

In their voices

Being (trans)gender diverse at a South African university

**An analysis of the experiences of (trans)
gender diverse people at 7 South African
public institutions of higher learning**

Sandile Ndelu

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Sandile Ndelu
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Abstract

This research report reflects the start of a burgeoning body of knowledge around the experiences, needs and wants of (trans)gender diverse students and staff members at South African universities.

The aim of this study is manifold. Firstly, it is to give voice to the experiences, needs and wants of gender minorities at South African universities. Secondly, it is to evaluate the state of (trans)gender diverse affirming and inclusive infrastructure across South African universities. Thirdly, it intends to be a catalyst for (trans)gender diversity advocacy interventions at public institutions of higher learning going forward.

The report offers qualitative evidence in support of the proposition that there remains a largely unchecked culture of emotional, sexual and sometimes physical abuse towards trans people within universities. Moreover, it shows that there remains an under-provision of (trans)gender diverse specific health, psycho-social, social and socio-economic support infrastructure within South African universities.



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Introduction to the Trans University Forum

The Trans University Forum (TUF!) is a collective of (trans) gender diverse students, staff and workers based at all 26 South African universities.

Established in 2016, TUF! emerges on the strength of nationwide calls for decolonisation that have been championed by contemporary student movements.

As an addition to the student demands, TUF! is calling for all South African universities to include and affirm gender diversity through revising policy, rectifying structural injustice and proactively promoting inclusivity.



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Glossary

Ally: An individual whose attitudes and behaviour are supportive and affirming of all genders and sexual orientations and who is active in combating homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism and cisheteronormativity both personally and institutionally.

Androgyny: A person displaying physical and social characteristics identified in this culture as both female and male to the degree that the person's outward appearance and mannerisms make it difficult to determine the androgynous person's biological sex.

Biological Sex: The dichotomous distinction between female and male, based on physiological characteristics, especially chromosomes and external genitalia.

Cisgender: People who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, i.e. people who are not transgender.

Cisheteronormativity: Describes the worldview that cisgender and heterosexual people are the norm.

Cisnormativity: Describes the worldview that cisgender people (people who identify with the genders that they were assigned to at birth) are the norm.

Cissexism: This is a worldview which believes that being cisgender and fitting into the gender binary is the standard for humans. It holds that being gender diverse, non-binary and transgender is abnormal and deviant.

Closeted/In the Closet: The confining state of being secretive about one's true gender identity and/or sexual orientation. A person may feel compelled to be closeted in order to keep a job, housing situation, family/friends, or for their safety. Many LGBTIAQ+ individuals are "out" in some situations and "closeted" in others.

Coming Out: "Coming out of the closet" or "being out" refers to the process through which a person acknowledges, accepts, and learns to appreciate her/his/their lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual or queer+ identity, therefore coming out to themselves. Sharing this information with others is not a single event but instead a life-long process.

Cross-dressing: Wearing clothing not usually associated with one's biological sex. People may cross-dress for a variety of reasons, including personal expression, sexual gratification, entertainment, or expressing a gender identity. Referring to a trans person as a cross-dresser can be used as a slur.

Effeminate: Used to identify a person (usually male) who expresses and/or presents culturally/stereotypically feminine characteristics. This is often viewed as a culturally negative term.

Femme: A person who identifies with being a woman, who understands the power of the feminine spirit and who is willing to be powerful as a woman. Can be used to identify a person who expresses and/or presents culturally/stereotypically feminine characteristics. Can be used either as a positive or negative term.

FTM/F2M: (Also see MTF and Transgender) Female to Male. A term that refers to male-identified people who were categorised as female at birth.

Gender: A term used to describe the social status of people as men, women, boys, girls, (which then impacts transgender people), including characteristics of masculinity and femininity that are learned or chosen. Gender is more accurately viewed as a spectrum, rather than a polarised, dichotomous construct. A person's assigned sex does not always match their gender (see Transgender), and many people display traits of more than one gender. Gender is different from sexuality.

Gender Binary: Recognises only two genders and regulates behaviour within narrowly male or female expectations. The idea is that all males should be male-identified and masculine, and all females should be female-identified and feminine.

Gender Dysphoria: An intense, continuous discomfort resulting from an individual's belief in the inappropriateness of their assigned gender at birth and resulting gender role expectations. Also, a clinical psychological diagnosis which is often required to receive hormones and surgery. Many in transgender communities are offended by this requirement as it pathologises them. Also, not all transgender people experience gender dysphoria.

Gender Expression: The external presentation or appearance of a person's gender (e.g. dress, mannerisms, hair style, speech, etc). One's gender expression may differ from one's gender identity.

Gender Identity: How an individual views himself/herself/themselves in terms of characteristics traditionally identified in this culture as male or female. A person may self-identify as purely male, purely female, or as possessing characteristics of both.

Gender-Neutral/Gender-Free Pronouns: Pronouns which do not associate a gender with the person or creature being discussed. The English language has no truly gender-neutral third person pronoun available, and women especially have criticised this, as many writers use "he" when referring to a generic individual in the third person. In addition, the dichotomy of "he or she" in English does not leave room for other gender identities, a source of frustration to the transgender and genderqueer communities. People who are limited by languages which do not include gender neutral pronouns have attempted to popularise "they, them and theirs" in the interest of greater equality. Some examples are "hir" for him/her and "zie" for he/she.

Genderqueer: A term that may be used to describe those with non-normative gender, either as an umbrella term or a stand-alone identity, typically encompassing those who are in one or more of these six categories:

- both man and woman (e.g. androgyne),
- neither man nor woman (agender, neutrois, non-gendered),
- moving between two or more genders (genderfluid),
- third-gendered or other-gendered, which includes those who prefer “genderqueer” or “non-binary” to describe their gender without labelling it otherwise,
- having an overlap or blur of gender and orientation and/or sex (e.g. girlfags and guydykes),
- those who “queer” gender, in presentation or otherwise, who may or may not see themselves as non-binary or having a gender that is queer; this category may also include those who are consciously political or radical in their understanding of being genderqueer.

Gender Roles: The socially constructed and culturally-specific behaviour and appearance expectations imposed on women (femininity) and men (masculinity).

Heterosexism: A set of attitudes that is consistent with the belief that heterosexuality is a superior psychological, social and moral stance. This serves to create an invisibility or lack of validation and representation for other than an “opposite sex” sexual orientation.

Heterosexuality: A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the “opposite sex”.

Heterosexual Privilege: The benefits and advantages heterosexuals receive in a heterosexist culture; for example, marriage. Also, the benefits lesbians, gay men and bisexual people receive as a result of claiming or denying homosexual or bisexual identity.

Homophobia: Fear or hatred of those assumed to be gay or lesbian and anything connected to their culture. It is a fear of homosexuality, either in other people or within themselves. This term represents an extreme set of negative attitudes and beliefs and can include overt threats or expressions of hostility/violence. It occurs on personal, institutional and societal levels.

Homosexual: A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same sex. This clinical term originated in the 1800s and is not used by everyone within the gay and lesbian community.

Hormone Therapy (also Hormone Replacement Therapy, HRT, Hormonal Sex Reassignment): Administration of hormones to affect the development of secondary sex characteristics. HRT is a process, possibly lifelong, of using hormones to change the internal body chemistry. Androgens (testosterone) are used for female to males, and oestrogens are used for male to females.

Intersectional/Intersectionality: A view of the world where various aspects of a person’s identity are taken into account when looking at privilege and discrimination. E.g. A poor, black trans woman is more likely to experience violence and discrimination than a wealthy, white trans woman.

LGBTIAQ+/LGBTI: A socio-political acronym for the community comprised of Lesbians, Gay Men, Bisexuals, Transgender, Intersex, Asexual and Queer individuals. The recent addition of a “Q+” at the end refers to individuals who may affiliate with the community and are “questioning” some aspect of their gender or sexuality. Also used to include those who identify as Queer. The plus symbol refers to those who identify as a sexual orientation or gender identity other than LGBTIAQ.

MTF/M2F: Male to Female. Used to identify a person whose was born male and identifies as female.

Outing: Publicly revealing the sexual orientation or gender identity of an individual who has chosen to keep that information private. Some activists, political groups and media believe outing is justified and/or newsworthy when the person involved works against the interests of LGBTIAQ+ people. Others oppose it entirely as an invasion of privacy.

Passing: Being taken for a member of the majority – white, straight, cisgender or temporarily abled, for example. LGBTIAQ+ people who pass can choose to conceal the stigma associated with being a member of a sexual minority.

Pre-Op (also Pre-Operative): Transgender individuals who have not attained gender reassignment surgery (see Sex Reassignment Surgery) to change secondary sex characteristics, but who desire to and are seeking that as an option. They may or may not “cross-live” (live as their self-identified gender) full-time and may or may not take hormone therapy.

Post-Op (also Post-Operative): Transgender individuals who have undergone gender reassignment surgery, and/or other surgeries to change secondary sex characteristics such as breasts, Adam’s apple, or body contours.

Privilege: This is a term for social, economic and political advantages or rights that are made available to people solely on the basis that their identity group is valued more than what is considered other. A person’s access to these benefits depend on characteristics such as sex, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability and social class.

Queer: Historically a derogatory term for gay. Reclaimed by some gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, intersex, asexual and queer+ people. It is still considered a slur by some LGBTIAQ+ people and in some contexts. Sometimes used as an umbrella term for LGBTIAQ+.

Sex: The biological (anatomical, hormonal, or genetic) traits used to categorise someone as either male, female or intersex.

Sex Reassignment Surgery: Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) is surgical body modification that seeks to attain congruence between one’s body and one’s gender identity, for example chest reconstruction or genital reconstruction. SRS is an old medical term and is better known as Gender Reassignment Surgery.

SOGIE: Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Used when referring to issues relating to gay, lesbian and transgender people. For example, the United Nations appointed a SOGIE expert in 2016. The term SOGIESC is increasingly used by LGBTIAQ+ human rights defenders and refers to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics (intersex) issues.

Transitioning: The process of a transgender individual publicly changing their gender presentation in society. Transitioning often includes changes in name, clothing and appearance and may include anatomical changes. Transitioning is sometimes confused with gender reassignment surgery, which is actually just one element of transitioning. Many people who transition choose not to have surgery. Transitioning is more holistic and can encompass physical, psychological, social, emotional and hormonal (HRT) changes. Some genderqueer and intersex people have little or no desire to undergo surgery or HRT to change their body but will transition in other ways.

Transgender: Individuals whose assigned sex at birth does not match their gender identity and who may seek to change their physical body to match their gender identity through gender reassignment surgery and hormone treatments or in other ways as discussed under Transitioning above. Transgender individuals' sexual orientation can be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or anywhere on the continuum.

Transmisogyny: Violence and abuse specifically targeted at people who are both trans and feminine.

Transmisogynoir: Violence and abuse, as seen through an intersectional lens, specifically targeted at people because they are simultaneously black, trans and feminine.

Transphobia: Hatred and/or discrimination against people who break or blur gender roles and sex characteristics. Like biphobia, it is prevalent in both straight and LGBTIAQ+ communities.

Transsexual: The medical term for Transgender.

1. This glossary borrows greatly from the Safe Zones @ WITS Ally Training Manual (see <https://www.wits.ac.za/media/migration/files/cs-38933-fix/migrated-pdf/pdfs-10/Safe%20Zones%20Training%20Manual.pdf>).

Introduction

The student protests that surfaced in 2015 have shifted the socio-political landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. Through the largest and most impactful mass protest action in the last 22 years, students across the country, from Cape Town to Turfloop and from Bloemfontein to Richards Bay, have made significant inroads towards the decommodification of higher education and the decolonisation of the academy. The aggregate of these protests has not only shaken the practices, policies and consciousness of the academy, but also re-centred the university as a site where the agenda for the socio-political change of a society is set.

The student struggle for a decolonised university with a human face fast spread into Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) spaces on some campuses. Empowered by an intersectional approach and practice, student demands for racial and economic justice within universities, punctuated with demands for the alienation of cisheteronormativity and for the advancement of institutional justice for the LGBTI community. This has resulted in small pockets of university based LGBTI interest groups that have become more pronounced in demanding universities to promote, protect and provide access to their human rights. These pockets of LGBTI student organising have been most visible amongst the (trans)gender diverse student community.

At the University of Cape Town, the UCT Trans Collective emerged as a small body of students that not only put pressure on the university to be more inclusive and caring towards (trans)gender diverse students, staff and workers, but that was also a strong dissenting voice within the student movements. These students held the Registrar of that university directly accountable for the University's resistance towards reforming the gender marker of student and staff access cards, physically removed the gendered bathroom signs on the University's main campus and called out the University's ill-informed attempt to include gender diversity on its admission form. They were also responsible for, infamously, disrupting an exhibition organised to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the #RhodesMustFall (RMF) movement at the University.

As justification for the disruption, the Trans Collective cited the continued exclusion, erasure and tokenism they had felt in the movement during the protests. In a publicised call-out against RMF, the UCT Trans Collective (2016, online) wrote that:

"It is disingenuous to include trans people in a public gallery when you have made no effort to include them in the private. It is a lie to include trans people when the world is watching, but to erase and antagonise them when the world no longer cares. We have reached the peak of our disillusionment with RMF's trans exclusion and erasure. We are done with the arrogant cis hetero patriarchy of black men. We will no longer tolerate the complicity of black cis womxn in our erasure. We are fed up with RMF being 'intersectional' being used as public persuasion rhetoric. We are saying down with faux inclusivity – RMF make it clear, to the world, that we are not welcome here. RMF will not tokenise our

presence as if they ever treasured us as part of their movement. We will not have our bodies, faces, names, and voices used as bait for public applause. We are tired of being expected to put our bodies on the line for people who refuse to do the same for us.” – UCT Trans Collective²

Up north at the Universities of the Free State and the University of the Witwatersrand, (trans)gender diverse activists (both students and staff) successfully advocated for their universities to have accessible gender-neutral bathrooms across all their campuses. The latter intervention was accompanied by an extensive awareness campaign to sensitise the broader university community on gender diversity. More recently, on Transgender Day of Remembrance 2016, the same group of Wits trans activists successfully lobbied for the university to commit to affirming gender diversity at the university. However, these developments in both the visibility and servicing of (trans)gender diverse students must not be taken as an indication that South African universities are a safe, receptive and non-antagonistic space for these students.

While much has been said regarding the mainstreaming of gender neutral bathrooms at North American colleges (see for example Beemyn et al., 2005)³, little has been said about the other forms of structural injustices that have historically curtailed the equal access to universities for (trans)gender diverse persons. Locally, much has been written about (trans)gender exclusionary practices in basic education. In his speech, *Transphobia in Schools*, Kheswa (2012)⁴ narrates the precarious position facing transgender learners in schools. He demonstrates how the strained legal recognition of transgender people as well as deeply held ideas on sex and gender meet to make transgender learners vulnerable to bullying, discrimination and exclusion at their schools. Whether it is being forced to wear gender-specific school uniforms that they do not feel comfortable in or being forced to use gender-specific bathrooms in which they feel unsafe, transgender learners are punished and disciplined for breaking gender rules.

Similarly, Sanger (2014)⁵ provides evidence of the lack of safety of school-going transgender young people due to bullying and discrimination by learners, lack of support from teachers and administrative staff, alienation by the curriculum, exclusion from toilet use and the lack of understanding of the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity. Although this literature has been useful for shaping our interventions in the schooling space, little has spoken directly to how (trans)gender persons are excluded and antagonised within higher education.

Those who have shifted their gaze to higher education have done so through a generalist lens, often obscuring the distinct nature and form of the institutional alienation experienced by (trans)gender diverse university staff and students as illustrated by Nduna, Mthombeni, Mavhandu-Madzusi and Mogotsi (2017)⁵ in *Studying sexuality: LGBTI experiences in institutions of higher education in South Africa*.

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1. UCT: The Trans Collective available at <https://www.facebook.com/transuniversityforum/>, accessed on 16 January 2018.
 2. Beemyn, B., Curtis, B., Davis, M. and Tubbs, N. J. 'Transgender issues on college campuses' (2005) In *New Directions for Student Services* at 49–60.

This report therefore aims to deliberately join the dots between the efforts of the Fallist student movement, developments in (trans)gender inclusivity in the West as well as discussion for (trans)gender inclusion within South African basic education in order to paint a picture of the nature and extent of (trans)gender diverse person's experiences within South African institutions of higher learning. Moreover, it seeks to set off an evidence base to support activists and university decision makers working towards the inclusion and affirmation of (trans)gender university students, staff and workers.

The report is divided into three parts. Firstly, it will look at the general experiences of being (trans)gender diverse at South African universities, with a particular focus on the trans-specific institutional infrastructure that universities have in place. Secondly, it will look at the services that universities make available to their transgender patrons. This section will look specifically at bathrooms, healthcare, residences and access cards. Thirdly, it will offer several recommendations for universities from (trans)gender diverse students, workers and staff members.

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3. Kheswa, S. 'Transphobia in Schools: paper presented at the Challenging Homophobia and Transphobia in South African Schools and Promoting Good Practise Colloquium, Johannesburg, 2012' available at http://www.genderdynamix.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Transphobia_in_schools13.pdf, accessed on 16 January 2018.
 4. Sanger, N. 'Young and Transgender: Understanding the Experiences of Young Transgender Persons in Educational Institutions and the Health Sector in South Africa' available at <https://genderdynamix.org.za/wp-content/uploads/GDXtransyouth2015-web.pdf?x91330>, accessed on 16 January 2018.
 5. Nduna, M., Mthombeni, A., Mavhandu-Madzusi, A. H. and Mogotsi, I 'Studying sexuality: LGBTI experiences in institutions of higher education in South Africa' (2017) *South African Journal of Higher Education* 31:4 at 1-13.

Methodology

This report offers a qualitative exploration of the nature and extent of the inclusion and affirmation of (trans)gender people at 7 South African institutions of higher learning. The universities visited were selected taking into consideration their type, geographical location and history. In this regard see Jansen⁶ (2003). They are:

- the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS),
- Stellenbosch University (SUN),
- the University Currently known as Rhodes (UCKAR),
- Nelson Mandela University (NMU),
- the University of the Free State (UFS),
- Sol Plaatje University (SPU) and,
- Durban University of Technology (DUT).

At each university, informal focus group discussions were conducted with groups of (trans)gender diverse students, staff members and workers that were canvassed using a variety of strategies, including a social media awareness campaign, word of mouth referrals, snowballing, as well as the strategic partnering with various constituency based university organisations. To this end, a total of 49 transgender and gender non-conforming students, workers and staff members were engaged. The focus groups were facilitated through open ended questions grouped into 12 topics ranging from the gender experience of being a transgender student or staff member at university, to bathroom inclusivity, to decolonisation (see Annexure A).

The aforesaid responses were then transcribed and coded according to their location vis-à-vis one of the 12 topics. To ensure the safety of the participants, quoted responses will only be attributed to a specific university and whether the participant to whom they belong was a student or staff member. The study also included a quantitative aspect, specifically tailored to benchmark the transgender inclusivity of the institutional and infrastructural makeup of the universities that we visited (see Annexure B). These results, which were canvassed through unstructured engagements with university representatives, are organised into graphs in the relevant sections of this report.

Limitations

Although this study was undertaken with much care, it remains nonetheless limited. First, the study only investigates the situation at a sample of South Africa's public universities, leaving out a huge cohort of (trans)gender diverse students, staff members and workers at other categories of institutions of higher learning such as the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges and private institutions of higher learning and training. Therefore, in order to get a more complete picture of the situation, further attention needs to be paid to the specific experiences of (trans)gender diverse students at these types of institutions.

6. Jansen, J. 'Changes and continuities in South Africa's higher education system, 1994–2004' In Linda Chisholm (ed) *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. (2003).

Secondly, due to limited network resources, the study is thin on (trans)gender diverse experiences from rural, historically black universities as well as Universities of Technology. Thirdly, all the interviewees in this study, are or have been, at the coal face of (trans) gender activism within universities and thus were undoubtedly influenced by their own subjectivities when conducting the focus groups. Similarly, the research tools were formulated with the researcher's own subjective assumptions, having been a (trans)gender activist within a university setting. Fourthly, The report is deliberately diagnostic rather than analytic. This is primarily to fulfil its catalytic ambitions to spark the production and archiving of knowledge on (trans)gender diversity within higher education. It is hoped that it will prompt further knowledge seeking endeavours from researchers working in the higher education, transformation and SOGIE spaces.



Part 1

From the data, it emerges that there are key differences between how (trans)gender diverse people experience the university as students of universities and how they experience the same space as employees of universities. Not only are (trans)gender diverse university employees usually older, they are also able to wield more influence within the university's systems than their trans student peers. While (trans)gender diverse staff members are only required to negotiate for gender inclusivity and affirmation with their co-workers and within their specific department, (trans)gender diverse students often have to make similar demands over several departments, buildings, residences and amongst hundreds of students, academics and administrators during the course of their university careers.

One participant from the University of the Free State reflected on the changing trajectory between their time as a student at the university and later as a staff member at the university. While not 'out' as transgender person during their student years, they were nonetheless coerced into a cisheteronormative university culture by students and staff members alike. However, as a (trans)gender diverse staff member, they are affirmed as such by both their superiors as well as their subordinates.

***"Truth be told I did nothing. Even my staff card doesn't have Mr or Ms. I think [that it is because of] the nature of the work that I have done. I never asked for this. Even on the system it doesn't say Mr or Ms. These are things I didn't ask for. But the same can't be said for students. The onus is up to the student to go to access control and ask for the change. There isn't a written rule that says you can't do that. If it can be done for a staff member – the system permits for it to be done for students [as well]."* – Staff member, UFS.**

For (trans)gender diverse students, the inside of the classroom is neither inclusive nor affirming in terms of its form. Significantly, several quotes spoke to students actively resisting the toxicity of trans-antagonistic classrooms.

***"I have taken a firm stance with my classes. I told them that my name is not my dead name and quite a few of them put my preferred name on the class list. I tell my lectures that I am a trans woman and when you address me in class I would prefer it if you – I insist that you – refer to me by my chosen pronoun."* – Postgraduate student, SUN.**

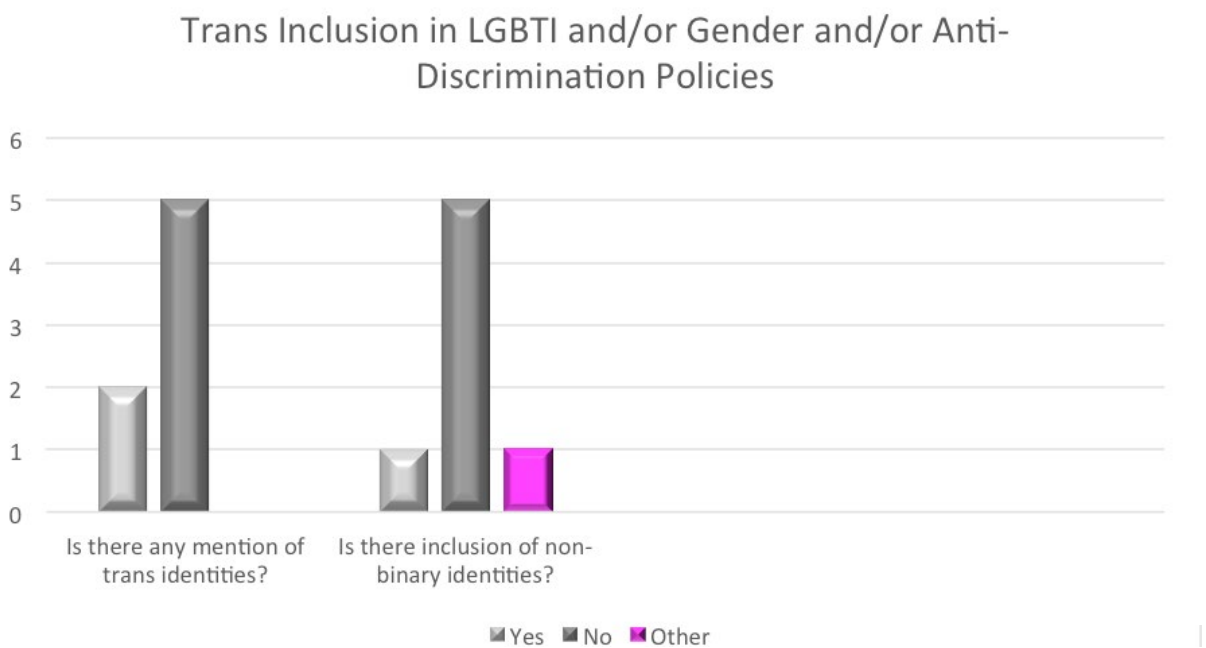
While others, subverted the gender binary of the curriculum by being deliberate in affirming gender diversity during assessments and class participation:

***"I advocate a lot for gender neutral language. And also when I would write my essays I would also be deliberate – I would put a footnote saying that I recognise they/them pronouns."* – Undergraduate student, SUN.**

These modest sites of resistance were facilitated by smaller teaching settings which allowed for more ease in students negotiating terms of engagement with lecturers and tutors than in the case of bigger, more impersonal teaching settings. In the case of the former, (trans)gender diverse students were more comfortable in demanding that teachers reasonably accommodate their trans identities. Speaking to individual academics about specific class settings tended to yield more positive responses than when concerns of alienation and discomfort were escalated to the higher echelons of the academic department or faculties.

Reflection

Although, one-on-one spatial negotiations with academics were successful, there is a lack of transgender specific/gender diversity policies at South African Universities. The graph below illustrates that, overwhelmingly, issues of (trans)gender diversity identities are not accounted for at the visited South African institutions of higher education.



With a lack of explicit objectives and directives, the intricacies of trans inclusion and affirmation are left to the good will and whim of the more progressive university decision makers. It also leaves the onus of transforming the institutional culture of the university to those (trans)gender diverse staff and students who are on the receiving end of discrimination and not on the university staff members who are employed to innovate and implement the transformation imperatives of the universities.

Universities such as the UFS and WITS have noted this and have embarked on developing policies that they hope will close the gaps of (trans)gender exclusivity. Others such as UCKAR and SPU have admittedly left the work of reimagining their campuses from a gendered perspective up to the students. For these universities, their role was to react to the diverse needs and wants of the student and staff populations and not necessarily to be proactive in creating a space that is open and welcoming to diversity.

This status quo motions towards several barriers to the creation of (trans)gender diverse specific policies. Firstly, many universities do not have a robust and visible (trans)gender diverse activist base. At such institutions, the invisibility of (trans)gender diverse students, workers and staff members is considered as tantamount to their non-existence. Thus, although universities across the country are engaged in policy and institutional changes post the Fallist student movements, (trans)gender diversity issues remained off the policy making table.

Secondly, rigid university processes inhibit the creation of trans specific policy. Many universities consider their Student Representative Councils as the only student body representative of the needs and wants of the students. However, as was articulated by participants at UCKAR, these representative bodies have fallen out of favour during the fallist student movement as they have been seen to legitimise the higher education status quo, rather than working against it. Thus policies that speak to the needs and wants of (trans)gender diversity would only make it to the university management if the seated SRC, in the case of students, and unions, in the case of staff members, have a trans inclusive gender politics.

This provides a further indictment on the majoritarian underpinnings of student governance and unionising which do not take into consideration the needs, wants and interests of minority groups such as transgender staff, workers and students. As a result, in some cases, such as at UCKAR, UFS and SPU, this has motivated transgender students to run for SRC office. In the majority of the cases, unfortunately, the livelihoods of trans people are left to the goodwill of individuals who are largely unaffected by the issues this community faces.

When juxtaposed with their experiences inside the classroom, (trans)gender diverse students' experiences outside the classroom were mired by discrimination, alienation and violence. One student described her experience of university as being 'really unnerving not only being a woman on campus but a trans woman'. When asked to expand on this, she recounted a specific episode of assault that she reckons was as a consequence of her position as a transgender woman on the campus of SUN:

***"I remember during my second year, I was walking down Pretorius street, the street from my residence and this random white boy came up out of the blue and started sprinting up to myself and my friend and tossed his arm out and punched me. I didn't know who he was. I only found out later that he had made out with a trans girl in a club without knowing that she is trans... I didn't know who he was though. I think he had seen me interact with her before and he was now misplacing his anger [with me]."* – Undergraduate student, SUN.**

She went onto bemoan that owing to the unsatisfactory manner in which her case was handled by the university campus security, she has become hyper vigilant about her safety on campus – negatively affecting her university experience.

A situation was experienced by a gender-non conforming at DUT:

"I like putting on nail polish every now and then. So we were standing outside smoking with these other two guys from res and then the one guy then noticed that I had nail polish on and then he asks me: 'why do you have nail polish on – are you gay?'. His question kind of annoyed me and I was like – yea I am gay is there a problem? Then he was like no he was taught that he shouldn't associate with gay people. At this point I could see that he was boiling. He then asked why I am gay. I then replied by saying because I like dick (laughs) – I like sucking dick. At that moment I could see that he was getting annoyed and so I said my goodbyes and went back into res. He then followed me inside.

When i got to res I was knocking for the security guard to open for me – as the security guard was coming to open for me he confronted me about my comment which I reaffirmed by telling him that I like dick. He then slapped me several times. When the security guard eventually opened. I reported the case to the res supervisor because I didn't know the guy's name and it was my first time seeing him at res. But the security guard saw him. We didn't have a Residence Assistant at the time. We also reported it at [student] housing. We also took the case to the student protection services.

My case was then taken to legal office. The legal office wanted me to get the guy's name – the security guard then identified his room. We didn't find him in his room the first time. When we finally got him he denied hitting me. And I tried to get the security who was working to corroborate. But the res had changed security companies and the security officer who had been on duty that day had been permanently moved." – Undergraduate student, DUT.

The student continued to explain why they decided to eventually drop the case:

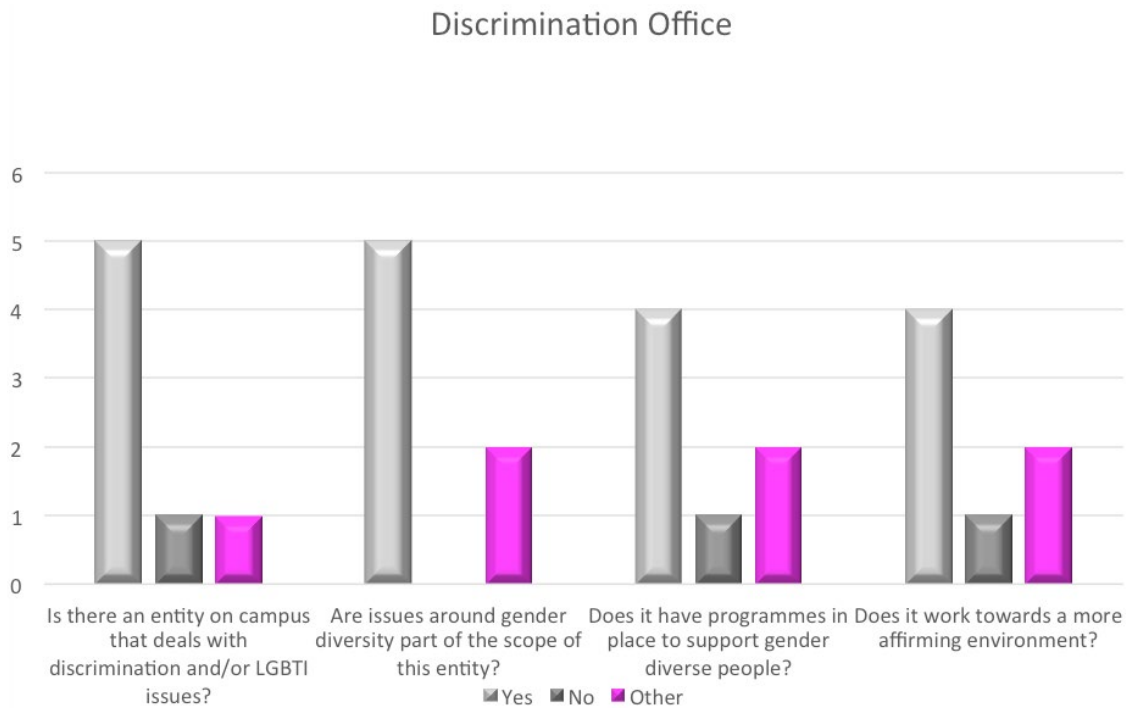
"Another fear of mine was that I do not have and family here in Durban, yes I have friends but he (the perpetrator) is from KZN and has family around here so my fear was that what if he got suspended or kicked out of res and now I may not be safe when walking on the streets in town. That pushed me to go to the legal office and drop the complaint. It was also taking forever." – Undergraduate student, DUT.

In addition, university officials tended to shy away from addressing the root of the conflict (transphobia) by only addressing its manifestation in specific cases. For example, another trans woman from SUN recounted how while living in a mens' only residence in her first year, her roommate reported being 'uncomfortable' living with her (presumably because of her feminine nature). To deal with the impending conflict, the residence officials decided to move the complainant to another room – and that was the end of the matter. In this example, the residence officials lost out on a chance to open up dialogue about diversity within their residence at least and about transphobia within the university at most. They failed to maximise on the (un)learning and transformational potential of that situation of 'discomfort'.

They also lost out on a chance to address the systemic nature of (trans)gender diverse antagonism, by 'dealing' with the conflict as a isolated incident of roommates not getting along instead of as a manifestation of transphobia. Fortunately, the trans woman has since

moved out of that residence; however the residence remains engendered with intolerance and an inability to include and affirm gender diversity to assist with present and future cases.

The status quo of the lack of safety for transgender students at South African universities is compounded by few university resources being channelled towards preventing and mending transphobic violence. The graph below depicts aspects of the structural analysis that examined the role of discrimination offices (if there was one) in providing support for transgender and gender diverse people at the visited campuses.



Many of the university offices and units that were visited deal with (trans)gender diverse communities as incidental, and not central, to their work. For instance, many of these offices and units were mandated to spear head their respective university’s response to HIV and due to global HIV best practice on key populations at risk of HIV infections, (trans) gender diverse people (particularly transgender women) fall within their work. These units have also been slow to canvass the lived expertise of trans people within their ranks and to consult with external bodies that could close any gaps in knowledge and expertise. The collapsing of the specialist needs of (trans)gender diverse students, workers and staff members into generalist bodies has left universities chronically under capacitated to service their (trans)gender diverse patrons leaving them without the aids and services required to self-actualise.

An agender student at SUN illustrates: ***“The first group that I approached [for support] was the MSM group.... What I found was that it put me in a difficult position of negotiating my gender identity. I had to negotiate healthcare whereby I had to pass as a man but at the same time I cant be non-binary. At the same time it was difficult to put out that message that I am agender or that I am nonbinary and the facilitator didn’t know how to deal with that. Arg it’s an afterthought thing. And they would go about it in order to seem inclusive.” – Undergraduate student, SUN.***

Additionally, this leaves the said students feeling excluded and alienated from the very institutions that purport to assist them: ***“With some of the transformation staff its very hard because they don’t use my pronouns. Its so hard to tell them that no when you say singular pronoun you actually talking about the subject of the verb agreeing with one another. Im not a plural person. I think ive had back lashes with that. Some of the staff has said that there are not really well versed with English as their mother tongue so conforming to they/them for them is almost like demanding the impossible. So it kind of like places me in a position where I feel like my existence is an impossible existence for them.”*** – Undergraduate student, SUN.

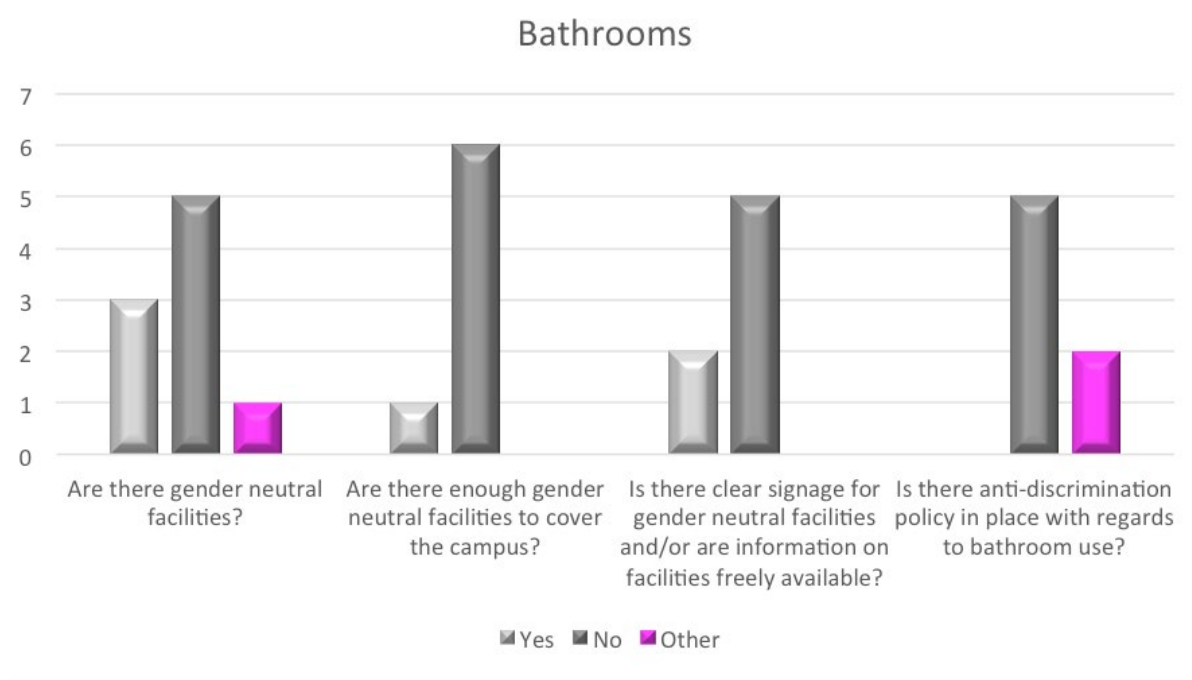
The disillusionment with the university’s institutional infrastructure has pushed participants to look for affirmation, support and community in enclaves external to the university such as support groups and social media spaces.



Part 2

Bathrooms

Many university bathrooms remain gendered in binary terms. In some cases, even single stall bathrooms are gendered. In addition to this, the bathrooms are serviced in gendered ways. For instance, only bathrooms allocated for people who were assigned female at birth (AFAB) have sanitary bins, even though there are some trans masculine people who also menstruate. The graph below evidences the lack of ungendered ablution facilities at the vast majority of the universities that were visited.



The justification for continuing to have gender binary bathrooms, besides the point that “that’s how they were found”, is the perceived dangers that would threaten (cisgender) women if they were to use the same bathrooms as (cisgender) men. This fear exists on the back of the prevalence of sexual violence at universities and the mounting accusations of universities inadequately dealing with incidences of rape on and around their campuses. However the often mute consequence for (trans)gender diverse people is that the seemingly mundane issue of bathroom use is accompanied by vary degrees of anxiety, shame, discomfort and vulnerability.

Access to inclusive bathrooms is also one of the main ways in which the experiences of (trans)gender diverse students differ from those of (trans)gender diverse staff members. While the former are forced to navigate binary gendered bathroom usage with thousands of other (largely cisgender) students, the latter only have to navigate bathroom usage within a floor or departmental setting. One staff member at SUN indicated that her colleagues had been receptive to her transition including her usage of the women’s bathroom. Another transgender staff member from UFS used the departmental men’s bathrooms, which was often empty due to its isolated location on campus. Both these

staff members admitted that their experience of using bathrooms at their respective institutions were different to those of the students at the same institutions.

Some (trans)gender diverse people often opt to use less crowded single stall bathrooms – whether or not it is close to their current location on campus. Others opt to rather wait until they get to their residences/homes in order to use the bathroom. These self-imposed interventions are mechanisms intended to avert the impending violence of being a gender non-conforming person making use of a gender conforming bathroom. Several students reflected on comments, looks and actions that they experience as violent and degrading whenever they make use of a bathroom in order to relieve themselves.

Admirably, some universities have however, attempted to create a sense of gender neutral bathrooms. UFS, WITS and to a certain extent SUN, have changed many of their bathrooms previously demarcated as disability bathrooms into gender neutral bathrooms. Of course, these disability bathrooms have always been degendered single stall bathrooms. What these universities have really done, is to expressly demarcate them for the use of their (trans)gender diverse people in addition to physically disabled patrons empowered by the narrative of “universal accessibility”. None of the universities visited expressly created or changed able bodied gendered bathrooms to gender neutral bathrooms.

A student at WITS, which is largely considered as a pioneer in gender neutral bathrooms, expresses their misgiving thus: ***“Having gender neutral bathrooms is a step forward – but I generally just don’t like the idea of gender neutral toilets and disability toilets being the same thing because I think there is a whole thing around disability still. And merging those ideas I think is very dangerous. But then also I feel like the bathrooms were created for people who physically [due to their disabilities] need those bathrooms. I even feel like I’m taking somebody’s space when I do use gender neutral bathrooms.” – Undergraduate student, WITS.***

Their colleague agrees by motioning towards a distinction between the nuances between engendering non-conformity vs. degendering gender conformity: ***“Yay WITS threw out a carrot to us to try and pacify us by giving us gender neutral bathroom but they have done it in a terrible, terrible way. They have bunched us with the disabled toilets that were already gender neutral. And even the idea of having a sign that becomes problematic because once again that creates a situation of over visibility – especially when you are going to the bathroom. The point is not to put up a sign but to take down the sign. It’s a toilet. If you live in a household with people of different genders you are going to go to the same loo that your dad or your sister or your gran goes to. Jea I use a gender-neutral facility when there is one close by – because the benefit is that they are cleaner – but otherwise then I go to a female one – I don’t give a damn anymore. I really don’t.” – Postgraduate student, WITS.***

However, even these ‘changes’ which have been a result of sometimes years’ long lobbying and struggling by (trans)gender diverse students and staff members. An official from the SUN Equity Unit, gave testimony of the barriers that exist to institutionalising gender neutral bathrooms by recounting the difficulties their office faced when attempting to reconfigure the bathrooms in their offices to be ‘universally accessible’. The clear division

of labour and budget between the SUN Equity Unit and the SUN Facilities Department dictated that the project could not be affected by the former without the willing cooperation of the latter. The bureaucratisation of what are essential social justice and transformation issues has resulted in university infrastructural change failing to keep up with the social and political change on South African campuses.

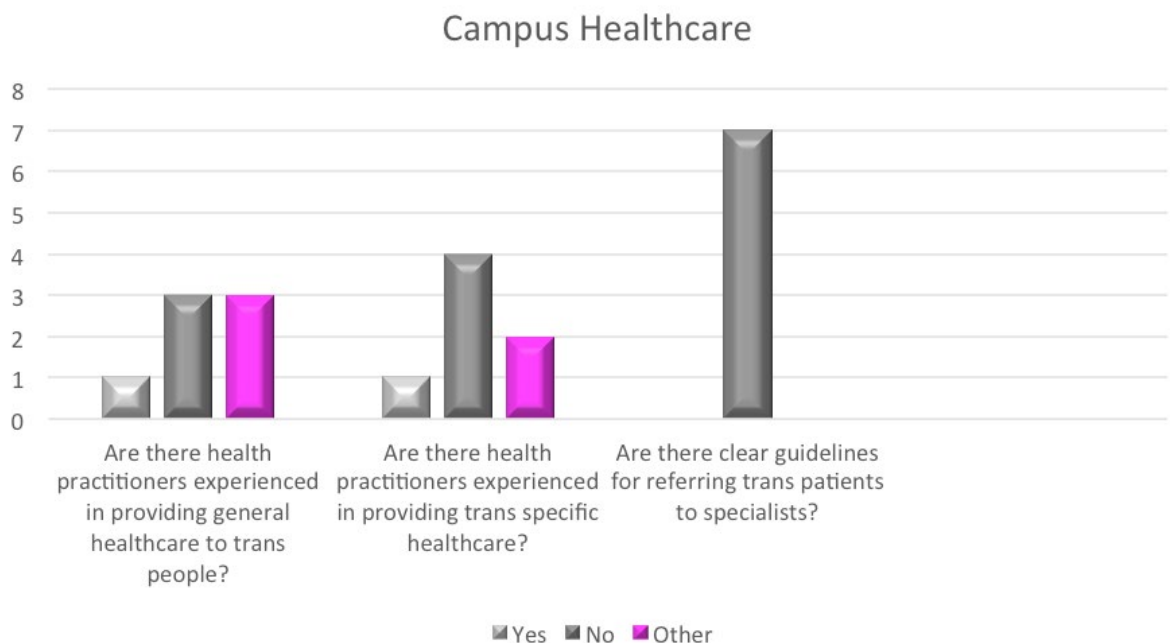
Alluding to this mismatch, participants spoke to a lack of satisfaction, even in the midst of the discourse around gender neutral bathrooms taking off at several universities: ***“But they say ‘we are committed to having more gender-neutral bathrooms’ but these spaces are more in the senior residences where there is already a cohabitation aspect going on. And there is nothing in the single sex residences.” – Undergraduate student, SUN.***

“The problem with the varsity is that there are so many levels to get through in order to get to one person – and by the time you have reached the second person – the first person has drained you out so much that by the time you get to the second person you might not have the strength to deal with that one. So it becomes a real challenge.” – Undergraduate student, NMU.

“All bathrooms should be gender neutral. But council and senate we have had unproductive engagements. But also the individuals who have resisted who are defending their cisgender privilege, who are located in a variety of spaces but are predominately people who are cis, who are het, who are white, who are able bodied. Who do not think through the possibility of what it is to be trans. This makes engaging and implementing change very difficult.” – Staff member, WITS.

Health services

Campus health services are lacking in best practice for treating (trans)gender diverse patients. Interestingly, this is at odds with the observation in other public institutions where the work of civil society organisations is having considerable influence in how healthcare is provided to (trans)gender diverse persons. The graph below provides an analysis of the inaccessibility of campus healthcare facilities to (trans) gender diverse people.



The failure of universities to make specific provisions for transgender healthcare are most manifest when (trans)gender diverse people attempt accessing mental health services. Campus based psychologists or counsellors were found to be 'lacking in trans issues'. They were often cited as not understanding transgender subjectivities and not understanding the interactions between being transgender and mental illness.

"When I went to the psychologist for a while when I was in second year I wasn't getting any help. And it seemed like she was trying to get to the root of other problems – but I was like I need a gender psychologist and that is something this university definitely needs to do before – I would like to see that happen before I leave. As we know [The Triangle Project] only operates in Cape Town and many people can't get there for their weekly meetings with their psychologist. What happens then is that you need to find a private psychologist who would charge you up to a R1000 per session and as we know if you want to transition you have to have seen one for a year so you can start going to an endocrinologist for hormones." – Postgraduate student, SUN.

"I decided to terminate my psychology counselling sessions because I felt like when I bring up my gender identity there is almost like a silent pause – as in like I don't know what to say or I don't know how to deal with that. We will help you but not to an extent where your experiences are too complicated for us." – Undergraduate student, SUN.

The lack of inclusive healthcare seems to be closely related to the lack of capacity at and funding of campus health units. In several instances, participants noted that the worse off of universities only have 'one nurse servicing thousands of students' and counsellors who do not have the training to handle the complex healthcare cases that students bring through their doors.

"The people at the health department – those people are not doing any justice in terms of LGBTI issues – especially trans issues. Because if they were to deal with trans people who are taking hormones and they are experiencing some allergy or whatever – they wouldn't know what things to put in their body or not because they are not capable of dealing with the health issue that is in front of them. Because now if I were to get sick I would have to worry about the kind of health treatment that I would be getting – whether it would make me even sicker considering that already taking hormones which are posing a huge possible danger to my liver and my body." – Undergraduate student, NMU.

The lack of capacity and inclusive healthcare services for trans people pushes out those who have the means to seek private practitioners. This also leaves those without the means without healthcare and at risk of their ailments negatively affecting their academic performance and general university experience. ***"I could have started on [hormonal replacement therapy] about a year ago already – but I couldn't because I'm not out to my parents and thus couldn't ask them for money for a private psychologist." – Postgraduate student, SUN.***

"I have learnt not to speak about my gender identity to them [the counsellors] because what happened last year I had a mental breakdown after RU Reference list and I had to

“speak about all of that and then I brought up the fact that I was gender queer and then the counsellor was like ‘I think you should have a meeting with the psychologist at Fort England’ – which is a mental institution! But that really scared me – because some of my friends have gone for a consultation at Fort England and they were locked up for a month. I can’t afford not to be at this institution. You will ruin my whole life if you take me out of this institution for an entire month. You will ruin everything! for me that was a sign that I should not speak about my gender identity – especially if you were seeing them for other issues that you were facing that had nothing to do with who I am as a gender non-binary person.” – Postgraduate student, UCKAR.

Residences

What came out strongly amongst student participants was that the university residence system was a key element in enforcing the gender binary at South African universities. At many universities, the gender binary organisation of residences facilitates the upkeep of strict, often anarchic, conceptions of masculinity and femininity. For those (trans) gender diverse students who have been placed in university residences, they often also function as sites of alienation, violence and discrimination. The graph below demonstrates the state of residences at the institutions that were visited.



At older universities, residences also function as cultural centres of the university where decades’ old practices and rules are enforced in the name of tradition and prestige. These traditions often involve performances of hyper femininity or hyper masculinity coupled with performances of heterosexuality. **“Basically, they had a speed dating social between the two reses – and then the girls were told specifically not to give out their numbers – and the boys res were told that they would be punished physically if they didn’t get any numbers. I mean you have so much toxic masculinity [in these residences].” – Undergraduate student, WITS.**

This often results in a culture of impunity and a lack of accountability as residences are invested in upkeeping these traditions rather than problematising them. Discrimination,

abuse and alienation frequently go unpunished if it is in line with the cultures of hyper masculinity and hyper femininity, respectively: ***“When I was in res in my first year I was forced to get married to a guy in a male res. For me the ideology behind that was incorrect but what comforted me was that I got married to a friend of mine. It wasn’t that thing were it’s a stranger. The person was familiar with who I am – they are my friend we engage in these kinds of discussions. But my problem is that had it not been my friend how would have the reception been different. Was I going to be that one first year that no guy wanted to get married to because I was masculine? These are the kinds of things that first years look at when they engage with these kinds of interactions with other reses.”*** – Staff member, UFS.

“My experiences have been the worst. Especially when I had just come in at the beginning of the year. I was assigned to a res based on my biology – a male residence. I walked in and then I find out that in the house committee has a trans woman. Which gave me this perception that ‘if there are people who are trans in this committee, then perhaps the space is liberal’, until such time days went by and the res showed itself as a very male, religious and patriarchal. There was a very big situation this year whereby a sub warden – an honours student who gets paid to lead the residence – during a house meeting said that [translated] ‘we will only use the word gents’ [when referring to the house members]. We will not use the words ‘people’ we will use gents – we will use men.” – Undergraduate student, UCKAR.

Interestingly, the UCKAR residence implicated in the testimony above had recently been renamed to Robert Sobukwe Hall from Smuts Hall. This illustrates the superficial changes that universities are implementing in order to give the impression that substantive and substantial changes are being made to radically reconfigure the dynamics of the residences specifically, and universities generally.

Although most of the visited universities had co-ed residences, the junior residences at the universities were largely single sex. Some universities have reworked this model by creating co-ed residences (often for senior students). However, even these residences pander to the gender binary as building floors or blocks are divided according to gender. This is a historical model justified by the perception of young (cis) men being a danger to young (cis) women – often with sexual violence being cited as a forerunning concern for university officials. This however, often does not take into consideration the types of violence that are caused by, for example) (cis) women against other (cis) women and by cisgender students against (trans)gender diverse students.

“That’s actually the main justification right now to have gendered residences – for the safety of the girls in female residences – even though not all the girls live in the female residences anyway. They don’t care about trans women, they live in a residences full of sexist and transphobic men.” – Undergraduate student, UCKAR.

“I live at a res of close to 1500 men, and when I go shower, I always shower when everybody is in class or when people are sleeping. Because I know that anyone could just open that curtain and they could rape me and get away with it. And the perpetrator would be protected. I am even scared to even take a shower. I am even scared to even be in my own room.” – Undergraduate student, UCKAR.

Gendered residences are thus often alienating for those trans people who are placed within these residences based on the sex that they were assigned at birth. In addition, the toxicity of 'compulsory cisheterosexuality' limits the experiences of transgender students to explore and come into themselves – a key take away from the university experience. One student from the SUN felt that living in a single sex residence limited their ability to 'explore the depth of gender'. The residence in which they were placed emphasised the performance of masculinity – concretised by the ideas of brotherhood and manhood – which limited their experience of coming into themselves as a agender person within a safe and affirming space.

Another trans woman student at NMU was relieved that she did not live at a university residence as she felt that she would have to over perform her trans femininity in order to be accommodated within a women's res: ***"When you go and live at res you are going to have to – because of your identity – you are going to be forced to live in a male res. And they not going to want to put you into a female res because they are going to say 'look at you – you aren't even representing what you say you are'. they lack the understanding that its not a matter of what my body looks like right now but how I feel right now. They'd disregard how your feelings actually matter. [you must 'pass' in order for them to even consider putting you in the appropriate residence] – yes – you must have everything – the documents etc. it's a real deal breaker. Where I stay its very difficult to get to campus – its so much easier to live in res. But who wants to put themselves in a situation whereby they are sharing with all these boys and they get into a situation where they get violated."*** – Undergraduate student, NMU.

The maintenance of problematic residence cultures is compounded by bureaucracy. While residence culture is established and maintained at the student leader level, through elected house committees and selected residence assistances or sub-wardens, and at the university level, through residence wardens, the structural transformation of residence remains the business of the university departments that are in charge of university facilities – each with its own system of bureaucracies, budget constraints and politics. Moreover, those elected, in the case of residence house committees, and those selected, in the case of residence sub-wardens and wardens, are under equipped to deal with the complex problems presented by having a diverse student body.

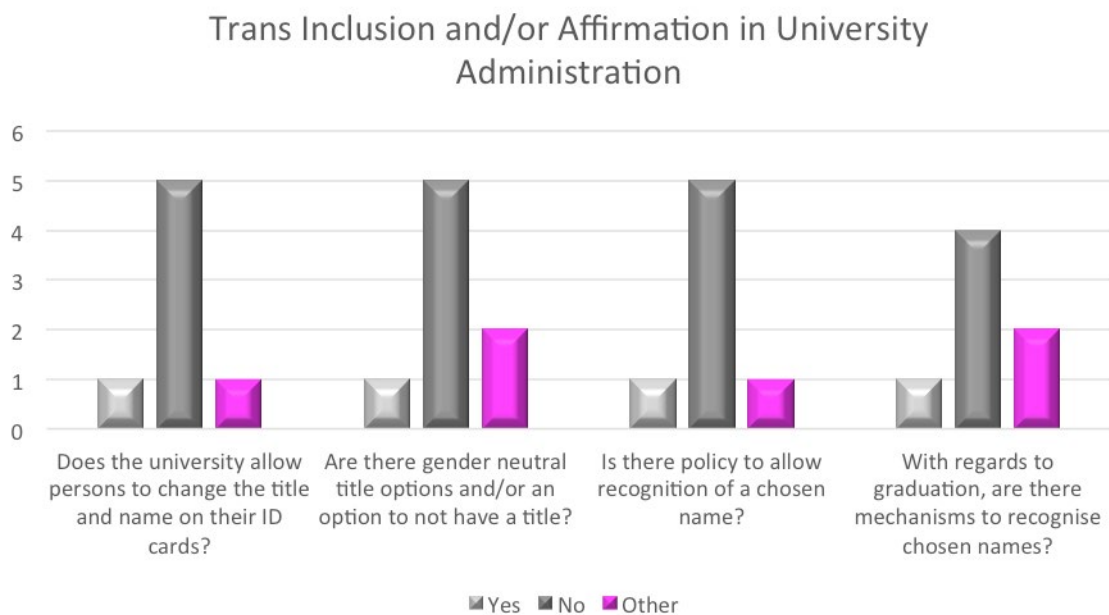
"The house father tried to be accommodating [after a conflict between a transgender house member and cisgender house mate who had been made roommates]...what he proposed to do was to not address issues that pertained to sexual orientation and gender...[instead he] put the trans people together and did not address the [gender and sexuality] crisis. [In effect he] just took the trans person out of the equation [in order to 'resolve' the conflict]." – Postgraduate student, SUN.

At newer universities, it is clear that attempts at inclusivity have been made. At Sol Plaatje University, one of South Africa's youngest, the biggest residence Moroka is a model example of architectural ingenuity within the university space. the residence has several communal spaces fitted with games, musical instruments and seating areas. The ground floor is dedicated solely to students with physical disabilities. Each room is accompanied by an adjoining room for those students whose physical disabilities necessitate the

services of a care giver. In building this residence, it is obvious that inclusivity was a key consideration. However, the thoroughness around inclusivity did not extend to gender diversity. All the bathrooms and all the floors that house all the bedrooms are segregated according to the gender binary.

Student cards

For security, all visited universities require both students and staff to carry access cards on their person. Generally, these access cards have the carrier’s title, name and surname, unique campus identity number/barcode as well as their image. However for (trans)gender diverse students and staff, the title, name and image are not unproblematic. The graph below represents the status quo regarding access cards at universities. Unsurprisingly, there is little to no provision of policies and procedures that allow for the affirming recognition of (trans)gender diversity.



The titles most commonly used in university access cards – Mr and Ms – are unmistakably the derivative of the gender that the carrier was assigned to at birth and the gender that the carrier is identified with legally according to South Africa’s National Populations Registry. However, this is the same gender that (trans)gender diverse people do not identify with. Similarly, many first names are also gendered according to the gender one is assigned to at birth. For many (trans)gender diverse people, transitioning also involves choosing a new name more fitting for their gender identity. In some cases the image on the student card does not correspond with the current face of the carrier due to the social and physical changes that the (trans)gender diverse person may have undergone as part of their transition. Thus for (trans)gender diverse people who have disassociated with the titles, names and gender expressions that were assigned to them at birth have difficulties with these access cards.

These difficulties can be subjective in that they function as constant reminders of the mismatch between the gender with which a (trans)gender diverse person identifies with and the gender that is forcefully assigned to them – in some cases triggering dysphoria. These access cards also provide objective difficulties. Firstly, the mismatch between the

(trans)gender diverse person's chosen gender expression and the gender expression codified on their student cards may result in allegations of misrepresentation or fraud from university security personnel, thus limiting the (trans)gender diverse person's access on and around campus. Secondly, the gendered student cards 'out' these persons as transgender without their consent – which in a cisheteronormative environment leaves them vulnerable to discrimination and violence.

“You also can't change your name without legal documents allowing the same. I would be in an exam and I would need to use the bathroom – and a lecturer would come and they would be confused and I would be like I just need to pee. Also its unpleasant seeing it – it triggers my dysphoria. it is also just triggering on my psyche. A big problem is that there is no infrastructure to change without legal name change or legal gender change.”
– Postgraduate student, WITS.

The gender binary of universities also extends across the university's records and administration. Official correspondence remains gendered. ***“For a person like me – since I have started transitioning, when I hear about graduation – I think about when I graduate – who is going to be called out on stage. Because with our systems in South Africa its so difficult to get your ID changed and your student number changed from Mr to Mrs vice versa that when I go up there they are going to misgender me. That is violence to me. To me that is the worst. What is it going to do to me? That trauma that I am going to be experiencing when they call my name for those 30 seconds that I will be on that stage. How am I going to get through that? So I'm contemplating should I or should I not, is 30 seconds of me being called out worth everyone knowing my business. Because when I am walking around no one would say anything because no body knows about my situation. Also people don't know – I hide it very well. When I get called up for thoes 30 seconds its going to be a life changer – again. Its going to come back to haunt me.”*** – Undergraduate student, NMU.

In those instances where (trans)gender diverse people have had any one of the gendered aspects of their access cards altered, it has been due to great effort negotiating generally unchangeable administrative systems. This also presents another site where (trans)gender diverse university students, workers and staff members bear the burden of including and affirming themselves within universities and universities merely being reactive rather than proactive in creating inclusive and affirming spaces.

Part 3

Although universities across South Africa are implementing various transformational interventions pursuant to the demands made by the Fallist student movements, this report has shown that (trans)gender diverse students, workers and staff members are on the margins of these changes. What is clear is that university decision makers need to join vulnerable minority groups such as transgender students, workers and staff members in order for universities to better accommodate diversity.

Firstly, university decision makers need to be more proactive in identifying and then responding to the needs and wants of (trans)gender diverse constituents. This requires universities to not only be particularly awake to the subjectivities of this community, but to also give the impression of being attentive to their concerns. This would prevent a situation where members of the (trans)gender diverse community feel that the university does not care for them and their plight.

This is expressed by some of the participants from UCKAR: ***“At the beginning of this year I sent an email to many of the major universities in South Africa concerning their treatment of transgender students and particularly the steps and actions that they have taken to accommodate thoes students...but I only received a response from one university...I still have not received any response. So that for me was the first indication here that regardless of whether there seemed to be any – very clear overt instances of the university taking action against transgender students – they certainly were not going to offer any kind of aid. And I think their silence is a definite complicity because an act of omission is an act no less.”*** – Undergraduate student, UCKAR.

“There is a point at which ignorance has to be constructed. You choose to isolate yourself. And by virtue of that you choose to isolate yourself from the students – from the students that you are meant to be taking care of. I don’t think that’s acceptable. I don’t think you can claim to have student welfare at heart and yet not take the time to be constantly cognisant of what students want.” – Undergraduate student, UCKAR.

Secondly, universities need to do more in order to ensure that their (trans)gender diverse patrons have adequate information in order to self actualise: ***“It is dangerous to not have information about very specific things encouraging self acceptance in trans kids and young trans people. For me that is the most fundamental source of information. The idea that being trans is okay. Debunking ideas that transness is un-African. Deconstructing ideas that transness is inherently a westernised concept and that there are no continental equivalents thereof – which is absolutely an untruth. Erasing the experiences of trans folk especially trans folk from South Africa and other parts of the continent. The idea that trans folk who want to get affirming therapies or such are able to do so. The global assumption that is continuously pushed is of a trans people who has the inherent struggle of being stuck in the wrong body. Being discriminated against by the world around them and having to scabble for crumbs. As a result***

undergoing hardship and eventually succumbing to tragedy. That is so so damaging; and the narrative that trans people should be hearing is that it is okay. The idea that a community exists and that anti-trans ideologies are harmful and ultimately inherently flawed in that they assumed to be well meaning but are at best abusive and problematic and generational damage. Of course the easiest assumption is that trans folk don't have enough information to accessing treatments etc, but that's not the whole story, its about erasing the loneliness that a lot of trans people face. – Staff member, WITS.

Thirdly, universities need to invest more time, effort and resources in training and sensitising staff members regarding transgender sensitivities: ***“The biggest thing that the university could possibly do, is training staff properly with regards to this stuff. Coming here when you are 18 – your world has never been opened in this way and having someone stand in front of the class room as an authoritative figure – has to have better knowledge of the stuff. Sometimes it's not even about the language. God sometimes I don't even have the right language – it's that you are not going to laugh in the class ... normalising transphobia. So for someone who maybe wasn't even thinking about that now have these ideas in their heads. Just train people. Because lecturers and tutors etc are very very influential. I think before we even put up signs and take them down etc – how you construct all of that – its going to be with the people standing in front there.”*** – Staff member, WITS.

Fourthly, university decision makers must ensure that guidelines for the inclusion, affirmation, treatment and servicing of transgender students, workers and staff members are explicitly provided for within university policy. ***“If you don't mention trans people in bureaucracy, trans people don't exist. For example I went through the problem where I was graduating and I do not want certain things. Luckily they ended up reading out my correct name but it wasn't on my degree or anything – which I accepted. But we fought so hard for the graduation booklet to also have the right name, but apparently that is a legal document it has to reflect my legal name. so I think the biggest problem is that we don't exist. And that's a big problem.”*** – Postgraduate student, WITS.

Ideally, these policies must be effective in naming the nature and form of (trans)gender antagonisms across the university as well establishing specific interventions to transform the landscape of these universities when it comes to gender diversity. They should be broad enough to be able to provide solutions for both present and future and uncertain problems. However, they should be politicised and detailed enough to be effective: ***“[The existent] Policy is liberal. And the actions of the university are very liberal in the global sense. In terms of the fact that if you are white and male, you are going to have a fantastic time at this university. Everything is great...even if you are a white gay male. This institution is incredibly accepting. There is hardly any homophobia perpetrated against white male gays. People will listen to you. And it's fantastic. and its so radically different from a lot of other areas that to me it breeds an idea that there aren't any significant challenges. Which is why all the time, particularly on online anonymous forums, you get people saying 'what are you complaining about – everything is so great. Because it is, until you are not part of that establishment...its so hard to tray and make people understand that going home every day to a place where you are surrounded by people of a different gender to you but who think that they are of the same gender***

to you and who undermine your identity everyday inspite of the fact that they are nice liberal people – they don't understand what's that like. And its really exhausting that the university itself doesn't want to hold you to do that.” – Undergraduate student, UCKAR.

Thus it is submitted that (trans)gender diversity policies ought to also operate as blueprints that:

- a) establish the nuanced political problems,
- b) provide clear context specific solutions for them and
- c) provide adequate mechanisms for universities to be held accountable and responsible for gaps in implementation.

Moreover, work must be done to ensure that the policies are known to the communities that they intend to service. Many students indicated that they did not have any knowledge on whether trans specific policies existed or of the process of how such a policy could come about.

Fifthly, universities should ensure that they have the correct people in power. ***“We also have to ask ourselves about these decision making structures – how many trans women are there, how many non binary people are there, how many black trans women and men are there. How diversified and how transformed is the decision-making bench. A trans person should be on council for example. But even when looking at people who are in charge of res, in charge of anything that has anything to do with student life there is a queer voice there to ensure that that voice is being heard.” – Undergraduate student, UCKAR.***

“The people doing the labour – that is diversified! Even when it came to the transformation forum, a queer lecturer fought for us to be on the forum. They were like these kids have been working so hard on these projects, but you are not even inviting them? To see the final result of this? They are not even allowed in this space? People were allowed and invited was management, the school principles (private schools), - so the people doing all the labour trying to get transformation going and who are still living under the institutional culture everyday are not really allowed in these spaces.” – Postgraduate student, UCKAR.

Sixthly, universities should be steadfast in holding accountable not only people who discriminate and abuse (trans)gender diverse students, workers and staff members, but also those university officials responsible for diversity and transformation for failing to adequately include and affirm transgender people. Related to this, more transparency, openness and participation regarding university transformation budget, where it is allocated and how it is used is needed in order to ensure that nobody is left behind in the university's transformation trajectory.

Annexure A

General experiences of university	How has the university experience been for you? Socially? Academically?
Gender identity	How do you identify yourself? When did you realise that you are transgender? How do other people identify you? When did you start identifying as transgender? What is being transgender?
Trans at university	What is it like being transgender within the university? What are the social dynamics? Do you face a lot of stigma? Do you find the university generally accommodative to your trans identity?
Social support	What support do you need as a trans person? Are you getting this support? Where/From whom? Have you made use of them? Do you have a support system? Do you feel comfortable approaching any lecturers or university officers? Where/To whom do you go in order to off load?
Health services	Do you have any particular health needs? Where do you go in order to access healthcare? Is there trans friendly healthcare within the university? Does your healthcare provider know that you are trans? Do you have access to gender affirming healthcare, if you desire it? Have you faced any stigma while trying to access healthcare?
Information services	Do you feel well informed about trans identities? Do you feel that others/society are well informed about trans identities? Do you think that information on trans identities is important? Is there anyone within the university who is providing information on trans identities? Is there anybody within the university that should be providing information on trans identities?

Bathrooms	What are your experiences using bathrooms at the university? How do you think the bathroom problems for trans people at the university could be solved? Who are the university decision makers that can make this change happen? Have you tried engaging them?
Residences	Have you lived on any on campus residence? What is/was your experience of living at res as a trans person? How do you think the residence problems for trans people at the university can be solved? Who are the university decision makers that can make this change happen? Have you tried engaging them?
Student cards	Are you required to carry an access card? What information is included on this access card? Why do you think that the university requires the information on this access card? Has the information included on the access card affected you in any way?
The classroom	What is your experience of lectures at the university? Do you feel comfortable contributing in class? Do you ever skip class for reasons related to your trans identity? What is the nature of your relationship with your lecturers? What is the nature of the relationship with your classmates? What are you studying?
Policy framework – Know your rights	Are there any policies relevant to trans identities at your university that you know of? Are there any policies/ideas/suggestions that you think your university should adopt? Who has the power to draft and adopt policies at your universities?
Decolonisation	What do you understand about decolonisation? How do you think decolonisation relates to transgender people?

Annexure B

Topic	Sufficiency Rating (Total out of 20)	Observation
<p>Bathrooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there gender neutral facilities? /1 • Are there enough GN facilities to cover the campus? /1 • Is there clear signage for GN facilities and/or is the information on facilities freely available? /1 • Is there anti-discrimination policy in place with regards to bathroom use? /1 <p>Total: /4</p>		
<p>Residences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there Co-ed residences? /1 • Is there policy in place with regards to the admission of trans people in residence? /1 • Is this policy inclusive? (trans women are allowed into women's residences for example) /1 <p>Total: /3</p>		
<p>Trans inclusion in LGBTI and/or HIV/Aids and/or Gender and/or Anti-Discrimination Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any mention of trans identities? /1 • Is there inclusion of non-binary identities? /1 <p>Total: /2</p>		
<p>Campus Healthcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there health practitioners experienced in providing general healthcare to trans people? /1 • Are there health practitioners experienced in providing trans specific healthcare? /1 • Are there clear guidelines for referring trans patients to specialists (eg. Trans psychiatry?) /1 <p>Total /3</p>		

Topic	Sufficiency Rating (Total out of 20)	Observation
<p>Discrimination Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an entity on campus that deals with discrimination and/or LGBT/SOGIE? • Are issues around gender diversity part of the scope of this entity? • Does it have programmes in place to support gender diverse people? • Does it work towards a more affirming environment? 	<p style="text-align: center;">/1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Total: /4</p>	
<p>Trans inclusion and/or Affirmation in University Administration (cards, certificates, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the university allow persons to change the title and name on their ID cards? • Are there gender neutral title options and/or an option to not have a title? • Is there policy to allow recognition of a chosen name? • With regards to graduation, are there measures to recognise chosen names? 	<p style="text-align: center;">/1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Total: /4</p>	

