WEB CONFERENCE SUMMARY

We know that harmful gender norms are a risk factor for sexual and domestic violence. Yet, conversations typically center around the effects those norms have on cisgender and heterosexual men and women. As more inclusive language evolves to encompass the existence of diverse identities, how do we ensure that we're not working against our own prevention efforts by perpetuating narrow definitions of gender? This topic explores the ways that we, as practitioners and advocates, can transform our own thinking to ensure our organizational practices accurately reflect our communities and prime us for partnership and inclusive approaches for prevention practice.

PRACTITIONERS & ADVOCATES FEATURED

- **Lolan Buhain Sevilla,** Community Organizer
- **Wesley Thomas, MPH,** Program Coordinator, [Advocates for Youth](#)

KEY FINDINGS

A. **Binary[7] and heteronormative[8] understandings of gender and sexuality are pervasive in society. These can have harmful outcomes, excluding certain identities from communities.** Often societal expectations around appearance, behavior, and character traits are subject to a social system that requires individuals to identify as either a "woman" or "man," depending on sex assigned at birth (with intersex individuals often enduring non-consensual surgeries as children to make them fit into one side of the binary). People are not only restricted by a strict gender binary, but also a heteronormative system that normalizes behaviors and societal expectations tied to the presumption of heterosexuality and this gender binary.

These understandings of gender create rigid gender roles that limit expression and can contribute to violence. Bipolarization of gender excludes many, leaving no room for gender non-conforming, intersex and trans* identities. For example, most surveys and forms that ask about gender only list male or female as options. Bipolarization also stifles nuances to what it means to be a "man" or "woman" and reverts to limited ideas of sex and gender. In sexual and domestic violence prevention work, it is important not to default to heteronormative language (e.g. referring to survivors as 'she' and perpetrators as 'he'), make assumptions around

EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS & LINKAGES

non-traditional romantic partnerships or mis-gender clients, colleagues and community members.

B.   There is language we can use that encompasses real intersecting identities, such as "UndocuQueer." It is important to be aware of the limits of language and address the realities behind the language we use when talking about gender. At the same time, we must deepen our understanding of intersectional identities to better understand how systems of oppression impact people's multiple identities (e.g., race, immigration status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity). "I am UndocuQueer" is an art project with the Undocumented Queer Youth Collective and the Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project (QUIP) that acknowledges intersectionality and recognizes the complex livelihoods of those who are queer and undocumented in the migrant rights movement.

Here are some helpful terms:

•   Ally: An individual or organization that actively helps another with a specific issue by acting in opposition to oppression. Here, ally refers to one who openly supports and affirms the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ people.

•   Cisgender: Used to identify someone who is not transgender, and typically refers to someone whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

•   Gender expression: Any way in which an individual chooses to present or explain their gender. It can include one's sense of self and the image that one presents to the world.

•   Gender identity: The inner sense of one's own gender.

•   Queer: Used to identify someone who aligns

Source: http://juliosalgadoart.com/

"I am UndocuQueer" art project is an example of acknowledging intersectional identities. [Image of "I am UndocuQueer" poster with a person wearing stickers that read "undocumented and unafraid" and "Queer and unashamed."]

themselves with the trans, bisexual, lesbian, and gay community. A term which is often taken back in a positive way for self-identification, in contrast to its negative historical use to ridicule and label anyone not conforming to heterosexual norms and societal gender expectations. This has both personal identity and political connotations.

- Transgender: Used to identify people whose gender identity differs from the sex or gender they were assigned at birth, and whose gender expression differs from what is culturally expected of them.

C. **Through individual and organizational change, such as expanding language and curricula, practitioners can reflect gender and sexual diversity and include non-binary and non-heteronormative identities.** Rather than examining gender as on a continuum with men and women on opposite ends and everyone else in between – the Universe Model of Gender sees each person's gender as a star in the universe. Each person's gender is unique and distinct, but clustered into galaxies that honor the expansive range of iden-

tities that exist Advocates and practitioners should engage people with a variety of gender identities in their work and be more inclusive in examples they use in curriculums they implement — for example, by expanding language around gender and opting not to gender everyone around the binary. There are also action steps individuals can take to be a Trans Ally, such as being an active bystander, using the correct pronouns, and listening to trans voices.

To build organizational capacity, advocates can call for things like all-gender restrooms and more inclusive forms and surveys that ask, "what is your gender identity?" rather than asking people to choose male or female. Organizations can also engage in trainings on gender inclusivity, identity, and expression to better meet the needs of the communities they serve. For example, Gender Spectrum highlights strategies for building capacity around basic identity conversations, physical development, and language.

RESOURCES

- [Web Conference Link](#)
- [Web Conference Slides](#)
- [National Sexuality Education Standards](#)
- [Say What? How to Talk about Trans and Gender Non Conforming People, Youth and People in the Sex Trade Respectfully](#)
- [LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary](#)
- [Universe Model of Gender](#)
- http://www.culturestrike.org/
- http://www.micahbazant.com/
- http://www.rommytorrico.com/
- www.justseeds.org

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[7]Gender binary: A social system that requires everyone be raised as a boy or girl (dependent on what sex you are assigned at birth), which in turn forms the basis for how you are educated, what jobs you can do (or are expected to do), how you are expected to behave, what you are expected to wear, what your gender and gender presentation should be, and who you should be attracted to/love/marry, etc. (Source: GSA Network, Beyond the Binary)

[8]Heteronormative: A system that works to normalize behaviors and societal expectations that are tied to the presumption of heterosexuality and an adherence to a strict gender binary. (Source: Everyday Feminism)