

Kaleidoscope: A Graduate Journal of Qualitative Communication Research

Volume 21 *Double Volume: 21-22*

Article 10

2023

Trans-Centered Acceptance within a University: Offering a Model of Acceptance Created By and Centered Around Trans Student Experiences

Sean TE Maulding

Southern Illinois University Carbondale, sean.maulding@siu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/kaleidoscope>

Recommended Citation

Maulding, Sean TE (2023) "Trans-Centered Acceptance within a University: Offering a Model of Acceptance Created By and Centered Around Trans Student Experiences," *Kaleidoscope: A Graduate Journal of Qualitative Communication Research*: Vol. 21, Article 10.

Available at: <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/kaleidoscope/vol21/iss1/10>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Kaleidoscope: A Graduate Journal of Qualitative Communication Research by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact opensiuc@lib.siu.edu.

Trans-Centered Acceptance within a University: Offering a Model of Acceptance Created By and Centered Around Trans Student Experiences

Sean TE Maulding
Southern Illinois University

Despite attending the same universities and working toward the same degrees, trans students and cisgender students do not always have the same perceptions of acceptance at their university. The transmale, gender nonconforming, and gender nonbinary students who participated in this study continue to experience a layer of rejection due to their gender identities and expressions. Using queer theory and feminist standpoint theory, this study sought to answer the question of what acceptance looks like from the standpoint of trans students at the University. Through these theoretical lenses and thematic analysis, it was determined that there were four general levels of acceptance experienced by members of trans communities at this university (i.e., active and passive acceptance, & active and passive rejection). Using their stories and experiences as a guide, a definition for both levels of acceptance and rejection was created. The discussion section includes a list of actions universities could take, provided by the participants of this study.

Keywords: trans, acceptance, university, standpoint theory, queer theory

I'm very open about being transgender inside the school, and he went and told some students that that's a man and students looked at me and were like, 'What, that's not a man. Look at her face and she has breasts. That's not a man.' So, they were standing and looking at me like if I was a circus freak, you know . . . as usual. (Nadal et al., 2012, p. 69)

In this excerpt from a previous study by Nadal et al., a trans university student details an experience on her campus of being openly misgendered while other students stared at her and analyzed her body. This experience represents one of many such experiences uniquely lived by trans students, namely, an openly intrusive, negative reaction to their gender identities or

Sean TE Maulding is a doctoral student in the School of Communication Studies at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Acknowledgements: I (Sean) would like to Dr. Julie Taylor for her patience and support throughout the process of conducting this research. I would also like to thank Dr. Thomas Corrigan and Dr. Todd Jennings for their guidance, and the anonymous peer-reviewers for their time and feedback. Thank you to every participant who gave their time to this research. Thank you, Hannah, for your help with this work. Finally, I would like to thank Kaleidoscope for providing this space for graduate student research.

expression. Indeed, this excerpt was chosen because of its resemblance to stories told by participants of this current research conducted at a different university, nearly a decade later. One participant of this current study, a student at Joan University (JU; renamed to protect the anonymity of participants) provided an unfortunately similar quotation when he said, “I’m just used to people, like, staring at me all the time back when I was on campus, you know, or like, audibly talking loud about like, what gender you are and it’s everywhere” (Max). In general, universities have the expectation of being open and accepting (Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2018). When students are accepted and given the opportunity to grow as individuals, college years can be a period of positive development (Yost & Gilmore, 2011). Unfortunately, this is not always the case for trans communities. For members of trans communities, fitting in might mean a decision between denying their true gender identity or facing violent harassment (Seelman, 2014).

As trans communities continue to face marginalization and inequality, it is important to hear from members of trans communities. As a genderqueer scholar, who was a graduate student of JU at the time of this study, I intended to use this research to better understand the ways members of trans communities perceived acceptance at Joan University. From this data, it was possible to justify definitions of four levels of acceptance and rejection (i.e., active and passive acceptance, & active and passive rejection) and the primary factors contributing to the classification of acceptance or rejection at each level. These definitions were created by intentionally centering the study and analysis around the lived experiences of trans students.

Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by feminist standpoint theory (FST) and queer theory. Feminist scholars in the 1970s noted a power difference between men and women (Anwaruddin, 2013) and sought to create “conceptual frameworks in which women as a group became the subjects or authors of knowledge” (Harding, 2004, p.29). Standpoint theory has since become more generalized and is used today to provide insight into how the perspectives of oppressed groups differ from those in different positions of power (Anwaruddin, 2013), in part by deliberately focusing research from the standpoints of marginalized communities.

An important tenet of FST, *epistemological advantage*, is the claim that members of oppressed groups have an advantage in some cases over members of dominant groups, by virtue of their place within the power hierarchy (Ardill, 2013; Intemann, 2010) because of their need to understand the ways in which oppression and power structures work within their lives (Harding, 2009). Those in privileged positions, even those with good intentions, may never experience certain types of oppression within their society and, therefore, do not have the knowledge this version of reality provides (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010), nor can they easily see the standpoint of

those with less power (Ardill, 2013; Dougherty & Krone, 2000; Hartsock, 1997; Hekman, 1997).

Queer theory began to unify as an offshoot of LGBT studies in the early 1990s (Yep et al., 2003). Some early queer theorists believed the identity politics of LGBT theorists were exclusionary and too focused on assimilationist goals (Slagle, 2006). Queer theorists are not seeking to fit in with dominant society by proving similarities; they are seeking to challenge the power structures of a given space that create systems of oppression for certain groups of identities and to create systems in which this oppression is nonexistent (Slagle, 2003). Like the epistemological advantage of standpoint theory, queer theory studies power structures starting from the margins of gender and sexual identities, arguing that these standpoints will likely have a wider perspective that are equally as valid as any other (Henderson, 2001). These standpoints help to illuminate the power structures created by and sustaining norms of sexuality and gender.

Although these theories are often considered at odds with one another because standpoint theory relies on essentialist categories (Dougherty & Krone, 2000; Hekman, 1997), while queer theory finds this type of fixed, generalized category problematic (Slagle, 2003), pairing these theories was useful for critically observing power dynamics affecting trans students at Joan University and explaining the findings using familiar categories (i.e., transmen & gender non-conforming people), rather than as occurrences only experienced by individual students. Although I was careful not to generalize all trans students, finding similarities between participants suggested similar positions on the power hierarchy of JU, which allowed for the creation of the larger, temporary category of trans student. Forming this temporary category allowed for an exploration of the experiences of trans students using a queer lens.

Trans

Trans is often used as an umbrella term for individuals whose body and resulting societal gender expectations do not conform to their gender identity. For example, a person who identifies as bigender might shift between communicating masculine and feminine gender expressions (Luke et al., 2017). Although transgender can be used as a label for many identities that do not conform to cisgender expectations (Miller & Behm-Morawitz, 2017; Nuru, 2014), it is not the accepted label for every community member. For this reason, and to lessen the risk of excluding identities, trans has emerged as a more accepted umbrella term for those with gender variant identities (Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2018). However, as this research is meant to explore the experiences of individual members of the trans communities who should all have the power to control their identity labels (Burdge, 2007), I deferred to any identity label desired by individual participants (e.g., transmale or transmas).

The College Bubble

As stated above, college is often considered a time for students to discover who they are and to grow as people (Yost & Gilmore, 2011). College students, residential and commuter, often have support and guidance through these potential life changes that they may not find outside of this college space. At the university, students may have the freedom to explore new labels with less fear of negative judgements (Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2018). However, this is not always the experience for every community on a college campus.

Within the college bubble is the campus climate, or “cumulative attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential” (Garvey et al., 2017, p. 796). Due to power structures on campus, the campus climate is the overall attitudes and behaviors among the more largely represented campus community members (i.e., heterosexual, cisgender students and faculty). The climate they create shapes the experiences of all others. Although studies have found a connection between universities and a greater acceptance of diversity (Holland et al., 2013; Rockenbach et al., 2017), the larger body of research suggests an overall lower level of acceptance of LGBTQ students compared to their cishetero peers (Evans et al., 2017; Tetreault et al., 2013). This creates a chillier climate for students within those groups. This is problematic for such students, because there is a direct correlation between campus climate and identity exploration (Vaccaro & Newman, 2017). Consequently, the warmer, more accepting the climate, the more likely queer students are to explore and live openly with their LGBTQ status(es).

As JU campuses shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic and courses shifted from in-person to online, the campus climate was still manifested through available student resources and university communications (e.g., emails, webpages). As noted in the interviews, some participants’ initial perceptions of the campus climate for trans students at JU were fostered by these available resources and university communications.

Research Design

This study examines the lived experiences of transmale, transmasculine, and nonbinary students at JU and their understanding of acceptance at this Southern California public university. The following research question guided this study:

RQ1: What does acceptance look like according to transmale, transmasculine, and nonbinary students at Joan University?

Data Collection, Analysis, and Participants

To answer RQ1, this study employed one-on-one interviews with

students who self-identified as members of one or more of JU's trans communities. The data was analyzed using a thematic analysis, which allowed me to find important patterns and shared meanings between and among the lived experiences disclosed through the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Interested participants responded to emails sent to every instructor during the term in which the data was collected. Seven students agreed to be interviewed for this study. Of the seven, four identified as transmale, one identified as female gender non-conforming, one identified as transmale/gender-neutral, and one identified as nonbinary. No student identifying as a transwoman or transfemme responded. A pseudonym was provided for every participant.

Research Site

I conducted this research at a mid-size, public, four-year university located in a Southern California city of roughly 200,000 people. The vast majority of its approximately 22,000 students are undergraduates. The campus has a queer and trans resource center, which offers social events and events for raising awareness of issues related to gender and sexuality. Additionally, this campus has a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee and houses a Title IX resource center. All students and faculty are required to undergo annual sexual violence prevention training.

Findings

Throughout the conversations with research participants, it became apparent that being accepted was more complicated than accepted or rejected. When asked the question "How do you define acceptance?" the responses varied widely. Some examples include the more passive "not focusing on gender" (Julian) and the more active "fighting outside the binary" (Adan). When describing their experiences with acceptance at Joan University, the term became even more complex. Some participants desired a passive acceptance that would allow them to assimilate into the dominant culture at Joan University without an emphasis on their gender identity. Others desired a more active and directed acceptance where trans lives would be uplifted and valued. Participants provided examples of interactions on campus (e.g., discussions with peers) and with campus (e.g., official JU correspondence) that were used as evidence to justify the structuring of perceptions of acceptance into four levels. These are not merely the definitions for acceptance provided by participants. They are the result of an analysis of the experiences shared by the participants. There are other factors which likely impact a student's perception of acceptance (e.g., college major, racial or ethnic identities), but this study did not focus enough on these factors to draw a conclusion about them.

Active Acceptance

The activist level of acceptance is active acceptance. This type of acceptance follows an equity approach, which means it involves identifying which actions and resources are needed to uplift trans communities and to bring them from the margins of Joan University. To Zack, a transmale student who identifies as passing enough to rarely be misgendered, active acceptance includes “finding ways to support” trans communities, “trying to make it easier” for trans communities, and providing trans communities the resources they need. Active acceptance is when students, faculty, or administration intentionally act with the aim to help trans students.

One example of active acceptance at the university level is the Queer and Trans Resource Center (QTRC) on campus. Joan University took the steps required to open a resource center specifically for queer and trans students. This center is staffed by members of the communities who can assist those students in need. During our interview, Max, a transmale student who is engaged in multiple ways with campus, (e.g., a student organization, courses, and housing), brought up some of the ways the QTRC helps trans students:

Pretty much the only time I've gone in there is like to ask, like, how to change my name, and like how to do this or that because like, you know, legal forms are hard. So, they have people there that'll like walk you through stuff. ... They're also the ones, I was just thinking about it, that got me my doctor to start hormones.

It is true that some trans students on campus do not believe the QTRC is the perfect solution for their communities, but this is an example of the University taking action it believes to be in the interest of helping trans students.

Active acceptance does not require such large steps as opening a resource center. Drew, who identifies as transmale and who stated they love being trans, recounted an instance of passive acceptance. When a professor unintentionally deadnamed Drew in an email, that professor quickly sent a follow-up with an apology. The professor understood the mistake and corrected herself. As Sofia, a female non-conforming student who self-identified as being of an older generation argued, some professors are attempting to “lead by example” through their use of pronouns in email signatures. Each of these examples were received positively by the research participants because it set the tone for their acceptance in the course. In those moments, their identities were validated.

Active Rejection

Active rejection is the opposite of active acceptance. Whereas active acceptance required a deliberate effort to uplift trans communities, active rejection is when students, faculty, or administration act with the intent to harm or bring down trans communities. What sets this apart from passive

rejection is both the intent to not accept trans students and the understanding that the actions are problematic to trans students. Adan, who identifies as transmale/gender-neutral and who is a vocal advocate on campus for trans communities, shared an example from his course, *Women as Agents of Social Change*, regarding rejection from his professor. Adan recounted the story of when he asked his professor to do his final presentation on why pink pussy hats are problematic:

I had to present to her the idea of talking about trans identity first for her to accept it. She said at first, no, because I already talked about my transness in class and that students didn't need to learn about that anymore, and I was just, and that killed me. Because here's a class about women as agents of social change and the teachers are talking about allowing Black and White women within the job force getting more rights, and not even talking about Marsha P. Johnson, not even talking about Sylvia Rivera, or any of those queer leaders of color. I felt so erased in that class.

In a college-level course regarding the contributions of women to social change, Adan was denied his request to speak about trans issues on the grounds that the students did not need to learn more about the contributions of trans women. It is clear that this rejection had a negative impact on Adan, as he describes the experience as emotionally damaging and contributing to feelings of being erased. In a course about women, when a trans student attempts to include trans women in the conversation, the professor likely understood the importance of this request as this was not the first time the student brought this up. Telling a trans student that his classmates do not need to hear from a trans perspective, knowing the importance, is a clear example of active rejection.

At the student-to-student level, several of the respondents have internalized being stared at as a typical experience. Max describes being stared at everywhere, including the restrooms. Max also discussed situations around campus when other students would be “audibly talking loud about what gender you are.” The students must have understood the negative consequences of their actions and yet Max stated this happens “everywhere” on campus. Active rejection is felt when people take an action knowing the consequences will be harmful to trans communities or their members.

Passive Acceptance

Passive acceptance is seamless acceptance, with no gaps or differences in treatment between people or communities. When asked for her definition of acceptance, Sofia provided the following explanation “it's not saying I need special; I don't need special rules. I don't need special accommodations. I need to be treated fairly and equally like everyone else. That's what acceptance means to me.” During the data analysis, I found that Sofia's explanation clearly defined what is meant by the category of passive

acceptance. Passive acceptance is being treated like everyone else, without discrimination or intentional acts to uplift or bring down trans students or communities. This type of acceptance follows an equality approach, with the goal to be balanced with the distribution of power and resource to all students without providing any special accommodations or allowances for any community. Under the equality approach, every student is treated equally, regardless of their gender identity. The call for equality is also present in the definitions provided by Max and Zack. Max, in an example of institutional level passive acceptance, states “they don’t have to, like have trans pride everywhere or like, have, you know, like, extra things for us just kind of a balanced thing.” At the person-to-person level of Joan University, Zack states his hope that trans people are seen as normal. “You see [trans students] and you’re like, yeah, like, there’s nothing to question about that, like that is completely run of the mill at this point. There’s nothing like different about it.” Their gender identities do not receive different treatment. Passive acceptance does not set trans students apart from cis students as they navigate life as a JU student.

Passive acceptance is also present when instructors and students use proper pronouns and names. Outside of his department, Max stated that most of his professors would use his name and pronouns as long as he talks to them on the first day of class. For passive acceptance, the professors do not have to go out of their way or do extra work to ensure identities are respected. When they learn the identities do not match the roster, they correct the roster for trans students just as they would for any other student whose name is incorrect on the roster. Julian, a transmale student who has not attended class in-person at JU also appreciated this passive acceptance when he noted his true name was present on his class roster, rather than his deadname. This was not the case for his student email address, but he still perceived the true name on course rosters as a step in the right direction. Despite not being physically present on campus, Julian experienced passive acceptance through the actions of his instructors and administrators who changed the course roster.

Drew spoke about the passive acceptance he felt from his co-workers at his campus job. When talking specifically about his co-workers he stated “they were accepting, like they knew I was a trans guy. Very cool. And they use my pronouns, used my name. That was very important to me.” His co-workers did not need to go out of their way to demonstrate passive acceptance. They only needed to use his name and pronouns as they would for anybody else. The University would not have to do any extra work for trans students either, beyond recognizing and correcting, as they would for any cultural group, the issues that are making student life more difficult for trans students at Joan University. This is what makes it an equality approach, which, in turn, makes it passive acceptance.

Passive Rejection

As with passive acceptance, no special action is required to be passive rejection. The difference, however, is that the absence of action in passive rejection is harmful to trans communities. Passive rejection occurs when there is a lack of understanding about an issue, either of its existence or of the magnitude of its harm, resulting in no perceived need to solve the problem. With passive rejection, there is no intent to harm trans students, but there is also no desire to understand how actions or policies are negatively impacting students.

One example of passive rejection provided by Zack is the unavailability of menstrual products designed for trans men. In addition to menstrual products in the men's restrooms, Zack explained that, as some trans men do have their period, menstrual pads have been designed to fit different types of undergarments. These products, I personally noted, are not available on campus at JU, despite being useful to some of the JU population. Having menstrual products that require women's underwear works well for gender-conforming, ciswomen, or for transmen who wear women's underwear, but not for the trans students who do not wear women's underwear and do not want to express differently while menstruating.

A second example of passive rejection is the inadequate availability of gender-neutral bathrooms on campus. Drew, who both works and lives on campus, recognized the gender-neutral bathrooms at JU as lacking, while speaking of necessary changes for the university:

I have to rush to the one in the Student Union, you know, or, I mean, I think there's another one in like, the newest building, but it's like, there's like two to three. And it's like, that's not enough. You know? It's like there, here's one. Deal with it. We did our job.

Drew's concern with the availability of a safe bathroom was shared by Adan and Grace-Ronaldo, both questioning which bathroom they would use. Grace-Ronaldo, who identifies as nonbinary discussed their concern about bathrooms as their transition continued, arguing "the outside world is very odd about androgyny." As of the interview, they were using female restrooms, but were still considering options for expressing as more androgynous and the consequences of doing so. The administrators at this university either have not been made aware of these issues or do not believe the issues are large enough to correct. This is an important distinction between active and passive rejection. If the administration is ignoring the issues, rather than working to solve them, this is active rejection. If the administration is not putting in the effort to reach out to trans communities in an attempt to understand their needs, this lack of adequate effort makes this passive rejection.

Passive rejection is also the "little things that you interact with every single day that just remind you of how kind of invisible you are in these spaces" (Adan). These are the microaggressions that occur when male and

female are the only options on forms and when male and female restrooms are labeled with dresses and pants. It is living with a constant fear of being misgendered because it “happens all the time on campus” (Drew), when cis students, faculty, and staff do not realize this is a problem. There may not be the intent to harm trans communities, but without expending the effort to understand the problems being created or perpetuated, trans communities do suffer.

Discussion

This study revealed multiple levels of acceptance perceived by members of trans communities at Joan University. It is clear that a variety of factors impact the perceptions of their own acceptance at this university, some in positive ways and others in negative ways. When feeling accepted, trans students are able to communicate their identities in ways that feel authentic to them. This acceptance helps them explore who they are and grow as individuals. However, when their trans identities are rejected, students do not feel like equal members of Joan University. There is no reason trans students should feel rejected for their trans identity, particularly in a space that purports to be open and accepting.

This research includes two major practical contributions for universities: 1) reasons for perceptions of acceptance or rejection and ways to identify the type of acceptance or rejection being perceived and 2) a list of suggestions to improve universities as described by members of the trans communities. The first practical contribution is an overview of acceptance versus rejection and potential reasons for perceiving acceptance or rejection. There were four levels of acceptance, defined throughout the findings section, which were identified through coding the interview data (i.e., active acceptance, active rejection, passive acceptance, & passive rejection).

The second practical contribution of this study is a list of ways to improve the university for trans students. The interviews ended by asking each participant a hypothetical question: What changes would they implement if they were declared the unquestioned leader of the university? The following is a synthesis of these changes. These are not my suggestions. They are paraphrases of the suggestions made by trans students. If you recognize these needs or know of solutions, do not dismiss them. They are the hopes for improving the University, directly from the trans communities. There were three university-level suggestions:

1. University administration should be more vocal with their advocacy for trans issues and needs. The university should be more deliberate when ensuring trans students feel comfortable and have the same opportunities around campus.
 - a. Trans students should be invited to the table to discuss how they are affected by all aspects of the university, even those taken for granted as cisgender topics (e.g., birth

- control, pregnancy).
- b. Trans students should feel empowered to make complaints, knowing the university will take them seriously.
 - c. There should be more trans and queer representation around campus.
 - i. The trans flag should fly.
 - ii. There should be trans and queer therapists, administrators, and professors.
 - d. The university should create a video that teaches about trans and queer identities and bullying and how we can be more inclusive.
 - e. A gender studies course should be a requirement for every student.
 - f. Queer and trans students should never feel they are not being treated with respect and with human dignity in academia.
 - i. Queer and trans students should be compensated for their activist labor.
 - ii. Queer and trans students should receive the same accolades as cis students doing the same work.
2. This university should audit its use of gender specific norms. Not everything needs to be (cis)gendered.
- a. There should be more gender diversity in sexual assault trainings, so that trans students feel they are included in attempts to make all students safer on campus.
 - b. Menstrual pads for masculine underwear should be available in stores on-campus and, menstrual products should be available in all restrooms.
 - c. There should be more gender-neutral restrooms on campus so that trans students who rely on these do not have to rush to certain buildings.
 - i. Single-occupant restrooms with a locking door are safe for everyone.
3. This university should allow for more authentic identities on official documents.
- a. The names on campus emails need to reflect true names, not deadnames.
 - b. There should be no gender boxes to check that are exclusively male or female.
 - c. The names on campus ID cards should allow for the inclusion of true names, instead of only deadnames.

There were three faculty and staff-level suggestions:

1. Faculty and staff should be required to take gender-sensitivity training seriously.

- a. This is a campus of diverse students who may need to rely on faculty and staff to know what to do in difficult situations covered by these training courses.
2. Faculty and staff should respect and use the proper identities of the students.
 - a. Students may face many institutional and personal barriers when trying to legally change their names. This legal change should not be a requirement to feel their identity is respected.
 - b. Faculty and staff should learn about pronouns so that their use becomes natural for all.
3. Every syllabus should declare the classroom a safe space, and every professor should take that seriously.
 - a. Curriculum should be open for debate.
 - b. Queer and trans histories need to be included even if they make students or professors uncomfortable.

Student emails, student centers, student IDs, rosters, and administrative staff are now commonplace at colleges and universities. Each of these provides hardships and opportunities for improvement that can be used as guides for members of universities.

Limitations and Future Research

There were a few limitations to this study. First, the sample size only included seven trans students. Although I am grateful for every one of them, the study would have benefited from comparing the experiences of more participants. With campus being closed due to Covid-19, the recruitment efforts were stunted. Future research would benefit from more perspectives. The second limitation is that five of the seven participants identified as transmale, which was helpful for understanding a transmale perspective, but did not include the perspective of any transfemale identified participants. Research has shown that transwomen can have different struggles than transmen (Raun, 2016). This is a limitation in the sense that a fuller picture of trans student experiences would benefit from those of transwomen.

Although this current study aimed to illuminate experiences and perceptions of acceptance of students within the temporary category of trans students, I do acknowledge the importance of future research that is more intentionally intersectional. There are numerous factors that contribute to a student's perception of their reality (e.g., race, socioeconomic status, sexuality, physical ability, etc.) and future research to test these four categories of acceptance in light of those intersecting identities would be beneficial and worthwhile.

Concluding Remarks

This research was undertaken as an effort to better understand how members of the trans communities at Joan University viewed acceptance. Through one-on-one interviews with seven trans students and a thematic analysis with a queer lens, I was able to uncover a variety of factors contributing to their understanding of acceptance. Queer theory focused the inquiry on individual students who are marginalized for their trans identity, while standpoint theory allowed for a discussion of these individual students' experiences as that of the collective identity *trans students*. Together, these theories allowed for an analysis and discussion of the lived-experiences and perceptions of acceptance of trans students at Joan University. It was disappointing to hear the ways in which not every student can benefit from perceptions of acceptance at this university. College should be a time for all students to be supported and accepted enough to grow. It is my hope that this research can be used by those in power or those finding their own power to not only understand a problem exists, but to use the words of trans students to make the positive changes they have suggested.

References

- Anwaruddin, S.M. (2013). (Re)viewing Maggie and Tess through the lens of standpoint theory. *Epiphany*, 6(1), 120-135. <https://doi.org/10.21533/epiphany.v6i1.56>
- Ardill, A. (2013). Australian sovereignty, indigenous standpoint theory and feminist standpoint theory: First Peoples' sovereignties matter. *Griffith Law Review*, 22(2), 315-343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10383441.2013.10854778>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology*, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004>
- Burdge, B. (2007). Bending gender, ending gender: Theoretical foundations for social work practice with the transgender community. *Social Work*, 52(3), 243-250. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/54.1.88>
- Dougherty, D. S., & Krone, K. J. (2000). Overcoming the dichotomy: Cultivating standpoints in organizations through research. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 23(1), 16-40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2000.11517688>
- Evans, R., Nagoshi, J. L., Nagoshi, C., Wheeler, J., & Henderson, J. (2017) Voices from the stories untold: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer college students' experiences with campus climate. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 29(4), 426-444. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2018.1378144>
- Garvey, J. C., Sanders, L. A., & Flint, M. (2017). Generational perceptions of campus climate among LGBTQ undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(6), 795-817. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0065>

- Goldberg, A. E., & Kunalanka, K. (2018). Navigating identity development and community belonging when “there are only two boxes to check”: An exploratory study of nonbinary trans college students. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 15*(2), 106-131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2018.1429979>
- Harding, S. (2004). A socially relevant philosophy of science? Resources from standpoint theory’s controversiality. *Hypatia, 19*(1), 25-47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2004.tb01267.x>
- Harding, S. (2009). Standpoint theories: Productively controversial. *Hypatia, 24*(4), 192-200. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.01067.x>
- Hartsock, N. (1997). Comment of Hekman’s “Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited”: Truth or justice? *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 22*(2), 367-374. <https://doi.org/10.1086/495161>
- Hekman, S. (1997). Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 22*(2), 341-365. <https://doi.org/10.1086/495159>
- Henderson, L. (2001) Queer communication studies. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 24*(1), 465-484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2001.11678998>
- Holland, L., Matthews, T. L., & Schott, M. R. (2013) “That’s so gay!” Exploring college students’ attitudes toward the LGBT population. *Journal of Homosexuality, 60*(4), 575-595. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2013.760321>
- Intemann, K. (2010). 25 years of feminist empiricism and standpoint theory: Where are we now? *Hypatia, 25*(4), 778-796. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40928656>
- Littlejohn, S., & Foss, K. (2010). The communicator. *Theories of human communication* (10th ed., pp. 79-122). Waveland Press, Inc.
- Luke, M., Levine, C. A., & Goodrich, K. M. (2017). Bi-gender. In K.L. Nadal (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Psychology and Gender* (pp. 148-149). SAGE Publications, Inc. <http://doi.org/10.4135/9781483384269.n54>
- Miller, B., & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2017). Exploring social television, opinion leaders, and Twitter audience reactions to Diane Sawyer’s coming out interview with Caitlyn Jenner. *The International Journal of Transgenderism, 18*(2), 140-153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2016.1260513>
- Nadal, K., Skolnik, A., & Wong, Y. (2012). Interpersonal and systemic microaggressions toward transgender people: Implications for counseling. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling, 6*(1), 55-82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15538605.2012.648583>
- Nuru, A. K. (2014). Between layers: Understanding the communicative negotiation of conflicting identities by transgender individuals. *Communication Studies, 65*(3), 281-297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2013.833527>
- Raun, T. (2016). *Out online: Trans self-representation and community building on Youtube*. Routledge.
- Rockenbach, A. N., Lo, M. A., & Mayhew, M. J. (2017). How LGBT college students perceive and engage the campus religious and spiritual climate. *Journal of Homosexuality, 64*(4), 488-508. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1191239>

- Seelman, K.L. (2014). Recommendations of transgender students, staff, and faculty in the USA for improving college campuses. *Gender and Education*, 26(6), 618-635. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2014.935300>
- Slagle, R. A. (2003). Queer criticism and sexual normativity: The case of Pee-wee Herman. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 25(2-4), 129-146. http://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_06
- Slagle, R. A. (2006). Ferment in LGBT studies and queer theory. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 52(1-2), 309-328. http://doi.org/10.1300/J082v52n01_13
- Tetreault, P. A., Fette, R., Meidlinger, P. C., & Hope, D. (2013). Perceptions of campus climate by sexual minorities. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(7), 947-964. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2013.774874>
- Vaccaro, A., & Newman, B. M. (2017). A sense of belonging through the eyes of first-year LGBPQ students. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 54(2), 137-149. <http://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2016.1211533>
- Yep, G., Lovaas, K., & Elia, J. P. (2003). Introduction. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45(2-4), 1-10. http://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_01
- Yost, M., & Gilmore, S. (2011). Assessing LGBTQ campus climate and creating change. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58(9), 1330-1354. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2011.605744>

