



INVISIBLE BODIES: EXAMINING THE INTERSECTIONS OF SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND RACE IN THE JUVENILE LEGAL SYSTEM

Alithia Zamantakis (Lindsay Gezinski)
Department of Social Work

This thesis examines the intersections of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and age as they relate to queer* and trans* youth in Utah who were engaged in the juvenile legal system. Scholars and activists, such as Michelle Alexander and Angela Y. Davis, have voiced the inequitable conditions through which people of color are funneled into the prison industrial complex. These conversations often lack an inclusion of how this intersects with queer* (queer* meaning an umbrella term for anyone who is not heterosexual, i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc.) and trans* (trans* meaning an umbrella term for anyone who does not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth, i.e. transgender, genderqueer, agender, etc.) identity. In order to understand these unique experiences, six interviews lasting between thirty to ninety minutes have been conducted with individuals who self-identify as queer* and/or trans* and were at one point involved in the juvenile legal system. By conducting a thematic analysis of these interviews, the investigators were able to document the concerns, needs, and desires of these individuals. The preliminary findings include the intersection of socioeconomic status as it relates to individuals' entrance into the system. These findings also include the documenting of a high incidence of unprotected sex due to policies that prevent contraception within facilities, as well as the importance of social support as it relates to rehabilitation into the community, prevention of incarceration, and development of identity. This is both a critique and a re-imagining of the legal system.

