



Transgender Mental Health: Co-Conspiratorship

Highlights & Key Concepts

Presenter: Ryan Kim Tiêu, Associate Clinical Social Worker – Former Executive and Mental Health Director at the Gender Health Center

Summary Ideas:

- Historical context of and evolution of transgender care, diagnosis, and pathology.
- Defining co-conspiratorship and the importance within the LGBTQ+ communities.
- Reviewing the effects of medical transition and social & legal transitions.
- Reviewing and defining the term gender and sexuality.

Questions & Responses:

Q1 *What is co-conspiratorship, and how is it different than allyship?*

A1 Allyship is generally defined as being supportive to one another or being supportive to a person or group. Co-conspiratorship is a newer term that takes allyship a few steps further, emphasizing action such as weaponizing your privileges to take on risks that people without those privileges cannot in order to enact change.

Q2 *Why do healthcare disparities exist for the transgender community? How has the healthcare system affected transgender people?*

A2 Transgender people experience a lot of discrimination and have fought to have their humanity recognized. Transgender people deserve equal rights and access to health like everyone else. The healthcare system and mental health system have a long history of pathologizing transgender people by making them feel they have an illness or disease. Although we are presently moving away from that, the foundations are still present in our systems.

Q3 *How do you see issues of racial justice and health inequities intersecting with people who identify as transgender?*

A3 Race and gender are social constructions that evolved together. “Gender” and “race” don’t exist in isolation from one another: they were co-developed as categories and remain co-evolving. Transgender people experience inequity. Transgender people of color (POC) especially experience compounding systems of oppression. When we are able to focus on Queer and Transgender POC, we are able to improve the system for everyone and raise the bar for all communities.

Q4 *What are some recommendations for working through internalized transphobia in therapy or counseling with transgender clients?*

A4 Positive questions about self-love and identity are great to ask clients, such as “What do you like about being transgender? What do you love about being transgender?” It is important to have transgender people connect with other transgender people; this can help transgender people find community and see what transgender success looks like.

Q5 *What are some best practices regarding gender categories on client intake forms or applications?*

A5 When it comes to filling out paperwork such as applications or forms, it may be best to leave some questions blank if the person’s preferred gender is not on the form. If you are working with youth, it is a good practice to sit with the youth and help guide them in filling out forms.

Additional Resources:

- [Transgender Mental Health - Resources and Education Handout](#)
- [Gender Minority Stress and Resilience Measure \(GMSR\)](#)
- [2015 United States Transgender Survey](#)
- [UCSF Gender Affirming Health Program](#)
- [Sample demographic form for clients to indicate gender identity](#)
- [Center of Excellence on LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity](#)
- [Inclusive Evidence-Based Practices in Gender Non-Binary Mental Health Services](#) from SMI Adviser
- [LGBTQIA+ Behavioral Health Resources](#) from Northwest MHTTC
- [Addressing Our Bias When Working with the LGBTQ+ Community \(Parts 1, 2, and 3\)](#) from National Hispanic and Latino MHTTC
- [Building Your Toolkit to Serve the LGBTQ Community](#)

Books & Videos

- *A Clinician's Guide to Gender-Affirming Care: Working with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Clients* by SC Chang, AA Singh, LM Dickey, and M Krishnan
- *My Gender Workbook* by K Bornstein (for adolescents exploring gender)
- *The Gender Identity Workbook* by AM Triska (for adolescents exploring gender)
- [Voices of Transgender Adolescents](#)
- [LGBTIQ People Talk About Their Experiences Accessing Healthcare](#)
- [Pose](#) (recommended by the speaker for its portrayal of transgender people by transgender actors)

Disclaimer: This training or product was prepared for the Northwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center under a cooperative agreement from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This work is supported by grant SM 081721 from the Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA. All material appearing in this presentation, except that taken directly from copyrighted sources, is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from SAMHSA or the authors. Citation of the source is appreciated. Do not reproduce or distribute this presentation for a fee without specific, written authorization from the Northwest MHTTC. At the time of this presentation, Miriam Delphin-Rittmon served as SAMHSA Assistant Secretary. The opinions expressed herein are the views of the speakers, and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), or SAMHSA. No official support or endorsement of DHHS, SAMHSA, for the opinions described in this presentation is intended or should be inferred.