

# Sexual Identity Development among Transgender Youth

## Abstract

This study *explores intersections between sexual identity and gender identity development* among transgender young adults. The aim is contribute to analyses about the interplay between sexual and gender identities. Findings revealed complex patterns of sexual attraction consistency and reexamination of sexual orientation labels and sexual attractions in the context of gender transition.

## Background & Theory

- ‡ Dichotomous models of gender and sexual orientation fail to accommodate for a complexity of experiences (Diamond & Butterworth, 2008).
- ‡ Transitioning gender may require an examination and reexamination of sexual orientation (Diamond, Pardo, & Butterworth, 2011).

**Intersectionality**  
(Crenshaw, 1989)

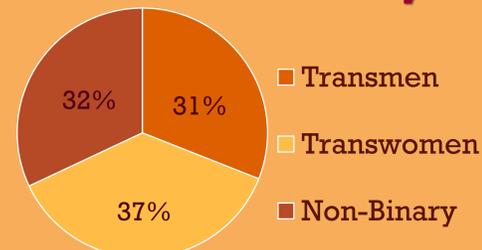
Highlights multiplicity across identity dimensions:

- ‡ Identities are not achieved, they are constructed and reconstructed.
- ‡ Intersections between sexual and gender identity give rise to novel forms of subjective experience.

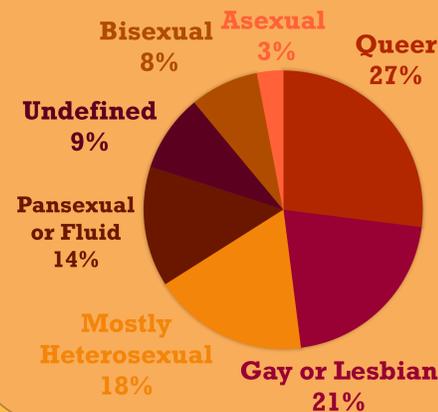
## Methods

Sample (N = 90)  
15 to 30 (M = 21.56; SD = 2.9)

### Gender Identity



### Sexual Orientation



### Procedures

1-3 Hour Interviews  
Thematic Analysis  
(NVivo QSR-11)

## Implications

1. Links between sexuality and gender identity are diverse and complex
2. Trans youth negotiate sexual orientation with regard to both attraction and gender identity

## Findings

### CATEGORIES

### EXEMPLARS

### THEMES

Accepting Attractions

I became more aware of [sexuality]... It was an aspect of becoming more comfortable with myself. Becoming more comfortable with myself, so I could be more comfortable with things like sexuality.”

(Jane, White, 29, Bisexual, M-F)

No Attraction Changes

P: I'm attracted to guys  
I: Have you ever been with a girl?  
P: No, and I don't want to.”

(Tiffany, Black/White, 18, Mostly Hetero/Straight, Feminine)

Broaden Sexual Attraction

I went with heterosexual just cause that's how I was raised, that's what was expected... Recently I've opened up more to the idea of having sex with a man, but not a heterosexual thing. I can have queer sex with a guy.”

(Emily, White, 22, Gay or Lesbian, Third gender)

Cross Gender Attraction

What I thought as my primary dating pool has changed. I used to think it was more female now I think it is more male.”

(Todd, White, 23, Queer, Masculine)

Trans Only Attraction

“I like FTM's... I understand them better. They understand me better... It's pretty much what I've stuck with. And actually, surprisingly, all the people I've dated are all FTM's now. And I'm like no wonder I dated you. Cause it's all I date.”

(Turbo, White, 21, Queer, Feminine)

No Label

“I just like people. Personalities are more striking than gender.”

(Dana, Other, 24, No label/Pansexual/Fluid, Third gender)

Congruent Label

“I wish I was a gay guy or even just a lesbian, but, unfortunately, I have such an interesting history with guys... Yeah. It seems to just be biologically set-up”

(Nev, White, 25, Mostly Hetero/Straight, Female)

Genderless Label

I started calling myself bisexual. I never really identified with that. It was just something I could say so that people would know who I was interested in and that only lasted until I found queer. So yeah the label changes.”

(\* , White, 23, Queer, Third gender)

Attraction Consistency  
(n = 38)

Sexual Attraction Changes  
(n = 51)

Self-Labeling Changes  
(n = 57)