Sexual Violence against Trans People
What does it mean to be trans?

• To be trans (short for “transgender”) is to identify with a gender other than that which one was assigned at birth.
  • In the US and many other Western countries, all infants are assigned a binary gender (girl or boy) at birth based on their assigned sex (female or male).
  • Someone who was assigned female at birth (“AFAB”) and does not identify (solely) as a girl or woman is transgender.
Trans Identities

- The most well-known transgender identities are binary:
  - Trans women (not “transwomen”)
  - Trans men (not “transmen”)

- However, most trans people actually identify outside the gender binary in some way:
  - Genderqueer
  - Agender
  - Bigender
  - Genderfluid
  - Neutrois
Gender Identity around the World

- The Gender Binary is largely a Western construct and does not necessarily exist around the world:
  - **Two-spirit** is a gender identity within more than 130 Native American cultures, and refers to individuals who have “two spirits” – both man and woman – in one body. Two-spirit people were widely accepted in Native American culture and often held important (or even sacred) roles in their communities.
  - The **hijras** of South Asia, who may identify a variety of ways and often take on religious roles in all-hijra communities. They still face extreme discrimination.
  - The **fa’afafine** of Samoa are individuals assigned male at birth that embody both masculine and feminine characteristics. Fa’afafine have historically been widely accepted in Samoan culture.

- Enforcement of the Gender Binary within many non-Western cultures is often the result of imperialism.
Respecting Trans Identities

• Misgendering: referring to someone in a gendered way that does not respect their gender identity
  • Never assume gender
  • Pronouns
    • Examples: sie/hir/hirs, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, (no pronouns), he/him/his, ze/zir/zirs
    • Always ask
    • If you mess up (it happens), politely correct yourself, but don’t make it about yourself
    • Pronouns ≠ gender, but they are gendered
  • Understand context – when/where is this person out as trans?
  • Respect “gender autonomy”
  • Sometimes identities change!

• Transitioning
  • Might be medical or social
  • Transitioning doesn’t change someone’s gender
  • Not all trans people want to or plan to transition
  • Don’t be invasive

• Gender-inclusive language
Gender-Based Violence against Trans People

- Employment discrimination
- Verbal, physical, and emotional abuse
  - At home
  - At school
    - Includes from authority figures
- Housing Discrimination
- Incarceration
Sexual Violence against Trans People

- High rates of sexual violence
  - Not a lot of data
  - Some estimates (vary widely):
    - 55.5% experience street harassment
    - 22.9% report being stalked
    - 59% of trans women were survivors of SA
    - Rates for trans men and non-binary people are similar
- This year, at least 5 trans people have been murdered in the US
  - All black or Latina trans women
Intersectionality

- Race
- Sex workers
- Incarceration
- Homelessness
- Disability
- Class
- Nationality
Barriers to Reporting

- 9% report
- 47% tell nobody

Reasons:
- General cissexism
- Police Violence
  - 5% of incidents of SV against trans people perpetrated by police
- Criminalization of sex work
- Outing
- Media portrayal
- Medical discrimination
  - 6% of incidents perpetrated by health care provider or social worker
Transgender People and Feminism

• Historically, a lot of tension:
  • “[a]ll transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves”

• “Womyn-born-womyn” movement
  • MichFest

• TERF (or TWERF)
Barriers to Safety

- Bathroom access
  - Florida’s law
- Shelter access
- Unsupportive family, peers, authority figures
- “Trans panic” defense
- Self-defense?
  - Cece McDonald
Our role?

• “Men’s” Activism?
  • Most studies show that trans men experience SV at rates just as high as trans women

• Is SAPAC a safe place for trans survivors?
  • What can we do better?