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Student Attitudes Toward the Transgender Community Following Restroom Reassignment

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**STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD THE TRANSGENDER
COMMUNITY FOLLOWING RESTROOM REASSIGNMENT
AT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY**

by

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B.S. May 2015, Old Dominion University

A Research Study Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
August 2016

Approved by:

Philip A. Reed (Co-Director)

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ABSTRACT

STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY FOLLOWING RESTROOM REASSIGNMENT AT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

Kelly L. Duggins

Old Dominion University, 2015

Co-Director: Dr. Philip A. Reed

Co-Director: Dr. John M. Ritz

The problem of this study [was[RP1]] to investigate the effect recent changes to gender specific restrooms had on students' attitudes toward the transgender community at a public research university in the southeastern United States. To determine if further education and/or inclusion actions should be implemented by university communities, an invitation to complete an electronic survey was sent by email to students at Old Dominion University's main campus in Norfolk, VA. Participants responded to seventeen statements, each designed to collect data relating to one of the four research objectives of this study. The findings of this study may be used to determine if students at [RP2]Old Dominion University are well informed about the changes to gender specific restrooms, and also determine how these changes may have affected attitudes toward the transgender community.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the transgender population has thrust the issues of gender identity and equality for all into the limelight in the United States. In an April 2011 article, the Williams Institute at the University of California-Los Angeles estimated that there were 700,000 transgender adults living in the United States (Gates, 2011). Note that not all transgender individuals identify as such. Some still categorize themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual (Gates, 2011). Thus to obtain a more accurate account of the number of transgender adults living in the U.S. remains a challenge. In an attempt to fulfill the Declaration of Independence's promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, steps must be taken throughout our society to ensure that gender identity is recognized, and steps are taken to ensure equality for all.

The fight for equality has brought about issues with gender specific restrooms and transgender individuals' rights to access the restroom they feel corresponds with their gender identity. To this cause, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a division of the U.S. Department of Labor, recently released *A Guide to Restroom Access for Transgender Workers* (2016). This guide was intended to provide employers with best practices as it relates to providing accessible restrooms to their employees, specifically transgender employees. OSHA believes that

restricting employees to using only restrooms that are not consistent with their gender identity, or segregating them from other workers by requiring them to use gender-neutral or other specific restrooms, singles those employees out and may make them fear for their physical safety. (Department of Labor, 2016, p. 1)

The Department goes on to explain that many health problems, physical injuries, or illnesses can result should an employee fear using the restroom while at work.

This study addresses the issue of accessibility of gender-neutral restrooms for students at a major metropolitan university. Further, it also accesses the attitudes of students toward the transgender community and inclusion actions taken by university officials to comply with the April 2015 ruling of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). This ruling stated that transgender individuals must be allowed access to public restrooms that are used by those of the same gender identity (Department of Labor, 2016).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect recent changes to gender specific restrooms had on students' attitudes toward the transgender community at a public research university in the southeastern United States. This is being studied to determine if further education and/or inclusion actions should be implemented by university communities.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were established to guide the conduct of this research study:

RO₁: Identify the age, sex, gender identity, and class of students at the university.

RO₂: Identify on-campus students' preferences for restroom use while on campus.

RO₃: Determine students' attitudes toward recent changes from gender specific restrooms to gender-neutral restrooms.

RO₄: Determine students' attitudes toward the transgender community.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Established in 1930 as a division of the College of William and Mary and Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Old Dominion College began educating teachers and engineers in the art of excellence. In 1962 this institution was granted independence, and it became Old Dominion University, a four-year institution. ODU has since continued to grow and change, striving to become a major metropolitan university situated in Norfolk, Virginia. The University is now comprised of six colleges and offers approximately 73 baccalaureate programs, 41 master's programs, two educational specialist programs, and 21 doctoral programs (ODU, 2015).

With all of these programs available, ODU's student body is about as diverse as one could imagine. Its educationally rich opportunities have become the choice for students from all 50 states and more than 100 countries from all over the world. ODU now boasts of enrollments totaling approximately 25,000 students, 60% of which take courses on campus. The other 40% is comprised of distance learning students from all over the world, even on Navy vessels that are on deployment (ODU, 2015).

ODU's mission states that "the University is committed to providing the highest quality instruction to all of its students" (ODU, 2015, p. 10). In its efforts to provide the highest quality instruction, ODU officials and administration must consider the quality of the instructors, the content of course material, and the educational environment in which

these courses are held. As such, there has been a heightened awareness on providing every student the opportunity to a safe, clean, and fair environment in which to learn.

In an effort to achieve fairness and equality in this learning environment, ODU has recently reassigned a number of restrooms on campus to accommodate students that may have gender dysphoria and/or identify as transgender. The reassignment was completed by the Office of Facilities Management, and it involved changing signage on certain single occupancy and/or handicap restrooms to gender-neutral and/or handicap restrooms. Many other colleges and universities, more than 150, have already taken this same measure (Kennedy, 2015). This act of inclusion is intended not only to accommodate transgender students, but to keep ODU within legal confines, as high rates of sexual harassment and discrimination toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students have been reported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) (Kennedy, 2015). Making restrooms more accessible for transgender individuals and those with gender dysphoria may affect ODU students' attitudes toward the transgender community. If this is so, it may warrant additional education or inclusion activities from Old Dominion University administration.

LIMITATIONS

Research for this study was limited to the current student population of Old Dominion University, including only those students coded by the Office of Admissions as taking courses at the main campus in Norfolk, Virginia.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were made:

- I. Students have concerns about and/or are aware of restroom designations.

- II. The enrollment records and campus coding information provided by the ODU Office of Admissions was complete and accurate.
- III. No one ODU student was given the opportunity to complete the survey more than once.

PROCEDURES

To begin this study a computer-based survey was developed. The survey included statements to gather the age, sex, gender identity, and academic class of respondents. It also included statements that would gauge the students' current habits of restroom use on the Old Dominion University campus, and their attitudes toward the recent changes made to gender specific restrooms to accommodate the transgender community. Lastly there were statements meant to gauge how students feel ODU could better address the issue of inclusion. Each statement would be answered based on a 5 level Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These questions were guided by the study's research objectives and developed from a review of literature.

Invitations to complete the survey were then distributed via email to those students that take courses on the main campus in Norfolk, VA. Upon collection of the electronic survey, answers were tallied and a statistical analysis was completed. The analysis would determine current habits of restroom use. This would be categorized by age, sex, gender identity, and academic class. Attitudes toward ODU's efforts toward inclusion would also be measured from the results.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The following terms were routinely used throughout this report. These definitions are presented to the reader for further clarification of meaning.

- I. Attitude – an enduring pattern of evaluative responses towards a person, object, or issue (Coleman, 2003)
- II. Equality – the quality, state, or ideal of being just, fair, and impartial (*Webster's II New College Dictionary*, 1999)
- III. Gender dysphoria – a chronic aversion to physical or social attributes of one's own biological sex or gender (Coleman, 2003)
- IV. Gender identity – a sense of awareness usually beginning in infancy, continuing throughout childhood, and reaching maturity in adolescence, of being male or female or of the gender associated with one's biological sex (Coleman, 2003)
- V. Gender specific – referring only to men or only to women (Gender specific, n.d)
- VI. Inclusion – the practice of teaching students with disabilities in the same classroom as other students to the fullest extent possible, via provision of appropriate supportive services (APA, 2009)
- VII. Restroom – a public lavatory (*Webster's II New College Dictionary*, 1999)
- VIII. Transgender – having or relating to gender identities that differ from culturally determined gender roles and biological sex. Transgender states include transsexualism and intersexuality (APA, 2009).

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This study was to determine if the recent changes that Old Dominion University made to some restroom assignments on its main campus affected students' attitudes toward the transgender community. In this chapter it was noted that, because of the growth of the transgender population in the U.S., more inclusion measures are being taken by institutions and agencies. Some of these inclusion measures involved making

restrooms more accessible to transgender individuals, so they are able to use the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity. This study singles out students at Old Dominion University's main campus in Norfolk, VA, in an effort to determine how recently taken inclusion actions have affected them.

Chapter II will review literature relating to the topics of gender identity and dysphoria. Laws relating to restroom designations and inclusion actions already taken by universities will also be discussed. Chapter III provides the methods and procedures in which this study was conducted. Data are then reported in Chapter IV. Chapter V discusses the conclusions drawn from the data gathered and makes recommendations for future research related to this topic of study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research study was designed to collect data related to the attitudes of students at Old Dominion University toward the transgender community after the recent modification of on-campus restroom assignments. Analysis of those data were used to determine whether Old Dominion University administration should take further action to foster an environment of inclusion.

Several issues related to the problem of this study are discussed in this Review of Literature. It begins with a discussion of gender identity and dysphoria. Next, information about understanding the transgender lifestyle is shared. Lastly, gender inclusive restrooms and acts taken toward inclusion are discussed. A summary concludes this Review of Literature section.

Gender Identity and Dysphoria

Before humans are born into the world, an attending physician performs an ultrasound and notes sex, male or female, on official documentation. From the moment we are born, this notation or assignment of our sex begins to shape the way in which we perceive ourselves and the world around us. Perceptions of ourselves and who we would like to become then determine our needs. Author Sarah Gardner (2015) discusses this idea in the article “Choice Theory: Gender Roles and Identity.” Choice Theory, developed by William Glasser, explains that every human being is born with the ability to choose most all of his/her behavior. These chosen behaviors seek to satisfy one or more of the needs outlined in Choice Theory: survival or self-preservation, love and belonging,

power or achievement, freedom or independence, and fun or enjoyment (p. 31). So then, it is our biological make-up and structural differences that drive our needs and behaviors.

Structural differences in the brains of men and women are thought to account for the gender traits that a person exhibits. Aggressive conduct, level of masculinity, level of femininity, and sexual conduct are among those gender traits affected. In the central bed nucleus of the stria terminalis, known to involve sexual dimorphism functions, men seem to have twice as many neurons as women. Neurons in this part of the brain agree with gender, not with genetic sex. Gender identity, then, is determined in the central bed nucleus by the number of neurons it houses (Capetillo-Ventura et al., 2014). The article *Gender dysphoria: An overview* defines gender identity as

the extent to which each person identifies themselves as male, female or a combination of both. It is the internal reference, built over time, which allows individuals to organize a sense of self and behave socially according to the perception of their own sex and gender. (Capetillo-Ventura et al., 2014, p. 53)

In this definition we see again that our behavior is driven by the perceptions we have of ourselves. This behavior generally follows norms that have been created by the society in which we live. Since society determines what it means to be male and female, our surroundings dictate what role a person would play based upon their gender identity. Deviation from these norms suggests a dissatisfaction with the gender identity that society has assigned based upon one's sex at birth (Gardner, 2015).

A person that deviates from such social norms and identifies more strongly with the gender identity of the opposite sex is said to have gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is a psychological condition that causes men and women to feel an

inconsistency between their physical phenotype and their biological sex. When this happens in a man, he will feel more connected to things that society may deem the norm for females. Women would feel more comfortable identifying with masculine roles (Capetillo-Ventura et al., 2014). Gender dysphoria is usually diagnosed over a six month period of time. Capetillo-Ventura et al. (2015) list the DSM Vs diagnostic criteria for gender dysphoria in adults as:

- I. A strong inconsistency between the sex the individual feels or expresses and his or her primary or secondary sexual characteristics,
- II. A strong desire to detach from their own primary or secondary sexual characteristics, due to a strong inconsistency between the sex the individual feels or expresses,
- III. A strong desire to possess primary and secondary sexual characteristics corresponding to the opposite sex,
- IV. A strong desire to belong to the opposite sex,
- V. A strong desire to be treated as an individual of the opposite sex, and
- VI. A strong conviction that one possesses feelings and reactions typical of the opposite sex. (Capetillo et al., 2014, pp. 55-56)

Such strong desires often cause a person to lead a transgender lifestyle.

Leading a Transgender Life

There are currently more than 700,000 transgender people living among us in the U.S. (Gates, 2011). These people struggle with the normal cares of life, but being transgender also has its own share of unique challenges. Transgender people face criticism for living as the person that they think themselves to be. Transphobia, or the

fear of difference, causes “normal” people to question why someone would live a life opposite of who they are biologically. This violates the norms that society places on the sex of an individual. Because transgender people violate the norm they are often misunderstood. This misunderstanding makes them the target of discrimination, harassment, violence, and injustice (Levasseur, 2015).

In 2011 the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force joined with the National Center for Transgender Equality to report the results of a study titled *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* (Grant et al., 2011). The aim of this study was to shed light on the types of injustice that transgender persons face daily. Paper and online surveys were completed by 6,450 transgender and gender non-conforming participants from all over the U.S., Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (Grant et al., 2011).

Results of the study show that, though there is more visibility of transgender persons, misunderstandings still exist (Levasseur, 2015). Analysis of the responses revealed that transgender persons experience unemployment at twice the rate of the general population. Minorities that identify as transgender experience unemployment at four times that rate. Harassment, mistreatment, and discrimination was reported by 90% of those surveyed, and 47% of the respondents reported being fired, not hired, or denied promotion due to their transgender status. Because most transgender individuals live in poverty, with household incomes of less than \$10,000 per year, about 16% of the respondents noted that they were compelled to do sex work or sell drugs to make a living. This could explain why the transgender population experiences almost double the general population’s HIV infection rate, and they are 85% more likely to be incarcerated. Some

feel the pressures of living outside of the “norm” are too difficult. It was reported that 41% of the study participants have attempted to take their own life. This is in comparison to the 1.6% of the general population that attempt suicide (Grant et al., 2011).

The results of the National Transgender Discrimination Study (Grant et al., 2011) prove that leading a transgender life can be quite the challenge for anyone. But it also reports positive things that have happened to the respondents as a result of their resilience and determination to lead full meaningful lives. For example, despite discrimination in the medical field, 76% of study participants now receive hormone therapy by medical providers that are sensitive to their conditions. Many were able to return to school and receive proper education despite the harassment and bullying that can take place in the classroom. Others reported improved conditions at work and improvements in living conditions (Grant et al., 2011).

Restrooms and Inclusion

The authors of the National Transgender Discrimination Study (Grant et al., 2011) conclude that society’s unwillingness to make accommodations for the transgender community opens doors for mistreatment, disrespect, abuse, violence, and the denial of human dignity (Grant et al., 2011). Alongside facing discrimination in various public places, transgender people also face this denial of human dignity in one of the most private places known, the restroom. Many transgender people spend an enormous amount of time planning their daily activities, so they are near restrooms accessible to them (Ball, 2015). Most chose this option as opposed to being ridiculed, harassed, or attacked when entering gender-specific facilities. This type of discrimination has thrust the issue into mainstream media (Ball, 2015). In most cases the basic human rights of

transgender individuals to use restrooms that coincide with their gender identity, or that are gender non-conforming, are not realized until new legislation is enacted.

Leading the charge for inclusion are the cities of Seattle, Berkeley, Santa Fe, Austin, and Philadelphia (Ball, 2015). In these cities laws have been passed that require businesses, restaurants, schools, and other establishments to redesign single-user bathrooms to make them accessible to all genders. Philadelphia has even created an online guide called Gotta Go to point out gender-neutral restrooms in the city. Refuge Restrooms, an application (app.), is also available to help transgender persons find accessible restrooms nationwide. Broadway theaters in New York City have even been sanctioned to renovate and/or reassign restrooms to comply with the New York City Human Rights Law, which demands that single-sex restrooms be available to transgender persons (Ball, 2015). In response to this law, Smartsign, based in Brooklyn, NY, has created and donated new toilet signs to many churches, hospitals, libraries, public school districts, food co-ops, the circus, and 128 colleges (Ball, 2015).

These new acts of legislation have caused many schools and universities to also participate in inclusion activities. Several public schools in San Francisco, CA, have made the change to all-gender restrooms for transgender children. Barnard College in New York City has assigned all of its restrooms to be “Gender Inclusive.” Multi-color toilets, signifying acceptance of the L.G.B.T. community, can be found on the campus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The University of Utah and Illinois State University have also joined the movement by creating all-gender restrooms on their campuses (Ball, 2015).

Summary

As more media attention is given to the issues that affect transgender individuals, society begins to see more inclusion. Restaurants, theaters, churches, businesses, schools, and universities are all among the entities making provisions for transgender persons to have safe, clean restrooms. While incidents of discrimination against this segment of the population still exist, studies are showing that society's unwillingness to accept those suffering with gender identity issues and/or dysphoria is fading ever so slowly. As we continue to make efforts toward understanding gender identity and gender dysphoria the world will better realize the need for more action.

Chapter III discusses the methods and procedures used to complete this research study. Information will be included about the population, instrument used, data collection, and analysis of the data.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The methods and procedures used in this research study are discussed in this chapter. Sub-sections detailing population, instrument design and use, methods of data collection, and statistical analysis are included.

Population

The population for this research study was limited to those students that attend courses at the main Old Dominion University campus location in Norfolk, Virginia. These are the students directly affected by the recent changes to restroom designations.

Instrument Design and Use

The instrument used in this study was a survey (Appendix A). This survey was designed to be delivered via the internet, with invitations to complete the survey being emailed to each student's @odu.edu email address. The survey was comprised of four sections. The first section included statements to gather the age, sex, gender identity, and academic class of the respondent. The second section included statements meant to determine the frequency in which a respondent utilized restroom facilities on the main campus of Old Dominion University. In sections one and two the respondent chose from a predetermined list of responses. Responses for the remaining two sections of the survey utilized a five point Likert-type scale. There were five available responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The third section of the survey included statements meant to determine how the respondent feels about the recent changes made to gender-specific restrooms in an effort to foster inclusion. The last section included statements meant to determine the respondent's attitudes toward the

transgender community in response to those recent restroom modifications. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey.

Methods of Data Collection

To collect data for this research study an introductory letter and a link to the survey, built with Google forms, was emailed to all ODU students identified as having taken courses at the main campus in Norfolk, VA. The introductory letter invited students to participate by explaining the goals for this research study. Each respondent was given the opportunity to remain anonymous, as no identifying information such as name or student identification numbers were requested. Email addresses were not connected to responses in the reporting of data. See Appendix B for a copy of the introductory letter. The survey was available a total of one week. This study was approved by the College of Education's Human Subjects Review Committee (Project 903302-1).

Statistical Analysis

The survey consisted of statements designed to determine the respondents' age, sex, gender identity, and academic class. The questions were answered by choosing predetermined responses. The survey was also designed to determine habits of restroom use, attitudes toward the recent changes to gender-specific restrooms, and attitudes toward the transgender community as a response to the recent restroom changes. These questions were answered by choosing the appropriate response from the five point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Data analysis of the first section of survey questions will reveal the demographical representation, age, sex, gender identity and academic class, as percentages of the respondents that participated. Data of

the second section is reported as percentages, means, and standard deviation, which are used to determine the respondents' current habits of restroom use. Attitudes toward restroom changes and toward inclusion are also determined from the percentages, means and standard deviations reported in the Findings.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methods and procedures used in the development of this research study. Details about those included in the population, and about the instrument construction and use were presented as well. The survey questions were designed to collect data to answer the research goals of this study. Surveys were made available via a link emailed to participants. Chapter IV will discuss the response rate, and present the findings of the survey.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The problem of this study was to determine the effect that recent changes to gender specific restrooms had on students' attitudes toward the transgender community at a public research university in the southeastern United States. To collect data, an electronic survey was used to poll the portion of the student body of Old Dominion University that take courses at the main campus. This chapter reports the results of the survey as percentages, means, and standard deviations, where applicable.

Response Rate

The survey was made available via email invitation to approximately 22,640 main campus students at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA. Potential respondents were given one full week from deployment to participate in the study. At the conclusion of the one week period 1,609 responses were recorded, for a response rate of 8%. According to the Survey Random Sample Calculator (Custom Insight, 2016), the number of respondents to this survey provides 99% confidence with a 3.1% error level.

Report of Survey Findings

The findings are reported in four groups. Each group corresponds with a research objective outlined in Chapter I.

Demographical Representation

The first four (4) survey questions were designed to answer RO₁: Identify the age, sex, gender identity, and academic class of students at the university. Results of survey question 1 are depicted in Figure 1 and show that the majority of respondents, 63%, were between the ages of 18 and 25.

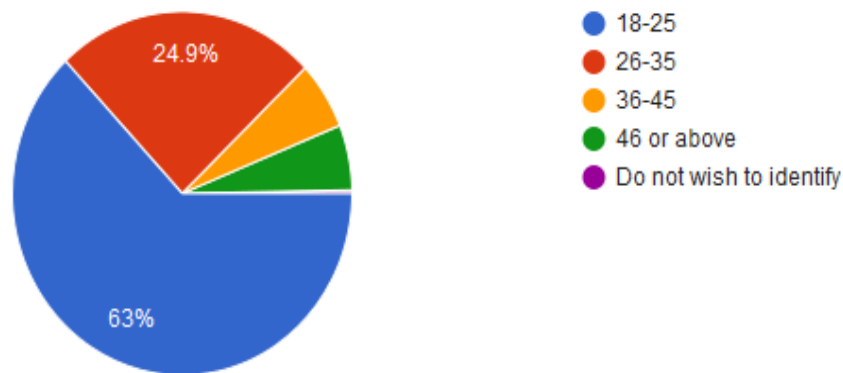


Figure 1. Percentages of respondents by age.

Survey question 2 asked respondents to identify their gender. The results show that 56.6% were females, 41.4% were males, 0.8% were transgender, and 1.2% did not wish to identify.

Survey question 3 assessed the academic classification of those that chose to participate. The results show that there were responses from all of the academic classes with most of the 1,609 respondents being undergraduate seniors. Figure 2 depicts this data.

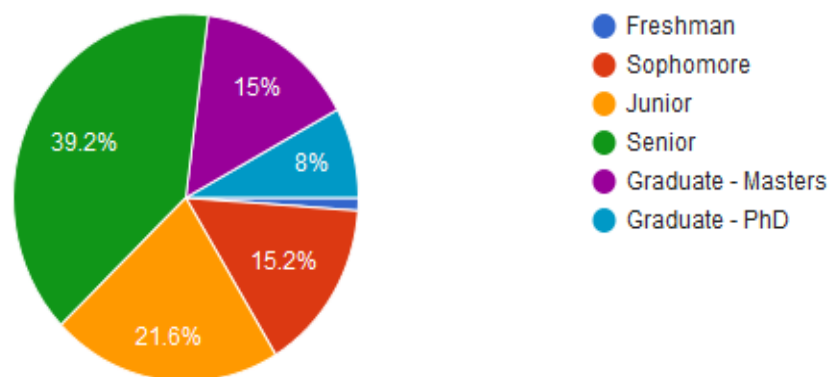


Figure 2. Percentages of academic class participants.

Survey question 4 asked respondents to identify their gender identity. The results show that 56.9% identify as female, 41% as male, 0.9% as other and 1.2% wished not to identify.

Current Habits of Use

The survey continues with the next five questions designed to answer RO₂: Identify students' current habits of restroom use while on campus. Results to question 5 indicated that 91.2% of students use the restrooms provided on campus. The mean for this question is 4.9, with a standard deviation of 0.52.

Responses to survey question 6 showed that 70.9% of respondents strongly agree to frequent use of the restrooms while on the Norfolk campus of Old Dominion University. Another 15.4% agree to frequent use of the restrooms, while 9.7% were neutral, 2.1% disagree and 2% disagree. The mean for this question is 4.51, with a standard deviation of 0.82.

In response to survey question 7, 88.2% of respondents strongly agreed that they use the restroom that corresponds with their gender only. At the opposite end of the spectrum, only 1.3% strongly disagreed to using the restrooms that correspond to their gender only. The mean for question 7 is 4.78, with a standard deviation of 0.69.

When asked, in survey question 8, if they had used gender-neutral restrooms while on campus most students, 54.6%, strongly disagreed and another 4.6% disagreed with that statement. A total of 32.8% agreed and strongly agreed to using gender-neutral restrooms and the remaining 8% were neutral. The calculated mean for question 8 is 2.69, with a standard deviation of 1.77.

Of the 1,609 respondents, 64% strongly disagreed with being uncomfortable when using restrooms on campus, as asked in survey question 9. Another 11.6% of respondents disagreed, 8.7% were neutral, 5% agreed with being uncomfortable and 10.6% strongly agreed. Responses to question 9 yield a mean of 1.87, with a standard deviation of 1.37.

Attitudes Toward Change

The next four questions of the survey were designed to answer RO₃: Determine students' attitudes toward recent changes from gender specific restrooms to gender-neutral restrooms. Survey question 10 stated *I am aware of the recent restroom reassignments*. Results to question 10 were that 39.3% strongly agreed, 9.9% agreed, 11.1% were neutral, 7% disagreed and 32.7% strongly disagreed to being aware of the recent restroom changes. Responses yield a calculate mean of 3.16, with a standard deviation of 1.74.

Survey question 11 read *There are appropriate restrooms for my gender-identity*. Most respondents, 84.9%, indicated strong agreement to this statement. While 6.8% agreed, 5.3% were neutral, 0.9% disagreed and 2.1% strongly disagreed to being offered appropriate restrooms for their gender-identity. The mean for question 11 is 4.71, with a standard deviation of 0.78.

Survey question 12 read *I disagree with the change to gender-neutral restrooms*. In strong disagreement to this statement were 42.1% of respondents. Disagreeing were 5.4%, while 14.8% were neutral, 5.4% agreed with the statement and 32.3% showed strong agreement. Figure 3 depicts these results. The mean for question 12 is calculated as 2.80, with a standard deviation of 1.74.

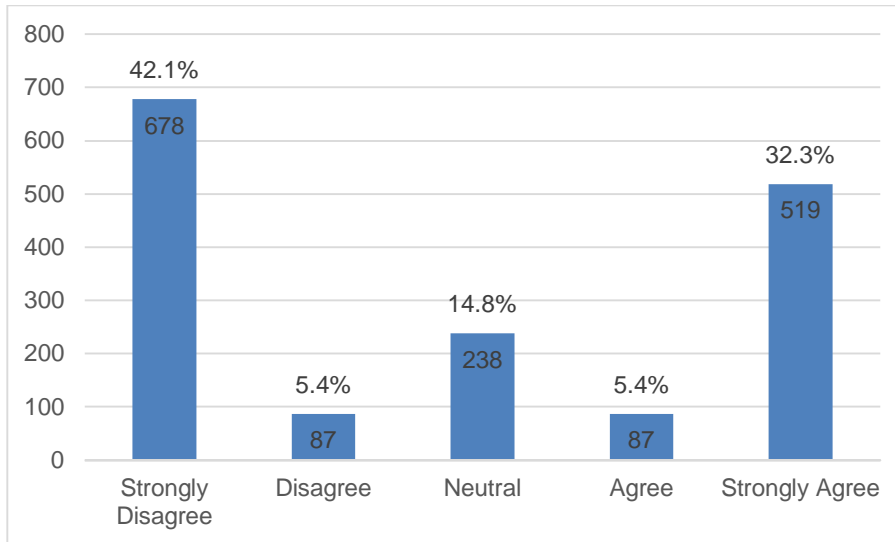


Figure 3. Disagreement to restroom changes.

Results to survey question 13 show that 40.7% of respondents strongly agreed and 8.4% agreed that gender-neutral restrooms create more availability to students. On the other side of the spectrum 28.5% strongly disagreed and 7.2% disagreed to that statement. Results are shown by Figure 4. Responses yield a mean of 3.28, with a standard deviation of 1.69.

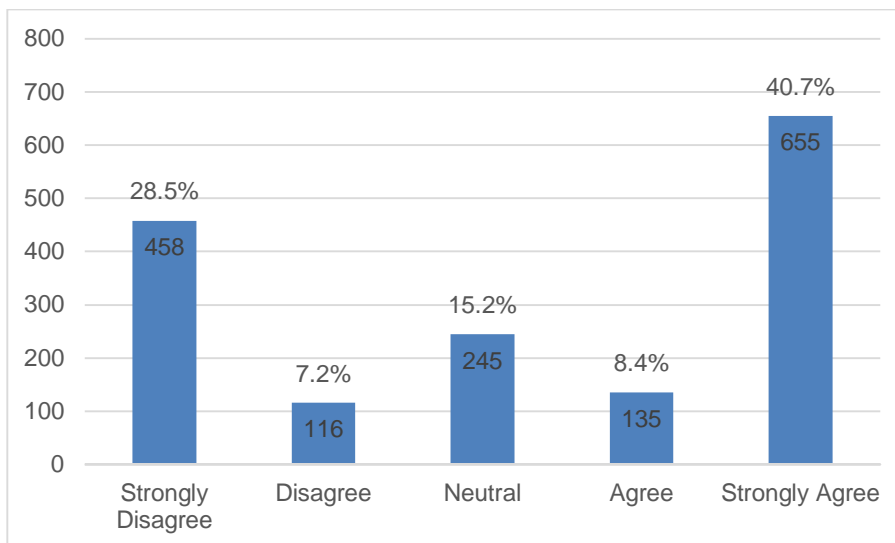


Figure 4. Gender-neutral restrooms and availability to students.

Attitudes Toward the Inclusion

The last four questions of the survey were designed to gauge students' attitudes toward inclusion when it concerns transgender individuals. They were written to answer RO₄: Determine students' attitudes toward the transgender community. Results to question 14, *ODU should take more actions to foster inclusion of the transgender community*, show that 32.6% strongly agreed. In agreement were 9.9% and neutral were 20% of respondents. Those disagreeing totaled 8.9% and in strong disagreement of more inclusion actions were 28.6% of the respondents. Responses to question 14 yield a mean of 3.09, with a standard deviation of 1.62.

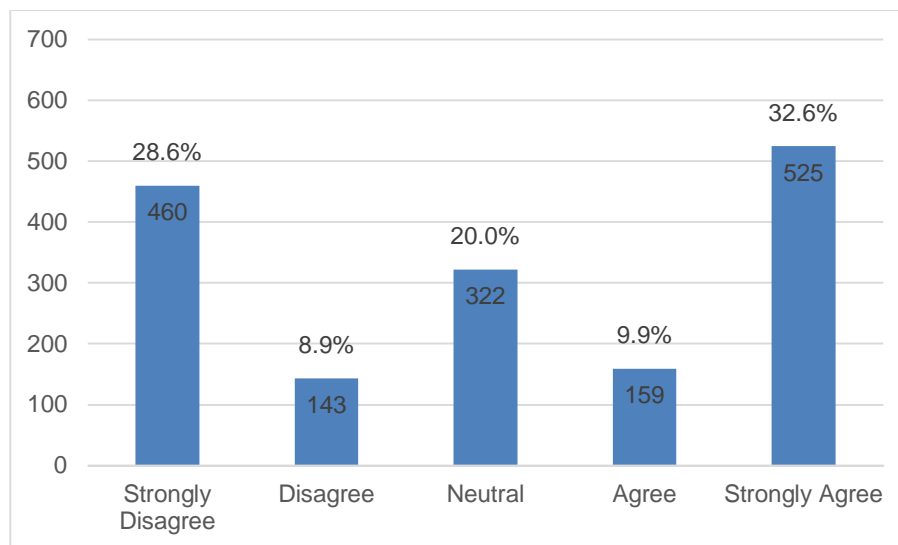


Figure 5. ODU should take more actions to foster inclusion of the transgender community.

Results to survey question 15 show that 55.4% of respondents strongly agreed they were aware of issues facing transgender individuals when it concerns restroom use. Another 20.6% agreed to their awareness. Strongly disagreeing were 6.7% and disagreeing were 3.7% while 13.5% remained neutral. The calculated mean for question 15 is 4.14, with a standard deviation of 1.91.

In response to survey question 16, *I am comfortable sharing a restroom with someone of the same gender-identity*, 62.2% strongly agreed and 10.1% agreed. Those strongly disagreeing totaled 13.5%, while 3.6% disagreed. The remaining 10.7% were neutral. The mean for this question is 4.03, and standard deviation is calculated at 1.44.

Lastly, the results to survey question 17, *I am comfortable sharing a restroom with someone NOT of the same gender as I*, show that 39.8% strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed with this statement. Another 32.6% strongly agreed and 9.4% agreed. The remaining 11.1% were neutral. The mean for this question is 2.88, and standard deviation is calculated at 1.74.

Summary

This chapter reported the findings of the study survey. This research study was designed to determine the effect recent changes to gender specific restrooms have on students' attitudes toward the transgender community. The results may help determine if further education and inclusion actions should be implemented by university communities. A population of 22,640 main campus students at Old Dominion University was given the opportunity to participate. Invitations were sent by email with an internet link to the electronic survey. A total of 1,690 students responded to the survey, for a response rate of 8%.

The results of this study were grouped into four categories. Each category and corresponding set of survey questions were designed with one of the four research objectives in mind. The first category, Demographical Representation, contained survey questions 1 through 4, and was designed to answer RO₁: Identify the age, sex, gender identity, and class of students at the university. The responses show that while there was

representation from each age group, gender, academic class and gender identity, the majority were senior class females between the ages of 18 and 25, who identified as female.

Survey questions 5 through 9 were grouped under Current Habits of Use. These questions were designed to answer RO₂: Identify students' current habits of restroom use while on campus. The responses show that the majority (91.2%) of respondents strongly agreed to using restrooms provided on campus. Of the respondents 70.9% use them frequently, and 88.2% strongly agreed to using restrooms that correspond to their gender only. Most, 54.6%, strongly disagreed to having used a gender-neutral restroom, but of the 1609 respondents, 64% strongly disagreed to being uncomfortable when using the restrooms on campus.

Attitudes Toward Change was the category containing survey questions 10 through 13. These survey questions addressed RO₃: Determine students' attitudes toward recent changes from gender specific restrooms to gender-neutral restrooms. Question 10 show that 39.3% strongly agreed, 9.9% agreed, 11.1% were neutral, 7% disagreed and 32.7% strongly disagreed to being aware of the changes. In strong agreement to there being appropriate restrooms for each gender identity were 84.9% of respondents. The majority of respondents, 42.1%, strongly disagreed to survey question 12: *I disagree with the change to gender-neutral restrooms*. While 32.3% were in strong agreement with the statement, results to survey question 13 show 40.7% strongly agreed, 8.4% agreed, 7.2% disagreed, and 28.5% strongly disagreed that gender-neutral restrooms create more availability for students.

The last section, Attitudes Toward Inclusion, contained four questions that were designed to address RO₄: Determine students' attitudes toward the transgender community. Of the respondents, 32.6% strongly agreed and 9.9% agreed that ODU should take more action to foster inclusion of the transgender community. To this question 28.6% strongly disagreed and 8.9% disagreed. Responses to survey question 15 show that the majority, 55.4% of respondents strongly agreed to being aware of the issues facing transgender individuals where it concerns restroom use. Of the respondents another 20.6% agreed, 13.5% were neutral, 3.7% disagreed and 13.5% strongly disagreed to being informed. When asked about sharing a restroom with someone of the same gender-identity, 62.2% strongly agreed and 10.1% of respondents agreed to being comfortable. Remaining neutral were 10.7% of the respondents, while 3.6% disagreed and 13.5% strongly disagreed. When asked about sharing a restroom with someone NOT of the same gender, 39.8% strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed to being comfortable. Remaining neutral were 11.1%, while 32.6% strongly agreed and 9.4% agreed to being comfortable.

In Chapter V, Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations, this research study is summarized. Conclusions will be drawn from the results outlined in Chapter IV and recommendations will be made based on these findings and conclusions.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study. Conclusions are drawn from the findings presented in the previous chapter. Finally, recommendations are made based upon the conclusions drawn from the research.

Summary

This study was conducted to determine the effect recent changes to gender specific restrooms had on students' attitudes toward the transgender community. The research objectives for the study were RO₁: Identify the age, sex, gender identity, and class of students at the university; RO₂: Identify students' current habits of restroom use while on campus; RO₃: Determine students' attitudes toward recent changes from gender specific restrooms to gender-neutral restrooms; RO₄: Determine students' attitudes toward the transgender community. This study was necessary to determine if further education and inclusion actions should be implemented by university communities.

The need for this study arose when Old Dominion University recently reassigned select restrooms on the Norfolk, Virginia campus to accommodate students who may have gender dysphoria and/or identify as transgender. Not only was this change implemented for inclusion, but to bring ODU within legal confines, as many states have passed new laws requiring such changes to restrooms. The study was limited to the current student population of Old Dominion University, who take courses on its main campus. These students are directly affected by the restroom reassignments.

An electronic survey was used to collect data for this study (see Appendix A). Invitations to complete the survey were emailed to 22,640 students' @odu.edu email

addresses. See Appendix B for a copy of the invitation. Participants were asked to respond to 17 survey statements. Each survey statement was designed to respond to one of the four research objectives. Most of the responses utilized a five point Likert-type scale, with available responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Participants chose from a range of predetermined responses for those statements that did not use Likert-type scale responses. This survey was made available for one full week.

Conclusions

This section draws conclusions regarding the research objectives based upon the data collected by the survey.

Research Objective 1

Identify the age, sex, gender identity, and class of students at the university. The first four statements of the survey were designed to address this objective. Results to statement 1 revealed that the majority of respondents (63%) were 18 to 25 years of age. Those in the 26 to 35 years of age range followed them at 24.9%. Results to question 2 showed that the majority of respondents were females (56.6%). Results to question 3 showed responses from every academic class, with seniors weighing in at 39.2%, juniors at 21.6%, and sophomores at 15.2% of respondents. And results to question four showed that most respondents (56.9%) identify as female. This indicates that young female students that have been on campus for a considerable amount of time responded more frequently to the invitation to complete this survey.

Research Objective 2

Identify students' current habits of restroom use while on campus. Results to the four questions in this section revealed that the majority of respondents (91.2%) have

visited restrooms while on campus. Of the 1609 respondents 1141 (70.9%) admitted to frequent use of the restrooms while on campus, and most (88.2%) said that they use the restroom that corresponds with their gender only. Only 26.8% have visited a gender-neutral restroom while on campus. Students seem to be using the restroom freely while on campus. Only 10.6% admitted to feeling uncomfortable while using the restrooms on campus. The majority tends to visit restrooms that are gender specific. Approximately one third of the group has used gender-neutral facilities.

Research Objective 3

Determine students' attitudes toward recent changes from gender specific restrooms to gender-neutral restrooms. Given that there is such a small margin between the 39.3% of respondents that strongly agreed, and the 32.7% that strongly disagreed to being aware of the changes, it is concluded that only half of the respondents have been informed of the changes. Available restroom facilities for each gender identity is not a problem, as 84.9% of respondents strongly agreed to having available facilities. There is a small margin between results of student responses to the statement *I disagree with the change to gender-neutral restrooms*. In strong agreement were 32.3% of respondents and in strong disagreement were 42.1%. This shows a split in the attitudes toward the changes with the small majority of respondents accepting the changes and feeling that gender-neutral restrooms create more availability for students.

Research Objective 4

RO₄ sought to determine students' attitudes toward the transgender community. From the results of the last four statements in the survey we learn that the majority of students (32.6%) felt strongly that ODU should take more action toward inclusion. An

alarming 20% of respondents replied neutral. This could be because of lack of knowledge about inclusion practices on campus, as almost half of the respondents strongly disagreed to being aware of the changes to restrooms on campus. More than half (55.4%) of respondents strongly agreed to being aware of the issues facing transgender individuals where it concerns restroom use. This would suggest that students are well informed and were equipped to complete a survey of this nature. Responses further showed that students have few reservations about using restrooms with those of the same gender identity, but would be uncomfortable using the restroom with someone of the opposite gender.

Recommendations

These recommendations include ideas for use of the study's findings, and guidance for future research in this area.

Implementation of findings

This study was completed in response to restroom reassignments to help determine if the university needs to implement further education and inclusion actions. The generalizability of this study is limited because of the sample size and limitation to Old Dominion University. The following recommendations are made based upon the results of the study:

- Given the mixed findings for RO₃ and RO₄, the university may want to provide more detailed information to students concerning changes to campus buildings when it concerns privacy and well-being. Students should also be given the opportunity to be informed of, understand, and voice opinions to proposed changes prior to the changes taking effect.

- The university should continue to foster environments that are inclusive of everyone by making resources and safe spaces available to those segments of the student body that may be discriminated against.

Future research

The following recommendations are made for conducting additional research on education and/or inclusion at universities:

- A study, much like this one, that provides respondents the opportunity to respond not only by fixed choices but with open responses. A replication study could also include monitoring of restrooms to get more accurate data reflecting the number of persons that use gender-neutral restrooms as oppose to gender specific restrooms.
- A study that compares the results found at several universities would provide more information about the level to which students feel they are well educated about changes to their campus environment as a result of the heightened awareness of transgender individuals in our society.

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APPENDIX A

RESTROOM REASSIGNMENT SURVEY

Restroom Reassignment Survey

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1csNjUQ8CyNZihvwq5nfXzw_PimC...**Restroom Reassignment Survey**

Purpose: A survey to determine students' attitude toward restroom reassignment at Old Dominion University.

* Required

1. Please choose your age range: *

Mark only one oval.

- 18-25
 26-35
 36-45
 46 or above
 Do not wish to identify

2. Please choose your gender: *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
 Female
 Transgender
 Do not wish to identify

3. Please choose your academic class: *

Mark only one oval.

- Freshman
 Sophomore
 Junior
 Senior
 Graduate - Masters
 Graduate - PhD

4. Please choose your gender identity: *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
 Female
 Other
 Do not wish to identify

5. I have used restrooms on campus. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

6. I frequently use the restroom while attending courses at ODU. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

7. I use the restroom that corresponds with my gender only. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

8. I have used a gender-neutral restroom on campus. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

9. I am uncomfortable when using restrooms on campus. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

10. I am aware of recent restroom reassignments. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

11. There are appropriate restrooms available for my gender-identity. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

12. I disagree with the change to gender-neutral restrooms.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

13. I believe gender-neutral restrooms create more availability to students.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

14. ODU should take more actions to foster inclusion of the transgender community.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

15. I am aware of the issues facing transgender individuals where it concerns restroom use.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

16. I am comfortable sharing a restroom with someone of the same gender-identity.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

17. I am comfortable sharing a restroom with someone NOT of the same gender as I.
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree



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Google Forms

APPENDIX B

EMAILED SURVEY LETTER OF INVITATION

Date

Good day Fellow Monarch,

You are among an elite group of students. You attend Old Dominion University, which is rich in heritage and tradition. As a fellow Monarch, it is our responsibility to make sure that ODU remains a rich environment, and an effective, safe place of learning for all. I am conducting a research study that seeks to determine how ODU can better serve its entire campus community. This study is designed to gauge your thoughts about the recent restroom reassignments on the main campus in an effort to foster inclusion for all. Your participation in the study will determine what, if any, further actions ODU administrators should take to foster an environment where everyone will be comfortable to be themselves. Participation is totally voluntary, and there are no direct benefits to your participation. You can access the survey by clicking this link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1csNjUQ8CyNZihvwq5nfXzw_PimCCXrwZwkvmdQCjQdo/viewform.

You will be asked a short series of questions that allow us to determine your feelings about the restroom reassignments. I ask that you read, then reflect on each statement, and provide the answer that best suits your experiences. It is required that you provide a response to every question. Once you finish the survey please make sure to hit the submit button at the bottom of the webpage. With minimal risk to participants in mind, I ensure that your responses will be kept confidential in an electronic password

protected file. Your email address will be deleted from our records at the conclusion of the study.

Participation in this study gives us, the students, a voice in shaping the community in which we learn. I hope that you will take the time to participate and help make ODU a better place for all.

If you have further questions/concerns, please feel free to contact me at kdugg004@odu.edu.

Sincerely,

Kelly L. Duggins
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MS Business Industry Training
Old Dominion University

John M. Ritz
Graduate Program Director,
STEM Education & Professional
Studies
Old Dominion University