. I've got a feeling I'm going to pack a bag, pee in the pool I guess.

(Farah, undergraduate)

I have not been to the gym. I'm afraid to go to the gym. I do not go swimming. I'm afraid to go swimming. On the one hand, it's probably my personal insecurity, on the other hand, for the reason that this is a space where I do not know what to do in. On the one hand, I probably could go swimming, and be OK, but that would require goddamn emotional growth on my part. (Oscar, undergraduate)

Housing and residential services. Currently, Rutgers New Brunswick has several housing options available for LGBTQ and allied students. First-year and transfer students may indicate on their housing application if they are interested in being paired with a student interested in LGBTQ issues. A social justice-oriented learning community also exists for first year students. All students may also apply to live at “Rainbow Perspectives,” an LGBTQ housing option with gender-neutral bathrooms, a gender-neutral roommate option, and monthly LGBTQ themed programming and discussions. Finally, gender-neutral roommate options are available by request at three other housing units, including an arts and humanities special interest community.

Over half the participants had lived in one of these housing options and indicated that these options were useful in providing a safe, affirmative community:

I was already super out and I just kind of introduced myself to everyone in my floor, because I live in Rainbow Perspectives, so everyone's pretty queer there with some exceptions. I was out to pretty much everybody on my floor, if not the first day, then pretty early on. Which was lots of fun. Also at orientation, I was saying it to lots of people. (Kevin, undergraduate)

I moved to Demarest on College Ave, because my friends were like "it's like a haven for LGBT people." So I went there. It was kind of like any other dorm, really. People were more willing to talk there than they were at my other dorm, because no one really talked to me there. (Elle, undergraduate)

Participants who had resided in other housing options spoke about feelings of isolation and indicated few opportunities to connect with others about transgender issues:

So I came into Rutgers and then lived on Busch... it was pretty horrible. The people were fine, but I didn't feel comfortable talking about anything with any of these people I didn't really feel comfortable in that space.... I started living off campus with two of my friends that were from that supportive circle. They were also Rutgers students. And I lived off campus for the rest of my time here. (Felix, alumnus)

I like talking about this stuff. Because I can't say anything outside of here. My roommate I don't talk to at all. Everyone on the floor I can't say anything to. I literally just sit locked up in my room, [on] Busch campus. (Nate, undergraduate)

I was living in [an academic] living/learning community, which was a floor of people and you could interview to be in it. It had a great environment of mature people who were interested in classes— really easy going and open minded. A lot of fun. Obviously I didn't have a negative experience there. It was very embracing... but I was the only queer person. (Oscar, undergraduate)

One student voiced frustration at having fewer gender-neutral housing options available for first year students:

[During my first year,] I didn't have a roommate. I actually initially couldn't even send in a housing application because it wouldn't go through. If I put in a male roommate, because they would say "this housing option does not allow mixed gender roommates. So my first year, I didn't even know anybody, so I couldn't say "I want this person to be my roommate and they wanna be my roommate, so let's be roommates." I was just like "I wish I had a roommate." And they were like "Well you're legally female, so unless you want a female roommate, then enjoy living alone." (Oscar, undergraduate)

Participants also reported a wide variety of experiences with their resident assistants (RAs). Responses indicate that some RAs are not actively involved in their residential communities. Other RAs may make themselves available to discuss problems but students may not feel comfortable approaching them about transgender-specific issues.

[Training for RAs] is seriously lacking. Just the idea that [an RA] was like "what's the difference between transsexual and transgender?" In a gender-neutral

building, we should know that. ... I think my RA, she could have been so much more involved than she was... She wanted the job for the housing.... I'm pretty sure my RA was much more concerned with herself. So I think if my situation had been worse, I wouldn't have been comfortable going to her, so that would have been difficult. But otherwise, my housing was pretty smooth. (Will, undergraduate)

The RA would occasionally come knock on the door. He wanted to check up on people on his floor, and I was really quiet so he would come do that more often. But I didn't really feel that comfortable talking to him about trans issues necessarily. Because I didn't really know him that well. (Felix, alumnus)

My RA isn't gender nonconforming but she's definitely really queer. She's never said something that bothered me or hurt me and she's always been really supportive in a really appropriate way. As for any RAs, I have a friend who's an RA who's similarly really good about it. I think some RAs do pretty well. There is the occasional RA who doesn't seem to care about their job, but that's a different issue all together. (Kevin, undergraduate).

They were alright, they were pretty respectful. [LGBT issues are] not really talked about. They're just like, "if you need help, come to me." You just kind of take it generally. You don't really think you can go to them for anything. If

they're nice, they're nice. But you don't think, "that is a pillar in my community that I can go to and talk to about issues." (Elle, undergraduate)

Health services. Eight out of ten respondents had utilized Rutgers Health Services at least once during their time as students. Participants shared experiences with campus health centers and with university Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Rutgers health centers. Over the past six years, Rutgers Health Services have made numerous changes in the area of transgender-specific services. Health Center record keeping allows for preferred names, and administrative staff have received education on working with transgender students. Consistent with current transgender health standards of care (World Professional Association for Transgender Health, 2011), students are able to obtain hormone replacement therapy (HRT) within an informed consent model of treatment, following a comprehensive psychosocial and medical evaluation with the director of health services, who specializes in transgender health care. This policy represents an effort to provide increased student access to HRT and a movement away from the "gatekeeper" model of care requiring prior written approval from a mental health provider. Several nurses on staff have been trained to teach students how to inject hormones and meet with students receiving HRT on a weekly basis until students are able to self-administer. Multiple health services staff members also attend the Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference. Students may obtain HRT prescriptions through the university pharmacies, where they are covered by the student health insurance plan. Students are also able to obtain gender affirmative surgical clearances

from the director of health services. At the time the interviews were conducted, gender affirmation surgeries were not covered by the insurance plan. However, following a switch in providers and input from students and Rutgers Health Services staff, gender affirmative surgeries will be covered by the student health insurance plan beginning Fall 2013 (M. Lasky, personal communication, August 6, 2013).

Many participants discussed aspects of transgender-specific medical services at Rutgers. Students noted the importance of being able to provide a non-binary gender identity and a preferred name for record keeping purposes, even if they had not yet undertaken a legal name or gender document change:

When you go to the health offices, they make a note. So when I go to the doctor, in my file, they have a trans option when you fill your general info sheet. So if you look over their shoulder while they're at the computer it says "[Legal first and last name], ... transgender male [Oscar]" So I'm like "yay!" (Oscar, undergraduate)

However, one participant noted that all healthcare service providers may not adhere to standardized identification and documentation procedures:

Once when I went to the pharmacy, just to pick up a prescription. I gave them my name and they asked me for my ID. I guess I didn't really come off as what my biological, given name is, and I'm not going to disclose that unless I have to. They're like "are you sure that's your name?" And I was like, "yeah..." It was at [Health Services]. It was just once. After that I guess they caught on and stopped asking me, because it was the same people. But that one experience was pretty rough. (Kevin, undergraduate)

Four respondents, including one alumnus, had received hormone replacement therapies through the university health centers. These participants expressed appreciation for the availability of this service, as well as the informed consent protocol:

[Health services] is where I'm currently getting hormones. It's pretty cool...

She gave me a three page checklist for all the risks of HRT, and saying high risk of blood clots, do you understand and consent, high risk of breast cancer, do you consent, or blood pressure, etc. That was great. It was like "I'm going to put the onus on you. Take it home, come back in a week, and we'll go over this together, and we'll sign everything." Which I think is very novel, it's a great policy. (Farah, undergraduate)

An alumnus who received HRT through health services over five years prior to this needs assessment spoke of his experiences in the early days of HRT provision at Rutgers, highlighting previous barriers to obtaining these services that have been addressed through protocol over time:

It took [the director of health services] a year or two for her to work with the university on that policy, and now you can start people on hormones. So that's in place. I felt like an experiment, because they were monitoring me really closely, because I was the first case. So I would be there every week to get the shot from the nurse, and the dose was monitored. I was getting a blood test every other week. They were very careful about it, which was good. I was willing to do it, to be that experiment. It would be three months before the nurse was like, "are you OK doing it yourself?" I was like "yeah," it was like "ok, go home and do it." (Felix, alumnus)

In spite of the availability of trained staff members and transgender-specific services at the campus health centers, several student noted interactions with staff involving a lack of knowledge or sensitivity of transgender issues:

Sometimes they stay stupid shit. One time a nurse was like “So, will you eventually have your period?” And I was like “you’re a nurse. I know you know the answer to this question. I’m not going to grow a womb, sorry.” That was definitely one of those little put-downs. With the medical stuff, though, it’s all worth dealing with that just to get specifically trans-related healthcare. (Farah, undergraduate)

[The provider] would either say or do really stupid or offensive things. First of all, she asked if I was gay. You would think they would ask do you sleep with men, something like that. Gender identity obviously has nothing to with orientation. I was like, “gay as in lesbian? What do you mean?” I felt like, if she’s so knowledgeable about LGBT things or trans issues in general, why would that be the first question you ask? In the first meeting, she asked me if I had my period, something hilarious like that. Which was nice, but didn’t you get the information? (Elle, undergraduate)

The majority of students highlighted the tension between a distrust of medical professionals and a need to obtain medical and psychological treatment:

I’m funny about doctors. It takes me a while to trust them to begin with. Some people will go see any doctor you recommend to them. I’m not like that. It takes

me a while to trust people, especially in the medical community. (Arianna, undergraduate)

I have a pretty strong distrust of the medical-psychological establishment. (Farah, undergraduate)

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). As part of Rutgers Health Services, CAPS has also experienced changes over the past decade with regard to providing mental health services for transgender students. For the past ten years, CAPS has offered a support group for LGBTQ-identified students. This group arose from student feedback that Rutgers had few safe spaces for students in the early stages of sexual and gender identity exploration and coming out (M. Forest, personal communication, July 25, 2013). In addition to this group, CAPS has recently created a support group meeting at the SJE for students struggling with LGBTQ issues but who may not be comfortable going to CAPS. CAPS has also devoted resources to create a more welcoming space for transgender students, including sensitivity training for front desk and other staff members, encouraging staff to attend LGBTQ Liaison trainings, keeping SJE and campus LGBTQ event fliers and magazines in the waiting room, and hiring therapists with experience treating issues related to gender identity. In conjunction with SJE, CAPS is currently creating a brochure with campus resources for transgender students.

Consistent with health services protocol discussed above, students are often referred to CAPS if they are considering HRT. Previously, students were required to meet

with a therapist for three months prior to beginning HRT. However, recent changes to improve student access to HRT have removed this requirement, replacing it with a case-by-case informed consent model. Students may elect to receive mental health services prior to and while starting HRT.

Seven students reported they had some contact with CAPS. For most students, CAPS provides valuable support not only for issues relating to gender identity, but also for general mental health and stress management concerns:

I appreciate CAPS being there. I've had a couple of experiences with them.

They've been good. Honestly as far as trans-ness being an issue, it's kind of really not. It's a side note, and you continue what you're actually doing there. CAPS has got it. (Oscar, undergraduate)

One student found the CAPS outreach group conducted at SJE to be valuable in the early stages of coming out:

The first person on campus I came out was, I went to a LGBT meeting on Mondays, they have “Breathing Room” at the Social Justice Center. So I came out to whatever six people were there. They were all pretty cool with it, and called me [Nate], it was nice. We go around and ask pronouns. Everyone’s really accepting there. One of the therapists also has office hours in the Social Justice Center once a week... My talking with her to figure out how to do things is my main source of information. (Nate, undergraduate)

Several students expressed confusion over the current HRT protocol at CAPS, with one student expressing frustration with the previous requirement necessitating mental health treatment to receive HRT:

[CAPS] follows the code of going through a set period of therapy before they would even allow me to see the doctor. The therapist was knowledgeable about certain things, and really sympathetic. I would feel better after talking to him. Only thing was I had to wait so long. That really annoyed me. I felt like I made a step toward reaching a goal but I'm still kind of held back for a period of months. That kind of made me upset. If someone's depressed, and they need meds, you don't make them wait seven months. Those meds have side effects too. If you're worried so much about HRT and if we're really sure about it, I feel like it doesn't make any sense. Why do trans people have to wait so long for something that's so important to them? Recently my friend who started this year, she didn't have to go through that long period of therapy. I don't know if they changed the policy. (Elle, undergraduate)

Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities (SJE). All respondents had interacted with the consultee organization (SJE) and/or the center director, Jenny Kurtz. Several students and recent alumni noted the specific role that SJE had in connecting them to a larger transgender community on campus:

[SJE] is having dinners for trans people.... It was like a table full of other gender nonconforming people. It was cool hanging out and chatting with other people, it was really fun. It was like a mixer. I feel like those kinds of things are definitely important, to keep having them. Because I feel like something like that for people who are coming out, that's one of the best environments, small and comfy and you're around other trans people. It's very relaxing and affirming. (Oscar,

undergraduate)

It was a fall reception, and I found out there was a group meeting. I wanted to meet Jenny and went to talk. And she was like, “We have this gender identity meeting going on, would you like to come? You can meet people.” (Lorin, alumnus)

Two students indicated they had received support from SJE in dealing with issues of classroom hostility and dormitory bathroom policies:

[The] dean didn’t really care. So I talked to Jenny about [the professor] and she was like, “you can file this bias report.” (Farah, undergraduate)

So my RA was trying to come up with solutions within her limited powers. And then I told the QSA and Jenny and everyone, and suddenly I had a big army behind me. (Oscar, undergraduate)

Participants also utilized SJE as a means of referral to other resources on- and off-campus:

There's actually a monthly trans support group for both parents and guardians [off campus], which should be publicized at Rutgers, because we're really close to it. It's on a sliding scale too. I wouldn't have known about [the off-campus clinic] if I hadn't called up Jenny. (Oscar, undergraduate)

Getting [my name] changed on campus was relatively easy because I had the paperwork. And Jenny already knew where I had to change the records, and she

would know people, like liaisons in those departments. So just make an appointment and go see. (Felix, alumnus)

Participants reported generally positive perceptions of SJE and the services the center provides, noting that the environment at the center is welcoming and inclusive:

I've always found they're very warm people. They're like "we take what we can get." They're very open to everybody coming along. (Will, undergraduate)

What I see right now is primarily the Social Justice center responding to LGBT concerns as well as the concerns of people of color and other groups that have been marginalized or may feel marginalized on campus. (Danya, alumnus)

Several respondents observed that the center's role and mission on campus might benefit from additional clarification, as pertaining to interactions with other university bodies:

If you have gender-specific problems, questions, comments, where do you go to contact? If it's a Rutgers administrative problem, you should be able to address the Rutgers managerial staff directly. The social justice center, they're a department, and kind of an independent thing. I feel like addressing Rutgers infrastructure and policies, I don't know if that's supposed to be a directive of the center. Even though they've been doing it. Maybe the center would be able more efficiently to focus on other programs. I feel like it's more professional for Rutgers to have an official contact for those problems. There should be a place to call up for that. (Will, undergraduate)

I don't even know what the center does, besides being an ally in the bureaucracy. I don't know what its mission statement is, what its function is besides bringing us to these faculty trainings. It's a nice space with nice people, seems like a safe space. (Farah, undergraduate)

Discussion and Recommendations

Below, the results for each topic area are discussed, with a focus on the ways the data might be used to support future efforts for change on campus. Recommendations provided to the SJE during the consultation process are also included below, followed by general discussion of the needs assessment process and limitations of the study.

Campus climate

As noted above, participant descriptions of the campus climate at Rutgers varied. Many students identified small communities and environments in which they felt free from harassment and a sense of belonging. Responses suggest that, rather than targeting a monolithic “campus climate,” efforts to improve student life for transgender students should work to identify specific campuses, departments, and organizations where further outreach is warranted.

Several students indicated experiencing welcoming and accepting communities at Rutgers. Indeed, at least half of respondents noted they chose to attend Rutgers at least in part due to its reputation as an accepting place for queer individuals. The university has already begun to implement structural and policy changes in the areas of housing, bathrooms, and academic documents, as well as to devote resources and staff for its

LGBT centers on New Brunswick and Newark campuses. Currently, the SJE also conducts Safe Space and Liaison trainings for students, staff, and faculty interested in publicly identifying themselves as allies and advocates on campus. Many of these factors may contribute to students' positive perceptions of campus climate.

In spite of these experiences, several students reported a lack of awareness of transgender issues on campus, and more than half reported specific instances of harassment from other Rutgers students. These experiences are consistent with previous research documenting harassment and discrimination among transgender college students (McKinney, 2005; Rankin & Beemyn, 2011), as well as findings that transgender students are significantly less likely than their cisgender heterosexual and LGB classmates to report a non-discriminatory climate and sense of belonging on campus (Dugan et al., 2012). For transgender students at Rutgers, negative experiences on campus include overt hostility, antagonism, or violence, as well as more subtle “microaggressions” and “microassaults” (see Nadal, Rivera, & Corpus, 2010). These results point to the importance of ongoing training for students (and all Rutgers community members) on the needs and experiences of transgender students, as well as increased attention to violence prevention efforts.

Based on participant responses, the following recommendations were made to the SJE:

- **Assess existing outreach efforts to identify geographic or organizational areas of greater need for future work.**
- **Continue to include transgender student experiences in awareness programming.** Ongoing interventions should include faculty, student,

staff, and Rutgers Police trainings in the areas of violence prevention and awareness, transgender identities and issues.

Classroom environment and academic documentation

Participant responses highlighted several areas of need at Rutgers regarding academic climate and records. While Rutgers allows academic records to be changed to reflect a legal name or gender change, the majority of participants reported they had not yet begun the legal name change process. In the state of New Jersey, a legal name change costs over \$200 and requires a court appearance and multiple notarized affidavits.

Participant responses reflected a need for streamlined method for students to indicate preferred name and gender pronouns on rosters, electronic classroom resources, and other academic records without the requirement of updated legal documents. These results are consistent with current research pointing to college document and record change policies as an important area of focus in creating a positive campus environment for transgender and gender nonconforming students (Beemyn et al., 2005).

While many faculty also appear to be affirming transgender students and creating safe classroom environments, the presence of transphobic attitudes and actions on the part of some faculty members suggests a strong need for additional education efforts on transgender issues. Although SJE devotes significant resources to faculty and staff education through its Safe Space and Liaison trainings, the experiences of some participants in this study are consistent with recent findings from other campuses that

transgender students find faculty and staff to be miseducated about and insensitive to transgender issues in the classroom (McKinney, 2005; Singh et al., 2013).

Results from the interviews also indicated that the current lack of standardized procedure regarding changes to academic documents creates confusion among students and staff, leading to student discouragement and frustration. As one student remarked, “The worst thing is being run in circles with different answers being given to you by different people.” Interview responses also suggest that students who have been unable to update their records are likely to speak individually with faculty regarding preferred name and gender pronouns, at times leading to stressful or uncomfortable interactions. An explicit and accessible procedure for changing records would reduce or eliminate the need for students to “out” themselves in every classroom setting in order to be called by their preferred names and pronouns.

The following recommendations were presented to the consultee organization in preparation for an upcoming meeting with the registrar and dean of academic services:

- **Implement a campus-wide procedure to enable students to change their name and/or gender designation on campus records.** Where legally possible, students should be able to have their preferred name and gender pronouns reflected in the record without the requirement of a legal name or gender change. Changes should be reflected in student ID cards, email addresses, electronic listings, online classroom tools (e.g., Sakai, Blackboard), and student services (e.g., Health Services and CAPS), and alumni records To the greatest extent possible, policy should protect students’ privacy, limiting the number of

individuals required for students to contact when obtaining a change in the academic record.

- **Educate faculty and staff on name-change and documentation issues experienced by transgender and gender nonconforming students.** Increasing awareness of these issues may create a more welcoming environment for students. To prioritize resources, the SJE should target departments without a history of engagement with the SJE liaison program and should further survey specific department needs and attitudes,
- **Orient faculty and staff to changes in campus procedures and policies.** Ensuring that policy changes are widely publicized and understood reduces barriers for students trying to navigate the Rutgers system. Particular focus on training and orientation should be placed on “gatekeeper” staff, including deans, registrar and financial aid staff, residential advisors, and faculty.
- **Provide education to students on policy and procedural changes.** Information should be made available at a variety of locations and should be presented in both online and offline formats.

Bathrooms and locker rooms

Consistent with previous literature (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn, Curtis, et al., 2005), student experiences with gender-segregated bathrooms and locker rooms may be characterized by discomfort and anxiety, representing an important area of future focus in creating a more welcoming environment for transgender and gender nonconforming students at Rutgers. Although university and state regulations allow students to utilize the

bathroom corresponding to their gender identities or expressions, providing legal recourse for students who are denied equal access to these facilities, bathrooms and locker rooms continue to be sites of uncomfortable or threatening interactions for students. Nearly all respondents spoke about the importance of single-use, gender-neutral facilities, and identified an insufficient number of available gender-neutral bathrooms on all Rutgers campuses. Students across campuses described instances of “holding it” in order to avoid using a single-sex bathroom, as well as walking long distances to access gender-neutral or single-stall bathrooms.

Gender-neutral locker rooms are currently unavailable for student use, and there are no existing plans to renovate these facilities. As described above, a lack of private showers and single-use changing rooms creates a significant barrier for gender nonconforming and transgender students who are interested in utilizing athletic facilities. As Beemyn, Curtis, et al. (2005) note, building or renovating facilities to include private changing rooms improves access not only for these students, but also for families with children and individuals with disabilities.

Given the above results, the following recommendations were shared with the consultee organization to assist with ongoing efforts to improve facilities access and protocol at Rutgers:

- **Create gender-neutral (single stall, lockable, unisex) restrooms in all newly constructed buildings.** Convert existing single occupancy bathrooms to allow individuals of all genders.
- **Create single-unit or private shower facilities in current athletic facilities.**

- **Educate faculty, staff, and students on facilities-use issues experienced by transgender and gender nonconforming students on campus.**
- **Orient all faculty and staff to campus procedures and policies related to bathroom and locker room use.** Include training on these issues for new staff members, including facilities management, police, and administrators.
- **Along with current listings of single use bathrooms, include information on students' right to use the bathroom consistent with their gender identity/expression.** This information should include clarification of how students are protected under university policy and state law, as well as steps individuals may take if they are threatened or harassed in a public facility.

Student life and campus organizations

Greek life. Transgender students may experience significant barriers to participating in gender-segregated fraternal or sororal organizations (Fielding & Pettitt, 2008). Organization membership policies are developed at the national level; the vast majority of fraternities and sororities do not specify inclusion criteria for students not identifying within the gender binary. At this time, students interested in joining Rutgers Greek life must consider each organization's membership policy and mission statement to determine if they will be accepted and supported within the chapter. Student responses suggest that "out" transgender students may find support and acceptance within existing fraternities and sororities at Rutgers. The following recommendations were shared with SJE in order to improve efforts to support students navigating Rutgers Greek life.

- **Work with Rutgers Student Affairs to develop a resource guide for transgender students interested in joining a fraternity or sorority.** This guide should include a list of inclusive organizations and a contact person for questions and concerns. The guide should be made available on the Rutgers Greek Life and SJE websites.
- **Continue outreach efforts** to Rutgers Greek chapters on issues of transgender identities and inclusion.

Cultural and LGBT groups. Recent theoretical and empirical research has emphasized the ways that multiple intersecting identities contribute to transgender youth resilience and ability to navigate systems of oppression (Burnes & Chen, 2012; Harley, Nowak, Gassaway, & Savage, 2002; Singh, 2013). Participant responses suggest that transgender students at Rutgers benefit from participation in organizations that validate their multiple identities and foster social connectedness. The results above also suggest that there are communities at Rutgers that provide validation and affirmation of these identities, which contribute to students' resilience and sense of belonging. These connections to accepting communities not only allow individuals to feel a sense of belonging, but also to engage in self-advocacy strategies (Singh et al., 2013). Moreover, transgender students at Rutgers are active contributors to cultural and LGBTQ groups on campus in spite of significant barriers to participation, such as transphobia and racism. This finding is consistent with previous research finding comparable rates of participation in educational and community activities among transgender and cisgender college

students despite transgender students reporting significantly higher rates of harassment and discrimination (Dugan et al., 2012).

The lack of visibility of trans-feminine students observed by several interviewees underscores the importance of avoiding generalizations about a singular “transgender experience” at Rutgers. Cross-sectional research by Dugan et al. (2012) found that MtF transgender students report significantly lower levels of leadership capacity, leadership self-efficacy, and involvement in leadership roles than other transgender-identified students. Further assessment and outreach efforts should aim to better understand these differences as well as potential underlying causes.

Recommendations to the SJE included:

- **Continue to expand programming collaborations, event cosponsorship, and leadership development with student groups, including cultural, LGBTQ, and religious organizations.**
- **Continue to expand transgender-themed programming and outreach that highlights issues of intersecting identities.**

Sports and athletics. Rutgers is a member university of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which in 2011 adopted a set of guiding principles and a formal policy on transgender athletes competing at the intercollegiate level (NCAA, 2011), based on recommendations provided by coaches, transgender athletes, athletic directors, and medical professionals (Griffin & Carroll, 2010). The policy specifies ways transgender students at different points of transitioning may participate in gender-segregated and mixed intercollegiate athletic activities. Though the NCAA policy has

drawn criticism for its treatment of male to female transgender students in their first year of transition with hormones, it represents an important step forward in recognizing and including transgender student athletes (for a more in-depth discussion of the NCAA and other athletic policies, see Buzuvis, 2012). Moreover, the NCAA policy includes recommendations for athletic departments to create more inclusive environments for students in areas such as dress code, facilities use, and department policies. Following publication of this resource, multiple universities articulated policies for transgender student participation at the intramural and club level (see, for example, Bates College Athletic Department, 2011). Although Rutgers students are protected from discrimination under state law and the university non-discrimination policy, the Rutgers athletic department has not yet created an explicit policy detailing guidelines for student participation in intramural and club sports. The student responses above underscore the importance of a clearly articulated, inclusive athletic participation policy, as well as ongoing outreach and education efforts to athletic communities at Rutgers.

Recommendations included:

- **Create an athletic inclusion policy for transgender athletes.** The policy should include articulate department policies and procedures for students of various genders (including genderqueer student) participating at the intercollegiate, club, and intramural levels. The policy should also specify procedures for locker room access, travel accommodations, dress code, and protection of student privacy.

This policy should be publicly available in the university athletic and SJE websites.

- **Educate athletic department staff about transgender identities and strategies for facilitating transgender athlete participation.** Staff should be able and prepared to support transgender students in athletic settings.

Housing and residential services

Interviewee data demonstrate the importance of gender-neutral housing options and inclusive housing policies in creating safe spaces and communities for transgender students. The experiences of students in gender-neutral and special interest housing environments contrasts with those of students living in other housing options, where concerns of privacy and isolation appear more frequently.

As peers who have daily contact with transgender students, RAs are an important point of focus when considering ways to meet transgender student needs on campus. Results suggest that RA engagement and ability to foster trust among residents vary. Research has noted the importance of RAs as community gatekeepers in areas such as sexual violence (Banyard, Moynihan, & Corssman, 2009), depression (Field, Elliott, & Korn, 2006), and suicide (Pasco, Wallack, Sartin, & Dayton, 2012). Students experiencing identity concerns, searching for campus resources, or navigating hostile living environments may not feel comfortable approaching residential staff about these matters. Outreach efforts may be useful in improving RA knowledge of transgender issues and ability to create more welcoming housing environments for all students.

The following programmatic and policy changes were suggested to address the issues in housing and residential life identified above:

- **Change the current housing policy to allow all gender-neutral housing options to be open to first-year students.** Housing policies should be made publically available to increase awareness of all housing options.
- **Continue efforts to train residential life staff and administrators on transgender concerns.**
- **Continue to expand gender-neutral housing options.** Early expansion should focus on campuses and geographic areas where no gender-neutral option is currently available (e.g., Busch campus).
- **Increase joint programming efforts between Residential Life and the SJE center.** Integrative programming may include “peer counseling” and Safe Zone training for residential assistants, transgender awareness programming as part of diversity training.
- **Orient all residential assistants to available on- and off-campus resources and policies.** Orientation should include information on name change, housing, bathroom use, bias and harassment policies, counseling and health services.

Health services

Nearly all respondents discussed the importance of being able to obtain sensitive, tailored healthcare services to address both transgender-specific issues (e.g., HRT) and other medical and psychological needs. This finding is consistent with past research indicating transgender-affirmative healthcare contributes to transgender student resilience (Singh et al., 2013). As discussed above, Rutgers has made vast improvements in the provision of transgender-affirmative treatments over the past several years. Many of the

changes were initiated as a direct result of student feedback. Some changes, such as insurance coverage of gender affirmative surgeries and new outreach programs, are in the very beginning stages of implementation at the time of this study. Analysis of participant responses suggests transgender students perceive these services as extremely important and are willing to utilize them despite barriers. The importance of ongoing improvements to health care service provision and access cannot be understated, particularly in light of multiple research studies documenting significant barriers to healthcare faced by transgender individuals (Grant et al., 2011; Hanssmann et al., 2008; Xavier et al., 2004).

Despite the numerous improvements to health services in the past decade at Rutgers, student responses also converge on several areas of need. Results suggest that students may be unaware of Health Services' recent movement away from the "gatekeeper" model of HRT to a model emphasizing informed consent and individual autonomy. This discrepancy between student perception and actual services may be a result of several factors. Health Services websites do not have information specifically describing transgender healthcare policies and procedures, and SJE website contains only general information stating that HRT is available at Rutgers. Further, many participants noted obtaining information regarding the quality and status of services from their classmates, rather than from healthcare providers. These discrepancies might be partially addressed by enhanced outreach efforts and improvements to existing informational resources.

Results also indicate a need for additional focus on issues of sensitivity to transgender student needs among Health Services staff. Students' negative interactions

with staff members suggest that existing training efforts may not have sufficiently addressed issues of cultural competence and sensitivity. Given the challenges in reducing barriers to care, further assessment and documentation of the existing treatment and quality assurance policies and procedures at the organizational level may be useful in identifying further areas to address (see also Hanssmann et al., 2008).

Recommendations:

- **Develop and make publically available the procedures for provision of transgender-specific healthcare services at Rutgers.** Information should be available on relevant websites as well as offline in student facilities.
- **Systematically assess needs Health Services staff regarding knowledge, skills, and attitudes of staff working with transgender students.** Brief needs assessment approaches incorporating feedback from staff and students may be useful in clarifying areas of further need in both medical and counseling settings.
- **Continue to develop and advocate for expansion of transgender-affirmative healthcare services.** Given barriers to care, creative outreach methods (e.g., social networking, cross-organizational collaborations) may improve student access.

Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities (SJE)

Higher education researchers have noted the importance of LGBTQ centers in several areas of student life, including visibility, programming, communication, advocacy, continuity of services over time, and safe space for meetings and events (Beemyn, 2003; Sanlo et al., 2002). Under the umbrella of Rutgers Student Affairs, SJE

performs these roles, with yearly events (e.g., Transgender Awareness Week, Gaypril), weekly group meetings (Gender Identity Discussion Group, Breathing Room support group), and availability for student drop-in. Programming in recent years has strongly emphasized the experiences of marginalized groups within the LGBTQ community, including transgender youth and queer people of color. Recent paid staff and volunteers at SJE have also included individuals across the gender spectrum. Participant responses suggest that SJE is an accessible space for transgender students at Rutgers. Furthermore, results indicate that SJE plays a supportive role in shouldering some of the burden of education, advocacy, and organizing that falls to transgender students at Rutgers, including the recent organization of the Gender Identity Discussion group. At the time of this research, transgender students had recently begun to assume the responsibility of the group's organization and planning. The SJE director has been actively involved in advocating for the changes in student housing, health care, and facilities discussed earlier.

The SJE website contains a resource guide for transgender students, including a summary of gender-neutral housing options, a map of gender-neutral bathrooms, information on transgender-specific health care options, and the legal name change process in New Jersey. The website also SJE organizational mission, vision and objectives. Thus, student confusion regarding the role and mission of SJE may reflect either a lack of awareness regarding the SJE website, or a lack of clarity in the organization's mission statement. This confusion does not appear to be impacting students' willingness to access services and support from SJE, but does suggest that ongoing input from students may be useful in considering future outreach strategies and changes to the SJE mission and policies.

Recommendations:

- **Continue to expand programming and resources to reflect the needs of students of all genders.** Programming should continue to reflect students' intersecting identities and developmental needs.
- **Continue to incorporate student voices and participation in all levels of SJE outreach and program development.** Expansion of current programs such as the Safe Space and Liaison programs and development of other opportunities to involve students of all genders, such as an SJE advisory board or leadership programs.
- **Continue to expand SJE outreach efforts to expand awareness about available resources and the SJE mission.** Consider further outreach to spaces where SJE materials may not be readily available, including academic department offices, student support settings, and various online forums. Continue to incorporate feedback from transgender students in development of future outreach efforts.

General Discussion

The student experiences documented through the needs assessment provide detailed insight into the daily challenges faced by transgender students at Rutgers. These narratives were successfully compiled and shared with the SJE, who then shared them with student organizers, student services staff, and university administrators in support of their efforts to change policies and services on campus. Ideally, these narratives may not only bring attention to harmful university policies and practices, but also challenge

prevailing genderist assumptions and worldviews at Rutgers that gender is binary and that all members of the Rutgers community identify only as male or female.

Consistent with previous theoretical and applied research, many of the obstacles encountered by transgender students coincide with genderist policies and gender segregated spaces, such as name change policies, bathrooms, locker rooms, and dormitories (Marine, 2011). Although Rutgers policies and student services would likely be considered more “advanced” with regard to transgender student needs than many other public universities (see Beemyn, Domingue et al., 2005), it is clear from participant accounts that many changes are necessary to create a more welcoming, inclusive university community. A consistent theme throughout the participant narratives was that encounters with genderist individuals, policies, and institutions at Rutgers were associated with feelings of anger, frustration, and alienation. Conversely, transgender-affirmative policies, staff, and programs were frequently associated with a sense of belonging and increased comfort in expressing aspects of one’s authentic gender identity. This finding underscores the importance of creating affirming communities for *all* students. Welcoming college environments allow for students to safely explore and question aspects of their occupational, academic, political, and cultural identities (Rankin et al., 2010). In their student affairs mission statement, Rutgers has explicitly acknowledged the importance of “cultivating inclusiveness and respect of both people and points of view, and by promoting not only tolerance and acceptance, but support and advocacy,” suggesting that the changes to policy and practice suggested above are consistent with the larger aims of the university in supporting their students “as whole people” (Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 2013). As one participant noted:

Since Rutgers is trying to make the best environment for its students, if trans students are not emotionally compromised for what it is to be trans, they can give better to the school. So if Rutgers was able to do that, then our quality of life—we could be comfortable, and actually concentrate on our research projects.

This statement implies that welcoming college environments beyond facilitating individual students' growth and development, also may enhance students' capacity to “give better” to the school, that is, to participate as active members and agents of change in their community.

While the findings from this needs assessment have direct implications for structural and policy changes at Rutgers, they may also be considered in the context of the broader body of literature on transgender students. The wide variety of identities and experiences represented in this small sample of students underscores the importance of research, policy, and programmatic efforts that recognize a diversity of gender identities and expressions. Prior research suggests that within-group differences exist in developmental hurdles and milestones, experiences of harassment, academic engagement, and sense of belonging on campus (Dugan et al., 2012; Rankin et al., 2010; Rankin & Beemyn, 2011). Further research is needed to clarify differences among subgroups under the “transgender umbrella,” such as the experiences of transgender students of color, transgender students with disabilities, and students whose gender identities do not conform to the gender binary (i.e., genderqueer, agender, gender nonconforming).

This project illustrates how needs assessment methodology can be used flexibly to document the needs of small, often underrepresented, student populations. The design of this study, including recruitment methods and inclusion criteria, were modified

reflexively as new information came to light. For example, early data from student interviews made note of several trans-affirmative student groups on campus, which then were targeted through electronic and in-person recruitment to obtain additional participants. Additionally, after discussion with the consultee organization, the inclusion criteria for the study were modified after several transgender alumni contacted this writer to express interest in participating.

As several researchers have noted, outreach and collaboration with current transgender students are important first steps in creating a more welcoming college environment for transgender students (Beemyn, Curtis, et al., 2005; Singh et al., 2013). For organizations on other campuses considering conducting a needs assessment, several considerations from this study may be helpful in tailoring the methodological approach to their needs. Although longer qualitative interviews provide a wealth of information from students whose voices may be marginalized, they require significant investment of time to transcribe and analyze, as well as the commitment of time and resources from the student participant (see also Reviere et al., 1996; Royse et al., 2009). Focus groups allow for greater numbers of participants in a given amount of time and have added transformative potential to facilitate social connectedness, consciousness-raising, and participatory engagement among participants (Chiu, 2003). However, they are logistically difficult to organize given the busy schedules of students; in this study only one focus group of three students was conducted due to participant time constraints. Alternative data collection approaches might include qualitative survey methods, such as those utilized by McKinney (2005) in a survey of 75 transgender students, as well as mixed-methods approaches (e.g., Rankin & Beemyn, 2011).

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Although the findings from the interviews corroborate larger-scale data on the experiences of transgender college students, the sample size, geographic specificity, and non-random sampling method limit the degree of generalizability of the results to a larger population. Even the degree to which the participant responses may reflect broader patterns of experience of transgender students at Rutgers, New Brunswick campus should be considered with caution. Although the responses provided a diverse portrait of transgender student experiences at Rutgers, the responses largely came from those students who had been openly engaged in the processes of developing a “transgender social identity” and “entering a transgender community” (Bilodeau, 2005; Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Most students reported some connection to SJE and all spoke of participation in LGBTQ groups. As such, the data from this needs assessment may not capture the needs of students in the early stages of “coming out” to themselves, as well as those who may not be ready or interested to access support from transgender and queer students and organizations.

Also of note, the sample consisted only of undergraduates and alumni, so the experiences of transgender graduate students, faculty, and staff at Rutgers remain unclear. Although research has found that transgender graduate students face similar challenges to undergraduates on campus, they may report more problems in student healthcare (McKinney, 2005). This research is in its very early stages. Efforts to advertise the project to graduate student groups did not improve participation. Additional assessment is necessary to determine if the lack of graduate student participation reflects ineffective

outreach strategies, negative perceptions by students of the consultee organization, transgender graduate student isolation from student groups (see McKinney, 2005), or other variables. In this study, faculty were not included as their experiences are not the direct focus of the consultee organization, which works under Rutgers Student Affairs. Research to date into the experiences of transgender faculty is scarce (Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010). However, future assessment projects might consider the experiences and needs of transgender faculty and staff, given their involvement in campus communities.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date _____

Time _____

Site _____

INTRODUCTION: Hello, my name is _____. For my doctoral dissertation, I am assisting the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities in finding out more information about the experiences of transgender and gender minority students at Rutgers. We are interested in finding out how the center and other campus organizations can best meet your needs. We are also interested in hearing about the ways you receive support as a college student. In order to do this, we have asked you to participate in a one-on-one interview to speak about these issues. The interview will last about two hours and your participation is completely voluntary. If you would prefer to participate in a focus group format instead of this individual interview, please let me know. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. As a reminder, we plan to audiotape this interview. Transcripts of all interviews will be made and excerpts may be used to provide examples for our research, but you will never be individually identified in the transcripts or any published materials. We hope to use the information you provide in this interview to improve the services offered to transgender and gender minority students at Rutgers. Would you like to participate in the interview? If so, please fill out the participant information sheet.

INSTRUCTIONS: I am going to ask you some questions now. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. There are no right or wrong answers.

QUESTIONS:

General campus experiences

- What is your general sense of the level of awareness of transgender issues on campus?
- How would you describe the climate on campus overall for transgender and gender nonconforming students?
- Have you had an experience on campus in which you had to 'out' yourself or disclose aspects of your gender identity in order to receive services? How did you respond to this situation?
- Who was the first person you came out to on campus and what was it like? What were you told?
- Have you experienced incidents of harassment or intimidation on campus? If so, how did you respond? Did you seek out any support? How was the incident handled?
- Have you had to meet with members of Rutgers administration, staff, or faculty on issues relevant to gender issues? Did they have an awareness and understanding of your concerns? How were they handled?
- Have you had any contact with the Rutgers Police? If so, can you describe these experiences?

Student Services and Life

- Are you involved in any student groups on campus? What has been your experience with these groups?
- Are you involved in any LGBTQ-specific groups on campus? Why or why not?
- What has been your experience with the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities? Do you feel they are adequately addressing issues relevant to you?
- Are you involved in any athletic activities or organizations? Did you play any sports in high school? Please describe your experiences.
- Are there organizations you would like to become involved with but have not? Why?
- What has been your experience with locker rooms and restrooms on campus? Do you use them? If so, what has been your experience?
- What services or programs would you like to see on campus that do not currently exist?

Physical and Mental Health

- Have you utilized any services from CAPS? Why/why not? What has your experience been like with this organization? Did you feel the organization was able to address your concerns?
- Have you been to Health Services? If not, why? If so, please describe your experience there. Did you feel the organization was able to adequately meet your health care needs?
- What has been your experience with the student health insurance plan?

Housing

- Do you currently live on campus? Have you ever lived on campus? Why or why not?

- When you first came to Rutgers, what were you told about housing options? Were you assigned a roommate? Did you contact Residential Life to discuss housing options? What was the outcome?
- Have you ever had concerns about housing options? Did you ever discuss your concerns with someone from Residential Life?
- What has been your experience with the residential counseling staff at Rutgers?

Academics

- With regard to awareness and inclusion of transgender issues, how have you found the classroom environment at Rutgers?
- Have you ever discussed issues of gender identity, pronoun use, etc, with a professor? What was your experience like?
- Have you ever used academic support services (e.g., tutoring, disability support services). If so, please describe your experience.
- (graduate students) Are you a GA or TA? If so, have you had to negotiate issues of gender identity and expression when teaching or working with undergraduate students?

Community and Support

- What is your sense of the transgender community on campus? What would it ideally look like?
- Are you a member of any other underrepresented group on campus? Has your gender identity affected your ability to access services and support for this group? Please discuss how these identities intersect in your life.

- Where do you turn for support when handling stress or dealing with difficult issues?

Follow-up Questions

- Do you have interest in participating in a gender advisory committee on campus?
- Do you have interest in working with the LGBT center on its outreach, advocacy and policy efforts for transgender and students?
- If there were a support or discussion group on campus for transgender students, would you be interested in participating? What issues would you like to see addressed?

Appendix B: Focus Group Protocol

Date _____

Time _____

Site _____

INTRODUCTION: Hello, my name is _____. For my doctoral dissertation, I am assisting the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities in finding out more information about the experiences of transgender and gender minority students at Rutgers. We are interested in finding out how the center and other campus organizations can best meet your needs. We are also interested in hearing about the ways you receive support as a college student. In order to do this, we have asked you to participate in a focus group and speak about these issues. The focus group will last between two and three hours and your participation is completely voluntary. If you would prefer to complete an individual interview instead of speaking in a group

format, please let me know. As a reminder, please do not share information from the focus group discussion with anyone else. Also, as a reminder, you may withdraw from the study at any time. We plan to audiotape the group's responses. Transcripts of the focus group will be made and excerpts may be used to provide examples for our research, but you will never be individually identified in the transcripts or any published materials. We hope to use the information you provide in this group to improve the services offered to transgender and gender minority students at Rutgers. Would you like to participate in the focus group? If so, please fill out the participant information sheet.

INSTRUCTIONS: A focus group is like a group discussion. We are interested in everyone's responses to the questions. There are no right or wrong answers.

QUESTIONS:

General campus experiences

- What is your general sense of the level of awareness of transgender issues on campus?
- How would you describe the climate on campus overall for transgender and gender nonconforming students?
- Have you had an experience on campus in which you had to 'out' yourself or disclose aspects of your gender identity in order to receive services? How did you respond to this situation?
- Who was the first person you came out to on campus and what was it like? What were you told?

- Have you experienced incidents of harassment or intimidation on campus? If so, how did you respond? Did you seek out any support? How was the incident handled?
- Have you had to meet with members of Rutgers administration, staff, or faculty on issues relevant to gender issues? Did they have an awareness and understanding of your concerns? How were they handled?
- Have you had any contact with the Rutgers Police? If so, can you describe these experiences?

Student Services and Life

- Are you involved in any student groups on campus? What has been your experience with these groups?
- Are you involved in any LGBTQ-specific groups on campus? Why or why not?
- What has been your experience with the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities? Do you feel they are adequately addressing issues relevant to you?
- Are you involved in any athletic activities or organizations? Did you play any sports in high school? Please describe your experiences.
- Are there organizations you would like to become involved with but have not? Why?
- What has been your experience with locker rooms and restrooms on campus? Do you use them? If so, what has been your experience?
- What services or programs would you like to see on campus that do not currently exist?

Physical and Mental Health

- Have you utilized any services from CAPS? Why/why not? What has your experience

been like with this organization? Did you feel the organization was able to address your concerns?

- Have you been to Health Services? If not, why? If so, please describe your experience there. Did you feel the organization was able to adequately meet your health care needs?
- What has been your experience with the student health insurance plan?

Housing

- Do you currently live on campus? Have you ever lived on campus? Why or why not?
- When you first came to Rutgers, what were you told about housing options? Were you assigned a roommate? Did you contact Residential Life to discuss housing options? What was the outcome?
- Have you ever had concerns about housing options? Did you ever discuss your concerns with someone from Residential Life?
- What has been your experience with the residential counseling staff at Rutgers?

Academics

- With regard to awareness and inclusion of transgender issues, how have you found the classroom environment at Rutgers?
- Have you ever discussed issues of gender identity, pronoun use, etc, with a professor? What was your experience like?
- Have you ever used academic support services (e.g., tutoring, disability support services). If so, please describe your experience.
- (graduate students) Are you a GA or TA? If so, have you had to negotiate issues of

gender identity and expression when teaching or working with undergraduate students?

Community and Support

- What is your sense of the transgender community on campus? What would it ideally look like?
- Are you a member of any other underrepresented group on campus? Has your gender identity affected your ability to access services and support for this group? Please discuss how these identities intersect in your life.
- Where do you turn for support when handling stress or dealing with difficult issues?

Follow-up Questions

- Do you have interest in participating in a gender advisory committee on campus?
- Do you have interest in working with the LGBT center on its outreach, advocacy and policy efforts for transgender and students?
- If there were a support or discussion group on campus for transgender students, would you be interested in participating? What issues would you like to see addressed?

Appendix C: Demographic Information Form

Participant Code _____

Please take a moment to complete the following information about yourself.

1. Gender _____
2. Age _____ (optional)
3. Year at Rutgers/Year of graduation _____
4. Race _____ (optional)
5. Ethnicity _____ (optional)
6. Sexual Orientation _____ (optional)

Appendix D: Recruitment Materials

Email Advertisement

Dear Rutgers Student/Graduate,

Thank you for taking time to read this email. My name is Sam Klugman and I am an advanced doctoral student in the Clinical Psy.D. Program at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) at Rutgers University. I am currently looking for Rutgers students and alumni who identify as transgender, gender nonconforming, genderqueer, transsexual, cross dressing, two spirit, and/or belong to a gender minority to participate in a research study.

This study aims to gather more information about the experiences of gender minority students at Rutgers. We are hoping to learn about your experiences with specific services on campus, your experience of the climate at Rutgers, and your ideas for future programs on campus. Study participants can choose between a one-on-one interview and a focus group with other transgender students.

General findings from the study will be used to improve policies for gender minority students on campus. In the future, this information will also be used to provide knowledge for future research on these understudied populations.

If you are a past or current Rutgers student, identify as transgender or another gender minority (see above), and would like your voice heard about these issues at Rutgers, please contact me at sam.klugman@gmail.com. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me or my faculty advisor, Daniel Fishman, at dfish96198@aol.com or 848-445-3911.

I would greatly appreciate your help this effort to bring more attention to these issues at Rutgers. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sam Klugman, Psy.M.

Recruitment Flier Text

Transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming?

Want your voice heard about issues on campus?

The Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities is teaming up with a doctoral student from Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology to hear more from transgender students and alumni about their experiences. You are being asked to participate in a research study on your experiences at Rutgers.

Your responses will be used to help the center advocate for a better campus climate around gender issues. You can also help bring research attention to issues facing transgender students on college campuses, while meeting other students in the process!

We are looking for transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and other gender minority undergraduates, graduate students, and alumni to meet and discuss these issues in a small focus group at the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities. Individual interviews are also possible.

All responses will be kept confidential.

If you are interested, please contact the study coordinator:

Sam Klugman, Psy.M.

Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology

Phone: (207) 776-8107

Email: sam.klugman@gmail.com

Or feel free to contact the Faculty Advisor for the study:

Daniel Fishman, Ph.D.

Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology

Phone: 848-445-3911

Email: dfish96198@aol.com

Appendix E: Informed Consent Documents

Consent for Participation in a Research Study

Title of Study: An Exploratory Study on the Experiences of Transgender and Gender

Nonconforming Students at Rutgers University

Principal Investigator: Sam Klugman, Psy.M.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE:

You are invited to participate in research that is being conducted by Sam Klugman, Psy.M., an advanced doctoral candidate in the Clinical Psychology Psy.D. Program at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) at Rutgers University. This consent form contains information about the study that the Principal Investigator will go over with you. Before you agree to participate in this study, you should know enough about it to make an informed decision. If you have any questions, ask the investigator. You should be satisfied with the answers before you agree to be in the study.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the study is to explore the issues and experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming students at Rutgers University. This includes the experiences these students have with different Rutgers organizations and services, overall campus climate, and the ways these students receive support. The current research on transgender students describes many unique issues that transgender and gender nonconforming students may

face while in college, and makes suggestions for improving campus experiences. This study will be used to see where Rutgers is meeting these needs and where Rutgers can improve. In the future, this information will be used to provide knowledge for future programs and policy needs at Rutgers, as well as for other colleges seeking to better meet the needs of this understudied population. Approximately ten to twenty individuals will participate in this study.

SUBJECT SELECTION:

You must be a past or current Rutgers University student over the age of 18 to participate in this study. You must identify as transgender, transsexual, gender nonconforming, genderqueer, cross dressing, non-gendered, two-spirited, and/or another gender minority. If you identify as cisgender or do not identify as a gender minority, you will not be eligible to participate in the study.

PROCEDURES:

Your participation in this study will last for approximately two to two and half hours.

Study procedures are as follows:

- You participate in an individual interview or focus group, of your choosing, where the investigator will ask you open-ended questions about your experiences as a gender minority student at Rutgers.
- At the end of the interview, you will be given a brief form to complete. The form will ask you some demographic information about yourself, as well as your interest in becoming involved with various programs at Rutgers.

Interviews will be audio-taped to ensure information is accurately recorded. Interviews will be transcribed and tapes will be destroyed after the transcription. Any tape recordings, transcripts of interviews, or other data collected from you will be maintained in confidence by the investigator in a locked file cabinet and destroyed three years after the end of the study.

BENEFITS:

There is no direct benefit from participating in this study. However, participating in the focus group may provide you with an opportunity to hear more about the experiences of other gender minority Rutgers students. In both the individual and group interviews, your participation will provide valuable information in ways Rutgers and other schools can improve the climate for gender minority students.

RISK:

The risk in participating in this study is minimal. However, there is a possibility that you may experience some psychological discomfort when talking about negative experiences. If this occurs during the interview or focus group, you can choose to end your participation at any point. If you would like, an appropriate referral for therapy will be given to you upon request, or you may call Rutgers Counseling, ADAP, and Psychiatric Services at (732) 982-7884. In case of emergency, you may contact Acute Psychiatric Services at (732) 235-5700 or speak with the investigator. These numbers will also be provided to you on a referral sheet.

When participating in an interview with other individuals, there is no guarantee that your information will not be disclosed by others participants. Because this study focuses on the experiences of transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming students, disclosure of your participation in the study carries added risk. For some individuals, unplanned disclosure of gender identity may carry significant negative interpersonal, financial, and/or psychological consequences. To minimize this risk, you have the option of participating in an individual interview with the Primary Investigator.

COMPENSATION:

There is no compensation to you for participating in this study. Refreshments will be provided as a courtesy for your time and energy.

COST:

There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

ALTERNATIVES:

There is no alternative for this study. You may not participate if you choose.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you, such as your gender identity, ethnicity, and age. While participant information will be kept confidential, there is a risk that other participants in

the focus group may share information. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. The investigator will keep this information confidential by limiting access to the research data and keeping it in locked filing cabinet in a secure location. In addition, you will be given an identification code and a pseudonym, in which only the researcher will have access to the code key. The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, your information will be disguised to not have any identifiable information. Dissertation, including results, as well as a summary of participant responses in the form of a policy brief, will be available upon request.

WITHDRAWAL:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and you may refuse to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with. If you decide not to participate, or if you decide later to stop participating, all data collected from you will be destroyed and there will be no penalty in any way.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact the principal investigator or the investigator's dissertation chairperson at any time at the addresses, telephone numbers or emails listed below:

Sam Klugman, Psy.M. (Investigator)

Rutgers University

GSAPP

152 Frelinghuysen Rd

Piscataway, NJ 08854-8085

Email: sam.klugman@gmail.com

Daniel Fishman, Ph.D. (Chairperson)

Rutgers University

GSAPP

152 Frelinghuysen Rd

Piscataway, NJ 08854-8085

Email: dfish96198@aol.com

SUBJECT RIGHTS:

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza

New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559

Tel: (848) 932-0150

Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. By answering questions during the interview, you agree to take part in the study.

Appendix F: Introduction to Policy Briefs

Introduction: A needs assessment of transgender and gender nonconforming students at Rutgers University

Over the 2012-13 academic year, the Rutgers University Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities (SJE), in consultation a doctoral candidate from the Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, conducted interviews with ten gender nonconforming and transgender students and alumni. Rutgers is home to a diverse and growing community of transgender and gender nonconforming students; participants identified with a wide variety of gender identities, ages, sexual orientations, and racial and ethnic backgrounds. The study aimed to clarify specific obstacles and barriers transgender students face on campus, student perceptions and utilization of various student services and programs (e.g., Health Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, Residential Life, LGBT Center); areas of community support, and experiences of campus climate. The study was approved by the Rutgers Institutional Review Board.

Participant Demographics

Of the ten individuals participating in the study, seven were students currently enrolled at Rutgers and three were alumni. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 62, with a median age of 22.

With regard to gender identity, participants identified using the following terms: male (n=5); male – FtM (n=1); female (n=2); female/transwoman (n=1); and MtF transsexual (n=1). Participants also identified with a wide range of sexual orientations,

including: straight (n=2); pansexual (n=1); asexual/pansexual (n=1); trans lesbian (n=1); queer (n=1); gay (n=1); often (n=1); homo (n=1); and bisexual (n=1).

With regard to race, four participants of color and six White participants completed the study. The breakdown of participant data by race and ethnicity is not reported here in further detail as it is potentially identifiable information given the size of the Rutgers community.

The majority of participants (n=7) preferred individual interviews. One focus group with three students was conducted.

Although participation was open to students from all Rutgers campuses, recruitment efforts were largely confined to New Brunswick campus, as the services provided by the consultee organization and assessed in this project are primarily limited to students on New Brunswick campus. Participants primarily attended the New Brunswick campus, and this report will systematically examine the needs of students from this campus.

However, participant responses from the Newark and Camden interviewees indicated that these campuses may have fewer resources available for transgender students on these campuses. For example, Rutgers Camden does not yet have a dedicated LGBT center or full-time staff member to create LGBT-specific programming. Given that Rutgers Camden and Newark have their own housing, health, documentation, and student life policies and organizational structures, this study's findings should not be generalized to students on all three campuses. However, students and administrators from Newark and Camden campuses will likely find the results from New Brunswick campus helpful in their own organizational and advocacy efforts. Where appropriate, responses from Newark and Camden respondents are included below.

Appendix G: Campus Climate Policy Brief

Rutgers Campus Climate:

Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Experiences

Participant responses regarding general campus climate and awareness of transgender issues yielded a wide range of responses. As one participant noted, student experiences vary widely depending on their area and degree of campus involvement:

It depends on what subgroups you find yourself in. You can either not be bothered at all or because your interests lead you in a certain way, you can find yourself in an uncomfortable situation. Overall, I don't think it's awful. It's not good or bad.

–Elle, undergraduate

Similarly, several respondents observed that differences in available student services and academic focuses among New Brunswick campuses contributes to differences in campus climates:

[Busch campus is] probably the least safe one out of all the campuses right now. It's the least aware of any social justice issues. Because College Ave. has got everything. Cook Douglass is pretty laid back, and Douglass is the women's college and the Women's and Gender Studies department is on Cook. They're at least aware of issues. And the [LGBT] center is here on Livingston. So Busch has nothing. Even being aware of anything social justice related.

–Felix, alumnus

Several students described challenges with ignorance and a lack of understanding about transgender issues:

I feel as though these people are educated in some way by their peers in terms of gay, lesbian, bisexual issues that I've seen it. But when it comes to trans issues it's an entire new world to them and they just don't really get it.

–Kevin, undergraduate

The most painfully drawn-out conversations I've ever had—They ask a question, you give them an answer, but they don't get it, so they keep asking you the question, just rephrased... I'm trying to explain, because they're asking you personally "how do think about yourself, what do you feel makes you your gender, do you reflect it in your appearance?" That makes you start to feel really crummy, because you start dissecting yourself, questioning yourself.

–Oscar, undergraduate

Many participants reported neutral or positive experiences at Rutgers; over half noted they chose to attend Rutgers at least in part due to its reputation as an accepting place for queer individuals:

I've always felt as though, if people have issues, they cloak them. I think that's only polite when you're working in an environment for a common purpose. If I think that you are going to hell because you're gay, it's not going to help us, to tell you that, so I might as well keep it to myself. So I've had only positive encounters with staff members and faculty.

-Will, undergraduate

I have not found anything that overtly restricted my access or that confronted me in a negative way. I think that occasionally I will feel self-conscious. Because there are times when you're in an environment and you have a feeling that people do perceive you as a trans female, and they sort of turn their head. The sense I have is that people are generally indifferent. I don't see anyone being upset.

There's a lot of diversity here.

-Danya, alumnus

Very open minded, very liberal, very accepting of a person for who they are, not what they are. So I would say for 90 percent of the campus they're open minded, and very accepting.

-Arianna, undergraduate

Conversely, over half the respondents reported at least one instance of harassment or intimidation by another Rutgers student:

There's always a thinly veiled threat of violence. I feel like I experience this a lot. Consistently masculine guys, who will just respond to me in street situations like I'm trash. When I'm wearing a skirt, when I'm wearing makeup.

-Farah, undergraduate

This guy comes up to me. I'm dressed in a very masculine way, but I guess my voice—it always gives it away. ... he comes up to me, he puts his hand up on the window.... he's like "so what's your real name, because you said your name is [Kevin]." "And I'm like, "My name is [Kevin]," and he's like "No, but what is it." I felt really intimidated.

— Kevin, undergraduate

Someone will say something, or someone's friend will come over and tap them on the shoulder, they're like, "oh that's a guy." It still hurts each and every time. It takes me to a dark place immediately. I like to think 70 percent I'm just like any other person. But that 30 percent, where someone has to make a comment to their friends, or go out of their way to shine a phone in my face, to look at my features.

- Elle, undergraduate

Experiences with harassment were not limited to interactions with other students. While many participants described largely positive classroom experiences, several students described transphobic interactions with faculty members:

In one class, I had a professor who dropped the T bomb. She uses the t word that rhymes with granny. And I was like "hey, that's not ok to say. That's a slur." I

just sort of said this to the class. At that point she was like “I wouldn’t use that word against anyone unless they identified themselves as such, first.” Thankfully this class had two exits, so I found the one I was closer to. I felt she did not demonstrate enough knowledge or sensitivity to the issues, or closeness with the community to use what I think is a really powerful slur. I didn’t drop the class immediately. It was after a couple classes I just couldn’t stand being in the classroom anymore. Because I felt like I wasn’t being taken seriously.

-Farah, undergraduate

I have a professor who deliberately misgenders me when I come into class late. The first day of class this semester I was like “can you call me [Kevin] and use male pronouns such as he, him, and his?” And he’s like, OK. But I come into class late maybe 3 times, like 5 minutes late. He won’t call me [Kevin] and he won’t call me by my given name, but he’ll call me “she” like “Oh, she’s here.” And everybody will just look at me... I address it with him at the end of class, and he’s like “Well, I don’t know what I’m supposed to do if you’re coming to class late. I’m just on the spot calling you out on it.”

-Kevin, undergraduate

Discussion and Recommendations

As noted above, participant descriptions of the campus climate at Rutgers varied. Many students identified small communities and environments in which they felt free from harassment and a sense of belonging. Responses suggest that, rather than targeting a monolithic “campus climate,” efforts to improve student life for transgender students should work to identify specific campuses, departments, and organizations where further outreach is warranted.

Several students indicated experiencing welcoming and accepting communities at Rutgers. Indeed, at least half of respondents noted they chose to attend Rutgers at least in part due to its reputation as an accepting place for LGBTQ students. Rutgers has already begun to implement structural and policy changes in the areas of housing, bathrooms, and academic documents, as well as to devote resources and staff for its LGBT centers on New Brunswick and Newark campuses. Currently, the SJE also conducts Safe Space and Liaison trainings for students, staff, and faculty interested in publicly identifying themselves as allies and advocates on campus. Many of these factors may contribute to students’ positive experiences with campus climate.

In spite of these experiences, several students reported a lack of awareness of transgender issues on campus, and more than half reported specific instances of harassment from other Rutgers students. For transgender students at Rutgers, negative experiences on campus include subtle microaggressions, overt hostility, and violence, pointing to the importance of ongoing outreach to all Rutgers community members on the needs and experiences of transgender students, as well as increased attention to violence prevention efforts.

- **Assess existing outreach efforts to identify geographic or organizational areas of greater need for future work.** Specific

campuses, academic departments, and student organizations that have not received training should be prioritized for future educational trainings.

- **Continue to expand educational programming.** Ongoing interventions should include faculty, student, staff, and Rutgers Police trainings in the areas of violence prevention and awareness, conflict resolution, and issues faced by transgender students.

Appendix H: Documents and Records Policy Brief

Documents and Records: Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Experiences

Many of the participants indicated they had adopted a preferred name to match their gender identity, but were unable to have this name and gender identity reflected in the academic record. **Currently, Rutgers does not have a university-wide procedure in place for students to provide a preferred name and gender for academic and identification purposes in classroom and campus settings:**

Just to have something within the system by itself that you could easily change, that would be so useful... That could affect your academic, ID, and roster. I've gone up to people for this, but some people might not want to do that. That could be really scary. If your name is Amy and you want to go by Albert, that's going to be scary going up to a person, saying, 'can you call me Albert instead.' You're afraid; they're going to look at you in a certain way.

- Elle, undergraduate

It's generally uncomfortable in pretty much every class, because I have to write my birth name on everything, everyone refers to me as that... It's not anything they're doing, it's just that I don't feel like coming out in the middle of the semester.

- Nate, undergraduate

Although students who change their names legally may have these changes reflected in the academic record, many of the students interviewed indicated they had not yet gone through the legal name change process, in some cases due to the prohibitive cost and complex legal process involved. Students reported speaking with professors, staff, students individually to request being called by their preferred names, at times placing students in uncomfortable situations:

The rest of the time is just asking professors in the beginning "can you use this name?" I'm still keeping my birth name as a part of my name but I prefer my new name to be the main name. So I tell professors up front. I don't say anything about being trans, I'm just saying I prefer this name. One time, I told [a professor] about the name thing. Later on, a week later, she called on me, and when I didn't say what she wanted me to say, she was like, 'can someone help him out?' I got pissed. Everyone turned around and looked at me. I felt really awful. Then she was like, 'is it him or her' in class, in front of everyone.

- Elle, undergraduate

Students also identified the lack of consistent policy as a source of confusion:

I was told by somebody when I went, somewhere to get my name changed, not officially on rosters, and they're like, "no". Then I went to the dean that I go to for academic advising, and she's like, "yeah, we can

just have your name changed on the roster.” So why is one person telling me one thing and another person telling me another thing?

- Kevin, undergraduate

It's hard to navigate this giant ...bureaucracy. There's the whole 'RU screwed' thing, it's because this is a huge school, and no one seems to know who to talk to about the one thing you desperately need to change...

It's frustrating.

- Farrah, undergraduate

Recommendations

- **Implement a campus-wide procedure to enable students to change their name and/or gender designation on campus records**

Where legally possible, students should be able to have their preferred name and gender pronouns reflected in the record without the requirement of a legal name or gender change. Changes should be reflected in student ID cards, email addresses, electronic listings, online classroom tools (e.g., Sakai, Blackboard), and student services (e.g., Health Services and CAPS), and alumni records. To the greatest extent possible, policy should protect students' privacy, limiting the number of individuals required for students to contact when obtaining a change in the academic record.

- **Educate faculty and staff on name-change and documentation issues experienced by transgender and gender nonconforming students**

Increasing awareness of these issues may create a more welcoming environment for students.

- **Orient faculty and staff to changes in campus procedures and policies**

Ensuring that policy changes are widely publicized and understood reduces barriers for students trying to navigate the Rutgers system. Particular focus on training and orientation should be placed on “gatekeeper” staff, including deans, registrar and financial aid staff, residential advisors, and faculty.

- **Provide education to students on policy and procedural changes**

Information should be made available at a variety of locations and should be presented in both online and offline formats.

Appendix I: Health Services Policy Brief

Rutgers Health Services

Eight out of ten respondents had utilized Rutgers Health Services at least once during their time as students. Participants discussed experiences with campus health centers and with university Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Rutgers Health Centers

Over the past six years, Rutgers Health Services has made numerous improvements in the provision of transgender-specific services. Health Center record keeping allows for preferred names, and administrative staff have received education on working with transgender students. Consistent with current transgender health standards of care (World Professional Association for Transgender Health, 2011), students are able to obtain HRT within an informed consent model of treatment, following a comprehensive psychosocial and medical evaluation with the director of health services, who specializes in transgender health care. This policy represents an effort to provide increased student access to HRT and a movement away from the “gatekeeper” model of care requiring prior written approval from a mental health provider. Several nurses on staff have been trained to teach students how to inject hormones and meet with students receiving HRT on a weekly basis until students are willing to self-administer. Multiple health services staff members also attend the Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference. Students may obtain HRT prescriptions through the university pharmacies, where they are covered by the student health insurance plan. Students are also able to obtain gender affirmative surgical clearances from the director of health services. At the time the interviews were conducted, gender affirmation surgeries were not covered by the insurance plan. However, following a recent switch in providers and input from students and Rutgers Health Services staff, gender affirmative surgeries will be covered by the student health insurance plan beginning Fall 2013.

Many participants discussed aspects of transgender-specific medical services at Rutgers. Students noted the importance of being able to provide a non-binary gender identity and a preferred name for record keeping purposes, even if they had not yet pursued legal changes:

When you go to the health offices, they make a note. So when I go to the doctor, in my file, they have a trans option when you fill your general info sheet. So if you look over their shoulder while they're at the computer it says "[Legal first and last name], transgender male [Oscar]" So I'm like, "yay!"

—Oscar, undergraduate

However, one participant noted that all healthcare service providers may not adhere to standardized identification and documentation procedures:

Once when I went to the pharmacy, just to pick up a prescription. I gave them my name and they asked me for my ID. I guess I didn't really come off as what my biological, given name is, and I'm not going to disclose that unless I have to. They're like “are you sure that's your name?” And I was like, “yeah...” It was at

[Health Services]. It was just once. After that I guess they caught on and stopped asking me, because it was the same people. But that one experience was pretty rough.

–Kevin, undergraduate

Four respondents, including one alumnus, had received hormone replacement therapies through the university health centers. These participants expressed appreciation for the availability of this service, as well as the informed consent protocol:

Health services] is where I'm currently getting hormones. It's pretty cool... She gave me a three page checklist for all the risks of HRT, and saying high risk of blood clots, do you understand and consent, high risk of breast cancer, do you consent, or blood pressure, etc. That was great. It was like "I'm going to put the onus on you. Take it home, come back in a week, and we'll go over this together, and we'll sign everything. Which I think is very novel, it's a great policy.

–Farah, undergraduate

In spite of the availability of trained staff members and transgender-specific services at the campus health centers, several student noted interactions with staff that indicated a lack of knowledge or sensitivity of transgender issues:

Sometimes they stay stupid shit. One time a nurse was like “So, will you eventually have your period?” And I was like “you’re a nurse. I know you know the answer to this question. I’m not going to grow a womb, sorry.” That was definitely one of those little put-downs. With the medical stuff, though, it’s all worth dealing with that just to get specifically trans-related healthcare.

–Farah, undergraduate

[The provider] would either say or do really stupid or offensive things. First of all, she asked if I was gay. You would think they would ask do you sleep with men, something like that. Gender identity obviously has nothing to with orientation. I was like, “gay as in lesbian? What do you mean?” I felt like, if she’s so knowledgeable about LGBT things or trans issues in general, why would that be the first question you ask? In the first meeting, she asked me if I had my period, something hilarious like that. Which was nice, but didn’t you get the information?

–Elle, undergraduate

The majority of students highlighted the tension between a distrust of medical professionals and a need to obtain medical and psychological treatment:

I’m funny about doctors. It takes me a while to trust them to begin with. Some people will go see any doctor you recommend to them. I’m not like that. It takes me a while to trust people, especially in the medical community.

–Arianna, undergraduate

I have a pretty strong distrust of the medical-psychological establishment.

-Farah, undergraduate

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

As part of Rutgers Health Services, CAPS has also experienced changes over the past decade with regard to providing tailored mental health services for transgender students. For the past ten years, CAPS has offered a support group for LGBTQ-identified students. This group arose from student feedback that Rutgers had few safe spaces for students in the early stages of sexual and gender identity exploration and coming out (M. Forest, personal communication, July 25, 2013). In addition to this group, CAPS has recently created a support group meeting at the SJE for students struggling with LGBTQ issues but who may not be comfortable going to CAPS. CAPS has also devoted resources to create a more welcoming space for transgender students, including sensitivity training for front desk and other staff members, encouraging staff to attend LGBTQ Liaison trainings, keeping SJE and campus LGBTQ event fliers and magazines in the waiting room, and hiring therapists with experience treating issues related to gender identity. In conjunction with SJE, CAPS is currently creating a brochure with campus resources for transgender students.

Consistent with health services protocol discussed above, students are often referred to CAPS if they are considering HRT. Previously, students were required to meet with a therapist for three months prior to beginning HRT. However, recent changes to improve student access to HRT have removed this requirement, replacing it with a case-by-case informed consent model. Students may elect to receive mental health services prior to and while starting HRT.

Seven students reported they had some contact with CAPS. For most students, CAPS provides valuable support not only for issues relating to gender identity, but also for general mental health and stress management concerns:

I appreciate CAPS being there. I've had a couple of experiences with them. They've been good. Honestly as far as trans-ness being an issue, it's kind of really not. It's a side note, and you continue what you're actually doing there. CAPS has got it.

—Oscar, undergraduate

One student found the joint CAPS outreach group conducted at SJE to be valuable in the early stages of coming out:

The first person on campus I came out was, I went to a LGBT meeting on Mondays, they have “Breathing Room” at the Social Justice Center. So I came out to whatever six people were there. They were all pretty cool with it, and called me [Nate], it was nice. We go around and ask pronouns. Everyone’s really accepting there. One of the therapists also has office hours in the Social Justice Center once a week.... My talking with her to figure out how to do things is my main source of information.

—Nate, undergraduate

Several students expressed confusion over the current HRT protocol at CAPS, with one student expressing frustration with the previous requirement necessitating mental health treatment to receive HRT:

[CAPS] follows the code of going through a set period of therapy before they would even allow me to see the doctor. The therapist was knowledgeable about certain things, and really sympathetic. I would feel better after talking to him. Only thing was I had to wait so long. That really annoyed me. I felt like I made a step toward reaching a goal but I'm still kind of held back for a period of months. That kind of made me upset. If someone's depressed, and they need meds, you don't make them wait seven months. Those meds have side effects too. If you're worried so much about HRT and if we're really sure about it, I feel like it doesn't make any sense. Why do trans people have to wait so long for something that's so important to them? Recently my friend who started this year, she didn't have to go through that long period of therapy. I don't know if they changed the policy.

–Elle, undergraduate

Discussion and Recommendations

Nearly all respondents discussed the importance of being able to obtain sensitive, tailored healthcare services to address both transgender-specific issues (e.g., HRT) and other medical and psychological needs. As discussed above, Rutgers has made vast improvements in the provision of transgender-affirmative treatments over the past several years. Many of the changes were initiated as a direct result of student feedback. Some changes, such as insurance coverage of gender affirmative surgeries and new outreach programs, are in the very beginning stages of implementation at the time of this study. Analysis of participant responses suggest transgender students perceive these services as extremely important and are willing to utilize them despite barriers. The importance of ongoing improvements to health care service provision and access cannot be understated, particularly in light of multiple research studies documenting significant barriers to healthcare faced by transgender individuals (Grant et al., 2011; Hanssman, 2008; Xavier et al., 2004).

- **Develop and make publically available the procedures for provision of transgender-specific healthcare services at Rutgers.** Information should be available on relevant websites as well as offline in student facilities.
- **Systematically assess needs of Health Services staff regarding knowledge, skills, and attitudes of staff working with transgender students.** Brief needs assessment approaches incorporating feedback from staff and students may be useful in clarifying areas of further need in both medical and counseling settings.
- **Continue to develop and advocate for expansion of transgender-affirmative healthcare services.** Given barriers to care, creative outreach methods (e.g., social networking, cross-organizational collaborations) may improve student access.

Appendix J: Public Facilities Policy Brief

Rutgers Public Facilities:

Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Experiences

Participant responses highlighted multiple issues related to campus bathroom and locker room facilities. **One common observation from participants was an insufficient number of available gender neutral and/or single-use facilities at Rutgers.**

People say ‘you’re in the wrong bathroom.’ Sometimes stares, sometimes they look at me and leave. On campus, I would walk several buildings away to use the bathroom. I would find a bathroom that’s not too crowded. That doesn’t get a lot of access, like basements in the building. Just generally when there’s not as much people around, I feel more comfortable. I’d try to look for a handicap single unit bathroom.

–Lorin, alumnus

The majority of participants reported **uncomfortable or unsafe** encounters in male- or female-only bathroom spaces, highlighting the importance of making gender neutral facilities available to all community members:

I guess I always feel unsafe in a bathroom, to varying degrees. Even now, bathrooms are one of those spaces where, once I enter, I’m more aware of my surroundings than I am in other places. Bathrooms just never really feel completely safe. It’s really the one space that comes to mind that is like that.

- Kevin, alumnus

I still use the women’s restroom and it’s embarrassing. But I don’t really fit in at the other one yet.

- Nate, undergraduate

Several students indicated they avoid locker rooms and athletic facilities due to a lack of available gender-neutral facilities. **Currently, no single-use or gender-neutral locker rooms are officially available for student use, representing a significant barrier for students who are interested in participating in athletic activities or physical education courses at Rutgers:**

In the locker room, because I took out a recreational pass at Rutgers last summer, hoping to use their treadmills and fitness equipment, but I felt uncomfortable, and ended up not going as much. When I went into the locker room, some females that were in there they stared at me.

–Lorin, alumnus

There’s of course the lockerroom question. Even beyond that, if I were to show up to a gendered thing, what’s the right strategy, how would I be interpreted?

–Farah, undergraduate

Current New Jersey state law and Rutgers University non-discrimination policy explicitly include gender identity and expression as protected statuses, suggesting that

transgender students may legally use restrooms that match their gender identities or expressions. However, students expressed confused about current policy:

I know it's not written down, but, say a trans woman went into a woman's bathroom, and someone flipped out. If she runs out and finds a worker, how is she going to handle the situation? That's what I would like to know.

-Elle, undergraduate

Alternatively, knowing who is in charge of the bathrooms, who is the bathroom police? Will I get in trouble if I go in the women's bathroom? I don't know. Do I talk to RUPD? Do I talk to a dean? I don't know. Like I said, I don't think I'm at a point where I pass much, where I'm really gendered.

-Farah, undergraduate

Recommendations

- **Create gender neutral (single stall, lockable, unisex) restrooms in all newly constructed buildings. Convert existing single occupancy bathrooms to allow individuals of all genders.**
- **Create single-unit or private shower facilities in current athletic facilities.** The current lack of private showers and single-use changing rooms creates a significant barrier not only for gender nonconforming and transgender students, but also for families and individuals who require accompaniment medical accompaniment.

Educate faculty, staff, and students on facilities-use issues experienced by transgender and gender nonconforming students on campus. Increasing awareness of these issues may create a more welcoming environment for students.

- **Orient all faculty and staff to campus procedures and policies related to bathroom and locker room use.** Include training on these issues for new staff members, including facilities management, police, and administrators.
- **Along with current listings of single use bathrooms, include information on students' right to use the bathroom consistent with their gender identity/expression.** This information should include clarification of how students are protected under university policy and state law, as well as steps individuals may take if they are threatened or harassed in a public facility.

Appendix K: Housing and Residential Services Policy Brief

Housing and Residential Services:

Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Experiences at Rutgers

Currently, Rutgers New Brunswick has several housing options and procedures available for LGBTQ and allied students. First-year and transfer students may indicate on their housing application if they are interested in being paired with a student interested in LGBTQ issues. A social justice oriented learning community also exists for first year students. All students may also apply to live at “Rainbow Perspectives,” a LGBTQ housing option with gender neutral bathrooms, a gender neutral roommate option, and monthly LGBTQ themed programming and discussions. Finally, gender neutral roommate options are available by request at three other housing units, including an arts and humanities special interest community.

Over half the participants had lived in one of these housing options and indicated that these options were useful in providing **a safe, affirmative community**:

I was already super out and I just kind of introduced myself to everyone in my floor, because I live in Rainbow Perspectives, so everyone’s pretty queer there with some exceptions. I was out to pretty much everybody on my floor, if not the first day, then pretty early on. Which was lots of fun. Also at orientation, I was saying it to lots of people.

–Kevin, undergraduate

I moved to Demarest on College Ave, because my friends were like “it’s like a haven for LGBT people.” So I went there. It was kind of like any other dorm, really. People were more willing to talk there than they were at my other dorm, because no one really talked to me there.

–Elle, undergraduate

Participants who had resided in other housing options spoke about feelings of isolation and indicated few opportunities to connect with others about transgender issues:

So I came into Rutgers and then lived on Busch... it was pretty horrible. The people were fine, but I didn’t feel comfortable talking about anything with any of these people. I didn’t really feel comfortable in that space.. I lived off campus for the rest of my time here.

–Felix, alumnus

My roommate I don’t talk to at all. Everyone on the floor I can’t say anything to. I literally just sit locked up in my room, [on] Busch campus.

–Nate, undergraduate

Students also voiced frustration at having fewer gender-neutral housing options available for first year students:

[During my first year,] I didn’t have a roommate. I actually initially couldn’t even send in a housing application because it wouldn’t go through. If I put in a male roommate, because they would say “this housing option does not allow mixed gender roommates. So my first year, I didn’t even know anybody, so I couldn’t say

"I want this person to be my roommate..." They were like, "Well you're legally female, so unless you want a female roommate, then enjoy living alone."

– Oscar, undergraduate

Participants also reported varying levels of comfort in accessing resident assistants (RAs) as a source of support.

[Training for RAs] is seriously lacking... I think my RA, she could have been so much more involved than she was. She wanted the job for the housing. I think if my situation had been worse, I wouldn't have been comfortable going to her, so that would have been difficult.

-Will, undergraduate

The RA would occasionally come knock on the door. He wanted to check up on people on his floor, and I was really quiet so he would come do that more often. But I didn't really feel that comfortable talking to him about trans issues necessarily. Because I didn't really know him that well.

-Felix, alumnus

They were alright, they were pretty respectful. [LGBT issues are] not really talked about. They're just like, "if you need help, come to me." You just kind of take it generally. You don't really think you can go to them for anything. If they're nice, they're nice. But you don't think, "that is a pillar in my community that I can go to and talk to about issues."

-Elle, undergraduate

Recommendations

- **Change the current housing policy to allow all gender neutral housing options to be open to first-year students.** Housing policies should also be made publically available to increase awareness of all housing options.
- **Expand existing efforts to train residential life staff and administrators on transgender concerns.**
- **Continue to expand gender-neutral housing options.** Early expansion should focus on campuses and geographic areas where no gender neutral option is currently available (e.g., Busch campus, Camden branch).
- **Increase joint programming efforts between Residential Life and SJE.** Integrative programming may include "peer counseling" and Safe Zone training for residential assistants, transgender awareness programming as part of diversity training.
- **Orient all residential assistants to available on- and off-campus resources and policies.** Orientation should include information on name change, housing, bathroom use, bias and harassment policies, counseling and health services.

Appendix L: Student Life Policy Brief

Rutgers Student Life:

Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Experiences

Participants were asked about their participation in a wide variety of social, cultural, and political student groups on campus. Student responses highlighted the importance of these groups in providing social support and feelings of belonging. At the same time, participants encountered barriers specific to issues of gender identity and presentation while participating in student activities.

Greek Life

Participants noted that transgender students interested in participating in fraternities and sororities face specific obstacles, as nearly all fraternities and sororities are structured as single-gender spaces. As one participant discussed, these gender-segregated spaces and groups create barriers for transgender and gender nonconforming students interested in joining a Greek organization:

I would have wanted to join a fraternity or sorority... As a gender variant person, it's kinda hard to decide what group because I don't fit in the sorority because they're all very feminine, that's what separates me... I'm not completely male. Going for a fraternity is a little bit like a mixed experience. So a little bit stuck there.
-Lorin, alumnus

Rutgers has over eighty fraternities and sororities, including one fraternity for “gay, bisexual, transgender, and progressive men.” Two respondents indicated they were currently members of Greek organizations. Both students spoke positively about finding strong networks of support through these organizations as they navigated social stressors:

I joined a sorority this semester. And surprisingly, they've been really accepting. I have a friend who was in it before I decided to join. ... We never really talk about it unless I bring it up as a conversation point. So that's been surprisingly positive. The only negative thing that has come from that is that other groups, like, I have a person from my high school was in a fraternity that we had a mixer with. Even though he was nice to me when he saw me, he told his brothers and it spread across the school, and even to other schools. Like, “oh they have a tranny in the sorority.”
-Elle, undergraduate

My fraternity... huge part of my life, one of the best decisions I ever made. Incredible family, got me through some very uncertain times for me.... They gave me this big push to go talk with my parents. I was like "I can't I can't!" And they were like "yes you can! ... I did. It went well. I love them a lot. My “big” is literally my older brother. I'm so close with him, he's stuck with me for life.
-Oscar, undergraduate

Recommendations

- **Work with Rutgers Student Affairs to develop a resource guide for transgender students interested in joining a fraternity or sorority.** This guide should include a list of inclusive organizations and a contact person for questions and concerns. The guide should be made available on the Rutgers Greek Life and SJE websites.
- **Expand outreach efforts** to Rutgers Greek chapters on issues of transgender identities and inclusion.

Cultural and LGBTQ Groups

The majority of participants indicated they participate or had participated in cultural and religious student groups on campus. Responses indicated that these groups are an important source of support for transgender students:

I used to go [a Rutgers cultural student group].... People were nice there. I started going even before my transition, and during... They were pretty accepting. Even as I got deeper into my transition, everyone was nice, called me by my preferred name.

–Elle, undergraduate

However, several students described challenges in participating in cultural groups due to anticipated and actual reactions to their gender identity and/or presentation:

I also stayed away from [my ethnic] community because I knew a lot of them from [my community prior to college]. It was kind of an isolating experience, because I didn't know any trans people, I didn't really know how to find other trans people. I eventually got back into the... community, but that was after starting the whole medical transition. I went into that even later. I started participating in stuff late junior year, even more behind. It was only after stuff was changing and I was feeling more comfortable with my own body that I was even willing to take the chance to face people that I did know from before.

-Felix, alumnus

I don't really like going to [cultural] events, because I feel like that's where I get the most shit from people. So even though it's my culture and I like being around other people [in my community], I am always more afraid. Because I know they're more likely to say something about me.... At other events, if they don't know me, no one is going to talk to me. But there, people will approach me, and if they see something wrong with me, they're going to make it a big thing. They're going to yell it to their friends, their friends are going to come over and laugh. It's just really nerve-wracking and really scary.

-Elle, undergraduate

All respondents reported current or past participation in an LGBTQ student group. Rutgers has a large LGBTQ community and ten LGBTQ student groups. The majority of students reported positive experiences with LGBTQ student groups on campus. Students indicated that these groups serve an important role in making and maintaining friends with other queer students, and were reported to be inclusive of students of all genders.

Even though I'm trans and that's different from the LGB part, orientation versus expression and identity, I'm still active in the [LGB] community as well. I have a lot of friends in that community. —Arianna, undergraduate

I went to the [QSA] meeting, it was a lot of people, it was a great experience, found out from them about other groups, went to LLEGO, and then there you go, I'm in the queer epicenter of everything, and met friends. —Oscar, undergraduate

I started attending LLEGO meetings last spring. I knew I needed to form social networks, and to find a safe space. And experiences are so far so good. The policy in the spring semester was—every meeting—what's your name, preferred gender pronoun, and some icebreaker. Just to have a space where that was a question, that's great. —Farah, undergraduate

Several students also spoke about the transgender and gender nonconforming community at Rutgers. Multiple respondents involved in the Rutgers Gender Identity Discussion Group found it to be an important source of support:

I don't know what I would do without a group of people who also look at their ID cards and say "this isn't me, why am I carrying this around, help me please." ... Everyone just seems comfortable. Everybody is on the same wavelength, the same page. —Kevin, undergraduate

Participant responses suggest that transgender students at Rutgers benefit from participation in organizations that validate their multiple identities (e.g., race, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity) and foster social connectedness. Results also indicate that transgender students are active contributors to cultural and LGBTQ groups on campus in spite of significant barriers to participation, such as transphobia and racism.

Recommendations

- **Continue to expand programming collaborations, event cosponsorship, and leadership development with student groups, including cultural, LGBTQ, and religious organizations.**
- **Continue to expand transgender-themed programming and outreach to students groups highlighting issues of privilege and intersecting identities.**

Sports and Athletics

Half of the participants spoke about experiences with athletic activities and organizations, with many describing concerns about perceptions of other students and facility use:

I joined a couple clubs. I joined [a martial arts group], but once I was going to start the hormones, I dropped out of it. Because I felt—they weren't bad, the people in Aikido would probably be the most supportive people ever. It's just that martial arts has to do bodies, and my body was going to change, and I didn't know how I was going to take the changes or how they were going to take the changes.

-Felix, alumnus

I've been thinking about joining an intermural sports team. But some of them are either men's only or women's only, and I can keep up with other guys, but how welcoming would they be? That's my concern.

-Oscar, undergraduate

No [athletic activities] since way back, since taking ownership of a trans identity. I'll have to get back to you on that. I've got a feeling I'm not going to use the shower rooms. I've got a feeling I'm going to pack a bag, pee in the pool I guess.

-Farah, undergraduate

I have not been to the gym. I'm afraid to go to the gym. I do not go swimming. I'm afraid to go swimming. On the one hand, it's probably my personal insecurity, on the other hand, for the reason that this is a space where I do not know what to do in. On the one hand, I probably could go swimming, and be OK, but that would require goddamn emotional growth on my part.

-Oscar, undergraduate

Rutgers is a member university of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which in 2011 adopted a set of guiding principles and a formal policy on transgender athletes competing at the intercollegiate level (NCAA Office of Inclusion, 2011), based on recommendations provided by coaches, transgender athletes, athletic directors, and medical professionals. The policy specifies ways transgender students at different points of transitioning may participate in gender-segregated and mixed intercollegiate athletic activities. Though the NCAA policy has drawn criticism for its treatment of male to female transgender students in their first year of transition with hormones, it represents an important step forward in recognizing and including transgender student athletes. Moreover, the NCAA policy includes recommendations for athletic departments to create more inclusive environments for students in areas such as dress code, facilities use, and department policies. Following publication of this resource, multiple universities articulated policies for transgender student participation at the intramural and club level (see, for example, Bates College Athletic Department, 2011). Although Rutgers students are protected from discrimination under state law and the university non-discrimination policy, the Rutgers athletic department has not yet created an explicit policy detailing guidelines for student participation in intramural and club

sports. The student responses above underscore the importance of a clearly articulated, inclusive athletic participation policy, as well as ongoing outreach and education efforts to athletic communities at Rutgers.

Recommendations:

- **Create an athletic inclusion policy for transgender athletes.** The policy should include articulate department policies and procedures for students of various genders (including genderqueer student) participating at the intercollegiate, club, and intramural levels. The policy should also specify procedures for locker room access, travel accommodations, dress code, and protection of student privacy. This policy should be publicly available in the university athletic and SJE websites.
- **Educate athletic department staff about transgender identities and strategies for facilitating transgender athlete participation.** Staff should be prepared to support transgender students in athletic settings.
- **Create single-unit or private shower facilities in current athletic facilities.** The current lack of private showers and single-use changing rooms creates a significant barrier not only for gender nonconforming and transgender students, but also for families and individuals who require accompaniment medical accompaniment (see also *Rutgers Public Facilities* policy brief).

Appendix M: SJE Policy Brief

Rutgers Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities (SJE)

All respondents had interacted with the consultee organization and/or the center 's director, Jenny Kurtz. Several students and recent alumni noted the specific role that SJE had in connecting them to a larger transgender community on campus:

[SJE] is having dinners for trans people.... It was like a table full of other gender nonconforming people. It was cool hanging out and chatting with other people, it was really fun. It was like a mixer. I feel like those kinds of things are definitely important, to keep having them. Because I feel like something like that for people who are coming out, that's one of the best environments, small and comfy and you're around other trans people. It's very relaxing and affirming.

-Oscar, undergraduate

It was a fall reception, and I found out there was a group meeting. I wanted to meet Jenny and went to talk. And she was like, "We have this gender identity meeting going on, would you like to come? You can meet people"

-Lorin, alumnus

Two students indicated they had received support from SJE in dealing with issues of classroom hostility and dormitory bathroom policy:

[The] dean didn't really care. So I talked to Jenny about it and she was like, "you can file this bias report."

-Farah, undergraduate

So my RA was trying to come up with solutions within her limited powers. And then I told the QSA and Jenny and everyone, and suddenly I had a big army behind me.

-Oscar, undergraduate

Participants also utilized SJE as a means of referral to other resources on- and off-campus:

There's actually a monthly trans support group for both parents and guardians [off campus], which should be publicized at Rutgers, because we're really close to it. It's on a sliding scale too. I wouldn't have known about IPG if I hadn't called up Jenny.

-Oscar, undergraduate

Getting [my name] changed on campus was relatively easy because I had the paperwork. And Jenny already knew where I had to change the records, and she would know people, like liaisons in those departments. So just make an appointment and go see.

-Felix, alumnus

Participants reported generally positive perceptions of SJE and the services the center provides, noting that the environment at the center is welcoming and inclusive:

I've always found they're very warm people. They're like 'we take what we can get.' They're very open to everybody coming along.

–Will, undergraduate

What I see right now is primarily the Social Justice center responding to LGBT concerns as well as the concerns of people of color and other groups that have been marginalized or may feel marginalized on campus.

–Danya, alumnus

Several respondents observed that the center's role and mission on campus might benefit from additional clarification, as pertaining to interactions with other university bodies:

If you have gender-specific problems, questions, comments, where do you go to contact? If it's a Rutgers administrative problem, you should be able to address the Rutgers managerial staff directly. The social justice center, they're a department, and kind of an independent thing. I feel like addressing Rutgers infrastructure and policies, I don't know if that's supposed to be a directive of the center. Even though they've been doing it. Maybe the center would be able more efficiently to focus on other programs. I feel like it's more professional for Rutgers to have an official contact for those problems. There should be a place to call up for that.

-Will, undergraduate

I don't even know what the center does, besides being an ally in the bureaucracy. I don't know what its mission statement is, what its function is besides bringing us to these faculty trainings. it's a nice space with nice people, seems like a safe space.

-Farah, undergraduate

Discussion and Recommendations

Higher education researchers have noted the importance of LGBTQ centers in several areas of student life, including visibility, programming, communication, advocacy, continuity of services over time, and safe space. Under the umbrella of Rutgers Student Affairs, SJE performs these roles, with yearly events (e.g., Transgender Awareness Week, Gaypril), weekly group meetings (Gender Identity Discussion Group, Breathing Room support group), and availability for student drop-in. Programming in recent years has strongly emphasized the experiences of marginalized groups within the LGBTQ community, including transgender youth and queer people of color. Participant responses suggest that SJE is an accessible space for transgender students at Rutgers. Furthermore, results indicate that SJE plays a supportive role in shouldering some of the burden of education, advocacy, and organizing that falls on transgender students at Rutgers, including the recent organization of the Gender Identity Discussion group. At the time of this research, transgender students had recently begun to assume the responsibility of the group's organization and planning. The SJE director has been actively involved in the improvements in student housing, health care, and facilities discussed earlier.

The SJE website contains a resource guide for transgender students, including a summary of gender-neutral housing options, a map of gender-neutral bathrooms, information on transgender-specific health care options, and the legal name change process in New Jersey. The website also SJE organizational mission, vision and objectives. Thus, student confusion regarding the role and mission of SJE may reflect either a lack of awareness regarding the SJE website, or a lack of clarity in the organization's mission statement. This confusion does not appear to be impacting students' willingness to access services and support from SJE, but does suggest that input from students may be useful in considering future outreach strategies or changes to the SJE mission.

Recommendations:

- **Continue to expand programming and resources to reflect the needs of students of all genders.** Programming should continue to reflect students' intersecting identities and developmental needs
- **Continue to incorporate student voices and participation in all levels of SJE outreach and program development.** Expansion of current programs such as the Safe Space and Liaison programs and development of other opportunities to involve students of all genders, such as an SJE advisory board or leadership programs.
- **Continue to expand SJE outreach efforts to expand awareness about available resources and the SJE mission.** Consider further outreach to spaces where SJE materials may not be readily available, including academic department offices, student support settings, and various online forums. Continue to incorporate feedback from transgender students in development of future outreach efforts.