Common effects of heterosexism and cissexism on students

• Poorer health outcomes, including mental health, for students who feel unsupported and especially students who are closeted.
  • Students who DO feel supported do NOT have the same poor health outcomes, and feeling supported obviates the minority-stress-induced achievement gap as well.
  • Targeted and culturally specific, or at least culturally sensitive, health services for students can help address health gaps.
• Some trans students restrict liquids in order to go through the whole day without using either a restroom that is not appropriate for their gender, or facing harassment or violence. This can lead to kidney damage.
  • Policies that support students’ ability to use the restrooms (and locker rooms) that THEY decide are appropriate helps students protect their health, especially when the policies are well known and trans people don’t deal with judgement or harassment.
  • The availability of gender-neutral restrooms, like “Family” restrooms or even single-stall restrooms, help nonbinary students and binary trans students with barriers to restroom use.
• Students may not seek out or use needed student services if they experience, or fear the experience of, heterosexism or cissexism.
• Students who faced harassment and other barriers to education, including violence, loss of familial support, and homelessness related to being LGBT, before college start further “behind” their peers, and/or are more likely to be nontraditionally aged students. LGBT people are also more likely to be teen parents than their straight/cis peers.
  • Nontraditional student services should be aware and welcoming to LGBT students in outreach and practice. Childcare is important.
  • It’s important to interrupt bias in the classroom, and identifiable friendly people at all areas of the university helps students seek out help if they need it.
• Students who don’t see LGBTQA people or issues reflected in their curricula either don’t learn to think of LGBTQA people at all, reinforcing the idea that straight and cis people matter more/are the only people
worth considering, or are robbed of access to their community’s histories, political strategies, and intellectual projects.

• Encountering LGBTQA academic content in a setting where students feel safe learning something new, and can process information on their own time, can help develop empathy and dispel fear, and help LGBTQA feel seen and valued.

• LGBTQA students who see LGBTQA curricula may feel more comfortable engaging fully with material, bringing their experiences and identities into the work, and trust professors.

• Minority stress—students who believe they’re being judged for being queer or trans, and students who hear messages that they are less worthy than straight or cis peers, are more anxious and preoccupied during tests and perform more poorly than their peers not dealing with minority stress. This is compounded for same gender loving and Two Spirit students of color managing their perceptions of their professors’ racism and heterosexism and cissexism.

• Students who believe they are not being judged for sexual orientation or gender, and students who believe that LGBTQA people can be and are successful in class (and who are encouraged), do not experience this achievement gap. Alternative assignments to tests, interrupting bias in the classroom with students, and allowing students to switch groups if their peers are bullying them, help with this as well.

• Some lose family support after coming out, and some lose their jobs (or have to leave their jobs after social stigma becomes intolerable), which is both a source of stress and another barrier to education.

• Policies that do not require students to sue their parents for financial support, full-ride scholarships, and small emergency grants can keep students from dropping out of school.

• Lack of support for LGBTQA scholars from peers and professors, and also for scholars working on LGBTQA issues, diminishes students learning opportunities and opportunities for academic achievement.

• Recognition of LGBTQA scholars and scholarship (like through a Lavender Graduation, but also in a daily way, through mentoring and advising) helps with this.