



# **Trans and Gender Variant Identity Development and Adverse Childhood Experiences**

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# Learning Objectives



- 1. Define key concepts and terms surrounding trans and gender variant identities, the theories of minority stress and intersectionality, and adverse childhood experiences.**
- 2. Describe the current literature surrounding trans and gender variant individuals and adverse childhood experiences.**
- 3. Identify future academic research areas and needs.**

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# Why it Matters

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## Why it Matters

**While the population is small, the total numbers are not insignificant and the number of trans and nonbinary individuals seeking mental health care services is increasing.**

- X 1.4 million (0.6%) Trans Adults in the United States
- X 25,050 (0.54%) Trans Adults in Missouri
- X Studies report between 0.8% to 4.6% of Nonbinary in Population
- X Up to 35% of Population has Gender Crossing Traits
- X Numbers seeking mental health services are increasing

(Flores et al., 2016; Joel et al., 2013; Richards et al., 2016)





## Why it Matters

**Research and support for LGBTQ+ people and mental health care has increased, but there is still a literature gap when it comes to research about LGBTQ+ identity development and risk factors for mental health distress.**

- X Trans and Gender Variant Excluded from Much Research
- X Adverse Childhood Experience are Risk Factors for Negative Outcomes in General and Gender Variant Populations
- X Trans and Gender Variant at increased risk for many Adverse Childhood Experiences and Negative Outcomes

(Barber & Schwartz, 2013; Carrotte et al., 2016; Felitti et al., 1998; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018; Richards et al., 2016; Russell & Fish, 2016; Schnarrs et al., 2019)

# Key Concepts







# Key Concepts

## Theoretical Lenses

### Minority Stress

The unique stressors and increase in negative experiences by minority individuals as a result of their status as a minority.

### Intersectionality

A model used to examine interactions of multiple issues like salient identities, dynamics of power, the legal and political systems, and more.

(Crenshaw, 1989; Carbado et al., 2013; Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Meyer, 1995; Meyer, 2003)



Quan, H. (2017). Close Up [Photo]  
Retrieved March 5, 2020, from [unsplash.com/photos/G1iYCeCW2EI/](https://unsplash.com/photos/G1iYCeCW2EI/).



# Key Concepts

## Terms and Definitions

Nonbinary:

someone who does not identify within the gender binary

Genderqueer:

another identity term used by those who do not comfortably fall within the gender binary

Trans:

someone who does not identify as the gender that is socially congruent with the sex they were assigned at birth

(Richards et al., 2016)





# Key Concepts

## Terms and Definitions

Identity:

how someone thinks about themselves

Gender Identity:

how recognizing oneself as a certain gender becomes internalized

Sexual Identity:

the categorized identity where one places themselves in terms of sexual desire

(Ryle, 2015)



# Key Concepts

## Terms and Definitions

Stress:

can be conceptualized as adverse events, conditions and experiences that are hard for an individual to endure and can lead to mental, physical and emotional strain and pressure

(Meyer, 2003)





# PRONOUNS



What is the rainbow rule when it comes to pronouns?

Examples:

Treat others as they want to be treated.

Use the pronouns someone wants used and don't use pronouns they don't want used.

If you don't know someone's pronouns, ask!

she/her/hers    he/him/his

they/them/theirs

it / its    ze/zir/zirs



# Key Concepts

## Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences includes ten child maltreatment and household dysfunction measures.

Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse; physical and emotional neglect; and parental separation and divorce, substance use, mental illness, domestic violence, and incarceration of a household member.

(Dube et al., 2003; Felitti et al., 1998)





# ACE Questionnaire

## Finding your ACE Score.

### Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire

#### Finding your ACE Score as of 10/24/06

**While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:**

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often** ...  
Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?  
or  
Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often** ...  
Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?  
or  
Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you **ever** ...  
Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?  
or  
Try to or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you **often** feel that ...  
No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?  
or  
Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Did you **often** feel that ...  
You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?  
or  
Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Was your mother or stepmother:  
**Often** pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?  
or  
**Sometimes or often** kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?  
or  
**Ever** repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt suicide?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

10. Did a household member go to prison?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**Now add up your "Yes" answers:** \_\_\_\_\_ **This is your ACE Score**

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# What the Research Says

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# What the Research Says

Research is limited but some of the research has suggested:

- ✗ Poor functional identity in a non-LGBTQ+ population correlated with Adverse Childhood Experiences
- ✗ Resiliency related to LGBTQ+ gender identity when it comes to LGBTQ+ community involvement
- ✗ Understanding resiliency and how to foster it are important in order to try and help ensure things will get better and improve for those who are trans and gender variant

(Asakura & Craig, 2014; Hinojosa & Medina V, 2016; Singh & Mckleroy, 2011)





# What the Research Says

## Trans and Gender Variant Individual and Adverse Childhood Experiences Outcomes

Those who are trans or gender variant are exposed to more adverse childhood experiences than individuals who are heterosexual or cisgender.

Research has also found this to be the case even when the cisgender individuals are a sexual minority- whether lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

(Kersting et al., 2003; Schnarrs et al., 2019)





# What the Research Says

## Psychosocial and Mental Health Outcomes

A cross-sectional study of 289 Southern Brazilian trans women with gender dysphoria found a negative correlation to child maltreatment—the first five variables of the ACE scale.

Similar negative correlations have been found in research connecting child maltreatment and ACEs to negative mental health outcomes in trans individuals.

(Bandini et al., 2011; Rovariset al., 2018; Schnarrs et al., 2019)



# What the Research Says

## Domestic Violence Experienced as an Adult Outcomes

Trans and gender variant individuals are more likely to witness domestic violence and up to twice as likely to personally experience interpersonal violence as compared to those who are not trans, with estimates of lifetime prevalence being from 31.1% to 50.0%.

Trans and gender variant individuals have less access to resources and help, as compared to their cisgender counterparts, and are more likely to be denied access to domestic violence shelters and other interpersonal violence programs.

(Apsani, 2018; Brown & Herman, 2015; Seelman, 2015)





# Research Since the Presentation Proposal

## A Narrative Inquiry Into Trans and Gender Variant Identities and Adverse Stress Experiences

This research used narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of trans and gender variant individuals' identity and outcomes in relation to adverse childhood experiences of abuse, neglect, and household dysfunctions using the lenses of intersectionality and minority stress. There was a common and unprompted theme of positive online involvement discussed by participants in their journeys towards cultivating understanding about their LGBTQ+ identities. There are important implications for both marriage and family therapists as well as researchers in the resiliency prospects of online and other digital technology in this population should be further explored.

(Leake & Hartenstein, 2021)

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# Future Research

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# Future Research

## More Research is Needed

While there has been some research into ACEs in the LGBTQ+ population the majority of this research has been into sexual minorities. There is a dearth of research relating to the second half of the LGBTQ+ acronym. More research is needed to further literature surrounding the experiences of individuals who are trans, nonbinary, or genderqueer, as well as the LGBTQ+ population in general, with relation to ACEs and identity development.



# Future Research

## Topics

- X Online, Technology and Resilience
- X ACEs and LGBTQ+ Identity Development in Trans and Gender Variant Individuals
- X Researchers from within the population





# Future Research

## Online, Technology and Resilience

- X Finding access to and using LGBTQ+ virtual spaces for information and resilience
- X Using technology, from social media to video games, to explore identities and names
- X Using online forums and social media as a means for connection and coming out



# Future Research

## ACEs and LGBTQ+ Identity Development in Trans and Gender Variant Individuals

- X Impacts of and on family and relationships by ACEs during identity development
- X Interactions with experiences of safety and hardships during identity development
- X How resilience pieces like family of choice and community connection interact with ACEs and identity development



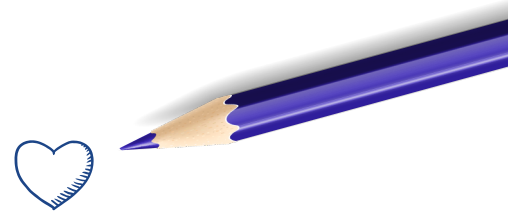


# Future Research

## Researchers From Within the Population

Previous research has suggested that a connection to the LGBTQ+ community as well as pride in gender identity could be sources of resilience. Considering the tie in of resiliency to involvement in the LGBTQ+ community, there is a need for research that is looking at the issue from a within group lens, in which the researcher is a member of the LGBTQ+ population being studied, rather than from an othered lens, in which the researcher is not a member of the population being studied.

# Thanks!



## Any questions?

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