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Culture Shock: A Study in Queer Exploration and Acceptance Through the College Transition for Binghamton University Students

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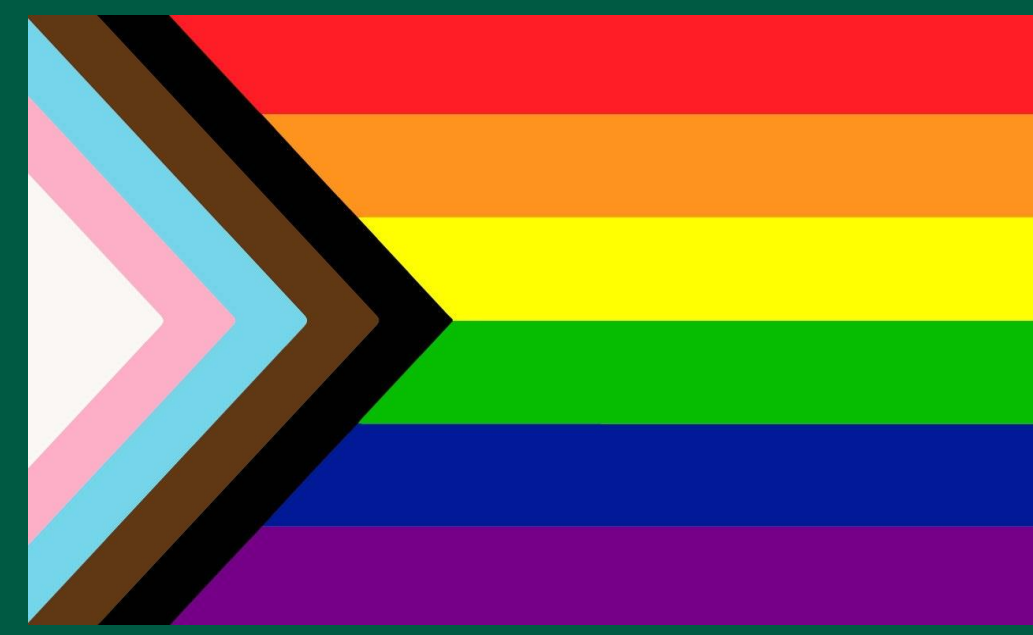
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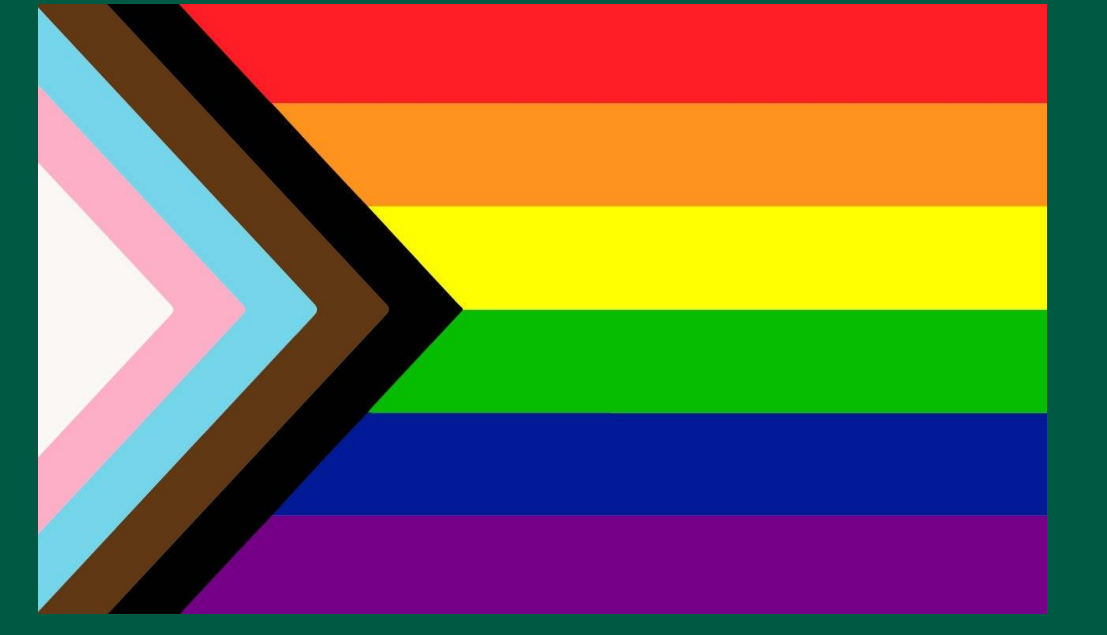
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Culture Shock: A Study in Queer Exploration and Acceptance Through the College Transition for Binghamton University Students



Researchers: Davin Baik & Connor Young



Evangelos Dousmanis / Binghamton University

What Our Study is About

How has the transition to college effected the way queer or questioning Binghamton University students express or explore their identity? We sought to answer that question through conducting a series of interviews with undergraduates where we asked them about their experience being queer or questioning at Binghamton University. One major part of the queer experience at Binghamton that we were able to best identify were the places that students go to find support and community at the college. We also found that the difference between Binghamton and a student's hometown high school as an environment has a great impact on how a student can express or explore queerness.



<https://www.binghamton.edu/centers/lgbtq/index.html>

New Friendships and Community Interaction

- Belongingness and social adjustment are huge factors that shape a student's first-year experience at college, especially for queer individuals (e.g., Sotardi et al. 2021)
- Our interviews showed that queer or questioning students tend to consider the friendships that they made to be a major help in finding a sense of belonging and reassurance that helps them feel more comfortable with their identity or their exploration of it
- Peer-led organizations like Transcend (a social group for trans and gender nonconforming students) give students a place to meet with other queer people on campus, fostering a greater sense of community

“...the thing that I feel the most... being part of this community on campus is *normal*. And for a person like me, *that's just a very good thing to feel.*”

-A.E.

How Campus Resources and Organizations Help

- Gender-Inclusive Housing in dorms and gender-neutral bathrooms in the buildings around a college campus (like what we have here at Binghamton) allow for gender expansive or otherwise queer students to feel comfortable both in public and in their living space (e.g., Seelman 2016)
- The Q-Center is a faculty, staff, and student-run LGBTQIA+ organization at Binghamton University. They provide resources for the queer community on (and off) campus and run frequent events like “Out-tober” and “Gender Bender Friday” that help to show students, especially newer ones, that they are not alone in their identity and that all identities and forms of gender expression deserve to be celebrated

Conclusions

While both interpersonal connections and organizations seemed to have a significant positive benefit for queer or questioning students, most interviewees considered friendships and interpersonal connections to be a more valuable resource for exploring and affirming their identity

According to most interviewees, Binghamton University is just as, if not more, accepting than their hometown. In some cases, Binghamton marked a significant step up in acceptance of queer identities that allowed them to explore or express their identity in ways they couldn't at home

Something we did not touch on in the interviews, but is still worth mentioning, is the tendency for queer individuals to wait until moving away for college to come out to their parents. Whether a student chooses to wait or not, the presence or absence of a parent's support can be a major factor in feeling accepted or comfortable in their identity (e.g., Price, Proseck 2020)



Interested in seeing some excerpts from our interview transcripts? Our Bibliography? Scan this!