

# Trans Workshop (2.24.08)

**Topic:** Information and teaching about transgender people, including an introduction to general terminology and a more personal look into the struggles and obstacles faced by the transgender community.

**Goal:** To give both introductory information and in-depth discussion about the trans community and trans issues, so that GSAs and other allied groups can learn to be more trans-inclusive.

**Materials:** the documentary TransGeneration (produced by the Sundance channel and available from their website or from the iNSIDEoUT library), Trans-terminology game board (more information on how to make this game in the instructions), puzzle with article on it (more information on how to make this activity in the instructions), paper, crayons or markers.

**Preparation for leaders:** Watch TransGeneration before the workshop to familiarize yourself with the material. Make sure you are familiar with transgender terminology and definitions of specific terms. Assemble the terminology game boards and puzzle. Read this workshop thoroughly!

## Activities:

### Introductions (5-10 minutes):

Go around in a circle with everyone in your group, asking everybody to introduce themselves. Information given might include: Name, age, school, grade, personal interests, &c. Make sure every person includes their preferred gender pronoun (PGP)! This is the pronoun that a person would prefer to be referred to when they are spoken about in the third person (e.g. he, she, sie, they, &c.). If you are unfamiliar with the different pronouns, Wikipedia's pronoun list is a great resource ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender\\_neutral\\_pronoun#Neologisms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_neutral_pronoun#Neologisms)).

### Movie (2 hours):

Watch the movie TransGeneration. At our workshop, we chose to watch episodes 1 and 8, which are each an hour long, since they introduced the characters and gave a good wrap-up at the end. However, you may choose to watch whichever episodes you find most relevant. Since this is a long activity, it might be good to break between episodes to let people eat, chat, or use the restroom.

### Icebreaker (10 minutes):

To let everyone loosen up and move around a bit after the movie, play the icebreaker 'Car Crash!'. This also helps participants get to know each other a little better. Car Crash is played by arranging chairs in a circle (or you can have everyone take off their shoes and use those as place-holders if you don't have chairs) with one less chair than you have people, like in musical chairs. One person stands in the middle and recites a fact about themselves, for example: "I am wearing blue jeans." Then everyone to whom that fact applies (e.g. everyone wearing blue jeans) must stand up and try to switch seats, while the person in the middle tries to find a seat. Whoever is left in the middle must then recite a new fact, and the cycle starts again. You should let this game go on for as long or short a time as you like; just make sure that everyone has the chance to move around a little.

### **TransGeneration discussion questions (30 minutes):**

Ask the people in your group the following questions about the movie TransGeneration. Try to stimulate some discussion about both the movie and about general trans issues.

1. Does anyone have any comments on the movie in general?
2. How do you perceive gender identity? How does this differ from how the people in the film perceive it? How does it differ from the way society in general perceives it?
3. How does one's gender identity affect one's life? What conflicts can you identify that stem from being transgendered in a world that is generally unaccepting of it?
4. How did the people in the film react to their own conflicts and struggles? Were there any reactions or struggles you were surprised by?
5. How were the institutions (especially the schools and families) unaccepting of trans issues? How can schools, GSAs, and LGBTQ organisations work to be more trans-inclusive (as opposed to trans-phobic, trans-ignorant, or trans-apatetic)?

### **Trans terminology game (20-25 minutes):**

**To make the game boards (this should be done by the workshop leader before the workshop):**

You will need two sheets of poster board, some coloured paper, markers, glue, velcro, and a general list of trans terminology with definitions.

Cut out 48 squares of paper. Make sure these squares are large enough to write legible definitions on, but small enough so that four of them will fit side-by-side on the short side of a piece of posterboard, and so six of them will fit on the long side. Divide the coloured squares of paper into four piles of 12. Pick out twelve trans-related vocabulary words you would want people to learn the definitions of (for example: transgender, transsexual, transvestite, drag queen, drag king, cross dresser, &c.). Write these words once each on 12 of the pieces of paper, then do it again with another stack of 12. Now take the definitions of each of the terms, and do the same thing with the definitions as you did with the terms on the remaining 24 squares. Glue the cards with the terms on them in two columns of six on each board, making sure to leave enough space between the columns to fit the definitions cards. Also make sure that each board has the full set of 12 terms! Then attach velcro to the back of the definition cards, and another piece of velcro to the spaces between the columns of terms. Each board should have four columns of six cards, arranged like so: terms (attached with glue), definitions (attached with velcro), terms (attached with glue), definitions (attached with velcro).

#### **To play the game:**

Split your group members into two teams. Remove all the velcro-attached definitions from the boards, mix them up, and put them in piles. Have each team line up.

Game rules:

Only one person can be at the board at a time.

Each person can either attach a definition to a term, or change a definition they think is wrong, but they cannot attach more than one card to the board per turn.

Once one person has added or changed their definition, the next person can go up to the board.

Team mates can help each other out, but only one person can be at the board at any one time.

The goal of the game is to match each definition to its correct term. The first team to do this wins!

After the game, discuss other terms that were not included in the game. For example: trans-man/woman, cis-man/woman, PGP, various acronyms, pronouns, &c. Are there any terms you think are missing? Are there any terms you think don't exist, but should? What about terms that aren't inclusive enough/applicable?

### **Gender-Neutral conversation (10 minutes):**

Have 2 members of the group have a conversation using no gender-specific pronouns. Why was this difficult? How can we work to exclude gender attribution from our outlooks?

### **Transgender Day of Remembrance Puzzle game (10-15 minutes):**

**To make the puzzle:** Print out the article about Rita Hester and Transgender Day of Remembrance from the gender.org website (<http://www.gender.org/remember/people/ritahester.html>). Glue this to a sheet of coloured paper, then cut wavy lines between the paragraphs, making the story into a 'puzzle'.

**During the workshop:** Hand out a piece of the 'puzzle' to each person. Have each person read their portion of the puzzle as it is being assembled.

### **Follow-up discussion questions:**

1. What are some primary struggles faced by the trans community?
2. Why do you think the concept of 'transgender' is more difficult to understand for many people than the concept of 'gay' or 'lesbian'?

### **Bonus colouring activity (20-25 minutes):**

Pass out crayons and paper to each person. Ask your group members to draw a picture of a perfectly gendered man or woman. If this concept is hard for them to understand, tell them, "If someone asked you to picture the manliest man or most feminine woman you could envision, what would that mean to you?" Ask everyone to explain their pictures. You might want to make lists on two sheets of paper, one for the 'masculine' traits and one for the 'feminine traits'. Then ask participants to discuss the repercussions of this kind of thinking. What traits cause you to identify a person as 'male' or 'female' on sight? How can we break down these assumptions? In what ways do participants think they differ from the list of traits associated with their stereotypical gender roles?