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ABSTRACT

"JUST GO IN LOOKING GOOD": THE RESILIENCE, RESISTANCE, AND KINSHIP-BUILDING OF TRANS* COLLEGE STUDENTS

by Z Nicolazzo

Despite the growing emergence of literature and scholarship on trans* people, the lives of trans* college students have received little attention. Moreover, of the small amount of scholarship on trans* collegians, much of it is based in deficit models and rhetoric and is drawn from broader LGBTQ participant pools. This study addressed the aforementioned lacks by inquiring into the resilience and strategies trans* students used to successfully navigate their gender-dichotomous college environments.

Informed by critical and trans*-specific theoretical perspectives, I used a collaborative ethnographic methodology and a poststructural analytical framework to proliferate possible understandings for how trans* collegians remained resilient and successful in an environment that was not built with them in mind. During our 18 months of fieldwork together, a diverse group of nine trans* participants and I explored the way gender operated at City University (CU, a pseudonym). Due to the cultural manifestations of gender at CU, participants were influenced by the twin realities of what I refer to in this dissertation as the "gender binary discourse" and "compulsory heterogenderism" at CU. Participants and I also explored how they created, developed, and maintained connections with students, faculty, and staff of all genders, using these networks, which we called "kinship networks," to enhance their resilience and success, building our own kinship relationships in the process.

Participants and I had different experiences of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism. These differences were largely due to our various salient identities, which mediated our experiences of the culture of gender at CU. Rather than collapse these experiences to only those that were "most salient" across participants, this study shares various, sometimes conflicting, analyses of data. This strategy resonates with the diverse array of trans* genders as well as honors the experiences, viewpoints, and resilience of all participants.

This study has implications for how educators understand and work in collegiate environments steeped in binary understandings of gender. Participants and I also highlighted the importance of developing kinship networks that supersede the physical boundaries of a college campus. The study concludes with participants giving their own recommendations for faculty, staff, and students.

"JUST GO IN LOOKING GOOD": THE RESILIENCE, RESISTANCE, AND KINSHIP-BUILDING OF TRANS* COLLEGE STUDENTS

A DISSERTATION

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Table of Contents

List of Tables viii

List of Figures ix

Dedication x

Acknowledgements xi

Chapter One 1

Introduction 1

Beginning Again: A Self-Introduction 1

The Trouble with Language: Coming to Terms with Terms 2

Research Purpose, Research Questions, and Theoretical Perspective 6

Theoretical Perspective: Critical Trans Politics 8

Interlude: Introducing My Community 10

Chapter Two: Literature Review 12

Understanding Trans* 12

Trans* is not Synonymous with Transsexual 13

Trans* as a Constantly Growing Array of Identities, Expressions, and Embodiments 14

Communities of Difference 15

The Biological and Social Construction(s) of Gender 17

Gender as Social Construction 17

Judith Butler and gender performativity 18

The Biological Determination of Gender 20

The Danger of Dichotomies and the Turn Toward Biology as Diversity 21

Oppression, Intersectionality, and the Social Imperative to Cover 22

Covering 26

Situating Trans* Students on College and University Campuses 27

What We Know: The Marginalization of Trans* College Students 28
Resilience and Resiliency Theory 30
Literature Review in Summary 31
Interlude: Collaborative Methodology and Methods 33
Chapter Three: Study Design 35
Theoretical Perspective 35
Methodology: Critical Collaborative Ethnography 36
Addressing the Complexities of Power in the Research Process 37
Positionality 39
Methods 42
Participants 43
Data Collection 46
Participant observation 47
Document analysis 48
Ethnographic interviewing 49
Participant narrative summaries 49
Data Analysis 50
Writing Alongside Study Participants 53
Goodness Criteria 53
Interlude: Bruised by Data 57
Chapter Four: Findings 59
The Setting 60
The (D)evolution of Trans* Awareness at City 63
The Student Body 64
Study Participants 65

Collective Description: Participant's Trans* Identities as Relational 66
Individual Participant Descriptions 69
Adem 70
Brody Comeau (BC) 70
Derek 71
Jackson 72
Kade 72
Megan 73
Micah 73
Raegan Darling (Raegan) 74
Silvia 74
Arrivals and Departures 75
Arrival: Gender Binary Discourse 75
Departure: Race.. 80
Departure: Sexuality. 84
Departure: Gender expression and/or embodiment 86
Arrival: Compulsory Heterogenderism 88
Departure: Gender expression and/or embodiment. 92
Departure: Race. 95
Arrival: Resilience as a Verb 99
Departure: Disability. 105
Departure: Academic departments. 108
Departure: Living on campus 113
Arrival: The (Tiring) Labor of Practicing Trans* Genders 117
Departure: Education. 123

Departure: In/visibility. 125

Departure: Multiple forms of exhaustion. 129

Arrival: A Constellation of Kinship Networks 131

Departure: Virtual kinship. 137

Departure: Leaving campus for kinship. 141

Departure: Academic kinship. 143

Conclusion 146

Interlude: An Ending Full of Beginnings 148

Chapter Five: Discussion 150

Implications for Theory and Practice 150

Moving Beyond Best Practices 150

Recognizing How Gender Mediates Everyone's Lives 153

Embracing a "Trickle Up" Approach to Diversity and Inclusion Work 155

Reconceptualizing College Environments 159

A Call to Recommit to Intersectionality 162

The Development of an Epistemology of Love 164

The Possibilities and Challenges of Collaborative Methodologies 166

The Possibilities and Challenges of Resiliency Research 168

Study Boundaries & Transferability 169

Boundaries 169

Transferability 170

Epilogue: In Their Own Words 172

Appendices 174

Appendix A: Call for Participants 175

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire 178

Appendix C: Interview Protocol 180
Appendix D: Narrative Summary Prompts 182
References 183

List of Tables

Table 1: Participant Demographics.. 46

List of Figures

Figure A: Adem's Face 136

Dedication

For Chase, Dan, Rachel, and Susan, over and over again.

You have been my lighthouse when I have been lost, my push back when I have needed a challenge, and my family always.

Thank you for showing me what unconditional love feels like.

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It is perhaps overstated, but this process would literally not have occurred without the love, support, cajoling, laughter, and companionship of several communities of people who I have come to love and rely on, especially throughout the past four years. I recognize that naming people means I run the risk of overlooking the significant contributions of many. If I miss anyone, I am deeply sorry; there is no excuse I can offer for this oversight. However, I hope that if I miss folks, those individuals grant me the same grace they have previously offered me throughout our years of friendship.

First, I need to pay homage to those trans* people who came before me and made my practicing gender the way I do possible. Many of these individuals may not have gone to college, let alone attained a Ph.D., but without them, I would very likely not be where I am (or who I am) currently. Many of these people are trans* women of color, which also feels particularly important to highlight. People like the amazing Sylvia Rivera, Marsha "Pay It No Mind" Johnson, Miss Major, and Dorian Corey gave me ways of being and doing trans* that have been life-giving. To them I say thank you, and I hope I can contribute some small amount to the incredible legacy of trans* activism they sparked.

I am also indebted to the strong line of trans* scholars who have continued to emerge. During the writing of my dissertation, two seminal sources for trans* studies as a discipline appeared: *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, edited by Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura and *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, edited by Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah. These editors, and all contributors to these volumes, have provided endless leadership on making trans* scholarship a force with which to be reckoned in the academy and beyond. Also of incredible significance to my scholarly journey was the work of the critical legal scholar and founder of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, Dean Spade. His book, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, as well as his essays "Be Professional!," "Mutilating Gender," and "Dress to Kill, Fight to Win" were immensely meaningful to my work and thinking. They were also instrumental in my own reflections regarding my trans* identity, and I have continued to go back to them throughout the years. Having had the pleasure of meeting Dean once, I can say he is an incredibly kind, smart, and humble activist-scholar. If I ever have a shred of his intellect and force of presence at some point in my life, I will consider my career made.

Next, I need to acknowledge the one person for whom I came to Miami University: Elisa Abes. I remember the first time I met Elisa at a reception hosted by Miami University at an ACPA conference in Boston and thinking I wanted to work with her. I still need to pinch myself sometimes when realizing that dream came true. Elisa has been one of the more patient, understanding, and gracious scholars with whom I have had the pleasure to work alongside so closely. I often tell people she has been my champion through this process, which is a reflection of just how protected and encouraged I felt working with her. She also has an incredible intellect (much more than she would ever let on). I firmly believe many of the good insights that may come from my work are a result of her mentorship and encouragement for me to play, explore, and think deeper.

I have also had an amazing dissertation committee, including Stephen John Quaye, Madelyn Detloff, Susan Marine, Peter Magolda, and when Peter stepped off my committee in order to enjoy his retirement, Lisa Weems, who stepped in and added so much to my work. Whenever I think about my committee, the word "rockstars" comes to mind. I do not think I could put together a better group of people to help me get my work and thinking where it needed to be. All of these scholars have been so generous, caring, and thoughtful in their engagement, and I am so fortunate to have had the chance to work with and learn alongside them.

I am also deeply indebted to the many readers—formal and informal—who offered feedback, encouragement, and insights along the way. Lissa Stapleton, Rachel Wagner, Andrés Castro Samayoa, Emily Henderson, Alandis Johnson, Hailee Gibbons, Dan Tillapaugh, and my mother, Nancy Nicolazzo, were among the many people who gave their time and expertise to make my work better. Additionally, I have been so moved by the three people who agreed to be my peer debriefers. Kathleen Knight Abowitz, Chase Catalano, and Michael Denton are impressive scholars in their own right. Knowing they were there for me to bug, pick their brains, and read through all my drafts was a gift I will never forget.

Three classes of students were also instrumental in my thinking and research. Although they may not have known it at the time, the students in the spring and fall 2014 sections of EDL 654 at Miami University and the students in the spring 2014 section of WGSS 3020 at the University of Cincinnati indulged me when I discussed my research, often asking terrific questions that caused me to pause and rethink why I did something or how I thought about data. They never tired of hearing about my research, and I never tired of thinking through it with them.

Many thanks goes to them, especially for forcing me to think about how to discuss my work by using non-expert language as well as for shifting how I think, write, and talk about this research.

I also need to take a moment to thank the four people to whom I have dedicated this dissertation. Susan Marine, Chase Catalano, Dan Tillapaugh, and Rachel Wagner have meant more to me than almost anyone else in my life (I said almost, Mom). It was Chase who I first came out to as trans*, and even though I was in Arizona and he in New York, it felt like he reached through the phone and hugged me. He has not stopped hugging me since, and I know my life has been changed for the better because of him. Susan and I met five years ago and we have been sisters ever since. She has opened her life, her home, and her family to me. When my Grandmother died unexpectedly last year, it was her who I called and stayed with during my travels to the funeral. She is always one of my first calls in good times and bad, and I have been so fortunate to count her as a co-researcher, scholar, colleague, and friend. Rachel was the one person who kept pushing me to come to Ohio. Also, when I felt like I could not make it another year in Arizona, when I felt myself spiraling out of control, she called me back to community by reminding me I needed to "find my people." Rachel continues to show me what love looks like, feels like, and sounds like. Her smile brings me endless joy, and whenever we talk, it feels like no time has passed since we were last together. She is an incredibly rare and special person, and I am so glad I bumped into her along my life journey.

And then there is Dan. I am not really sure what to say about Dan other than I could not have done this without him. We have been a lot of things to each other in the more than a decade we have been in each others' lives, and although I am certain he knows this, I want to say as plainly and simply as possible: I love you, Dan. Your friendship, mentorship, and unconditional support truly knows no end. Even when I did not believe in myself, you never once doubted me. You embody what it means to be beautiful, and I am glad to have you in my life as one of my very best friends.

I am also indebted to my family, especially my mother. She has been a joy, inspiration, and has been alongside me no matter what throughout my life. Mom, I know I usually tell you not to cry, but now is a perfectly good time to sob. I did it, and it is in large part due to your belief, encouragement, and allowing me to go wherever I needed to in order to flourish. Thanks, too, for being so open to having a queer and trans* child. I know it has been a complex ride, but I would not want to do it with any other mom.

I am also convinced that I would not have been able to function nearly as well as I did over the past four years without the love and support of my dog, Mz. Grrtrude Anne. Her playfulness and her pulling me away from my work (even when I felt I did not want her to pull me away) helped me remain happy and healthy throughout my doctoral process. Plus, I am not sure, as a queer person, I could get away without recognizing the love of my dear pet in my acknowledgements section.

My brother Adam also deserves special mention. I know he has not always understood my choices, but he has never stopped encouraging and cheering me on from afar. Additionally, I want to honor my Grandmother, who passed away toward the end of my fieldwork. Her legacy is written into this dissertation through the notion of "arrivals and departures," which I developed while sitting in the airport waiting to head back for her funeral services. I miss her so very much, but like to think she lives on in these pages.

I am also fortunate to have an extended queer family who has meant a lot to me. In addition to the four people to whom I dedicate this dissertation, T.J. Jourian, Kara Devaney, Symone Simmons, finn schneider, Alandis Johnson, Erich Pitcher, Kris Renn, Michael Woodford, Karen Harper, Dafina-Lazarus Stewart, Robyn Bowers, Keri Crist-Wagner, Miss Jai, Amy Lind, T Vaught, Claire Robbins, Chris Linder, and Jessie Antonellis-John have been so amazing, loving, and encouraging. I also have been so moved by the members of the T*Circle with whom I have grown close. Your love and support has been particularly meaningful to me toward the end of my writing this dissertation; a time during which many in our community, especially Black trans* women, have continued to face heightened victimization and threat. Thank you so very much for your support. When I have felt my most alone and my most helpless, you have been there to let me cry, scream, and babble without interruption. You all make me feel safe.

And to the two very special members of my queer family, Michael Denton and Peter Thorsett, I do not know how you did it living with me for over a year, but I am so glad you did. Your partnership and support, especially through some very rough moments in my life, has provided me endless joy and allowed me to keep doing my work. It was Michael who comforted and looked after me when my grandmother passed away. The past year not having him close by has been tough, but I am happy we have built a friendship that has superseded time and space. Thanks must also go to Peter, who calmed me down during the more anxious moments of my

last year writing and job searching. To this day, there is no one with whom I would rather order pizza and watch reality television; thank you, Peter.

I also want to take a moment to highlight four people who have shown me the value and utter importance of allowing myself to feel. As I mentioned, the last year has been marked by stories of people of color, particularly Black people of all genders, being murdered at incredibly alarming rates. Often, these murders go underreported, are not discussed, and are committed by the very people who are charged to "protect and serve" our communities. To Stephen John Quaye, Dafina-Lazarus Stewart, Mahauganee D. Shaw, and Dominique C. Hill, thank you for providing the space for me to feel all the complex and intense emotions I continue to experience. Although I so wish it came about due to better, more humane circumstances, you have all been incredible role models for me as I look to enter the faculty ranks. I see you; I hear you; and I will continue to mobilize my anger for justice, equity, and access.

Lastly, I need to thank the participants alongside whom I worked for this study. More than anyone else, you have shown me a whole new world of possibilities and ways of thinking, being, and doing trans* than I ever imagined there being. You also made me believe I could be loved, was worth the time and investment of others, and reminded me that sometimes, just listening and being heard are the most treasured gifts we can give one another. I wish I could write your names here, but seeing as I cannot, please know my life and research has forever been changed by the nine of you. Thank you, Adem, BC, Derek, Jackson, Kade, Megan, Micah, Raegan, and Silvia. Over and over again, thank you.

"What do you do when you have no words? You cry, you get angry, you become numb. You allow yourself to feel. …Then, you find friends, allies, confidants who see you, and you string together a few utterances and keep moving. …And you join with others who can string together a few more words when no words are available."

Stephen John Quaye

"We have stories, we have words, and they matter. And when you disregard these stories and words, you contribute to creating a toxic environment for these students. And I, for one, will not support that."

Stephen John Quaye

Chapter One

Introduction

Every time I contemplated writing this introduction, I felt a sense of uneasiness. In truth, I was worried that starting where I needed to start for this research to make sense was too personal, too close to home, opened me up too much, or made me too vulnerable. But then I thought this was exactly where I needed to begin. If I was planning to research the lives and livelihood of trans* college students and their experiences navigating rigidly bigendered environments, then perhaps I needed to start by opening up. Perhaps I needed to start by talking about my evolving understanding of my gender identity and expression and how this influenced the way I made meaning of, navigated, and maintained a sense of resilience despite the prevalence of genderism in higher education (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009). Although this felt scary, and despite my attempts to talk myself out of doing so, I was reminded of the words of bell hooks (1994), who wrote, "Without our voices in written work and in oral presentations there will be no articulation of our concerns. … Withdrawal is not the answer" (p. 105).

Beginning Again: A Self-Introduction

Everyone has a relationship to one's own gender identity and expression. Personally, I did not allow myself to take my desires to transgress the gender binary seriously until recently. Looking back, there are specific moments and events of my life that stand out as times when I felt confused, frustrated, and lost. These feelings likely emanated from my inability to make sense of the complex incongruity between what I was feeling and how I was living. I rationalized away my desires by telling myself I had an intellectual interest in gender, particularly in non-dominant modes and expressions of masculinity. I share this not to suggest I was experiencing a version of false consciousness, but to suggest I had learned throughout my childhood and early adult life to not even entertain the myriad possibilities that existed for my own gender identity, expression, and identification.

The recognition and acceptance of my trans* identity coincided nicely with my moving across the country to begin my doctoral work. Although I had applied to and interviewed at Miami University before I "came out," my new environment, job, and coursework allowed me a new start with my new unfolding identity as trans*. I am not implying everything was (or still is) wonderful. There were, are, and will continue to be trying days. I am continually misgendered—I prefer the pronouns ze, pronounced *zee*, and hir, pronounced *here*, rather than

he/she, his/her, or they/their—and have had my gender identity explained away in terms of my sexual orientation (e.g., instead of people recognizing I am trans*, some people see me as an effeminate gay man). My collegiate environment also provides constant reminders of the impossibility of my identity. These reminders, which come in the form of sex-segregated bathrooms, administrative forms with checkboxes for M and F, fraternities and sororities, and the language of university policies support an environment where only two sexes (i.e., male and female) and two genders (i.e., masculine and feminine) are deemed socially legible and appropriate. Furthermore, some people—both cisgender and trans*—read my lack of interest in participating in any form of medical interventions to modify my body morphology as somehow meaning I am not "trans* enough."

Notwithstanding the bad days and awkward moments, I have never felt happier, healthier, or more comfortable with who and where I am in my journey as a trans* person. Yes, there are challenges, but I have become more interested in how trans* college students cultivate and maintain a sense of resilience in the face of institutional genderism. I certainly have ideas about how I have been able to do this as a 30-something emerging scholar. However, because I did not identify as trans* until well after my undergraduate experience, I have an increasing curiosity about how trans* college students develop their own sense of resilience. In this way, my own gender-based journey has led to my dissertation study: an ethnographic study exploring the resilience of trans* college students.

The Trouble with Language: Coming to Terms with Terms

Although the term transgender has been in use less than 40 years (Ekins & King, 2006), many scholars and researchers have documented the numerous definitions regarding trans* identities (e.g., Currah, 2006; Hill, 2003; Stryker, 2008) along with the various tensions (e.g., Valentine, 2007), debates (e.g., Halberstam, 1998; Hale, 1998; Rubin, 2006), and conflations (e.g., Renn, 2010) that arise due to these definitions. Even my use of the asterisk, which symbolizes the multitude of identities and identity categories used to refer to those of us who are trans* (Tompkins, 2014), represents a relatively new turn in how the community is understood and represented textually. This rocky terminological terrain mirrors Sedgwick's (2008) provocative statement, "The relations implicit in *identifying with* are, as psychoanalysis suggests, in themselves quite sufficiently fraught with intensities of incorporation, diminishment, inflation, threat, loss, reparation, and disavowal" (p. 61, italics in original). Language and categories are

insufficient to capture the fluid nature of the various permutations of gender identities, expressions, and embodiments that show up in various spatial and temporal locations. However, despite their seeming inadequacy, such categories are, in many ways, necessary in their ability to make individuals and populations culturally intelligible (Butler, 2006) as well as to help individuals find communities of support. As Davis (2008) suggested:

> Controversy over academic representations of transgender lives centers on and reiterates false dichotomies of stable/fluid, hegemonic/subversive, and oppression/empowerment. … Neither the emphasis on stability nor the postmodern framing of fluidity can completely account for the ongoing, everyday practices and experiences of (trans) gender identity construction. Attempts to create and present a coherent self may coexist with diverse ways of exhibiting and explaining this self. (p. 99)

Valentine (2007) extended this point, describing that while language and categorization are both necessary, they are far from neutral. If the language and the categories of identification one uses are never neutral, then one must recognize overarching matrices of power and privilege as influencing the ways in which individuals and groups invoke such discourse and categorization. I agree with both Davis' (2008) and Valentine's (2007) commentary and can mark points in my history when the language and categories I have used to self-identify have been seen—and not seen—as intelligible based on both my privileged and subordinated identities.

Despite the contingency of language, and the inadequacy of categories, both are still necessary to promote an understanding of trans* students. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will use the term "trans*" when discussing this student population. As previously mentioned, the use of the asterisk is a relatively new development, one that has yet to receive widespread acceptance and use, especially in educational research. The term refers to the way computer search functions allow one to search for any suffix attached to the prefix trans- (e.g., transgender, transsexual, trans* woman). As such, it provides a textual representation of the malleability of gender identities, expressions, embodiments, and performances. The term is consistent with Stryker's (2008) definition of "transgender," which she stated, "Refer[s] to people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross over (*trans-*) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender" (p. 1, italics in original). The asterisk also provides a visual disruption for readers, severing the conflation often made by educational researchers between the words "transgender" and "transsexual," a term signifying,

"A person who identifies as the opposite *sex* of that which he or she was assigned at birth" (Teich, 2012, p. 136, italics in original). The asterisk also serves as a reminder that categories, while seemingly expressing a solitary identity, may well be sites of fractious, contested, and varied meanings.

Regardless of my preference and use of the word trans*, I allowed research participants to define and use their own terms regarding their gender identity. I honored their choices by using their terms and definitions when referring to them throughout my dissertation. I also did not change the quotations of those scholars I cite throughout my dissertation. If an author's use of terminology is unclear in relation to my own, I clarified this discrepancy in the text. However, I did not modify their original text as a way to honor their voice, perspective, and the context from which they wrote.

The next definition I will address is the word "cisgender," which Schilt and Westbrook (2009) explained as, "[Replacing] the terms 'nontransgender' or 'bio man/bio woman' to refer to individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity" (p. 461). By defining cisgender as replacing the term nontransgender, Schilt and Westbook (2009) suggested one should not understand there to be a cisgender/trans* binary in relation to gender identity; a point other scholars have also been keen to emphasize (e.g, Enke, 2012). In fact, some people may identify as cisgender, but have an outward gender expression others may read as transgressing gender boundaries. The rise in popularity of metrosexuals, or males who pay particular attention to their appearance, provides an example of such slipperiness of the cisgender/trans* binary. A metrosexual male may be cisgender, despite his expressing traits culturally marked as feminine (e.g., well-groomed hair and nails, wearing feminine clothing such as scarves and deep v-neck t-shirts). Thus, the indicators of metrosexuality may be some of the same deployed by trans* people to express their gender.

Here, it is clear the line separating the cisgender metrosexual from the trans* person who transgresses gender boundaries by employing some of the same outward cues, is, at best, thin. In fact, one may argue the main thing separating these two people is the way they self-identify their gender. Although metrosexual males enjoy a certain amount of cultural cachet in the United States, trans* people—and specifically trans* people of color—still face widespread social ostracism (Grant et al., 2011). So, while a cisgender metrosexual may express himself similarly to a trans* individual, the social response, including the policing and enforcement of gender

norms, may affect these two people differently, with the individual who self-identifies as trans* being punished for hir gender identity and expression (Dusenbery, 2013). Even if the social response is the same, and the cisgender metrosexual faces social stigma, this will have been due to systemic genderism and the perception that he is transgressing the gender binary in a way that he should not be.

This extended example shows the complexity of individual understandings of gender identity, expression, embodiment, and experiences of genderism for both cisgender and trans* people. Although one could argue metrosexual males are more often mistaken as gay rather than trans*, the fact remains that the negative reaction to these individuals is rooted in their *gender transgression*, or their presenting their gender in a way that is insufficiently masculine. Namaste (2006) referred to this as "genderbashing," suggesting that although individuals may be ostracized due to the perception of their being gay or lesbian, such ostracism—and the potential violence that accompanies such ostracism—is mainly a result of their transgressing gendered social norms. Therefore, this is a salient example to uncover the pervasiveness of genderism—and homophobia—as well as its potential effects on all people who transgress the gender binary, regardless of if one self-identifies as trans*. This example also underscores that one cannot view the terms cisgender and trans* as always wholly dichotomous.

A final definition that requires immediate attention is the term "genderism" (e.g., Bilodeau, 2005, 2009; Browne, 2004; Wilchins, 2002b). For the purposes of my study, I use Hill's (2003) definition, which describes genderism as a "system of beliefs that reinforces a negative evaluation based on gender nonconformity … [and] the cultural notion that gender is an important basis by which to judge people and that nonbinary genders are anomalies" (p. 119). This definition provides a framework through which one can understand gender-based oppression to operate on a social level. Hill's definition can also encompass the more narrow definitions focusing on interpersonal instances of gender-based oppression (e.g., Browne, 2004) as well as those definitions that locate genderism in certain places, like Bilodeau's (2005, 2009) exploration of genderism in higher education. Although there are other terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers, I defined them as they appear throughout my dissertation. I have

made this choice in order to focus one's attention on my study rather than creating a glossary of trans*-related terms.[1]

Research Purpose, Research Questions, and Theoretical Perspective

In the forward to *The Transgender Studies Reader*, Stephen Whittle (2006) wrote, "Communities of transgender and transsexual people … offer new challenges to politics, government, and law, and new opportunities to broaden the horizons of everyone who has a trans person as their neighbor, coworker, friend, partner, parent, or child" (p. xi). Trans* identities have entered the mainstream in many ways (Whittle, 2006). Although there is a growing body of positive research and media depictions (e.g., Halberstam, 2005), there is also a long litany of negative portrayals that depict trans* people as either tragic or deceptive individuals (Bornstein, 1994; Halberstam, 2005; Mackenzie, 1994; Serano, 2007; Sloop, 2000), which contributes to the ongoing marginalization of the trans* community.

The marginalization of trans* individuals has been widely demonstrated in the research literature (e.g., Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Bornstein, 1994; Catalano, McCarthy, & Shlasko, 2007; Catalano & Shlasko, 2013; Grant et al., 2011; MacKenzie, 1994; Marine, 2011b), including the literature specifically related to trans* college students (e.g., Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Seelman et al., 2012). The genderism trans* students face has a negative impact on their health (Mulé et al., 2009), safety (Grant et al., 2011; Rankin et al., 2010), personal well-being (Haper & Schneider, 2003), experience of their campus culture and environments (Bilodeau, 2009), and persistence in higher education (Rankin et al., 2010). Despite this growing body of literature, a distinct lack of studies focusing on trans* student resilience signals a gap in the literature (Marine, 2011b). Therefore, not only are trans* students vastly misunderstood, but a majority of the research on this population focuses on the myriad forms of risk, violence, and harassment they face. The deficit language and models constructed from this research has the effect of

[1]Some readers may notice I have not defined "sex" or "gender." Although this may seem like an oversight, I have made an intentional choice *not* to define these terms. As I discuss further in my literature review, Butler (2006) suggested that providing normative definitions for such terms delimits the possibilities for how one understands oneself and others. As such, she intimated providing definitions may "determine in advance what will qualify as the 'human' and the 'livable'" (p. xxiii). Because I am interested in proliferating possibilities for who trans* students are, how trans* students come to know themselves, and how others come to understand trans* students, I am choosing to not define "sex" and "gender." I have also taken care to create as broad a definition as possible for the term "trans*," making sure to discuss it in terms of proliferating possibilities for who we are as trans* people rather than setting boundaries on who is or is not trans*.

portraying trans* students as problems for whom administrators must make accommodations. It also promotes the notion that trans* students need protection rather than focusing on trans* student resilience, or the positive coping strategies and approaches trans* students call upon as they successfully navigate the gendered college context in which they find themselves.

As Marine (2011b) succinctly stated, "Few or no examples of transgender [college] students' resiliency are noted" (p. 73) throughout the research literature. Therefore, the purpose of the following study was to explore how trans* college students navigated their gendered cultural context, paying particular attention to how these narratives may (or may not) have aligned with notions of resilience. Focusing on resilience recognized the agency of trans* college students as well as provided a platform from which they could "talk back" to the genderism in their environment. In doing so, trans* students were no longer situated as problems for whom one must make accommodations. Instead, the college environment was problematized while, at the same time, trans* students were understood as resilient individuals capable of developing supportive communities and navigating the gendered cultural context of college life.

Whether or not trans* students may immediately self-identify as resilient, their persistence and ability to thrive on their own terms in highly gender dichotomous collegiate environments suggests otherwise. Adam (1978) stated, "Dominated peoples develop a range of behavior patterns to cope with their recalcitrant social environment" (p. 1). It was these resilience-based attitudes, behaviors, and strategies trans* students possess and call upon that I sought to explore and uncover as a result of my ethnographic study, *not* whether trans* students used this particular—and highly subjective—term to define themselves. Therefore, I did not require participants to self-identify as resilient in order to participate in this study, choosing instead to focus on the actions and behaviors they employed during their college experience. Moreover, in keeping with my theoretical perspective and methodology, both of which will be explained in depth later, I worked alongside participants to explore what "resilience" meant, how one formed and maintained a sense of resilience, and how being resilient—or one's lack of resilience—influenced their collegiate experience.

The five questions guiding the present research study were:

1. What are the cultural gender norms confronting trans* college students?
2. How are these cultural gender norms manifested and enforced?

3. How do trans* college students confront, navigate, resist, and/or push back against these cultural gender norms?
4. What role do coalitions among students, faculty, and staff on campus play in the formation and/or maintenance of individual and/or group-based trans* resiliency, if any?
5. How do participants define and make sense of resiliency as they navigate their gendered cultural context?

Theoretical Perspective: Critical Trans Politics

Analyzing trans* students by drawing attention to our inability/lack of desire/opposition to simply "fit in" to a dichotomously gendered society has become something of a habit through literature and practice. In response to this, I employed the theoretical perspective of Critical Trans Politics (Spade, 2011) to frame the present ethnographic study. As Spade (2011) articulated, Critical Trans Politics (CTP) calls for trans* people to be active in the process of cultural (trans)formation on a daily basis rather than waiting, hoping that gender-based equity will evolve over time. Aligned with other forms of critical theory, CTP focuses on the damaging cultural forms of oppression—in this case, genderism—and how they create, maintain, and further inequity. CTP takes issue with the environments and cultures from which genderism emanates and, through political engagement and coalition building, provides a way for trans* people to push back against the genderism they confront.

CTP resists the continued promotion of the idea that trans* people must fit into normative gender categories (e.g., masculine/feminine). Furthermore, this theoretical perspective interrupts the logic that accommodations for trans* people (e.g., a college designating a certain residence hall for gender inclusive housing options) are an adequate means of overcoming the social inequity of genderism. Instead, Spade (2011) suggested building broad-based coalitions between marginalized communities as a way to promote inclusive cultural shifts. For example, rather than requiring trans* students to "out" themselves in attempting to access safe and comfortable housing—which is often limited based on the (non-)existence of "gender neutral"[2] housing options—colleges should seriously reconsider the illogical assumptions upon which sex and

[2]I use this term to reflect its common use in higher education practice (e.g., many collegiate residential life offices have or are developing "gender neutral" housing policies) rather than my own personal preference. Instead of suggesting one seeks to neutralize gender, I prefer to think and talk about proliferating understandings of the always increasing diversity of gender identities and expressions present on college campuses.

gender are used as categories of difference when making housing assignments (Nicolazzo & Marine, in review). Such a change would allow multiple marginalized communities (e.g., feminists seeking to reframe discourses of safety in addressing sexual assault; people with disabilities who have personal assistants who have a different sex and/or gender and are therefore unable to access certain areas in one's living environment) to work alongside trans* individuals in shifting campus culture. In this sense, "gender neutral" policies are, therefore, necessary, but insufficient in providing the type of inclusion sought through CTP. In other words, shifting culture via CTP would mean recognizing such policies as a starting place rather than an end unto themselves.

Through its insistence on coalition building, CTP as a theoretical perspective places extreme value in polyvocality, or the recognition of many voices at the same time. Rather than aggregating perspectives under the guise of one unified voice—a critique used to articulate the continued exclusion of trans* perspectives in what Spade (2008) called the "LGBfakeT movement"—CTP provides a platform from which trans* college students are encouraged to "talk back" to gendered attitudes, practices, policies, and institutions, situating their voices as central in the discourse. Thus, trans* students are recognized for their agency and are viewed as authorities in shaping their own lives and environments. Critical Trans Politics (Spade, 2011) is an appropriate theoretical perspective for this specific research study because of its promotion of increased agency and the push for a broad-based coalitional movement recognizing the human dignity of trans* college students.

Interlude: Introducing My Community

I will always remember the exact moment I realized I was trans. I was watching television on a weekend and kept seeing a Tide commercial. In the commercial, a young girl was bouncing around her room, trying on all different kinds of tights, jumping on her bed, and looking in the mirror. The commercial insisted that to keep this girl's tights clean, bright, and vibrant, one should use Tide. After seeing this commercial repeatedly, I said to myself, "gosh – I wish I had those tights." And then the panic set in.*

"Shit," I thought. "I wish I had those tights."

What did this mean for me? Who was I? Who could I turn to? I felt alone, lost, and confused. I also began to worry for my safety. Living in Arizona at a time when xenophobic laws targeting oppressed groups were increasingly being passed, I immediately felt a need to keep whatever feelings I was having undercover. I started pacing in my studio apartment, realizing the next four months—the time I had left in Arizona before I moved—would be tough. I had already found and developed a queer community of support, but how would these people—the queer students I advised, my loving friends and colleagues, and my extended national network of friends and family—take the news that I was trans?*

I began searching the Internet trying to find out about myself, but soon became exasperated. I had no idea where to start. Did I want to transition bio-medically? Did I want to wear women's clothing? Did I want to come out to my family? What if friends decided they no longer wanted to be close with me? And where was I meant to start learning more about this new revelation? I began to get frustrated that I had more questions than answers; I needed someone to guide me, something to root me in place, but I had neither. Quickly, I sent off a cryptic email to a trans friend of mine asking if we could talk soon.*

When I spoke to my trans friend on the phone the next week, I was still nervous. I was sitting outside of a coffee shop in the Arizona sun, cigarette in hand, peeking around to see if anyone was in earshot and would find me out. I spoke in hushed terms and remember trying hard not to say something that would reveal my ignorance. The truth was I felt guilty and ashamed of the fear and anxiety I had around my new identity, and was worried this shame would come across as transphobic. My friend was gracious and kind; reminding me I should be*

patient with myself. He shared with me that when he first realized he was trans, he started reading trans* memoirs. Because he knew I learned best by reading, he suggested I do the same. He told me a few titles to check out, and over the next couple weeks, I devoured these books and more. Without a community of people in my local area with whom to explore my new identity, I created a community through literature. These people, who I became closer to with every turn of the page, helped me feel more comfortable and get to know myself better. They helped me feel less alone, and although they may never know it, I am forever indebted to their words. Their writing increased my ability to be resilient in a geographic area, and at a time in my life, when I was struggling to understand and feel good about myself, to say nothing of remaining safe and comfortable in a place that had grown increasingly hostile to marginalized populations. These people—writers, theorists, poets, intellectuals, and trans* memoirists—continue to be a community for me. In a sense, I have been reading myself into existence—the more I read, the better I understand myself. This literature review represents my community, the people who helped me—and many other trans* people—learn about and feel comfortable with ourselves. Welcome to my community; welcome to my people.*

Chapter Two: Literature Review

There is little doubt the investigation and detailing of trans* individuals, embodiments, and communities has a robust legacy through various disciplines, including psychiatry, medicine, law, English, and philosophy, among others. In fact, the study of gender variance has even generated its own field of study: Transgender Studies (Stryker & Whittle, 2006). Regardless of the venue, the wealth of theoretical and research-based interdisciplinary scholarship suggests two themes. First, gender as an organizing principle around which trans* individuals make meaning of their lives is not a passing fancy. As articulated by Jennifer Finney Boylan (2003), "Gender is many things, but one thing it is surely not is a *hobby*. Being [trans*] is not something you do because it's clever or postmodern, or because you're a deluded, deranged narcissist" (p. 22, italics in original). Second, while many have written about trans* identities from a variety of perspectives and located their work in multiple academic disciplines, there remains a dearth of such research emanating from the field of higher education. Furthermore, most of the scant amount of research on trans* college students within higher education and student affairs is non-empirical and centers on a deficiency discourse that situates trans* individuals as victims of violence, harm, harassment, and ostracism.

With this in mind, the following review of literature moves from exploring the myriad—and contested—understandings of the term "trans*" to situating trans* students on college and university campuses. From here, I unpack the common nodes of discussion in relation to trans* college students, those being marginalization and accommodation. Finally, I review the existing literature on resiliency, suggesting this as a framework one can apply to understanding how trans* students navigate their rigidly gender dichotomous environments. As I plan to show throughout the literature review, the current gap in the literature surrounding trans* resiliency in gendered collegiate environments informs the necessity of the present study.

Understanding Trans*

> We differ in terms of political praxis: some feel we should assimilate into the mainstream culture; others celebrate the creation of separate "queer" space. We're variously gay, post-gay, queer, bi-queer, butch, femme, top, bottom, feminist, masculinist, intersexual, genderfuckers, trans, pre-op, post-op, confused, certain, ambivalent, and generally awed by the diversity of our ranks. We are obviously not all the same (nor have we ever been),

and we do not all configure our desire in the same way. (Alexander & Yescavage, 2003, p. 3)

Despite the use of the word as an identifier to organize around a seemingly unified identity, there has been fierce discussion and debate over who counts as trans*. From the trans/butch border wars[3] (Halberstam, 1998; Hale, 1998; Rubin, 2006) to the tensions inherent in the asymmetrical use of the term amongst activists and those they define as trans* (Valentine, 2007), the category of trans* remains an open question. In defining the term "transgender," Stryker (2008) stated it represented "any and all kinds of variation from gender norms and expectations" (p. 19), therefore serving as an umbrella term for a plethora of gender identities and expressions. Stryker's definition of transgender mirrors closely my use of the word trans*. This definition illuminates three important points, namely: "trans*" is not synonymous with the term "transsexual"; the term captures a wide array of identities, expressions, and embodiments that continues to grow and expand; and while there is a common thread among trans* individuals in their transgression from gender norms and expectations, there are many differences among us as well. I turn now to an exploration of each of these insights.

Trans* is not Synonymous with Transsexual

Stryker (2008) defined transsexuals as "people who have a strong desire to change their sexual morphology in order to live entirely as permanent, full-time members of the [sex] other than the one they were assigned at birth" (p. 18). Given Stryker's (2008) aforementioned definition of transgender—as representing "any and all variation from gender norms and expectations" (p. 19)—it is clear the terms "trans*" and "transsexual" are not synonymous. However, there remains a widespread conflation of the two terms through writing and conversation.

Although there is a need to increase the visibility of all trans* individuals, there have been calls for additional research and writing regarding trans* individuals who are not seeking to change their body morphology (Bilodeau, 2005; Califia, 2003; Feinberg, 1998; Mattilda, 2006b).

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[3]The term "trans/butch border wars" refers to the ongoing theoretical contestation between trans* people, specifically those who identify as female-to-male (FTM) transsexuals and transfeminine individuals, and butch lesbians about what it means to be female, feminine, and/or gender transgressive. Questions regarding when, if ever, one stops being a "woman" and/or "lesbian," starts being a "man," what these terms even signify, why some FTM transsexuals were ostracized from the butch community with which they identify/identified, and the overarching effects of these identity and body politics serve as primary flashpoints in these conversations.

Although the exact reasons are unclear, there are several possible rationales as to why most of the scant amounts of writing and research regarding trans* individuals center on transsexuals who have undergone gender confirmation surgery, some—but not all—of whom identify as post-op, or post-operative, transsexuals. Some have posited it relates to a societal adherence to the gender binary, or the cultural assumption that there are two gender categories (i.e., man and woman) into which individuals must fit (Serano, 2007). Therefore, discussion of those who transgress gender only becomes culturally intelligible (Butler, 2006) insofar as they transition from one identifiable gender (e.g., woman) to the other (e.g., man). Others have even suggested the foregrounding of transsexual narratives could be due to their economic privilege (S. Marine, personal communication, 17 October 2012). Gender confirmation surgeries are costly, and although some health insurance companies have revised their policies to cover transition-related expenses (Pérez-Peña, 2013; Transgender Law Center, 2014), they remain uncovered by most health insurance plans (Spade, 2011). This means only those with significant financial capital can have these surgeries performed. Of course, not all transsexuals have undergone—or may ever undergo—gender confirmation surgery (e.g., individuals who identify as pre-op, or pre-operative, transsexuals; transsexuals who are unable, for one reason or another, to access gender confirmation surgeries). However, the intersection of which gendered bodies become culturally intelligible with one's ability to pay for gender confirmation surgeries provides possible insight into the heightened level of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2002) needed to have one's identity socially recognized and, thus, why post-op transsexual narratives are foregrounded largely through current literature.

The privileging of transsexual narratives also unintentionally occludes the wide variety of gender transgression among transgender individuals, including individuals with various other salient social identities (e.g., race, class, dis/ability, age). To counteract this phenomenon, Califia (2003) stated, "The best we can do is speak our own truth, make it safe for others to speak theirs, and respect our differences" (p. 2). It is with this in mind that I conducted the present study; so we as trans* people can speak our truth, make it safer for others to speak theirs, and work toward having our differences recognized and respected.

Trans* as a Constantly Growing Array of Identities, Expressions, and Embodiments

Stryker's (2008) aforementioned definition portrays trans* as a category with porous and constantly expanding boundaries (Davis, 2008). Rather than being restrictive, the definition

allows individuals to self-identify as trans* regardless of their desire to bio-medically transition sex (i.e., self-identify as transsexual), to be recognized as the opposite sex and/or gender (i.e., to "pass"), or to be seen as existing within the false constructs of the gender binary. Here, one is able to tease apart the differences between gender identity, gender expression, and one's embodiment of hir gender. Gender identity relates to one's internal understanding of hir own gender. Conversely, gender expression relates to one's outward expression of gender through cultural forms (Kuh & Whitt, 1988) such as language, gestures, and artifacts (e.g., clothing, makeup). Furthermore, one's embodiment of hir gender relates to the ways in which one may choose to morph hir bodily representation—either through bio-medical modes or otherwise—to mirror hir internal gender identity and/or outward gender expression (e.g., someone born female taking testosterone injections to bio-medically transition to a male sex; a drag king wearing a prosthetic penis to appear more masculine). Therefore, being trans* may have little to do with others being able to define an individual as such. For example, someone assigned male at birth who chooses not to wear clothing typically ascribed as feminine (e.g., a dress) out of fear of harm may still identify as trans*, regardless of the individual's lack of outward feminine expression and hir not being read as trans* by others.

Disentangling the ways individuals may identify, express, and embody their gender—a fluid construct itself—proliferates one's understanding of the plethora of combinations and permutations of what it means to be trans*. Moreover, it becomes clear that one's trans* identity, expression, and/or embodiment is not something one can ascribe to someone else; instead, the identity must be personally assumed by the individual hirself. For example, while a female may dress in a way that could be read as masculine (e.g., jeans, no makeup), that individual may not identify as trans*. The potential rupture between how others read an individual and how that individual chooses to self-identify foregrounds the reality that, despite the overarching similarity of transgressing gender norms and expectations, there are many differences in self-identification amongst trans* individuals. However, this realization exposes the precariousness with which one can understand notions of community and alliances made among trans* people.

Communities of Difference

Writing about the blending of critical and postmodern theory to address the problems facing higher education in the twenty-first century, Tierney (1993) sought to "offer a definition of community based on the concept of *difference*, rather than similarity" (p. 3, italics in original).

Trans* people challenge the notion of that which is assumed to be absolute (e.g., the gender binary). Furthermore, there are trans* individuals who actively seek—and readily embrace—cultural *un*intelligibility. An example of this would be individuals who identify, express, and/or embody genderfuck (Alexander & Yescavage, 2003; André & Chang, 2006), which consists of a gender performance that is intentionally contradictory and confounding to others.

A microcosm of the various identities, expressions, and embodiments captured within the constantly expanding notion of trans*, genderfuck elucidates how "the idea of difference becomes an organizing principle" (Tierney, 1993, p. 5) when attempting to understand the possibilities—and tensions—of a cultural analysis of trans* individuals. Despite the overarching similarity of defying gender norms and expressions, trans* people remain highly varied and distinct from one another. There is widespread intragroup divisiveness about the identification, expression, and embodiment of trans* subjectivities (Califia, 2003; Sedgwick, 2008). Because trans* individuals represent a wide array of identities, expressions, and embodiments, we are always already both in and out of community with one another based on the multiple and shifting ways we identify our trans*ness.

Rather than needing a definitive definition for the term trans*, I contend it is at its most powerful when held as an open question pointing toward the instability of the assumed gender binary, recognizing trans* people as comprising a community of difference. However, although this analysis tends to the proliferation of different trans* identities, expressions, and embodiments, it does little to address how connections are made between and among trans* individuals and others with whom they interact. If trans* people do not make up a coherent community, but develop relationships with others, how should one refer to these groupings? There is likely no definitive answer to this question. However, for the purposes of this study, I refer to the relationships made between and among trans* students, faculty, and staff on college campuses as kinship networks.

Although the notion of kinship is often mistaken for being synonymous with "family of origin," several scholars have written on queer kinship (e.g., Rubin, 2011; Weston, 1991), thereby extending visions of kinship to include trans* and queer populations. Furthermore, the notion of kinship, and specifically kinship-building, provides a way of understanding the relationships trans* students make within a resiliency framework. Put another way, the notion of kinship offers a way to view relationships as meaningful to how trans* students develop

individual and group-based coping strategies and behavioral skill sets in order to confront genderism. This term also meshes with my theoretical perspective of Critical Trans Politics, as Spade (2011) uses it to describe the ways people with various identities can best come together to resist oppression.

I now move from conversations about group identity (e.g., communities of difference, kinship, and kinship building) to that of individual identity. Specifically, the following section of my literature review addresses the literature regarding what causes, if any, there may be as a foundation for the development of one's trans* identity. Although many have framed the argument mostly through a nature/nurture binary, I elucidate in the following section how these seemingly opposite positions may also converge.

The Biological and Social Construction(s) of Gender

Stephen Whittle (2006) stated, "This … is perhaps the most controversial issue in sex and gender theory. Is the basis of gender identity essential and biologically based or is it socially constructed" (p. xiii)? This question has prompted a wealth of studies from a wide range of disciplines (Serano, 2007), illuminates deep personal insecurities (e.g., Ablow, 2011), and exposes rifts within the trans* community regardless of the answer. However, Whittle's assessment of the debate between the biological essentialism and social construction of gender presents the issue as a false dichotomy (Lane, 2009). In addition to these two perspectives, a third exists, which posits biology as diversity. Lane (2009) posited, "While arguments for a biological role in gender development need careful scrutiny, they should not be rejected out of hand, especially when they stress nonlinearity, contingency, self-organization, open-endedness, and becoming" (p. 137). I explore these three perspectives—gender as social construction, gender as biological determinism, and biology as diversity—and the influential role they have in shaping the ways trans* individuals understand their gender identities.

Gender as Social Construction

Riki Wilchins (2002b) stated:

> The way in which we think—and especially the way we "think the body"—has too often become an off-the-rack, one-size-fits-all approach. One that favors that which is universal, known, stable, and similar. But my experience of my body and my place in the world is exactly the opposite: mobile, private, small, often unique, and usually unknown. (p. 38)

Wilchins hinted at the tension between the biological determinism and social construction of gender, landing squarely on the side of social construction. Wilchins was not alone in her thinking (Barnett & Rivers, 2004; Gagné, Tewksbury, & McGaughey, 1997). This idea also has traction on college campuses. Students who have had previous exposure to discussions on gender often make the statement that "gender is a social construct." These students say this as if it were axiomatic, with little regard to any alternative understanding of gender. Furthermore, the idea that gender is something one *does* rather than something one *is* (Wilchins, 2002a) seems to be an appealing idea for many trans* college students, granting them agency over their own gender identity and expression.

Judith Butler and gender performativity. The work of Judith Butler (2006) has become foundational to how scholars understand gender. Although it shares a faint similarity with the notion of gender as a social construction based on her refusal that gender is a biological truism, Butler's conception of performativity offers a vastly different approach to the concept of gender as an organizing principle. For Butler, Wilchins' (2002b) claim regarding the malleability of gender is somewhat limited. In elucidating this point, Butler (2006) wrote, "If gender is [socially] constructed, could it be constructed differently, or does its constructedness imply some form of social determinism, foreclosing the possibility of agency and transformation" (pp. 10-11)? Thus, the notion of gender as socially constructed implies there is a society acting upon one's gender rather than, as Wilchins suggested, one having full autonomy and agency to determine their own gender presentation. The dynamic interplay between self and society as it relates to gender brings Butler to her notion of "gender performativity," or the idea that how one expresses one's gender is both mediated by their social milieu and also produces effects in the world, to which others respond.

Gender performativity suggests a link between one's understanding of hir gender identity—an internal self-conception—and the perceptions others may have based on hir gender expression—an outward articulation that may or may not align with one's own internal gendered self-concept. Butler (2006) stated, "Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of 'men' will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that 'women' will interpret only females" (p. 9). Here, Butler uncouples the perceived unity of sex as an embodied biological construct and gender as a social concept. She went further, suggesting this splitting of sex and gender surfaced further questions, including what the very notion of what

"sex" is. In addressing this question, Butler (2006) suggested that throughout history, hegemonic discourse within various social institutions (e.g., psychiatry, medicine, law, education) formed the concept of "sex" as biological, natural, and binary as a way to regulate individuals' lives; a notion Foucault (1990) termed "bio-power." Extending this line of thought, Butler (2006) claimed, "Perhaps, this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, *perhaps it was always already gender*, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" (pp. 9-10, emphasis added). Thus, the need to define "sex" and "gender" is unnecessary, as Butler suggested there may not be a distinction between the terms in the first place.

Beyond calling into question the supposed naturalization of "sex" as a category and intimating "sex" may have always already been "gender," Butler's theoretical work is also important due to her focus on increasing what she discussed as the livability of lives for people who exist on the margins of sexuality and gender. Butler's decision not to define "sex" and "gender" is not just a rhetorical or linguistic trick; instead, she makes this choice as a way to resist the ways in which definitions normalize, and thereby delimit, possibilities for how one understands hir gender. A main thrust of Butler's work is the expansion of what bodies and genders are deemed culturally intelligible, thereby increasing the chance for those with marginalized genders (e.g., trans* people) to lead livable lives. As such, her efforts to denaturalize "sex" and not provide definitions of "sex" or "gender" "was done from a desire to live, to make life possible, and to rethink the possible as such" (Butler, 2006, p. xxi). Far from suggesting the performance of gender is a form of false consciousness (Rubin, 2003), Butler (2006) articulated, "The giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary" (p. 187). Once the rigid schemas linking certain sexed bodies (e.g., female) to certain gendered performances (e.g., feminine) is exposed as flawed, as Butler (2006) indicated, the number of legible gender possibilities increases. Thus, trans* subjects move from being culturally *un*intelligible to being culturally intelligible.

Due to the confluence between the impetus for both Butler's and my work (e.g., the expansion of understandings about people on the margins of gender and, thus, the promotion of livable lives), I have also decided not to define "sex" and "gender" for fear it may delimit

possibilities of how trans* students are understood. However, contrary to Butler's theorizing on gender performativity and Wilchins (2002a, 2002b) argument regarding gender as a social construction, there is another group of theorists who claim that gender (and sex) are innate, immutable, and biologically determined realities. Thus, I now explore scholarship suggesting gender is biologically determined. I follow this with an alternative way to understand biological literature regarding gender, namely the notion of biology as diversity.

The Biological Determination of Gender

A leading scholar in the fields of biology and gender studies, Fausto-Sterling (1985) claimed the debate between the biological versus social determinism of gender was far from resolved. In fact, Fausto-Sterling (1985) stated, "Children show a great deal of (albeit not total) flexibility in the development of a gender self-concept" (p. 89). However, if this is the case, why are some individuals consumed with the notion of gender being completely biologically determined?

Barnett and Rivers (2004) chronicled the litany of books published in the early 2000s dedicated to the notion that men and women represented biologically discrete gendered categories, were, by nature, distinct, and, therefore, had certain predilections and predispositions. Addressing the arguments for the biological foundations of gender, Lane (2009) discussed a recent line of thinking in neurology that attempts to connect phantom limbs with transsexuals' image of their bodies. Lane (2009) detailed research indicating that "trans women have a much lower rate of phantom penis after [gender confirmation surgery, or GCS]—30%—than men who have had their penis amputated due to cancer 60%" (pp. 149-150). Additionally, Lane (2009) stated, "An astonishing 60% of trans men report a phantom penis prior to [GCS] and only 10% report a phantom breast after [GCS] compared with 30% of women after mastectomy for breast cancer" (p. 150). This finding, Lane claimed, has been used as evidence of a biological link between one's material sexed body and gender identity.

Despite the attempts to claim gender as natural and innate through fields such as biology and psychology, some (e.g., Fausto-Sterling, 2000) cite methodological errors that render the findings inaccurate. Lane (2009) also criticized some scientific and psychiatric disciplines for forwarding overly simplistic and reductionist views of gender as an innate human trait. However, what is one to make of gender if it is neither a social construction nor a biologically determined trait?

The Danger of Dichotomies and the Turn Toward Biology as Diversity

While people make strong claims in support of both sides of the nature/nurture divide—and even stake their identities on them, as can be seen from the recent "Born This Way" campaign taken up by Lady Gaga (Born This Way Foundation, n.d.; Halberstam, 2012)—such either/or thinking can be dangerous. For example, while some find comfort in the biological claim that trans* people are "born this way," it opens the door to the notions of reparative hormone treatments and eugenics-based "solutions," as has happened recently in terms of the possible "treatments" for "girl[s] born with what looks like a small penis" (Schaffer, 2012). Additionally, for those who agree gender is purely a social construction, conversion therapy is still socially present (Steigerwald & Janson, 2003). First championed by Nicolosi (1997), who designed the intervention as "an attempt to reorient gay, lesbian, and bisexual clients to heterosexuality" (Steigerwald & Janson, 2003, p. 56), some have recently alluded to or written about the need for similar psychiatric interventions for people who transgress gender norms (e.g., Ablow, 2011). Seen in conjunction with the continued pathologizing of trans* identities (Mackenzie, 1994) throughout the medical and psychiatric communities, some claim these identities can—and should—be treated as a way of "curing" trans* people.

Sedgwick (2008) highlighted the dangers implicit on either side of the nature/nurture argument, along with the clear lack of epistemological grounding to support fully one stance over the other. In her introduction to *Epistemology of the Closet*, she stated, "Every step of this constructivist nature/culture argument holds danger" (p. 42). If trans* people are "born this way," then the institutions of medicine and psychiatry (among others) can help steer parents in the direction of only giving birth to "normal" (i.e., cisgender) children. However, if trans* identities are entirely socially constructed, then it is merely a "choice," which assumes someone could just as easily not make that choice and lead a happy, healthy, and fulfilling life as a "normal" (i.e., cisgender) person. Thus, one arrives at an existential dilemma. If trans* people are neither "born this way" nor have a gender that is socially constructed, then how can one understand trans* identities? Butler (2004) suggested this paradox reflects the "limits of the discourse of intelligibility" (p. 74) rather than casting trans* people as problematic in their inability and/or lack of desire to fit neatly into either framework. However, if trans* identities point to the limits of discourse—a point that is further crystallized by my previous commentary on the slipperiness of trans* identities, categorizations, and definitions—then how can

researchers represent the breadth of such claims without falling into the pitfalls and half-truths that go along with the myopia of an either/or perspective?

Lane (2009) posited another way out of the difficulties of such an either/or perspective, suggesting there are "approaches [in which] biology produces sex and gender diversity in processes that are nonlinear, chaotic, dynamic, and indeterminate. …Biology is [therefore] no longer figured as constraint, but as capacity" (p. 146). Lane claimed one should not overlook the field of biology as a site for understanding gender as a complex phenomenon extending beyond a scientifically determined relationship. However, Lane was not alone in this line of thinking. Adding to the discourse on biology as a site of complexity and diversity, Bonchev and Rouvray (2005) stated, "In complex systems 'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.' What is more these systems possess the properties of emergence, adaption, and self-organization" (p. xii). Here, Bonchey and Rouvray (2005) furthered the possibility that one may be unable to understand how the complex systems of sex and gender operate for individuals. This admission signals the potential connections between scientific and socially based discourses of gender. Moreover, it recognizes the sheer complexity of sex and gender as categories, opening up a variety of possibilities for how one identifies, expresses, and embodies their gender at any given moment.

The previous discussion about natural and/or social foundations of trans* identities is far from conclusive, but raises important questions about how certain lines of thought influence how trans* students make sense of their gender identity. Similarly, the concepts of oppression, intersectionality, and the social imperative to "pass" or "cover" influence trans* students' ability to navigate their college environments successfully. I now elucidate these concepts and their relation to genderism in order to explore the complexity of the trans* college student experience.

Oppression, Intersectionality, and the Social Imperative to Cover

Genderism posits that there are two distinct and immutable categories of sex (i.e., male/female) and gender (i.e., man/woman), and that these categories are linked (i.e., males must identify as men, and females must identify as women). Gilbert (2009) termed this assumption bigenderism, constituting a social system wherein individuals are oppressed for transgressing such culturally intelligible (Butler, 2006) sex/gender linkages. Meanwhile, Hardiman and Jackson (2007) defined oppression as "an interlocking, multileveled system that consolidates social power to the benefit of members of privileged groups and … consists of three levels: (a)

individual, (b) institutional, and (c) social/cultural" (p. 39). People enact genderism on an individual level through such person-to-person acts as hate crimes (Hill, 2003) and bias related incidents (Rankin et al., 2010). Institutions perpetuate genderism through policies, such as the maintenance of dress codes that delineate "appropriate dress" based on gender norms, and practices, such as the inability to easily change (or exclude) one's sex on many forms of identity documents (Spade, 2011).

These individual acts and institutional practices of genderism are rooted in the sociocultural foundations of genderism as a form of oppression, which Hardiman and Jackson (2007) described as "values that bind institutions and individuals, [including] philosophies of life, definitions of good and evil, beauty, health, deviance, sickness, and perspectives on time, just to name a few" (p. 40). This form of oppression is structural (Young, 1990), meaning it does not require an active participant to engage in oppressive behavior or create and maintain oppressive policies. Instead, structural oppression is woven into the very fabric, or structure, of society. Girshick (2008) and Gilbert (2009) showed how the cultural norm and unstated assumption of the gender binary creates a culture where those who transgress, resist, or deviate from the binary are understood as less than those who do not.

Gilbert (2009) demonstrated the impossibility of trans* intelligibility in stating, "There is no such thing as someone whose sex or gender diverges from their birth-assigned sex, which means trans folk cannot exist" (p. 95). Going further, Gilbert (2009) articulated the social pervasiveness of bigenderism, explaining it is pervasive through all aspects of our daily lives (e.g., government, education, health care, psychiatry, law, family, media). Furthermore, based on the hierarchy created, where trans* people are less valued than cisgender people, trans* students are forced to navigate the individual and institutional instances that create structural oppression. Examples of these forms of oppression include: intercollegiate athletics being set up along the false dichotomy of men's and women's teams, picking up on the cultural unintelligibility of trans* people (structural); an institution's internal forms and documents having two checkboxes for gender (man and woman), giving the impression there are only these two discrete options (institutional); and a student being harassed for hir gender identity by another student or a group of students (individual).

Recent studies (Rankin et al., 2010; Grant et al., 2011) and personal narratives (Serano, 2007) have shown that not all trans* people have the same experiences with oppression. In

elucidating this point in relation to Black women, Crenshaw (1989) cited intersectionality as a model to expose how developing a "single-axis framework erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experience of otherwise-privileged members of the group" (p. 140). Similarly, any analysis of trans* oppression that does not take into account the various intersecting identities of those who identify as trans* runs the same risk. Therefore, it is imperative to explore how an intersectional approach to the oppression trans* individuals may experience can enhance one's understanding of the diversity of these experiences and, thus, the trans* community itself.

Intersectionality and its Relationship to Genderism

Crenshaw (1989, 1995) provided an important framework through which one can understand how multiple subordinated identities intersect. Discussing how both anti-racist and anti-sexist articulations of sexual violence overlook the unique experiences of women of color, Crenshaw (1995) claimed:

> When identity politics fail us, as they frequently do, it is not primarily because those politics take as natural certain categories that are socially constructed—instead, it is because the descriptive content of those categories and the narratives on which they are based have privileged some experiences and excluded others. (p. 376)

What is needed, then, is a more inclusive epistemological framework for understanding and expressing the oppression faced by trans* people who inhabit other subordinated identities, such as race (e.g., trans* people with subordinated racial identities), social class (e.g., trans* people who live below the poverty line and/or have less access to adequate education, healthcare, and other social institutions), and gender (e.g., transwomen and transfeminine individuals), to name but a few.

In a 2011 report, researchers articulated that while "discrimination was pervasive throughout the entire sample," the confluence of transphobia and racism meant trans* people with subordinated racial identities, specifically Black and African American trans* respondents, "fare[d] worse than white [sic] participants across the board" (Grant et al., p. 2). Situating these findings on college and university campuses, researchers reported trans* respondents with subordinated racial identities felt less comfortable in their department/work units as well as in the classroom than White trans* respondents did (Rankin et al., 2010). Additionally, trans* people with subordinated racial identities perceived harassment at significantly higher rates than men

and women with subordinated racial identities, substantiating the notion that the convergence of subordinated identities created additional challenges in navigating an environment tinged by both genderism and racism (Rankin et al., 2010).

The convergence of gender identity and class is yet another important intersection demanding attention. Grant et al. (2011) highlighted that trans* respondents reported higher levels of extreme poverty than their cisgender counterparts did. In fact, the results of the national study uncovered that trans* individuals were "nearly four times more likely to have a household income of less than $10,000/year compared to the general population" (p. 2) as reported by the U.S. Census. Coupled with this, various scholars have pointed toward comparatively higher rates of poverty in the trans* population due to such factors as "employment discrimination, family rejection, and difficulty accessing school, medical care, and social services" (Spade, 2011, p. 89). The concomitant effects of poverty for trans* people can result in their need to participate in sex work and other illegal methods of making money (Spade, 2011; Valentine, 2007), enmeshing them in a prison system that further limits their life chances (Spade, 2011).

Moreover, trans* college students, who may have unsupportive families and/or may be otherwise dependent on federal financial aid to attend and persist in higher education, face significant barriers to accessing necessary funding. The difficulty of trans* students accessing federal funding to support college stems from many of them still being deemed dependents and, thus, needing to report family income, which unsupportive and/or hostile family members may be unwilling to provide. Moreover, Burns (2011) stated:

> Transgender applicants can encounter roadblocks with the [Free Application For Federal Student Aid] due to selective service issues, and possibly with data mismatch with their name and gender markers. Both of these issues can result in the delay or the rejection of their application. (para. 3)

For trans* youth who are independents, barriers to accessing college still exist based on the rising costs associated with college. Herein one can see the need to understand not just the significant social barriers facing trans* and poor people, but people for whom these two identities intersect.

A third example where intersectionality proves to be an important lens through which to develop a more complex—and thereby complete—understanding of trans* people is between gender identity and sex. Specifically, Serano (2007) coined the term "trans-misogyny" to

describe intersections of transphobia and sexism. In doing so, Serano created a situation where both identities—one's trans* and female identities—are recognized as adding to this unique form of cultural oppression. Therefore, the experiences of transwomen and transfeminine individuals are not overshadowed or covered up under the aggregating guise of either form of oppression (i.e., transphobia or sexism). While there are innumerable other examples where an intersectional analysis would more accurately depict the experiences of subcultures of trans* individuals (e.g., Clare, 2003: Dzmura, 2010), the three aforementioned examples outlined above should be understood as a marker for the importance of not "think[ing] about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140).

Covering

Yoshino (2006) suggested covering, or actively hiding aspects of one's identity that are stigmatized, is something in which everyone participates, as "being deemed mainstream is still often a necessity of social life" (p. ix). Therefore, one can understand covering as synonymous with the notion of passing I used in my introduction and other trans*/gender scholars have used (e.g., Garfinkel, 2006; Lie, 2002; Mattilda, 2006a; Montgomery, 2002; Namaste, 2000), which some transgender people do out of a perceived or real threat or fear of safety in a given environment. Moreover, covering is an effect of cultural oppression, as it is the "mainstream'" that dictates when (and to what extent) people must cover certain aspects of who they are.

The manifestation of covering can vary by individual. For example, some may cover out of a fear of violence or social reprisal, whereas others may be struggling with internalized oppression (Bell, 2007) and, therefore, unable or unwilling to admit their subordinated identity. Snorton (2009) even suggested that "focusing on its psychic components may help to reform our understanding of passing such that we value it as the function by which one distinguishes oneself as a human subject (Jackson and Jones 2005, 11)" (p. 80). This gives rise to a view of passing in which "the political possibilities for trans people when passing is no longer primarily defined as a deceitful practice" (Snorton, 2009, p. 80). Following these analyses, what is clear is that covering as a practice is predicated on the social privileging of some identities (e.g., being cisgender) over others (e.g., being trans*). Who covers, when they do so, and due to what perceived or real threats people choose to cover are questions that remain unanswered; but the cultural foundation and reality of covering is unmistakable.

The pressures facing trans* students to cover on college and university campuses are present in literature (Fried, 2000; Gray, 2000; Quart, 2008; Rabodeau, 2000). There are also various examples of trans* college students who have felt unsafe after disclosing their gender identity (e.g., Greenaway, 2001). In addition, the genderism present on college and university campuses suggests trans* students must cover their gender identity, rendering them invisible in the process (e.g., Taylor, 2012). Due to transphobic individuals, policies, practices, and cultural norms across campus, trans* students often feel they need to be careful with whom, when, and how they disclose their gender identity. Even once a trans* student has disclosed hir gender identity, fellow students, faculty, and staff may still negate it (Conrad, 2012; Taylor, 2012). This reflects my personal experience on my current campus. For example, even after sharing my gender identity with certain staff—including high-level campus administrators—I continued to be perceived as an effeminate gay male rather than trans*. This negation means trans* students must either cover their identity or "pass" as either masculine or feminine so as not to be seen by others as trans*. If they do not, trans* students run the risk of cisgender students, faculty, and/or staff deeming them illegible, impossible, deviant, or social pariahs.

Exploring the concepts of oppression, intersectionality, and covering elucidates a series of complex negotiations trans* students must navigate in their daily lives. These negotiations raise the question: how might trans* college students remain resilient in their gender identity and expression in the face of such social stigma and erasure? However, before getting to issues of resilience, it is imperative to situate trans* students on college and university campuses.

Situating Trans* Students on College and University Campuses

There is a sizeable (and still growing) amount of research and literature on lesbian, gay, and, to some extent, bisexual students (Abes, 2011; Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes & Kasch, 2007; Cass, 1979, 1984; D'Augelli, 1994; Dilley, 2005; Evans & Wall, 1991; Fassinger, 1998; Patton Davis & Simmons, 2002; Renn, 2007; Ridner, Frost & LaJoie, 2006; Wall & Evans, 1999). Renn (2010) noted there is often conflation between "categories of sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual) and transgender (gender identity), [which] is common among activists on and off campus, [but] it is contested in theory and in practice" (p. 132). This conflation of sexual orientation and gender identity categories by those on and off college campuses is not only highly reductive, but also threatens to overlook the distinct experiences of trans* students. This is best articulated by those who argue the lesbian and gay movement has lost sight of the

trans*—and to some extent the bisexual—community in an attempt to push for certain rights that would benefit the White, middle- to upper-class, able-bodied, cisgender, gay and lesbian communities (e.g., gay marriage) (Califia, 2003; Halberstam, 2012; Spade, 2011; Warner, 1999). Although these advancements are arguably important, advocacy groups such as the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) have put most of their time, energy, money, and focus behind these efforts while other pressing issues (e.g., trans* legal advocacy, homelessness and poverty among the trans* population) remain unaddressed (Spade, 2011). This has led to the oversight of trans* lives, narratives, and issues throughout much of what Spade (2008) has termed the "LGBfakeT movement."

Despite this, there has been a recent growing awareness of the presence of trans* students on college and university campuses (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009; Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Marine, 2011a). There is also some non-empirical literature regarding trans* college students, particularly regarding educational programming, trans* awareness training, and offering trans* support groups (e.g., Beemyn, 2003, 2005; Beemyn, Curtis, Davis & Tubbs, 2005; Beemyn, Domingue, Pettitt & Smith, 2005; Henning-Stout, James & Macintosh, 2000; Nakamura, 1998). Although some empirical research emerged regarding trans* collegians during the course of the present study (e.g., Catalano, in press; Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014; Nicolazzo, Pitcher, Renn, & Woodford, in review), there is a need for more empirical research. Specifically, some researchers have called for a more thorough investigation of trans* student experiences in college (Bilodeau, 2005; Marine, 2011b).

Due to the aforementioned lack of empirical research, there are many questions one could explore and, by extension, stories one could tell about trans* college students. Of particular interest to me as a researcher are stories of resilience as trans* college students navigate a bigendered world (Gilbert, 2009), or a world which only recognizes two genders (i.e., man and woman), and campus environment (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009). However, researchers have yet to highlight these narratives throughout the research literature. Instead, much of the current literature focuses on the marginalization and ostracism experienced by trans* students, faculty, and staff (e.g., Pusch, 2005; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010).

What We Know: The Marginalization of Trans* College Students

> For a while, I thought that it would be fun to call what I do in life gender terrorism. Seemed right at first—I and so many folks like me were terrorizing the structure of

> gender itself. But I've come to see it a bit differently now … Gender terrorists are those who … bang their heads against a gender system which is real and natural; and who then use gender to terrorize the rest of us. (Bornstein, 1994, pp. 71-72)

A prevalent theme in the small body of research on trans* college students is that of the violence, isolation, fear, and hatred they face individually and as a community (e.g., Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Pusch, 2005; Rankin et al., 2010). Underscoring the social embeddedness of LGBT violence, a 2001 Human Rights Watch report stated LGBT-related prejudice "is based on rigidly enforced rules dictating how girls and boys should look, walk, talk, dress, act, think, and feel. The social regime in most schools is unforgiving: Youth who break these rules will be punished" (p. 262). Although the report spoke specifically to the environment of primary and secondary schools, similar patterns of hatred, prejudice and violence against the trans* student population persists on college and university campuses.

For example, in the *2010 State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People*, a significantly higher percentage of gender non-conforming students (31%) reported personally experiencing harassment than cisgender men (20%) and women (19%) respectively (Rankin et al., 2010). Furthermore, those who identified as gender non-conforming also reported having more negative perceptions of campus climate (Rankin et al., 2010). In one of the many chilling results uncovered by the study, not only were trans* students more likely to fear for their physical safety, but they also reported having a greater likelihood of avoiding queer areas of campus and avoid disclosing their gender identity (Rankin et al., 2010). The amalgam of these findings means trans* students are highly isolated on college and university campuses, even within what some may perceive outwardly to be supportive communities (e.g., Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, and Queer (LGBTQ) Centers). Trans* students' avoidance of queer areas on campus is exacerbated by the fact that cisgender and heteronormative spaces, which make up the majority of campus, provide minimal safety and comfort for trans* students. The continued lack of comfort and safety for trans* college students is predicated on—and perpetuated by—genderism. Enacted on individual, institutional, and sociocultural levels, genderism forms a matrix of oppression through which trans* students must wade. Despite this, however, trans* college students remain resilient in aspiring toward success.

Resilience and Resiliency Theory

With roots in psychopathology and psychology, resiliency theory emerged from the study of children who overcame the undesirable conditions of their specific environments (Greene, Galambos, & Lee, 2003; Van Breda, 2001). Resiliency theory focuses on risk factors, or those conditions that pose a threat to an individual or community from succeeding, and protective factors, or those conditions that protect an individual or community from risks. As previously discussed, the concept of genderism (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009) poses many risk factors to trans* college students. These risk factors include, but are not limited to bigendered spaces (e.g., residence halls, restrooms, locker and changing rooms), activities (e.g., fraternities and sororities), and policies (e.g., dress codes). Although the web of genderism on college campuses poses serious risks and challenges, there is reason to believe trans* college students have been able to develop and maintain self-efficacy and resiliency in achieving success throughout their collegiate experience. This belief stems both from anecdotal experience (e.g., my own ability to navigate educational systems in pursuit of a terminal degree) as well as firsthand accounts of trans* college students (e.g., Rabodeau, 2000; Rogers, 2000; Quart, 2008).

Researchers have written about resiliency theory as being based on individual and community strengths rather than deficiencies (Greene, Galambos, & Lee, 2003; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Therefore, resiliency theory provides an opportunity to view trans* individuals as capable of navigating the adversity they face without suggesting they are somehow lacking in skills, abilities, or need to capitulate to societal expectations in order to thrive. Furthermore, research suggests community is an essential component of resiliency theory (Krovetz, 1999; Van Breda, 2001), including research on resiliency among transgender individuals (Singh, Hays, & Watson, 2011). When understood with the potentially tumultuous relationship of trans* individuals with others in the LGBT community (Singh, Hays, & Watson, 2011; Spade, 2008) as well as the intragroup diversity within the trans* community itself (Califia, 2003; Davis, 2008; Sedgwick, 2008; Valentine, 2007), what exactly is meant by "community" and how that is formed, maintained, and navigated becomes of primary importance. The contested nature of community and culture are, thus, a main reason for both my fourth research question—including my decision to focus on kinship and kinship building rather than community—as well as my pursuing a research study rooted in ethnographic methodology, which I will elucidate in the following chapter.

Researchers have used resiliency theory in studying underrepresented populations, such as members of subordinated racial and ethnic identities (e.g., Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Others have also used the theoretical construct to address educational research, including in secondary schools (e.g., Krovetz, 1999). Singh, Hays, and Watson (2011) studied the resilience of trans* individuals. However, the study came out of counseling psychology and did not mention having college students in their participant pool. Therefore, a gap exists in higher education literature when theorizing on trans* student resiliency; a gap which this study intended to address.

Additionally, when researchers use the term "resilience" in relation to marginalized populations in higher education, they often link it to the notion of retention (e.g., Sanlo, 2004). However, it is important to develop a fuller understanding of what resiliency means. For example, Stieglitz (2010) stated, "In adolescence and young adulthood, resilience may be reflected by achievement in career development, happiness, relationships, and physical well-being in the presence of risk factors. Therefore, resilience is complex and dynamic rather than static" (p. 202). It is clear resiliency theory—and the concept of resilience itself—have more to offer higher education research than a narrow focus on retention.

Understanding trans* student resilience in terms other than persistence and retention is important for several reasons. First, trans* students remain invisible through college records, as no data are collected on this subgroup of students. This mirrors the invisibility gay, lesbian, and bisexual students face (Sanlo, 2004) and makes the tracking of resilience due to persistence hard, if not impossible. Furthermore, focusing solely on retention as a measure of resilience overshadows the complex negotiations trans* students need to make on a daily basis within a college environment that continues to negate their existence (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009). Put another way, the microaggressions (Sue, 2010a, 2010b), genderism (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009), and minority stress (Harper & Schneider, 2003; Hayes, Chun-Kennedy, Edens, & Locke, 2011) trans* students regularly face are negated, denied, and/or overlooked when resiliency is understood as simply relating to retention and persistence.

Literature Review in Summary

Multiple things become clear when reviewing the literature on trans* people, trans*/gender theory, and trans* college students. First, while there has been a recent proliferation of trans* and gender-based literature in a variety of academic fields (Whittle, 2006), it has yet to be the case in higher education. In fact, out of all the pieces included in the

Transgender Studies Reader, the *Transgender Studies Reader 2,* and *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*—the last two of which were released during the later stages of the present study—only one relates to college campuses, and even that one focuses on the use of a case study to enhance pedagogy in Women's Studies classrooms rather than on trans* students' experiences.[4] Thus, a paradox exists in which trans* people are increasingly socially visible while, at the same time, trans* collegians remain largely invisible.

Second, much of the literature talks about trans* people by using deficient language and perspectives. This is especially the case when reviewing the scant amount of literature regarding trans* people in higher education. These point to the heightened need not only for scholarship regarding trans* students, but for that scholarship to take an affirmative, resilience-based approach. Moreover, it is important to recognize that while there is a growing body of research regarding trans* college students—some of which began to emerge during the course of this research study—much of the data from which this literature comes has been taken from larger studies involving LGBTQ populations and, therefore, has not been collected with the express intent of studying trans* students' lives (C. Catalano, personal communication, 23 June 2013). Therefore, the present study served to aid in the stemming of a serious gap in higher education literature by offering data from a study specifically designed with trans* students in mind. In the chapter that follows, I discuss my study design in detail.

[4]It should be noted, however, that a special issue of *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* focusing on trans* students, faculty, staff, and pedagogy in education will be published in fall 2015.

Interlude: Collaborative Methodology and Methods

When I was a kid, I was encouraged to participate in group activities, specifically sports. Even today, I find I function better when I am in groups rather than when I am alone, especially when I am with a small group of close friends. I am more energetic, can rest easier, and am able to process through what I am thinking and feeling. Although I shy away from large groups of people I do not know, I continue to search for my people, my community with whom I can feel comfortable, be active, and work toward equity and justice.

There have been times when I have tried to neglect my desire to build community, but these have been the times during which I have most struggled. I remember the start of my last year in Arizona being one of immense struggle. I had originally moved to the Southwest for a partner with whom I was no longer together. Even though the end of my time being so far from my family in the Northeast was in sight, I felt alone and unconnected to others around me. I began to feel as though I went from home to work and then back to home again each day with little to no community of which to speak. I tried volunteering, poured myself into my work with students, but I still felt a gnawing emptiness. Exasperated, I told a friend one day that I just needed to stick it out for one more year and then I could leave. It would be tough, but I had lasted three years, so what was 12 more months? My friend, feeling the strain in my voice, told me no matter the timeline, I still needed to find my community. Her words were exactly what I needed to hear going into my last year in Arizona, and I went out and found my people by connecting with people, finding places, and joining organizations that fed my sense of being and shared similar values to me.

Similar to my time in Arizona, I have continued to look for and develop my community throughout my doctoral experience. The people with whom I am connected mean everything to me, giving me the comfort, strength, and support to face my days. Moreover, the community I have developed gives me a base from which to continue agitating for change. Given my dedication to community building and group-based activism, I saw no other way to progress with a dissertation than to find a methodology and methods consistent with these values. I wanted to resist, as much as I could, the colonizing effect research can have on the voices and experiences of research participants. Even calling participants "my" participants seemed problematic to me. Additionally, I did not want to swoop in, collect the data I needed, and then leave the research

site and participants, never to be seen again—something Rist (1980) defined as "blitzkrieg ethnography."

My choices of theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods are an attempt to work with and alongside research participants, creating a coalition from which we work for change in a collaborative fashion. This work, this research, this project all change from being mine to being ours, and I change from being the sole arbiter of the story that is told to one of many voices involved in the research project. Each time I write now, I imagine the research participants with whom I participated in this study sitting with me, working with me, shaping the story we tell about our culture and resilience. Although every research paradigm, methodology, and set of data collection methods face critique, my choices represent the best ways forward for the community I continue to create.

Chapter Three: Study Design

In elucidating my study design, I spent time in this chapter detailing my theoretical perspective (Critical Trans Politics), methodology (Critical Collaborative Ethnography), my positionality as a researcher, and methods for data collection. I also used this chapter to provide an overview of the research site, my criteria for participation, an explanation of how I analyzed the data, and an explanation of my goodness criteria, or how I produced a trustworthy study.

Theoretical Perspective

The present study explored how trans* college students navigated their gendered cultural context, paying particular attention to narratives of success and resilience. I situated my research in a critical paradigm, which presupposes reality and truth as subjective and influenced through a system of sociopolitical power that privileges some while marginalizing others along the lines of social identity (Lather, 2006; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). According to Tierney and Rhoads (1993), "Fundamental to critical theory is the notion of freedom and justice. The goal of [critical] theory is not just to enlighten, but also to enable people to seek justice, freedom, and equality" (p. 319). Although Tierney and Rhoads suggested that "critical theory is contested terrain" (p. 316), a view echoed by other theorists (e.g., Lather, 2006; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011), they forwarded five central foci for critical theory, including: "(a) marginalization and emancipation, (b) the role of culture, (c) the role of power, (d) a critique of positivism, and (e) the union of research and practice" (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993, p. 319).

Of particular interest to my study is a strand of critical theory known as Critical Trans Politics (CTP). As Spade (2011) stated:

> [Critical Trans Politics] eliminates the false notion that we [trans* people] could win the change people need simply by using the electoral process to vote in certain representatives or pass certain laws. It helps us investigate how the norms that produce conditions of disparity and violence emerge from multiple, interwoven locations, and recognize possibilities for resistance as similarly dispersed. (p. 21)

Rather than falling for the illogical supposition that there is one answer upon which one solves problems, Spade spoke to the reality that cultural genderism and transphobia are a result of multiple and intersecting forms of violence and the reinforcement of a dichotomous gender binary. Critical Trans Politics as a theoretical perspective: (1) is invested in interrogating

culturally embedded forms of genderism and transphobia; (2) is interested in political strategizing grounded in intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1995); (3) seeks to center the voices, stories, and narratives of transgender and gender non-conforming people; and (4) extends the value of polyvocality, or the foregrounding of multiple voices, to express many possible forms of resistance. Because CTP focuses on addressing the various threads of violence and oppression that make up cultural genderism, as well as its insistence of foregrounding multiple voices, I chose to employ an ethnographic methodology for the present study. Specifically, I utilized a form of ethnography called Critical Collaborative Ethnography (Bhattacharya, 2008).

Methodology: Critical Collaborative Ethnography

Critical Collaborative Ethnography is a branch of the broader tradition of critical inquiry. Critical theory is both politically motivated (Carspecken, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998) and oppositional in nature (Taylor, 1998). As such, Critical Collaborative Ethnography rests on the notion of critical thought (Brookfield, 2012) as well as how privilege and power mediate one's multiple intersecting social identities and how, as a result, one navigates a social world riven with inequity (Crenshaw, 1989, 1995). Critical Collaborative Ethnography translates the political orientation taken by critical theory into the realm of ethnographic research. Echoing the writing of Thomas (1993), Bhattacharya (2008) defined the central aspect of Critical Collaborative Ethnography as "refer[ing] to ethnographic practice that focuses on projects that challenge dominant hegemonic global structures at the intersection of race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability" (p. 305). By looking at the micro- and macro-level systems of privilege and oppression, Critical Collaborative Ethnography provided a lens through which participants and I interrogated the pervasiveness of cultural genderism in the college environment. It also provided a platform from which participants and I advocated institutional reforms (Foley & Valenzuela, 2008), which is itself an essential component to any critically based research study.

The collaborative aspect of Critical Collaborative Ethnography relates to working alongside participants rather than taking the stance that I was doing research *on* or *about* them (Bhattacharya, 2008). Entering into a collaborative research relationship with participants meant we all took part in constructing and making sense of our shared reality (Lykes, 1989). This process involved the development of close, trusting relationships (Foley & Valenzuela, 2008) rooted in a shared sense of solidarity in the research itself (Lykes, 1989). Collaboration also required continued negotiation between the research participants with whom I was working and

me. As Brettell (1993) noted, "The [participant] is never always right and … the ethnographer … is sometimes wrong" (p. 16). Therefore, the collaborative nature of my study served as a way to check constantly the balance of power in whose voice and analysis was forwarded throughout the research process.

This is not to say power could ever be distributed equally amongst myself as a researcher and the participants with whom I worked. Instead, power was continually negotiated among us, as no one held ultimate authority over the entirety of the study. For example, although I had power over the final written product(s) related to this study, participants also had power in granting me access to information, experiences, and their perspectives of genderism on campus. Additionally, both the participants and I had power in determining the nature of the relationships and friendships we form throughout the research process (de Laine, 2000). Therefore, although the extent to which participants and I were able to conduct this study together was a vital issue that was not easily answered (de Laine, 2000), its inability to be answered did not serve as an impediment to actually doing collaborative research. Instead, it points to further complexities I must explore relating to the distribution of power throughout the research process and my own positionality as a researcher.

Addressing the Complexities of Power in the Research Process

Recognizing, addressing, and constantly negotiating the role of power through the research process is a primary concern for ethnographers, especially those invested in critical ethnography (Madison, 2012). Smith (1990) argued power is always already an aspect of fieldwork, highlighting its shifting and uneven distribution between participants and researcher at various points throughout the research process. Magolda and Weems (2002) agreed, stating, "At best, qualitative researchers can be aware of these power differentials and be openly reflective about how issues of power and positionality shape the inquiry process" (p. 503). This certainly remains true for me as a critical educator and researcher. In fact, not reflecting on these issues during the research process has the potential to counteract the collaborative and liberatory aims of the study itself (Elbow, 1973; Lykes, 1989).

In order to address the ongoing complexities of power (e.g., is our critical collaborative ethnographic study truly "collaborative"? Who defines what "collaboration" looks like in our study, participants or me?), authority (e.g., how do I manage my implicit title as an "expert" on trans* issues, whether or not I believe myself to be one?), and voice (e.g., who has the "final

word"? How will I use the critical feedback I will get through member checking data and writing alongside participants?), I rely heavily on Fine's (1994) notion of "working the hyphen" between research participants and myself.

In explaining this concept, Fine (1994) wrote that qualitative research has a tradition of falsely presuming objectivity through the research process, thereby writing about "the Other" (e.g., research participants). In doing so, researchers separate themselves from participants, research from "real life," and one's personal identities from one's identity as a researcher. Instead, Fine (1994) suggested when researchers choose to recognize how our lives are entangled with those of research participants, "We and they enter and play with the blurred boundaries" (p. 72) of these positionalities. Therefore, instead of seeing the researcher and participant as opposites existing in distinct and mutually exclusive worlds, "working the hyphen" means "we interrogate in our [the researchers'] writings who we are as we coproduce the narratives we presume to 'collect'" (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2003). In other words, rather than assuming our lives as researchers and participants are separate from each other, we must continually address and reflect on the power dynamics at play in our working together, as well as how power mediates the data we coproduce and analyze. We can achieve this by talking openly about the research content and process, making sure to attend to how working together feels and/or if we feel heard, understood, and able to share what we want with each other. Obviously, researchers and participants need to embrace a certain level of vulnerability for this sort of reflective relationship to work. However, I agree with Fine (1994), who stated, "When we construct texts collaboratively, self-consciously examining our relations with/for/despite those who have been contained as Others, we move against, [and] enable resistance to, Othering" (p. 74).

As a critical collaborative ethnographer, I claim neither objectivity nor neutrality to be possible, let alone desirable (Madison, 2012; McBeth, 1993). Furthermore, rather than presuming power does not impact my study due to my methodology being "collaborative," I continued to question, interrogate, and struggle with the notion of power and its effects on the research process openly with research participants. As such, an exploration of my own positionality as I entered the research process becomes essential (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2003; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998). Far from being self-indulgent, exploring my own positionality provides an opportunity for me to "work the hyphen" by reflecting on how my

experiences, identities, and relationships have formed who I am and, thus, how they may have shaped the research process itself.

Positionality

> I remember, as a child, pulling my hair back, leaning forward into the mirror, and wondering, "Do I look like a girl?" My reflection gazed back at me, blue eyes looking through me – who was I meant to be? "Perhaps someone other than who I am" was the thought that went unuttered. (Personal journal entry, 12 October 2012)

At its most traditional anthropological roots, ethnography has been seen as a rite of passage by which researchers would travel to a distant location and spend years in the field cultivating a relationship and slowly becoming an insider to the culture under study (Van Maanen, 2011). As the methodology has developed, more ethnographers are seeing a value to studying locally and studying groups to whom one may already have an amount of insider status (O'Reilly, 2009). Moreover, qualitative researchers act as the instrument through which data collection and analysis happens (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Speaking specifically of ethnographers, Bochner and Ellis (1996) wrote, "It's dishonest to pretend we're invisible. We've left traces of our convictions all over this text. Instead of masking our presence, leaving it at the margins, we should make ourselves more personally accountable for our perspective" (p. 15). As such, it is important for me to be transparent about my positionality in relation to the trans* students with whom I conducted the present study.

I first realized I was trans* during the spring of 2011. At the time, I was living in Arizona and was finishing my last semester as an entry-level fraternity and sorority advisor at a large public university. Coming out felt both liberating and dangerous; I was excited to explore my gender identity more, but I was scared of doing this in Arizona, which was becoming an increasingly dangerous place for subaltern populations to reside due to contentious laws like SB 1070[5], HB 2281[6], and Proposition 107[7]. I was also overwhelmed in thinking about coming out,

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[5]The Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (SB 1070) granted "state and local law enforcement officials the responsibility to detain persons whom they have "reasonable suspicion" to believe are unlawfully present" (Campbell, 2011, p. 1). Predicated on the fallacious rhetoric that migrants, specifically individuals crossing the Mexico-US border, were dangerous criminals who were attempting to steal US citizens' jobs and gain free access to healthcare and education, SB 1070 has continued to cause an unsafe environment for Latino/a Arizona residents.
[6]HB 2281, commonly referred to as the Ethnic Studies Ban, effectively ended the teaching of ethnic studies courses in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) (Soto & Joseph, 2010). The bill, originally intended to impact

especially to my family and those who had known me for a long time. In my final months living and working in Arizona, I came out to several close friends and went out in public several times in women's clothing. Despite the support I had from the queer network of friends I had established, I was always nervous of running into co-workers, students, or other acquaintances with whom I did not feel safe disclosing my gender identity. In this sense, I framed my leaving Arizona and moving to the Midwest as liberatory, providing me an opportunity for a "fresh start" in a new area where many people did not yet know me. I understand this was a liberty many trans* people do not have, including the trans* college students with whom I worked for this study. As such, I am curious how one's coming out as trans* in a place where one has lived for some time and developed significant relationships may differ from my own experience and, thus, affect how one defines and makes sense of resilience.

Between finishing my job in Arizona and starting my doctoral program at Miami University, I spent six weeks traversing the country seeing family and friends. I had not come out to many of the people with whom I stayed, and made the conscious choice not to do so during my travels. Reflecting back on my choice to not come out, I am not sure if I was worried I would be unwelcome or if I was worried these people, many of whom had known me for a significant amount of time, would be unable or unwilling to validate my changing gender identity. Part of my decision was likely also a function of my own internalized transphobia in thinking I was "weird," "abnormal," or "messed up." Although I had always affirmed others' gender variance, my own gender fluidity forced me to confront deep-seated assumptions related to my sex, my gender, and the ruptures within and between these two categories. Recognizing these feelings as a manifestation of internalized transphobia made me feel even more guilty, frustrated, and emotionally raw.

One of my last visits during my summer trek was a two-week stay with my brother, who lived in Brooklyn, New York. I had decided not to come out to my brother yet. My brother and I had become increasingly close after the dissolution of my marriage two years before my leaving Arizona, so my decision not to come out to him felt strange. However, I figured I

TUSD, is being promoted as an effective strategy for dismantling similar programs offered in higher education by the current Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction and Ex-Officio Regent on the Arizona Board of Regents John Huppenthal (Planas, 2012).

[7]Proposition 107 was an anti-affirmative action ballot initiative that passed with a 60% majority. The wording of the initiative claimed affirmative action was a method of giving members of marginalized communities preferential treatment, thus promoting the myth of meritocracy as a strategy for the initiative passing (Ganesan & Swenson, 2010).

needed more time to become comfortable with myself before coming out to family. The first night I got to Brooklyn, my brother and I went to our favorite Mexican restaurant to get burritos. We walked back to his studio apartment, cleared off the small breakfast nook countertop, and sat closely talking. The conversation soon turned to my brother asking me what the terms "queer" and "trans*" meant, which he did because he knew of my interest in studying the experiences of trans* college students. He became visibly agitated and kept insisting he did not understand why people could not self-identify with terms he understood. I politely told him trans* folks did not care what he understood, but the terms signified their own *personal* identity. He then paused and said, "Well, I don't really understand why anyone would want to cut their dick off! Just tell me that whatever you do, you won't cut your dick off!" I gasped and my heart began racing. Did he know something? Had he figured me out? And was this really what he thought being trans* was about? Despite the conversation occurring almost four years ago, I remember this evening as if it was yesterday. I remember what I was eating, what I was wearing, the uncomfortable humidity in the city that night, and where I was sitting. My ability to recall these details so vividly, I have been told, suggests this was a traumatic experience for me. I still have not come out to my brother.

Since coming to Oxford and beginning the Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) doctoral program, I have developed a supportive queer and trans* network who have encouraged me to explore fully my gender identity, my research agenda, and the intersections between the two. I am thankful to have a wonderfully supportive mother, who continues to understand and love me for who I am. I have also made a number of friendships with cisgender individuals who see me as a person rather than as someone who can teach them about gender. Although there are days when I am frustrated by the social invisibility of lives, experiences, and needs of trans* people, I am comfortable with who I am, where I am at, and the realization that my gender identity, and especially my gender expression, will continue to shift.

Presently, I identify as gender nonconforming, which for me signifies that my identity is always already both personal and political. Put a different way, my active denial to abide by gender norms resonates with how I choose to identify and express my gender as well as a way for me to openly resist, push back, and call into question these very norms themselves. I have also chosen not to take hormones, voice lessons, or seek other medical interventions to alter my body. Although I may change my own physical appearance by wearing makeup, what are

traditionally coded as feminine clothing/accessories, and prosthetics, I want to reduce the level at which others (e.g., medical or psychiatric professionals) regulate my ability to present my gender on my own terms. Although this does not preclude me from seeking these options in the future, my choice has been a comfortable one for now and reflects my current desires related to my own trans*ness.

My experiences as a trans* person have led me to want to explore the experiences of trans* college students. Furthermore, as a trans* person seeking a terminal degree in my field, I have become increasingly preoccupied with thinking about the ways in which trans* students are successful despite the genderism they face in college, signaling why I am framing my study around the notion of resilience. By approaching the lives of trans* students from an affirmative standpoint provides a framework through which trans* students are not cast as deficient, defective, or people for whom individual accommodations must be made. It is with these past experiences and thoughts that I position myself at the outset of my research with trans* students.

I move now to a discussion of my research methods, including an overview of my research site, criteria for participation, methods for data analysis, and how my collaborative methodology informed how the writing up of my dissertation. I then end this chapter by elucidating my goodness criteria.

Methods

To best articulate the methods for this study, I will now spend time discussing the research site, participants for my study, data collection methods, my data analysis process, and the goodness criteria I used to enhance my study's trustworthiness and credibility.

Site

This study took place at City University (CU, a pseudonym), which is a large public research university in an urban environment in the Midwest. At the outset of the study, CU had a total enrollment of approximately 42,000 students, of whom CU's website listed 46% as male and the remaining 54% as female. CU is located in Stockdale, a metropolitan area comprising just under 300,000 residents. The campus's racial demographics (86.4% White, 8.2% African American, 3.1% Asian, and 2.3% Hispanic) were vastly inconsistent with those of Stockdale, which was approximately 49% White, 45% African American, 2% Asian, and 3% Hispanic or Latino based on 2010 Census data. Despite the façade of racial equality based on Census data, Stockdale had a history of tenuous race relations. The city's neighborhoods were highly

segregated and several areas home to people with subordinated racial identities (e.g., Black, Latina/o, and Asian American) had been undergoing ongoing gentrification, furthering race-based acrimony. Coupled with ongoing instances of systemic racism, it was clear Stockdale had a long way to go to achieve racial equity.

Stockdale hosted multiple genderqueer and trans* community groups, including drag king performance groups, trans* support groups, and trans* social groups. However, similar its relationship to individuals with subordinated racial identities, Stockdale also had a historically strained relationship with the LGBTQ community. This tension was due largely to previous legislative efforts to create and enforce discriminatory policies against the LGBTQ community.

City University had an LGBTQ Center, which was an office dedicated to the concerns, issues, and support of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, and queer (LGBTQ) communities. During the course of the present study this office was staffed by two full-time professionals, a Director and a Coordinator, and hosted three student LGBTQ student groups, one of which was described on the office's website—and echoed by members of the organization—as a radical queer activist group focusing on gender issues, specifically those relating to trans* equity. This group, called TransActions, had a membership that fluctuated between 8-10 people, approximately half of whom self-identified as trans*, and was active in promoting trans*-inclusive policies and practices on campus.

According to the 2010 Campus Equality Index, CU did not have a gender-inclusive residential housing policy (National Student Genderblind Campaign). However, the institution had multiple gender-inclusive restroom facilities, which TransActions advertised on their organizational website. Trans* students in TransActions with whom I spoke felt that while there were communities of support across campus, some spaces that one may take for granted as safe (e.g., the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program) were not perceived as such for trans* individuals. Although the trans* students with whom I spoke mostly perceived TransActions and the LGBTQ Center as safer spaces for trans* students, there was also widespread consensus that not all trans* students on campus were affiliated with either.

Participants

I used criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) to find participants who met specific criteria in order to be included in the present study. These criteria stated participants must:

1. Self-identify under the umbrella term of trans*. Trans* could include, but was not limited to: transgender, FtM, MtF, genderqueer, agender, genderfuck, gender nonconforming, pre-transition, post-transition, pre-hormones, pre-surgical, tranny boi, tranny grrl, trans* man, trans* woman, transmasculine, transfeminine, gender variant, and transgressing gender binaries;
2. Be currently enrolled (part-time or full-time) as an undergraduate at City University;
3. Be 18 years of age or older;
4. Speak English, although it was not necessary for English to be their first language. This criteria was important due to my own lack of ability to speak or understand another language adequately enough to have participants who were not English speaking; and
5. Be born and raised in the United States. This criteria allowed me to narrow the focus of my ethnographic study and not have to confront the trickiness involved in cross-cultural comparisons of trans* experiences.

In order to find these participants, I started by doing what Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) defined as "casing the joint," a method by which I spent time at CU prior to engaging in the research to meet trans* students and see where they spent their time. Once I was familiar with the research setting and those who were a part of the environment, I recruited initial participants by distributing a Call for Participants (see Appendix A) through various offices and departments on CU's campus that may work with trans* students. Offices included the LGBTQ Center, Women's Center, Ethnic Programs Office, Black Cultural Center, Residence Life Office, and the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department. Potential participants filled out an online demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) to determine their eligibility in the study. Once initial participants had been identified, I used snowball sampling methods (Patton, 2002) to identify additional participants who fit my criteria and could be added to my study, which was consistent with the ethnographic fieldwork in which participants and I engaged (O'Reilly, 2005, 2009). This was also realistic for this particular study given the extended time participants and I

spent working alongside each other (18 months). It also allowed me to add participants from various backgrounds and with differing identities to the participants with whom I was already working, which was consistent with my theoretical perspective and the ethnographic approach of understanding culture from various perspectives. At the outset of the present study, I hoped to work alongside of anywhere from 8-12 participants, with a timeframe starting in January 2013 and extending through August 2014. The study began with a pilot during the spring semester of 2013 that involved five students. After that initial semester in the field, four other participants joined the study at various times. The table below shows the full list of participants for the present study. It also provides some key demographic information that is relevant for the remaining chapters of this dissertation, including how they defined their gender identity, personal pronouns, and other social identities they deemed salient throughout our working alongside each other.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Gender Identity	Personal Pronouns	Salient Social Identities	Duration of Participation
Adem	In-between; in a gray space	They/them/theirs	Jewish; feminist	2 semesters
Brody Comeau (BC)	Trans* woman	She/her/hers	White; activist	1 semester
Derek	Trans*	He/him/his	White; sex worker; sexual violence survivor	1 semester
Jackson	Agender	They/them/theirs	White; person with psychological disability	2 semesters
Kade	Trans* man; transmasculine	He/him/his	White; socially and biomedically transitioning	2 semesters
Megan	Trans* woman; woman	She/her/hers	White; biomedically transitioning	2 semesters
Micah	Comfortable; genderqueer	All pronouns	Black; queer	All (3 semesters)
Raegan Darling (Raegan)	Transmasculine; non-binary	They/them/theirs	White; queer	1 semester
Silvia	Agender	She/her/hers	Black; queer; person with multiple disabilities; adopted	2 semesters

Data Collection

Given the extended time I was in the field collecting data, there were various methods for collection I used. Each of these methods for data collection were tied to at least one, if not multiple or all, of my research questions, which were:

1. What are the cultural gender norms confronting trans* college students?
2. How are these cultural gender norms manifested and enforced?
3. How do trans* college students confront, navigate, resist, and/or push back against these cultural gender norms?
4. What role do coalitions among students, faculty, and staff on campus play in the formation and/or maintenance of individual and/or group-based trans* resiliency, if any?

5. How do participants define and make sense of resiliency as they navigate their gendered cultural context?

In answering these questions, and pursuant to critical collaborative ethnographic methodology, I used the following methods for data collection:

1. Participant observation;
2. Document analysis;
3. Ethnographic interviewing; and
4. Participant narrative summaries.

Participant observation. Participant observation is a central data collection method for ethnographic research (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001; Wolcott, 2008). Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2001) described participant observation as "establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting" (p. 352). Due to the size of CU's campus, as well as my desire to provide a more nuanced analysis of the site at which participants and I conducted fieldwork, I decided to focus our inquiry on an area of CU described on tours for perspective undergraduate students as the "heart of campus." This area, officially labeled Central Square, comprised CU's student union, recreation center, student life building, which houses multiple student-centered offices (e.g., LGBTQ Center, Women's Center, Ethnic Student Programs Office), several high-traffic dining areas, and an open air campus football stadium, which began undergoing an expansive renovation toward the end of our fieldwork. There was also a main thoroughfare, Central Avenue, which bisected the area. Central Avenue was a pathway along which students often congregated, ate, and promoted clubs and organizations in which they participated. Due to our research being collaborative, participant observation took place with participants as they went through their days, which included, but was not limited to, my observing participants during meetings, social gatherings, and other publics spaces within Central Square to which participants granted me access. Additionally, I attended other events beyond Central Square when there were additional programs, events, or experiences participants thought would be informative to our work.

In order to determine what level of participant observation participants were comfortable with, I talked with them before they entered the study to see how they preferred to interact when I was with them in Central Square. Because participants were "out" as trans* in varying degrees,

I also asked how they wanted me to refer to them when we were in public spaces (e.g., by their legal name, with a different set of gender pronouns than those they prefer). I also told them they could choose to introduce me however they like, which spared them from having to disclose their involvement in a research study about trans* students if they preferred not to share that information. I continued to check in with participants throughout our time working alongside each other to renegotiate their initial requests if/when they changed. Doing this allowed me to attend not only to the study's methodology, but also allowed me to honor participant anonymity. Furthermore, it made the participant observation feel more natural and less like I was "shadowing" or "observing" them from a distance.

I spent two to three days each week on CU's campus over the course of my 18 months of fieldwork, both with participants as well as just observing social interactions in Central Square. Additionally, I spent time with participants during evening activities, meetings, and events in which they were involved and felt would be helpful for me to understand better the culture of CU. I also shared time with participants having informal conversation, allowing us to get to know each other better. In this sense, I was a participant observer during pre-planned events and programs in which study participants took part and also created opportunities for spending time with participants. Doing so gave me a well-rounded understanding of trans* student culture and how participants developed a sense of resilience in response to the bigendered environments in which they lived. I also checked in with participants throughout their involvement in the study to ensure I was not overwhelming them by asking for too much of their time and energy as participants. This type of prolonged participant observation, a method of being with participants and engaged in "deep hanging out" (Clifford, 1997), aided me in answering all of my research questions.

Document analysis. Wolcott (2008) stated:

> One feature common to the work of all [ethnographers] is their attention to records or "the record." ...The key feature of archival strategies is the relative importance given to sifting through what has been produced or left by others in times past. (p. 62)

Documents such as student newspapers, fliers, zines, policy statements, emails, press releases, and maps add to creating a rich sense of culture. Although document analysis primarily helped me in answering my first research question, this method also aided in answering my second and third research questions as well, as many of the documents I found throughout fieldwork

enforced genderism (e.g., a dress code policy that punishes cross dressing) and/or resisted genderism (e.g., a trans-friendly zine or flier for an event).

Ethnographic interviewing. Along with participant observation, interviewing is a main method of data collection for ethnographic studies (O'Reilly, 2005, 2009; Heyl, 2001; Wolcott, 2008). I interviewed each research participant once a semester throughout my fieldwork. These formal interviews, which lasted between 50-90 minutes, complemented the informal conversations I had with participants during the time we shared together during participant observation. The interviews allowed participants and me to explore jointly the phenomena under observation throughout my time in the field. I also asked specific questions regarding how participants were experiencing and making sense of the experiences, encounters, and events in their environment, allowing me to get a sense of how they were responding to and/or resisting genderism (see Appendix C). On the chance this activity brought up difficult or troubling thoughts, I provided a referral list (see Appendix E) at the conclusion of each interview. Ethnographic interviews done with participants assisted in answering all research questions and provided an additional opportunity to build and strengthen rapport (Wolcott, 2008).

Participant narrative summaries. Each semester of involvement, I invited research participants to write a narrative summary based on several prompts (see Appendix D). The topics for the narrative summaries related to: specific incidents of genderism and how the participants navigated them; the foundation of the participants' resilience; and the participants' responses to the overall research process. Participants wrote and submitted these summaries to me at the end of each semester. On the chance this activity brought up difficult or troubling thoughts, I provided a referral list of offices, services, and organizations both on campus and in the Stockdale community where participants could potentially turn to for support each time participants wrote a narrative summary. I also consulted with a counselor who talked me through how to respond and work with participants if I read anything of concern in the narrative summaries once participants submitted them to me. These narrative summaries became yet another way for participants to "speak back" to their environment, which was consistent with my theoretical perspective. The method was also consistent with critical collaborative ethnography, as it conveyed a sense of researching with my participants rather than doing research on or about them.

The purpose of this activity was threefold. First, writing may have been a more effective medium for those participants who wanted additional time to reflect on issues and questions. By providing this space, participants were able to provide information and feedback on their own timeline and terms. Secondly, because a central tenet of Critical Collaborative Ethnography is to perform research *with* rather than *on* or *about* participants, I used their narrative summaries as I wrote up the research as a way to write with rather than about the trans* students with whom I was researching. In doing so, I made sure to ensure participant anonymity by using the pseudonyms they chose for the study as a way to identify to whom each response belonged. This approach reflected the collaborative nature of the ethnographic process and provided a space in which trans* students could speak directly to readers rather than having to go through me as an intermediary. Third, it provided participants the time and space for self-reflection, which they may not have previously taken. This rationale echoes findings from Tillapaugh (2012), who found that participants in his study, all of whom answered narrative prompts as a component of the study design, developed a deeper sense of self because of their engagement in such critical self-reflection. While it can be difficult for researchers to find benefits for participants' involvement in research studies, this finding provided a compelling rationale for the use of written responses as a data collection method.

Data Analysis

Ethnographic data analysis is rarely a linear or simple process (O'Reilly, 2009; Thomas, 1993). Due to the generative nature of analysis, oftentimes analysis takes place at multiple points during an ethnographer's fieldwork (O'Reilly, 2009), providing the impetus to dig deeper into certain aspects of the culture in which the researcher is enmeshed. O'Reilly (2009) referred to this as "a spiral approach to analysis … moving forward from idea to theory to design to data collection to findings, analysis, and back to theory, but where each two steps forward may involve one or two steps back" (pp. 14-15). Data analysis, then, occurred throughout my research study rather than just at the conclusion of my data collection.

I used a process Jackson and Mazzei (2012) referred to as "thinking with theory" to analyze my data, which meant I used my theoretical perspective of CTP as a lens through which to make sense of the research data. Put another way, I used the three central tenets of CTP (i.e., resistance, resilience, and coalition building) and looked at how data converged and/or diverged from these concepts. I also looked across the data collected from different participants and/or

sources at different times throughout my fieldwork as a way to expose how data may converge and/or diverge throughout my 18 months in the field. For example, participants' thinking and the ways they made sense of their gender, the collegiate environment they found themselves in, and the way they navigated that environment changed due to the longitudinal nature of my data collection. In fact, how participants (and I as a researcher) may have thought at the outset of the study was in some senses drastically different—even contradictory—to our thinking at the end of working alongside one another. As such, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) claimed traditional approaches to coding, which collapse data into generalizable patterns and themes, foreclose the possibility of seeking multiple meanings across all data. For the present study in which participants and I were engaged, approaching data analysis in this traditional way meant these tensions, nuances, and dissonances were overshadowed by the development of supposedly stable and unified themes that persisted across the data.

In an attempt to capture the complexity and potential (dis)continuities within and between participants' experiences and data sources—an approach to data analysis that complements my previous conversation about the diversity within and among trans* students themselves—Jackson and Mazzei (2012) forwarded "thinking with theory" as an analytical process through which difference is honored and drawn out. In doing so, this process of data analysis allowed me to convey the multiplicity of participants' definitions of their gender identity and expression, their personal definitions of resilience, and how they navigated their gendered collegiate context. This meant I sought to highlight where data diverged from each other rather than creating a streamlined and consistent narrative. The resulting analysis, then, relied heavily on raising questions and encouraging educators to interrogate and interrupt how they comply with systemic genderism rather than, for example, developing a list of "best practices" for working alongside trans* students. Using this method of data analysis was also consistent with my theoretical perspective, which Spade (2011) defined as being "about practice and process rather than arrival at a singular point of 'liberation'" (p. 20), by pushing back against normalized, stable, and unified understandings of data analysis (e.g., coherent narratives across participants' experiences) and research findings (e.g., best practices). Instead, "thinking with theory" allowed me to emphasize the collaborative aspects of my methodology, as my analysis promoted polyvocality rather than just one coherent narrative of trans* student resilience.

In order to "think with theory" in a spiral fashion, I analyzed all data on an ongoing basis. I began by analyzing all documents I had collected as a way of exploring the genderism that pervaded environment of City University. As such, I looked for instances of cultural, institutional, and individual genderism through all documents. I also looked for ruptures, or events or spaces on campus where individuals, organizations, and/or departments confronted genderism. Thus, my spiraling document analysis provided an overview of the landscape within which my participants lived, including how it changed over time in relation to the promotion, maintenance, and/or deconstruction of cultural, institutional, and individual genderism.

Next, I used my theoretical perspective as a lens through which to analyze all other data (i.e., interview transcripts, field notes from participant observations, and participants' narrative summaries); a process Jackson and Mazzei (2012) refer to as "plugging in" to highlight how researchers connected a theoretical perspective with data. When "plugging in" my data with my theoretical perspective, I paid particular attention to where the data converged with the three foci of Critical Trans Politics (CTP). These foci were: participants' resistance to genderism; coalitional alliances between participants and others both within and across various dimensions of identity; and individual- and community-based signs of participant resilience. These three concepts were central to my theoretical perspective and "plugging in" my data in this way allowed me continually to foreground my theoretical perspective throughout my analysis. It also allowed me to see each participant's story as unique rather than only using what may be salient for all participants. Thus, a main goal of "thinking with theory" was to recognize each participant's voice by "plugging in" their data to CTP and highlighting how each of the three foci showed up through their interviews, narrative summaries, and participant observation. Additionally, "thinking with theory" is an analytical strategy that is relational in nature, underscoring ongoing interactions between my participants, the data we collected, my theoretical perspective, and me as the researcher. This collaborative relationship of data analysis was in harmony with my collaborative methodology and encouraged me, study participants, and readers to develop a more complex understanding of how trans* student resilience was de/re/co/constructed.

This method of data analysis encouraged me to explore my data in a way that "produce[s] something new, something different from mere themes and patterns generated by coding" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 6). The newness and difference produced by "thinking

with theory" revealed itself as tensions between and among participants' narratives. It also uncovered an effect where trans* students may be resilient at some points, but not at others. Thus, "thinking with theory" mirrored the messiness of everyday life represented in the data by offering a process of analysis that recognized the differences, diversions, and multifaceted experiences of participants. In this way Jackson and Mazzei (2012) stated, "'Thinking with theory' across the data illustrates how knowledge is opened up and proliferated" (p. vii). Searching for themes and patterns by coding may not be able to account for the potential discontinuities across the data. However, these incongruities may be especially important to explore and surface in order to arrive at implications from the overall research study.

Writing Alongside Study Participants

Upon completion of my fieldwork in August 2014, I asked all participants to provide final thoughts on the research process and the key findings from my study. I also made the decision to write an epilogue where participants would have the "last word" in the dissertation. In particular, I wanted to create a space where participants could "speak back" to the administrators, faculty, students, and environment of CU. I invited participants to share and write reactions to the research process both in our last interviews as well as in the last set of narrative summaries, which I used in my data analysis as a way to explore fully not only the data itself, but also the very process of our research itself. Therefore, I used these participant reflections to further elaborate, explore, and/or trouble the research process in a manner that was consistent with my theoretical perspective, methodology, and process of data analysis. In this sense, the participants' counter-stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) served as a visual and textual disruption causing readers to pause and reflect on the stories participants shared. Placing participants' reflections throughout the text, and ending the entire dissertation in their own words, also (re)inscribed the collaborative nature of our research process as an important site of knowledge production and distribution.

Goodness Criteria

In their 1985 opus *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Lincoln and Guba laid out goodness criteria for qualitative research, including how researchers can increase the trustworthiness and credibility of their research. Included in their analysis are the concepts of prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer reviewers, and member checks. Additionally, ethnographers such as Geertz (1973) and Wolcott (2008) discussed the importance of thick description as a form of goodness

criteria. Therefore, thick description becomes an important aspect of establishing what constitutes a credible ethnography.

In accordance with O'Reilly's (2005) suggestion of spending at least a year in the field, I spent 18 months doing fieldwork for the present study. Spending a year and a half at CU allowed for the strange to become familiar and the familiar to become strange (Magolda & Ebben Gross, 2009; O'Reilly, 2005). Put another way, spending an extended amount of time in the field allowed me to gain a more complete understanding of CU and to contemplate the various meanings of my experiences as a researcher instead of making quick assessments without full context. My 18 months in the field also allowed me to build trust with participants and other stakeholders across campus (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, the variety of methods I employed for data collection ensured my prolonged engagement was meaningful.

Similar to my prolonged time in the field collecting data, the plethora of my data collection methods allowed me to triangulate data, thereby increasing the trustworthiness and credibility of my findings. Rather than just using one data collection method, the four (i.e., participant observation, document analysis, ethnographic interviewing, and participant narrative summaries) I chose to employ provided me ample data from which to draw credible conclusions. Moreover, I relied on three peer reviewers who offered their perspectives on my data and conclusions through peer debriefing sessions. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted, peer debriefing "is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308). In light of this, I had three peer reviewers in an effort to increase the diversity of perspectives aiding me in the peer review process.

My first peer reviewer identified as a trans* man, making him an insider to the trans* community. He had also just finished his dissertation, in which he focused on college students who were trans* men. Therefore, his expertise, knowledge of, and personal membership in the trans* community provided an invaluable perspective to my work. My second peer reviewer was a gay cisgender man who was a queer theorist and was fluent in critical theory and methodology. Although he had limited knowledge of the trans* community and trans* issues, his theoretical perspective and analytical skills were a key asset when I began analyzing the immense amount of data I collected. My third peer reviewer was a heterosexual cisgender

woman who, while she had been involved in my research process and thinking, also had limited knowledge of the trans* college student community and trans* issues. However, she was fluent in critical theory and was able to ask incisive questions that moved my analysis and overall research forward. At different points throughout my research and analysis process, I worked with my peer reviewers to talk through what I was doing and finding in the field. I also worked with my peer reviewers when I came to a stuck place in my fieldwork and/or analysis, engaging them in my thinking to see if they could help me get unstuck. For example, during conversations with my peer reviewers, I discussed with them how I was making sense of the data, asked them to share their own perspectives, and sought their feedback regarding what aspects of the campus culture and/or trans* community on which they felt I should follow up or explore in greater depth.

True to the nature of Critical Collaborative Ethnography (Bhattacharya, 2008), conducting member checks was one aspect of conducting research *with* rather than *on* or *about* trans* college students. Due to the prolonged nature of my fieldwork, I had several member checks throughout the research process. Additionally, these member checks served as a process by which to garner further information and insight in the phenomena being researched, namely trans* college student resilience. In conducting periodic member checks, I invited all research participants to review and provide feedback on the research process each semester of their involvement. For each research participant involved in my study, I provided them with their personal interview transcripts and their individual narrative summaries. I then invited participants to provide clarification and feedback about what I had provided them and asked them what aspects of the culture at CU they thought might be illuminating to the research study and, therefore, that I should explore in more depth. I anticipated participants sharing multiple (potentially competing) perspectives when I asked for their involvement in member checks. However, recognizing this multiplicity was consistent with the process of "thinking with theory" I attempted to foreground these perspectives throughout my data analysis. For example, I did not collapse my data into themes or generalizable categories, but sought to display the multiple perspectives that participants had by putting them alongside each other throughout my analysis. In doing so, I exposed and emphasized these differences, as well as attempted to theorize why these differences existed and, as a result, what they may indicate. Although the participants did

not have to participate in this process, providing the opportunity was an important component of the collaborative nature of my methodology (Bhattacharya, 2008).

Member checks also served as a way for participants and me to deepen our shared understanding regarding my research questions. In this way, member checks served as an important springboard to the thick description (Geertz, 1973) I provided when I wrote up our research. Geertz (1973) stated, "Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries" (p. 10). In response to this, Geertz (1973) suggested the aim of ethnographic texts was "to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics" (p. 28). It is these very densely textured facts and complex specifics invoked in the notion of "thick description." My time in the field, along with the various methods for data collection, allowed me to develop thick descriptions of the culture of trans* students and their resilience in confronting, navigating, and resisting the genderism inherent in the higher education environment in which they find themselves. In turn, this thick description enhanced the credibility of my study, analysis, and findings.

Interlude: Bruised by Data

It is 1:30am and rather than sleeping, I am sitting in front of my computer writing. Although I rarely write this late (or this early?), my being kept awake has been a common occurrence over the past six to nine months. More than anything, I find myself unable to sleep, or waking during the night, thinking about participants, data, and the study. Tonight especially, my mind was drawn to Silvia, who is studying abroad in Sweden for the year and with whom I have been trading emails. My mind then wandered to Raegan and Ginnie, who I have not yet seen this semester, but very much miss. And then again I think of Micah, who has been posting articles on his Facebook wall about the social misconceptions of Black youth in America, suggesting that she may be experiencing pain, frustration, and sorrow about the current state of race relations in our country, and how such pervasive systemic racial inequities will likely result in decreased life chances for him and her Black peers. I cannot stop thinking about Kade, who is with his partner Brin on a much deserved vacation to Hawaii, posting picture after sunny picture on Facebook of him lounging on sandy beaches, getting a tan and sporting a toothy smile. And I cannot help wondering what happened to the people with whom I lost touch; where are Jackson or BC? How is Derek doing? What is Adem thinking about these days?

Lisa Mazzei (2013) once stated,

> *Data is vibrant. It is, whether we acknowledge it or not. It pricks, taunts, and talks back. When I am immersed in a project, the data won't let me go, no matter how hard I resist (even when I'm reading a novel at 11:00 at night!). It is data that St. Pierre (1997) described as 'overwhelming and out-of-control.'"*

It's the vibrancy of the data participants and I developed together that keeps me up. It's the relationships we formed, the conversations we had, and the bonds of kinship we continue to carry with us that won't let me sleep. Even when my body is tired, my mind races, and I feel the pricks, taunts, and ways in which the data talk back. The data, like the relationships participants and I created, and the ways we experienced CU, defy easy categorization and understanding. They resist codification and simplistic thematic organization. The data demand to be expressed in full rather than aggregated and ordered. Similarly, participants' identities, although sharing some similarities, were far from uniform, either from participant to participant or for each participant across the duration of our working together for the study. Just as the data bruised me, leaving a noticeable mark on who I am and how I think, participation in the study pricked

the participants, motivating some to make new meanings of who they were and how they navigated CU.

These complex interactions—between participants and me, the study and participants, and for participants themselves throughout the span of their involvement in the study—created an intricate web of meanings through which data could be (re)articulated in multiple ways. Sometimes, one chuck of data could be read various—and sometimes conflicting—ways. These collisions of meanings, the ways that data both came together and diverged, was a reflection of the unruliness of the category of "trans" in the first place; a category that, taken at its most basic etymological understanding, is Latin for "across." So how can one capture such acrossness? How can one contain that which transgresses boundaries and categories? And if one were to attempt to do so, would it not be antithetical to what it means to be and do "trans*" identities?*

For these reasons, the data (re)presented in the following chapter is not categorized into tidy themes. Readers may very well feel unsettled by the use of shifting pronouns (as has already been demonstrated in this interlude in reference to Micah), or the ways in which specific chunks of data are understood in multiple, potentially competing ways. Far from being a theoretical game, these uneasy, contested meanings and (re)presentations of data convey the very unsettledness of what it means to be, do, and practice trans identities in a culture that does not easily recognize transgressive gender identities, expressions, and embodiments. Just like I am up right now, writing this introduction, my intention in (re)presenting the data in this fashion is to convey its vibrancy to you, the reader. I want you, too, to feel the vibrancy, to be pricked and taunted by the data, to be kept awake, even when reading a novel at 11:00 at night. Because then, perhaps, we will be able to move forward together in creating campus environments where gender is addressed in a way that increases the life chances of the trans* students alongside whom I worked to co-construct these data.*

Chapter Four: Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings from this study. In developing findings, I analyzed the data to understand the experiences of the participants alongside of whom I was working. I framed my analysis by using Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) notion of "thinking with theory" as an analytical tool. Next, as a way to provide consistency with the overall study design, I used the research questions as a way to organize my analysis of the data. Therefore, I consciously constructed the findings, themselves based on my analysis of the data, to be reflective of the research questions that framed the overall study. In other words, I intentionally chose to use language similar to that in my research questions when framing the data analysis. Rather than suggesting I had a priori assumptions about what I would find, this choice reflected my desire to provide clear answers to the very questions participants and I set out to answer throughout the study. My choice to reflect the language of my research questions in describing the study findings was also an attempt to increase the accessibility and goodness criteria of the study findings. By linking the language used in the research questions with how I framed the findings, participants could more easily recognize their experiences through the findings and readers could more easily follow the logical progression of the study itself. Thus, my intentional use of similar language was an attempt to increase the study's face validity (Lather, 1991), or the way research "provides a 'click of recognition' and a 'yes, of course,' instead of a 'yes, but' experience" (Kidder, 1982, p. 56). Furthermore, my turn toward increasing the face validity of the study was also an attempt to improve the overall transferability of the study findings themselves, thereby increasing the possibilities for social change and action as a result (and, thus, reflecting the critical paradigmatic orientation of the study itself).

The analytical process by which participants and I co-constructed these findings highlights polyvocality and, thus, encourages one to recognize the ways data both come together as well as diverge. Additionally, there are multiple ways one may understand participants' experiences when thinking through the Critical Trans Politics perspective that framed this study. For these reasons, I conceptualize the findings of the present study as a series of arrivals and departures. By arrivals, I mean the ways data share commonalities related to the three central tenets of CTP (i.e., resilience, resistance, and coalition-building); by departures, I mean the ways data diverge from one another as well as how they may diverge from the three central tenets of CTP. Put another way, similar to how travelers may gather at an airport—itself a similar point of

arrival—they may depart in several different directions. Moreover, even though some travelers may come to the same airport for the same flight, thus arriving at the same point seemingly for the same departure, their specific reasons, purposes, and meanings made of their arrivals and departures may have both similarities and differences. By using the notion of arrivals and departures, then, I seek to highlight the multiple ways in which data can be read and understood through CTP, thereby foregrounding the polyvocality that undergirds both my chosen theoretical perspective (i.e., CTP) and analytical process (i.e., thinking through theory).

I developed five sets of arrivals and departures from the data I collected with participants, which include:

1. Arrival: The gender binary discourse (Departures: Race, sexuality, and gender expression and/or embodiment);
2. Arrival: Compulsory heterogenderism (Departures: Gender expression and/or embodiment and race);
3. Arrival: Resilience as a verb (Departures: Disability, academic departments, and living on campus);
4. Arrival: The (tiring) labor of practicing trans* genders (Departures: Education, in/visibility, and multiple forms of exhaustion); and
6. Arrival: A constellation of kinship networks (Departures: Virtual, off-campus, and academic kinship networks).

In the chapter that follows, each set of arrivals and departures will be explored, complete with how participants' experiences both converge and diverge. Before doing so, however, I begin with a detailed description of City University, the setting in which the study took place. I also introduce the nine participants with whom I conducted this study. In doing so, I highlight several aspects of CU that, although common among colleges and universities, help frame the context in which participants and I experienced the five sets of arrivals and departures. In other words, although what I describe may not be particular to City University, understanding those things described as phenomena rooted in and influenced by genderism allows one to gain a more nuanced understanding of the sets of arrivals and departures themselves.

The Setting

Perched upon a large hill in an urban neighborhood of Stockdale, one can see City University's buildings from some distance. The red brick construction of many of the buildings

reminded me of the college architecture I saw growing up in the Northeast, although there was a distinct lack of white columns at CU. Parking on campus was usually an expensive endeavor, so most days I tried my luck on one of the nondescript side streets that spread out from the edges of campus. Finding a spot along these roads felt like hunting for treasure, but when I found one I always felt like an insider. "People who do not know City would not know to look for parking here," I thought.

The center of campus looked and felt qualitatively different from the outlying areas of CU. Whereas most of the outer buildings were noticeably older and uniform in their construction, the inner portion of campus, which the tour guide who led me and others around campus my first week at City referred to as both "the heart" and "the hub" of campus, was full of buildings with hard, metal corners and smooth, sleek façades. The change of building material and design gave a decidedly modern edge to the heart of campus, and made it feel distinctly different from the brick buildings stretched throughout the remainder of campus. This main area of campus, also known as Central Square, was a main thoroughfare. Although there was rarely a time Central Square was not active, it was flooded with students between classes. The line for the Coffee Express along Central Avenue, the bricked pedestrian roadway that cuts lengthwise across Central Square, often tailed out the front doors and around the building, playing host to students eager for their caffeine fix. Walking further, one went past the campus recreation center on the left, which also had an adjoining dining hall below it, which was called Full Press. The walkway, replete with blue and gold pavers signifying CU's school colors, lead further to the Student Life building and, at the far edge of Central Square, the student union. Outside of the union, students often gathered at outdoor furniture, metal tables with built-in chairs that, despite their intention, were far from comfortable. Despite this, the tables were often crowded with people when the weather was good enough to sit outside—and even some days when it was not.

However, these were not the most noticeable of features of Central Square. That distinction belonged to the large football stadium around which much of City's campus was built and which abutted both Central Square and, on one corner, Central Avenue. Like a crater, the stadium was carved into the ground, creating a bowl-like effect where one could look down onto the playing surface from Central Avenue. A scoreboard towered over the North end of the football field, which was made of artificial turf and has a ten-yard wide likeness of City's emblem emblazoned in its center. The first time I went to City, the placement of the stadium as

a central element of campus struck me immediately as odd. More than the hills or the architecture, the placement of the football stadium spoke to the centrality of sports and sporting culture at City. The more I learned about and walked around CU, I noticed that beyond the South end of the stadium was an area known as Athletic Valley, where practice fields and facilities were located. The campus tour also featured a walk through the building that hosted all athletic coaches' offices, including the Athletic Director. Feeling uncomfortable, but trying to remain present, I listened as the tour guide drew the attendees' attention to the wall of trophies and the low hum of an 80's power ballad being piped in through speakers on the wall. The tour guide told us that music was always playing, which "pumped up" the students to cheer on their teams to victory—which, aside from football and men's basketball games was free of charge for students.

Although I had been an athlete in my youth, and still follow multiple professional sporting events, there was something unsettling about the pervasiveness of sports at CU. Perhaps it was due to the sheer proximity and overpowering role athletics played on campus. Most likely it was also connected to my gender non-conforming identity and not feeling comfortable in a space on campus that was heavily structured by genderism. On the tour, I could not help but recall when Bilodeau (2005) wrote:

> This study illustrates the need for scholarship on the ways in which higher education colludes with binary gender systems to reinforce gender oppression. For example, how are transgender students affected by college environments that cluster educational experiences around "male" and "female" identities, such as men's and women's residence halls, fraternities and sororities, *gender-segregated athletic programs*, gender-specific anti-discrimination policies, gendered restrooms, and even curricular offerings like women's studies? (pp. 42-43, emphasis added)

Despite my not having met any of the students who would become participants at the time, I remember wondering what they made of the heavy influence of sports at City. At the end of my first week of fieldwork, I mused about this in my fieldnotes, writing:

> I felt physically uneasy during the portions of the campus tour when we walked by the football stadium and went into the athletics building. I could feel my body comportment changing and I wanted nothing more than to get out of the space. I am wondering what campus must feel like on a home game day, an experience I am sure many trans* students

at City have to navigate each fall semester. How does this influence how they make sense of campus? How do these events regulate where and when they go out on campus? …I will have to follow up with the students who choose to participate in the study about this. (February 27, 2013)

The (D)evolution of Trans* Awareness at City

Although trans* students had likely been attending CU for some time, when I began this study, the campus Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Center had been in operation for just four years. Affectionately referred to as "The Center" by the staff and students who frequented the office, the office's history was that it was an outgrowth of the campus Women's Center. Once it became its own space, the office moved, quite literally and much to the ironic delight of queer students on campus, to a closet space. After two years, the office "came out of the closet" and was given a proper office space, housed alongside several other identity-based centers. The office, which was staffed by two professional and one graduate student staff members, was a vibrant and inviting space, the front of which was all glass and had full-length venetian blinds that were always slightly drawn. Upon entering the space, one saw two cubicles along the left side of the office, the furthest one back of which was for the Program Coordinator, Tristan. Ornacia, the Director of The Center, had an actual office to the right of Tristan's cubicle, with the front half of the office being dedicated to student space and a workstation for the graduate student staff member.

There were three student organizations related to LGBTQ populations at CU, but Ornacia was quick to point out that not all of the groups had a direct connection with The Center. For example, the advisor for Pride, the overarching LGBTQ social group on campus, was a member of the Women's Studies department, and the leadership of Pride rarely came into The Center or worked alongside staff and fellow students. The two other groups were TransActions, a self-described activist student organization focusing on trans*-related issues on campus, and QPOC Unite!, a group focused on the experiences of LGBTQ people of color, were both advised by Tristan and Ornacia respectively, and had close working relationships with each other and The Center. In fact, there was significant overlap in membership between the two groups, which was often small and varied greatly across the course of the research study.

Significant to this research study, Tristan identified as genderqueer, which research indicates may not be as common as one might expect for an LGBTQ Center staff member

(Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014). Ornacia, who identified as a Black lesbian, often made comments about her self-improvement on trans* issues throughout the four years of her being the Director of The Center. However, Tristan often felt marginalized as a trans* employee, once sharing with me that the only time he felt comfortable as a trans* employee was when he left for a week to attend Creating Change, a national conference coordinated by The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals. Additionally, it became clear that although Ornacia had a good rapport with some trans* students, her interactions with them were minimal, and most of her time was spent in her office attending to administrative responsibilities.

The Student Body

Of particular interest at City as an institution was the focus on the student body. Similar to other campuses, uniformity was a high priority. The same signs, fonts, bricks, and overall look largely pervaded the campus. Even in Central Square, where several buildings broke from the traditional red brick of most of campus, there was a coherency to their metallic edges and lines. This uniformity was replicated by many on campus who talked about having "tiger pride" (City's mascot), or being part of the "tiger family." Before the campus tour, for example, a representative from the Admissions Office talked to incoming students about how, were they to attend, would become a "tiger for life," which was a bond that united all alumni. Moreover, it became clear there was a specific look, which most students adopted and ran according to normative gendered logic. The "City Look," as I came to know it, was best summed up by Micah, a participant, who stated:

> Since [City] is as diverse as it is, there are certain standards for certain groups of people. I would say for the most part, the standard look for CU, probably CU females, would be leggings and a shirt, and hair usually up … and then maybe high tops or the flats gives off the feminine look. And then for the gentlemen, I haven't really noticed with them. It's more typical to see jeans and a t-shirt, and every now and then you see sweatshirt. …I would say there's more of a look for females than for males.

Micah's observations signal two important insights. First, he highlighted the ubiquity of the "City Look," as a gendered—and more to the point, a gender dichotomous—phenomenon. This persisted even across the various diverse groups Micah mentioned at the beginning of her comment. Second, Micah quite astutely pointed to the heightened regulation of feminine gender performance and femininities at City. As Micah mentioned, ze did not really notice the men on

campus. Rather than this being a reflection of Micah's observational skills, the ability for men to go unnoticed at City while women and femininity were highly scrutinized mirrors the way genderism operates culturally. In other words, in a society framed by genderism, normative constructions of masculinity go unnoticed specifically because they are prized above all other gender presentations and, as such, become so naturalized they fade from consciousness. Serano (2007) extended this thought beyond cisgender men and women, suggesting that most people who express some level of femininity, and specifically people who identify as trans* feminine and trans* women, face even further scrutiny, as genderism and sexism intersect to impose further restrictive and regulatory regimes through which these individuals must wade.

Thus, far from the "City Look" being something that negatively impacted those who were assigned female at birth, it impacted all people who, in some way, expressed some level of femininity, including trans* women and trans* feminine people. For example, toward the end of my fieldwork, a student approached me on campus and said, "I have to ask you a question. What's up with your shoes? Because I have never seen that on campus." At the time, I was wearing heels, and, although I had a hard time fathoming the student had never seen someone wearing heels on campus, I knew this was not what he was attempting to say. What he really was doing was pointing out that he had never seen someone who looked like me, with specific masculine features such as a beard, wearing shoes that he identified as overtly—and perhaps exclusively—feminine. Furthermore, the student felt the need to point out my feminine gender transgressions, even going as far to suggest I did not belong on campus due to his "never having seen that on campus," while simultaneously overlooking the masculine presentations of several women with whom I stood. About a month later, a student who was not a participant in the study let me know about a similar incident. As the student explained to me via text, "Some stupid girl in here [a classroom] ran into the 'creepiest thing ever' on the way to class. A large Black man in a skirt…who she took a picture of and gawked at and laughed at" (J. Jackson, personal communication, April 8, 2014). These two examples not only reinforce the presence of the "City Look," but also denote the asymmetrical nature of how it negatively affected those who practice feminine gender expressions.

Study Participants

It seems odd to me to begin discussing findings from a study without first giving some context and background about the participants with whom I worked. However, I am also

conscious of the fact that this study represented a specific moment in time for these participants. Any individual participant descriptions I could offer will inevitably fail to represent them fully. Particularly in relation to their trans* identities, many participants practiced their genders in ways that reflected the suggestion by several scholars that such identities are always under construction (Cooper, 2012; Stryker, 2008). In other words, although all participants had a clear sense of who they were, their identities, expressions, and embodiments were rarely, if ever, static. Therefore, to write individual participant descriptions related to their trans* identities would not only be disingenuous to the literature on these identities, but it would be a misrepresentation of the ways participants queered notions of fixed, stable, and constant practices of gender.

And yet, I still feel compelled to provide some sense of who participants were, however temporal and incomplete the snapshot of who they were may be. Not only will a sketch of who these nine individuals were provide some context for the data and data analysis that follow, but it will also allow readers to begin to develop connections to them as people rather than viewing them as merely providers of data. As a result of the tensions regarding representation, stasis, and emphasizing the complexity of practicing genders, I have decided to provide two types of participant descriptions. First, I will describe how participants practiced their genders as a collective. I am doing this to recognize and honor the many ways their genders were largely influenced by others, both cisgender and trans* people. In other words, rather than trans* identities just being understood as an individual identity, participants underscored a relational aspect of how they practiced their gender that a collective description will allow me to elucidate. Next, I provide brief individual participant descriptions. These individual descriptions do not focus squarely on participants' trans* identities, but are intended to fill in some of the gaps of who they were. Although gender sometimes leaks into the descriptions, they should allow readers to gain a context in which to understand more fully the data analysis that follows.

Collective Description: Participant's Trans* Identities as Relational

As previously mentioned, participants often described the way they practiced their trans* identities as relational. Put another way, the way they came to understand, and ultimately practice, their genders often involved some recognition of other people in their lives as well as the social contexts in which they found themselves. Thus, participants described coming to

know and practice their genders in a manner consistent with Tatum's (2013) suggestion that identity is shaped both by one's personal desires, but also the social contexts in which exists.

The relational aspect of participants' trans* identities became highly visible in conversations about their personal pronoun preferences. For example, Micah discussed her decision to use all pronouns by saying,

> I know there's instances where people are stuck in the mindset that, "Okay, when I was growing up, I was taught boys look like this, girls look like this," and some people make accidents, you know what I mean? They make mistakes.

Here, Micah described his choice to use all pronouns as partially a decision based on those around her. Similarly, Jackson, who often expressed their gender in androgynous ways, stated that they sometimes would just define themselves as a lesbian rather than telling people they were agender. Although I analyze this particular comment in more depth later in this chapter, it is telling that Jackson discussed their gender in a way that would be more understandable to others. Although Micah and Jackson practiced their genders in ways that were comfortable for them—in fact, Micah identified hir gender identity as comfortable—the way their genders "showed up" in public, or came to be known by others through markers such as pronoun preferences or words used to identify themselves, were mediated by others in their environments.

Many participants talked about the notion of passing, or being read by others as the gender with which they identified. For Kade, who passed as a cisgender man, he often wondered how other trans* people may see him. He expressed a sense of loss due to the invisibility of his trans* identity, while in the same breath recognizing the privilege he had in being able to navigate City as someone who passed as cisgender. Megan talked about wanting to pass as a woman, and about what she would do when she did. She said that she would just lie out on a grassy common area of City University. This was something Megan had never done before, but as she stated, "I just have this image in my head of my female self just relaxing in the sun, bathing in the sun."

Raegan had an altogether different perspective on what passing meant to them. Rather than passing as a man or a woman, Raegan stated, "My ideal setting for passing is *people not knowing my gender*" (emphasis added). Thus, Raegan's definition of passing was achieving a level of cultural unintelligibility that Megan was attempting to eschew. In the same vein, BC desired to create a sense of confusion for others about her gender identity. Although she said she

wanted to be read as a feminine, she also stated, "Ideally in the future I [would] probably change my appearance daily. Real butch to real femme and then androgynous, and always make people question." Both Raegan and BC understood their gender identities and expressions as always already in relation to how others read them. Even though they desired to create similar states of confusion, their ability to achieve these goals were dependent on others, thus underscoring the relational aspect of their trans* identities.

This does not mean Raegan, BC, or any other participant could only be trans* if others saw them as such. Instead, it provides a more complex understanding of one's gender identity—be it trans* or otherwise—as being simultaneously an identity one comes to understand on a personal level as well as an identity that is heavily influenced by the people with whom one surrounds oneself. In other words, one's gender is a product of both one's own personal identity as well as a reaction or reflection of how one is identified by others. Exemplifying the way others play a role in shaping one's gender identity, Silvia expressed confusion when she was told that other people's interpretations of her gender expression led them to assume she was a woman. She stated:

> When someone pointed out to me that how you are perceived is what people associate your gender to I was like, "Wait, really?" 'Cause it was a bizarre concept to me, and I was just like, "So people see me wear a dress and think that I'm a woman; that's weird." I don't know [but] that's weird to me.

Thus, although Silvia knew herself to be agender, her comment exposed the reality that how others read her, itself a product of cultural understandings of what constitutes "appropriate" women's clothing, also influenced her gender. Put another way, others (mis)understanding of her gender expression influenced the (un)intelligibility of her agender gender identity. These (mis)understandings changed depending on the various contexts in which Silvia found herself, but the relational aspect of her and other participants' gender identities remained constant.

Sometimes, the relational nature of gender proliferated possibilities for participants. For example, Adem stated:

> I have found that since kind of reaching out, and since meeting you, and starting to talk to you more frequently, and being more involved on campus, it's a lot easier for me to kind of self-identify [as trans*] if I see other concepts out there.

Adem explained this way of learning about their gender was like "stealing parts of other people's identity." The notion of "stealing identities" suggests that Adem's seeing various other peoples' gender expressions provided a wealth of possible options from which they could think through what resonated most with their own identity. However, sometimes the relational aspect of gender foreclosed possibilities, too. This was the case for several participants, including Raegan. When discussing how they identify their gender, Raegan discussed the frustration associated with using language others did not know. They stated:

> All the other words, like genderqueer, agender, gender fluid, gender variant—nobody knows what that means. Or even non-binary, which is the word that I would probably use the most to describe myself … it's like, if I say I'm not a man or a woman, even explaining that, it's just like, they don't get it.

Here, the words Raegan felt they could use to describe their identity were severely limited by other's (lack of) understanding. Although this did not change how Raegan expressed their gender, it did foreclose the ways they felt they could identify as trans*.

The relational aspects of trans* identities were perhaps best summed up by Megan's use of the metaphors of being "inside" and "outside." Megan described being "inside" for most of her childhood, denoting her not being out as trans* as well as staying in her room and remaining isolated from others. However, she also recognized that she would have to start going "outside" as she grew up. Not only would she need to come out as trans*, but her coming out would be precipitated by the way her gender identity showed up in public spaces. Put another way, Megan's gender identity was both a private, individual identity as well as a public one. By going "outside," Megan knew she would encounter other people, which was something she had not had to do when she was "inside." Thus, Megan's going "outside" symbolized her interacting with others and, as a result, the myriad ways in which other people influenced how she made sense of, expressed, and discussed her gender. Although all participants "went outside" in different ways, the relational aspect of their gender identities was consistently felt and discussed.

Individual Participant Descriptions

In the following section, I present a brief description of each of the nine participants alongside whom I worked for this study. Although the descriptions sometimes highlight nuances related to how participants practiced their genders, the intent is to focus less on their being trans* and more on the various other identities and experiences they shared as being important. I

provide these participant descriptions in alphabetical order according to the pseudonyms they chose for the study.

Adem

A slightly built student with gauged ears and neatly styled chestnut hair, Adem had just begun identifying as trans* when we started working together. During our first semester together, Adem was a main fixture in The Center, attending a variety of programs and being actively involved in TransActions. However, this participation waned over time, to the point where Adem only stopped by The Center to use the office's free printing services. Formerly an art student, they had stopped out from CU for a short period of time before returning and becoming a Women's and Gender Studies major. After not having much of a connection to their faith, Adem had begun to explore their Jewish heritage. They were also a deeply committed feminist, which often caused tension for them, as they worried how being trans* while also being a feminist may be in conflict. Adem had an acerbic wit that belied the devotion they had to their pets and their partner, who Adem dated during our second semester of working alongside each other. Adem also regularly wrestled with complex theoretical ideas regarding gender, often spurred by their coursework. For example, during the second semester of our relationship, Adem was taking four Women's and Gender Studies courses, making them contemplate gender from multiple theoretical frameworks in conjunction with their attempting to understand their lived experience as a trans* person. After a year of working together, Adem stopped out from CU, abruptly breaking contact with me, staff members, and their partner. After a period of little to no contact, Adem reached out and we remain in contact. They have not yet come back to CU, and have not indicated if this is a goal of theirs.

Brody Comeau (BC)

When BC and I first met, she was the President of TransActions. She had thick, shoulder length hair, and her typical attire included skinny jeans, a black zip-up sweatshirt, and a black leather purse. She always reminded me of having a punk look, and although I never asked, I imagined she listened to the likes of The Ramones, Black Flag, and The Clash. BC was a self-identified activist who participated in CU's Race and Racism Dialogue Program as well as TransActions. Her younger brother was one of her best friends, and although she had previously come out to her mother, she came out to her father during the time of our working together. BC was deeply sarcastic, but it was clear that her sarcasm was a signal that she liked you. She was

also incredibly soft-spoken and tended to keep a select few close friends. BC smoked marijuana frequently, citing it as a way to escape frustrations, and had moved off campus by the time we began working together. She left CU after one semester of our study, telling me she needed to make and save money. At the time, it was unclear what instigated her becoming financially independent, but she had told me her parents were not wholly supportive of her being trans*, leading me to wonder if her stopping out had something to do with her financial independence. After exchanging some texts in the fall of 2013, we lost touch for a year, after which she came back to CU and we reconnected. Of the four participants who stopped attending CU during the study, BC was the only one to return and start coursework again. BC was not fully out as trans* on campus during our working together, had two separate Facebook accounts—one using her legal name and the other with her chosen name—and said that, ideally, she hoped to be able to switch back and forth between different gender presentations on a daily basis in the future.

Derek

Derek was the first participant with whom I began working. I met him the semester before I began collecting data while getting to know Stockdale and CU. He was boisterous, and even though he was the Vice President of TransActions, his talkative nature often made it seem as though he were leading the group. Derek was a mixture of intelligent, inquisitive, and brash. During our first meeting, he peppered me with questions about the study while other members of the TransActions Executive Board sat around listening. After he had gotten all the information he wanted, he nodded and told me he was really excited to be a participant. He went to The Center regularly, despite having open confrontations with both staff and fellow students. Derek did sex work, was a survivor of sexual assault, and had a polarizing personality, which was evidenced by the strong feelings others had about him, be they affirmative or negative. Shortly after beginning our work together, Derek abruptly stopped out from CU, citing mental health reasons for stepping away from school. We have kept in touch irregularly, and largely through social media. Although Derek had thought about attending Stockdale State College, a community college in Stockdale, he was clear he would not be going back to CU. The decision not to go back to CU was due, in part, to what Derek cited as a hostile climate for trans* students.

Jackson

With sandy blond, short-cropped hair they eventually shaved off for a decidedly androgynous appearance, Jackson and I began working together in the fall of 2013. I met Jackson at a TransActions meeting, which they rarely got to attend due to some intense work responsibilities at The Loft, a local independent theatre in Stockdale. Jackson told me early in our relationship they were particularly proud of having become sober. This was something Jackson had tried multiple times in the past, but with little success. Jackson supposed they may have abused alcohol partially as an escape from confronting their gender identity, but was enjoying being sober. Having stopped out from CU for a period, Jackson had come back to campus to pursue a degree in secondary education. They had attended Montessori schools throughout their childhood, where they grew a love for schooling, and had hopes of becoming an educational reformer by eventually becoming a policy-maker. Jackson was from Stockdale and had a close relationship with their nuclear family. Jackson identified as having a psychological disability and, after a year of working together, they stopped out from CU. Although we have kept in touch via social media, Jackson has not expressed a desire to come back to CU, once telling me they still had an outstanding balance at the school they needed to pay off before they made a decision about coming back.

Kade

Kade had small-gauged ears, piercing blue eyes, and a coy smile. A senior when we started working together, Kade began socially and biomedically transitioning when he was in high school. He had bounced around to a couple high schools when he began socially transitioning, often due to prejudicial treatment and harassment he experienced in his educational contexts. A couple weeks after starting at CU, he moved out of his residence hall room, largely due to the discomfort he felt as a trans* masculine person placed on a women's floor. A Psychology major, Kade was a native of Stockdale, and was deeply connected to trans* and queer groups in the local community. He spent a majority of his time off campus, had finished up all course requirements for his major, and was spending his last year taking as many queer-friendly electives as he could. Kade had been involved with TransActions in previous years, but only stopped by once or twice in the year we worked together. Kade was passionate about living a healthy lifestyle, and often cycled to campus when the weather was good. Although Kade recognized the privilege he had due to his ability to pass as a cisgender man, he also talked about

the sense of loss this caused him. Specifically, he talked about feeling disconnected to trans* and queer communities, one time questioning how people whose gender transgression was more visible read him and understood him. Halfway though our time together, Kade began a serious relationship with Brin, with whom he is still together and now lives with in Wellsburg, a town about an hour from Stockdale. Kade graduated from CU in the spring of 2014 and is taking a year off before applying for graduate programs. We are still in touch, even participating together in a queer reading club, which he organized, but has since dissolved.

Megan

Quiet, shy, and enigmatic, Megan and I first met in the fall of 2013 after she attended her first TransActions meeting. After a year living in the residence halls, Megan lived at home with her parents in Springfield and commuted to campus for the past two years. Megan shared stories of being bullied during her early childhood, forcing her to contemplate suicide and live a rather isolated life. Megan was a Computer Science major, which may have been a result of her interest in gaming that she developed as a child. Although she was not bullied in college, she continued to be teased by her friends and peers in the residence halls, which precipitated her moving off-campus after her first year. She had come out to her parents and sister when we began getting to know each other, and was planning on coming out to her brother shortly thereafter. She also had been going to counseling and, halfway through our working together, began hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and electrolysis. Megan had largely lived an insular life, spending a lot of time in her room, being online, and playing video games. However, when we began working together, she mentioned a desire to "get outside," by which she meant she was intentionally trying to meet other people. She was not publically out as trans*, but began taking steps to meet other trans* people throughout our time together as well as thinking about how she would come out to her friends at CU. After graduating, Megan had hopes to move to California to pursue a career in computer program development and design. Megan and I have lost touch since the end of data collection.

Micah

Behind his quiet demeanor, Micah had a sense of loyalty and love that was unmatched by the many people I met throughout my time at City. A self-described introvert, Micah often could be found in Tristan's office in The Center, watching a show on her computer with earbuds in their ears. Micah was from Deerfield, a metropolitan area two and a half hours away from

Stockdale. He was majoring in the sciences, and during the eighteen months of our working together, she was heavily involved in student organizations, particularly those that revolved around issues of race and gender identity. Micah was intensely committed to their nuclear family, even despite what she defined as her "love/hate relationship" with one of her siblings. Micah was dedicated to raising awareness about gender identity and sexuality on campus, but also recognized he needed to see some level of others' investment in the topics for him to want to do education. Micah felt things very deeply, especially things that impacted them as a Black queer youth. Over the course of our time together, Micah and I became very close, and remain so to this day. We would often stroll around Central Square, talking about family, our work together, classes, relationships, and the days' events. They have talked about pursuing a teaching career after graduating for CU, and although ze has lived in the same state all hir life, she had a desire to eventually land in California.

Raegan Darling (Raegan)

Although I met Raegan in the spring of 2013 when I began collecting data, it was not until the following spring they asked to participate in the study. With a shaved head, a smile that could light up a room, an incredible sense of humor, and an effusive personality, Raegan was often in the middle of any social group in which they found themselves. They had been an MC for one of the drag shows held on campus during the course of the present study, was also a Resident Assistant (RA), and was also involved in the CU's Race and Racism Dialogue Program. Prior to our working together, Raegan began dating Ginnie, a cisgender woman who Raegan described as their best friend. Although Raegan identified as having depression, they had weaned themselves off their medication the summer before our working together, a decision they were glad they made. Raegan was out as trans* on campus, as well as with their nuclear family, and asked to join the study as a way to develop a friendship with me as another trans* person. Although Raegan does not have a Facebook account, we continue to keep in regular contact. It is not unusual for me to wake up to texts Raegan had sent me the previous night, checking in and wondering when we can get together. Raegan was still attending CU at the conclusion of the study, and had all intentions of graduating.

Silvia

With a flair for the dramatic and an effusive personality, it was hard to miss Silvia. She was funny, had a bright smile, and regularly had a full schedule of meetings due to her multiple

student leadership roles. She also was a main fixture as the MC for the drag shows TransActions hosted every semester, a role for which her sharp sarcastic wit was well suited. However, under the veneer of extroversion, Silvia kept a small, tight knit group of close friends, and tended to be a private person. However, when she was with her close friends, Silvia tended to get into philosophical conversations, especially around issues of gender and race. A native of Stockdale, Silvia was adopted and grew up with foster siblings. She developed a passion for art, especially visual and video art, and strongly identified as an artist. Silvia identified as being neurodiverse and as having several chronic illnesses, one of which she was diagnosed with during the last semester of our work together. This diagnosis was both illuminating and frustrating for Silvia. Although she was glad to know what was making her feel the way she was, she worried about her own resilience, saying she did not know if she would be able to bounce back from the diagnosis. Toward the end of our work together, Silvia made the decision to study abroad for her final year at CU, finding a program in Sweden that would allow her to focus on her art. Silvia and I remain in good contact, even seeing each other when she returned from Sweden on holiday. She planned to graduate from City upon returning from Sweden after the spring 2015 semester.

Arrivals and Departures

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to elucidating the five sets of arrivals and departures developed from the data I collected alongside participants. It is worth stating again that one should not read these arrivals and departures as being themes. Instead, one should recognize them as places where data both come together and fall apart, thereby highlighting polyvocality and the various ways in which one can understand participants' experiences and, as a result, use the analysis to effect cultural change on college campuses.

Arrival: Gender Binary Discourse

The first set of arrivals and departures related to the presence of a gender binary discourse at CU. Similar to Pascoe's (2007) "fag discourse," the gender binary discourse at CU was a constellation of words, phrases, actions, rules (written and unwritten), and social realities that regulated "appropriate" gender identities, expressions, and embodiments on campus. Participants clearly articulated what rules about gender existed on campus as well as how these rules were enforced. Oftentimes, individuals on campus exemplified the gender binary discourse in overt ways, such as through direct conversation. An example of one such time occurred during The Center's fall welcome event during my second semester on campus. During the

event, City's Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), who was cisgender and heterosexual, spoke about what she saw as the importance of having LGBTQ students on campus. Detailing her address in my fieldnotes, I wrote:

> During her speech, she thanked "us" (presumably LGBTQ folks) for helping "other people" (presumably hetero/cis folks) confront and learn about difference. The CDO seemed to say this without a hint of irony, as if "our" sole purpose was to enhance the education of hetero/cis folks. (September 6, 2013)

In her short speech, which the CDO had intended to be welcoming and inclusive, she had effectively reinforced the notion that the people on whose behalf The Center was maintained were not like the "other people" on campus. In fact, not only did she inscribe the notion that LGBTQ students were just different—a fairly innocuous statement in and of itself—but she insinuated that LGBTQ students were so different that education was needed to highlight their differences, and that it was the responsibility of the LGBTQ population at City to do that education. The resulting message was that having a diverse sexuality and/or gender was so different, and so contrary to the normative way that gender and sexuality operated on campus, that it required a level of education that only those who embodied these non-normative positionalities could provide.

Similarly, Raegan discussed an experience several participants had of how the gender binary discourse on campus leaked into spaces, which one might assume would be gender-free. Particularly, Raegan discussed going to Full Press, a high-traffic dining hall located below the recreation center along Central Avenue. Raegan explained:

> One of the women at Full Press, when I would swipe my card, she would always refer to me and Ginnie [Raegan's partner] as ladies, and it was just like every time I came in there was a microaggression. She also had a habit of—she'd look at your card and be, like, "Oh," like, "Sarah [a pseudonym for Raegan's birth name]," like, "How are you today?" It wasn't until literally a couple weeks ago [that] I finally corrected her. Like, "Oh, I actually go by Raegan Darling."

Raegan's comment is striking for two reasons. First, it highlights the administratively enforced genderism whereby Raegan could not get a new college identification card with their correct name; a name that, at the time, was different from their name on their official identification documentation on file at City. Secondly, and perhaps more insidiously, Raegan's comment

points to the ways that well-intentioned interactions in supposedly gender-free spaces such as dining halls can have an overall negative effect on trans* students. When faced with a task as universal and necessary as eating on campus, Raegan's choices were regulated by the gender binary discourse at CU. Furthermore, although Raegan was talking about one specific dining hall on campus, and one specific employee in that specific dining hall, it is not difficult to envision this happening in other dining facilities on campus.

The gender binary discourse extended beyond overt, spoken messages, including tacit and covert messages such as looks, attitudes, and moments of discomfort. For example, Adem stated, "There are definitely gendered expectations [for students at CU]. I feel entirely out of place in a non-Women's Studies class, or anytime I am outside The Center." Thus, the feeling Adem had of not belonging, or of being out of place due to their gender identity, was the internalized manifestation of comments like those expressed by City's CDO and the comments made by the staff member in Full Press. Therefore, the overt messages take on an additional edge to them, as Adem began to internalize the messages as their not belonging on City, save for certain specific areas perceived to be safe for Adem as a trans* student. Adem went on to describe the experience of being "mean-mugged" on campus, or fellow students giving them mean looks on campus. Adem understood these looks, which they received frequently, to be in some way shaped by their peers' dismay, confusion, and abhorrence of their non-normative gender expression. Sharing a similar sentiment, Megan discussed feeling uncomfortable when walking on campus between classes. She explained, "I guess definitely walking in between classes I feel really uncomfortable, which I guess is all of campus. …Even though I know this is definitely not true, I sometimes feel like all eyes are on me." Here, even though Megan clearly articulated that she did not actually think everyone was looking at her, she felt as though they were, and that everyone's looking at her was directly related to her gender transgressions. Her feeling focused on is similar to the experience Adem shared of being mean-mugged on campus, with both experiences giving voice to the pernicious effects of the gender binary discourse on an affective level.

The reach of the gender binary discourse at CU even stretched into classroom spaces. BC in particular discussed changing her major due to the reliance on a binary logic of gender. Specifically, she said:

> I am good at Econ. I understand it, but it's not what I want to do. The College of Business is dumb. … [In] business, you had a class—it was the dumbest thing—where you had to dress up in formal wear and give these presentations. I wanted to go get a blouse and get a mixture of feminine and masculine formal wear. But that took—that would take time, money, and preparation. So I ended up throwing on a pair of pants and a dress shirt.

Although BC knew she was good at economics, she felt forced to change due to the lack of room—both material and metaphorical—for trans* people in her chosen major field. Notions of what constituted "appropriate" formal wear for presentations pressed so heavily on BC that, regardless of how good she was at her major, or how well she understood the concepts, she did not feel comfortable remaining in the field. Thus, one can interpret the effects of the gender binary discourse as having far-reaching impacts that stretch well beyond one's time at CU.

Moving from the ways the gender binary discourse operated in hetero- and cisnormative spaces at City to thinking through how they operated in queer and trans*-specific settings, Derek shared a detailed list he had sent to The Center staff addressing ways he felt they needed to become more trans*-inclusive. The list included things like posting ground rules for The Center, supporting a university-wide policy where students, faculty, and staff could change their names in university database systems without first doing so legally, and hosting trans*-specific events on campus. By way of addressing Derek's concerns, staff members at The Center indicated that they thought TransActions as a student group should be responsible for promoting cultural change at City (e.g., for leading the charge to implement a university-wide preferred name policy). Although one could understand this as promoting student agency and voice, it could also be read as an approach that placed a heavy burden for broad-sweeping cultural change on a group that: had a small and inconsistent membership; lacked intentional and developmental advisor support; and, due to their status as a student group, could not garner the same level of respect and access that The Center staff, who constituted a dedicated office on campus, could have gained.

Looking specifically at how the gender binary discourse operated within the LGBTQ student organizations themselves, BC recalled, "There are safe spaces more in the queer spheres. But even at CU Pride [the main overarching LGBTQ student group on campus] and with certain LGBT people on campus, they'll say stupid shit about trans* and stuff." Here, BC's comments

highlight that, aside from the gender binary discourse on campus being just a phenomenon reinforced by cisgender and/or heterosexual students on campus, it occurs within LGBTQ affinity spaces and groups. In other words, although the student leadership of CU Pride framed the group as being inclusive of people with diverse genders, the gender binary discourse still operated in a restrictive way to marginalize BC and other participants within that space.

The critique of student organizations went beyond just CU Pride, however, and included TransActions itself. BC and Silvia each shared stories of feeling marginalized within the group, whose mission was explicitly trans*-inclusive. As BC recounted, "Someone in TransActions last year, [who] I consider really queer-friendly, but wasn't trans*, they—like, I spit on occasion when I'm walking. And then she's like, 'You've gotta stop spitting—that's not very ladylike.'" The level of gender policing and overt scrutiny of BC's behavior by her peer, a fellow member of TransActions and someone who BC took to be "really queer-friendly," is a prime example of how the gender binary discourse seeped into not just hetero- and cisnormative spaces on campus (e.g., dining halls), but also were present in trans*-specific spaces. Moreover, not only was the gender binary discourse present, but it had the effect of alienating some students from one of the few spaces on campus constructed specifically with the intent of fostering trans* inclusion. Speaking to this paradox, Silvia shared,

> I used to be pretty active in TransActions my first year here. Um, and not so much last year, and there was definitely a reason for that. There was a person—they don't go here anymore, but they were here. They were pretty radical, like, really really radical. Like, to the point where people were pretty uncomfortable, and there was a lot of conflict, a lot of drama, and [they] were always sort of—I don't want to say dictating the meetings, but that's basically what they were doing. So they would always be like, "We're gonna talk about this," and like, "These are the only people who can talk." And then it just got to the point where I didn't want to go to the meeting. So, like, I'm there, and that's supposed to be a place where I feel supported, and it's my first time really being away from home and really feelin' like I have time to talk about these things or even think about them … There's…a whole basket of gender expressions, and not all cis people look the same, just like not all trans* people look the same. And all trans* people are gonna look like you and just giving the talking stick to the trans* people in the room who look like you [isn't right]. So I just eventually left the group. And then last year when the opportunity came

> up—back when Derek was still here, Janelle and I were just sorta having a conversation. So I was going to go to a meeting that week, and we were talking about a date I had gone on, and then they [Derek] were sitting at the table, and they were like, "Wow, this conversation really proves that I'm not a woman." And I was like…[pause]…I'm just never going back to a TransActions meeting … because that had been my experience of … not being accepted.

Many, if not all, participants shared the sentiment of not feeling comfortable in CU Pride. However, the notion that even TransActions, a space solely dedicated to trans* activism and awareness, was regarded at times as being a marginalizing space highlights the divergences amongst ways participants experienced the gender binary discourse on campus. I now turn my attention to exploring three such dissonances, or departures. Specifically, I address departures related to participants' racial identities, their sexualities, and their gender expressions and/or embodiments.

Departure: Race. The gender binary discourse took on a particularly racialized feature for both Micah and Silvia that was not present for other participants. In fact, the ways Micah and Silvia's racial and gender identities intersected resulted in their experiencing genderism differently than that experienced by White participants. Thus, one must be careful not to understand this departure as constituting the same sort of gender binary discourse previously discussed, but just with examples from Black communities and spaces on campus. Instead, Silvia and Micah's Black and trans* identities intersected to create a new set of effects that influenced how Micah and Silvia navigated the entire campus. So, while Micah and Silvia discussed straying from Black communities and spaces on campus due to the lack of safety or comfort transgressing binary norms of gender, their race also mediated their experiences in largely White spaces.

For example, Micah was quick to point out how The Center operated largely as a White space, even in spite of the Director Ornacia's identifying as a Black lesbian. For example, although Micah marked becoming involved in The Center as an important step in learning about and reflecting on his gender identity, she also highlighted that The Center operated largely as a space for White students. Particularly, she stated:

> Being involved in The Center, it's helped me a lot actually … I went to a program last year that brought together The Center and the Black Cultural Center [BCC]. And during

> that program, we were talking and I was like, "Oh, I didn't know there was people of color in The Center." And that's what kinda turned me off in the first place. So, I started to come, I got involved, and, … learning about the different terms and different people, and meeting new people that were not inside the binaries when it comes to sex and gender identity and all those things; it opened my eyes and made me explore more about how I feel about myself? So, that was—it was a learning experience.

Here, Micah expressed viewing The Center as a White space by the statement, "Oh, I didn't know there was people of color in The Center." Moreover, The Center was the only space where Micah could learn about and interact with people who transgressed "sex and gender identity and all those things." In fact, Micah explicitly discussed that conversations about gender identity were not happening in other spaces where Micah spent time on campus, not even in the BCC, which was a consistent co-sponsor with The Center for certain events. When Micah realized this, it caused her to stop going to the BCC as often and curtail their engagement with BCC events, stating:

> I felt accepted for who I was, but I felt that it was almost one of those don't ask, don't tell things …And it didn't necessarily make me feel uncomfortable, but it made me shy away from a lot of things … I feel like that made me shy away from being as involved as I could have been in the [BCC].

Thus, not only was The Center coded as a White space, but because this was the only space to talk about trans* identities, the identities themselves were also coded as White.

It is worth noting there is nothing innately negative or impossible about being both Black and trans*. In fact, participants and I undertook this study at a moment when some trans* women of color were experiencing heightened positive media attention. For example, Janet Cox published her memoir, leading to a subsequent book tour (which included CU as a stop) and national media attention, and the popular rise of Laverne Cox as both a celebrity and trans* activist in her own right led to her being the first openly trans* woman of color to be featured on the cover of TIME magazine. Understood in conjunction with the many trans* women of color activists (e.g., Reina Gossett, CeCe McDonald, Monica Roberts), blogs and news sources focused on issues of trans* people of color (e.g., TransGriot), one might assume that the notion of these two categories of identity (e.g., being trans* and being a person of color) being mutually exclusive would be irrelevant. However, this would be an overly simplistic interpretation.

Instead, Micah elucidated a far more nuanced relationship between his Black and trans* identities. Specifically, the recognition that The Center was the sole place on campus to learn about and meet trans* people—a result of the gender binary discourse at City—coupled with the coding of The Center as a White space, manifested in the feeling that trans* identities must also be a specifically White positionality. Thus, to be Black and trans*, while not materially impossible, was constructed as an impossibility in the social imaginary of CU. The construction of this seemingly impossible positionality was a direct outgrowth of the production of a different set of effects for the gender binary discourse due to the complex intersections of race and gender identity.

Micah and Silvia also expressed reticence in being heavily invested in maintaining strong connections to spaces coded as Black at City, such as the BCC. For example, I recall one evening when I met Silvia on campus for an event co-sponsored between The Center and the BCC. The event was located in the BCC, and despite her being designated the MC, Silvia did everything she could to stall for time. Already an anxious person, I kept asking if we needed to begin walking over to the BCC, to which she groaned, slumped down in her chair, and said flatly that she really did not want to go, but knew she had to show up. Specifically, she articulated that she did not want to go due to the event being in the BCC and the overwhelming nature of the gender binary discourse in the space. When we finally made it to the BCC, the event had already begun (a new MC had been found at the last minute) and Silvia slipped into the back row of seats alongside Janelle, one of her closest friends at City.

When asking Micah about his experience as a Black queer person on campus, he expressed a sense of loneliness and difficulty. He stated:

> I'm very attached to both of my identities. I can't leave one without the other, and especially my race, that's something that I can never give up. And being Black and queer on this campus has been an interesting experience for me? I'm not gonna say all bad, because it hasn't. But it's been kind of a lonely journey, because most of the Black queers that I know, they're strictly identified, they don't cross those lines, they're not stuck in the middle, they're usually feminine or very masculine, and especially with the females. Even with the males, it's usually one or the other, they don't have that kinda middle of the line that I tend to tread. …When it comes to the African American culture here, it's more of one of those things where like, "Oh, we know you're funny, but we don't wanna have

> that discussion, because we can deal with you if you like women and you dress completely like a girl all the time, or you are always dressed like this." Or, "If even you just accepted the masculinity that you have and you completely dressed like this, then we could accept you because you are one extreme or the other. But the fact that you walk that middle line is kinda like we don't know to deal with you, we don't know how to treat you."

Thus, Micah felt that people in the Black community on campus treated hir differently due to their queer gender presentation, which often transgressed the gender binary by rarely staying consistently masculine or feminine. He expanded on this further, expressing:

> I see a lot of other Black queer individuals—like, queer as an umbrella term—and they're either super masculine or super feminine, and I've noticed they've almost been more accepted. …But on the opposite side, because I am so attached to my race, it's kinda hard bein' just a queer individual, especially, when most things queer in the media, you mostly see White, Caucasian, European gays, and it's kinda like they're the face, so where does my face belong? And I see a lot of White people, who are queer, kinda like me, like they identify like me, and they can walk that middle line and be just fine, but they don't have the same struggles as me, so it's kinda like, what's important for me to discuss isn't important to them to discuss. So it's one of those things where it's like, yeah, we can hang out, but all's we can talk about is specific things to LGBTQ. We can't discuss other things. We can't discuss how I am being affected by my race while I am being LGBTQ. That's not something that often comes up; it's a hard line to walk.

Micah not only expressed loneliness in her asking where she belonged amidst the wealth of White gay media representation, but also highlighted that his ability to navigate space as a Black queer person was more difficult, and created a more liminal existence, for them than for White people who may identify and express their gender queerly. Moreover, Micah highlighted a deep tension in that there were barriers to her being able to explore their Black queer identity with others in spaces coded as White (e.g., The Center), but there were also barriers to expressing and talking about genderqueerness in Black spaces on campus. Therefore, even though Silvia and Micah knew there were queer Black students at CU, some of whom even spent time in the BCC, their queerness was largely masked due to their being in the BCC, a space that was not perceived as being welcome to discussing, expressing, or embodying one's gender queerly.

Micah and Silvia's experiences regarding the gender binary discourse also resonated with my first interactions with Nadia, a BCC staff member, which I recounted in my fieldnotes:

> I mentioned I was searching for participants and was wondering if she know [sic] of any trans* students with whom she could connect me, of if there were any student organization meetings I could attend to recruit. At this moment, she took another deep breath. She explained this was a difficult topic … [and] Nadia mentioned the Black community on campus was just starting to come around on issues related to sexuality and gender. (March 3, 2013)

I had a similar encounter again with Nadia at the beginning of the following fall semester during a welcome event for The Center. As I wrote in my fieldnotes:

> One of the things I heard at The Center Meet and Greet came to mind again today in light of one of my interviews (with Micah). She was saying how it is hard and a bit lonely being Black and queer, which made me think of Nadia telling me at the Meet and Greet that she can't think of anyone who may be a fit for my study. Here, the confluence of race and gender identity reinforce what Micah has told me about feeling like she needs to choose (or feels forced to choose). If Nadia cannot think of anyone who is Black and trans*, I wonder if this is a symptom of (or a result of) the genderism present in the BCC and/or that she has been socialized to think. (September 18, 2013)

These two encounters make clear that the gender binary discourse at City was readily present in the BCC, both in the way the staff structured programming and involvement opportunities as well as in the way staff and students did—or perhaps more accurately, how students and staff did not—discuss or allow room for gender transgression. Furthermore, the way Micah and Silvia experienced the gender binary discourse on campus, and how it influenced how they navigated campus—specifically, where they felt safe, comfortable, and willing to spend time—was further mediated by the intersection of their racial and gender identities.

Departure: Sexuality. Sexuality was another social identity around which participants' experiences navigating the gender binary discourse at City varied widely. At times, others reinforced the gender binary discourse due to the perception of participants' sexualities. Kade offered a particularly poignant example of this, recounting an experience in which a gay couple confronted him on campus. He stated:

> I had this experience last year … there was, I would assume, a queer couple. It was two men, they were holding hands, and they walked past me and I stared at them, 'cause I thought one of them was cute [laughs], and one of them … I think that he thought that I was straight and was offended by them, or was feeling something negative towards them because I was looking at them, and he gave me a dirty look and called me a breeder. And it was a really weird experience for me because I was like, "Woah," [laughs], I feel like the tables have really turned from wanting to hide this othered kind of part of my identity to not wanting to be perceived as this normative straight male.

Despite Kade's not identifying as straight, the two men Kade passed on campus coded him as straight. Their doing so was rooted in a sense that all people who passed as normatively masculine—which Kade admitted was a reality for him—must be men, who are then attracted to women and, thus, would be insulted by being called a "breeder," a pejorative term for heterosexual people. The couple in Kade's story did not think that Kade may not identify as a man; in fact, similar to Micah and Silvia, his being trans* was seen as an impossibility in that moment due largely to the gender binary discourse in which the couple Kade passed by were steeped.

Additionally, several participants spoke about the trickiness of dating as a trans* person. For example, Jackson talked about one person with whom they were in and out of a relationship over the year of their involvement in the study. Part of Jackson's ambivalence about being in the relationship was their partner's inability to recognize Jackson's agender identity in the way they wanted it to be recognized. Specifically, Jackson stated:

> It didn't really work very well [chuckles]. I mean, it was kind of the same issues. And the issues were not necessarily understanding where I was coming from about my gender, you know? …We would try to talk about things, but for the most part, it had to do with her saying, "Well, I don't understand. I don't see how this is any different from how I feel just being a gay woman." And she's like, "It's the same," and I'm like, "No it's, it's really not the same," you know [laughs]? …You know, you can only really fit and go along with that for so long before it just becomes … too much; where you know where this person's not gonna be able to accept things about you that you've already readily accepted.

Silvia also recounted a particularly painful story about a dating experience she had recently had, stating:

> It was probably one of my most uncomfortable dates I should say. So we're walking into the Cheesecake Factory, and we just had this awkward door moment of who gets the door first, and like [laughing], I don't even know. We are both standing there, and I reached for it, and they reached for it, and then it was like, who goes in first? So, I just went in first, like I can't see what they're assuming, but I went in first, so I don't know. …And then ordering. Just like, ordering for me, or the check went to them, and I'm like, "Oh my God!" It was so awkward. I was wearing a dress; I like dresses. They weren't wearing a dress. It's just perceptions and how they were being determined in that space, and how they were treating me, and how they were treating me were dictating [sic] how the staff was treating us, and it was just very bizarre.

Both Jackson and Silvia's narratives point to the complexities of dating as a trans* person. Not only did the prospect of dating provide multiple challenges within any given relationship, as they both highlighted, but navigating social space as a couple provided additional challenges. Silvia exemplified this additional complexity when she discussed the wait staff at The Cheesecake Factory taking gender-based cues from not only how she was dressed (i.e., in a dress), but also how her date was treating her.

Despite these complexities, participants continued to go on dates and seek romantic partnerships, finding ways to do so that aligned with their trans* identities. For example, Kade found that dating within explicitly queer and trans* circles allowed him to escape some of the negative experiences he had, particularly with some of the gay men on campus he had dated. For Raegan, they had a long-term cisgender partner, Ginnie, with whom they had ongoing conversations about gender identity and how gender was mediating their relationship. Similarly, several other participants (e.g., Jackson, Micah, Adem, Silvia) continued to seek partners with whom they felt comfortable being themselves.

Departure: Gender expression and/or embodiment. A third departure in how participants experienced the gender binary discourse at CU was related to participants' gender expression and/or embodiment. For example, discussing the gender binary discourse on campus, Jackson noted,

> I've noticed there's certain people that are definitely—not just on the CU campus—people who will expect people to be a certain way based on their biological sex. I don't see that much animosity toward people who don't adhere to that on campus, which … maybe I don't see it that often because I'm kind of passing as a woman, you know?

Here, Jackson gave voice to the reality that they may experience the gender binary discourse differently than others specifically because of their passing as a woman (and, thus, fitting into the logic of the gender binary due to being assigned female at birth). In other words, although Jackson's identity as agender did not adhere to the gender binary, they supposed that at times, others read their gender expression as feminine or, perhaps more to the point, not masculine. Thus, Jackson thought their being coded as a cisgender woman allowed them to navigate CU differently than someone who others coded as transgressing the gender binary.

As Jackson's previous comment suggested, other participants experienced City differently due to their different gender expressions and embodiments. For instance, BC, who had not begun hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and was not attempting to pass as a woman on campus during her participation in the study, stated, "I'm always a little worried about comments about when I carry a purse now that I do." BC knew she may not pass as "woman enough" for some people at City, and, as a result, she worried about receiving negative comments when she wore her purse, a feminine-coded artifact. However, right after acknowledging this, she went on to say:

> But it really helps with being gendered, ah, what do you call that? Female. It's funny, I went with Heidi to buy alcohol last night for her, and the guy called us ladies and he was the cop that was there, and he used feminine pronouns throughout. And I was like, "Alright. Cool."

Thus, although BC may not pass in most social settings, the ones in which she did pass were invariably easier and less panic inducing. Thus, BC's comments are a direct indication of how others make sense of one's gender expression and/or embodiment and how, as a result, one's ability to navigate space might become more or less restrictive.

Moreover, BC's remarks make clear that, whereas one's gender may be understood in certain way in one time and place (e.g., her being read as a woman when buying alcohol), this may not be consistent across times and spaces (e.g., her fear of receiving negative comments for being read as not a woman while carrying a purse on campus). This opens up the possibility that

how participants navigated CU's campus in relation to the presence of the gender binary discourse had to be flexible and open to adaptation. It also points to the very instability of the gender binary itself, as one could recognize participants like BC and Jackson as being both "woman" and "not woman" at different times and in different spaces. If this were the case, then it would stand to reason that participants—and other trans* students—might be able to leverage those spaces on campus in which they were recognized as themselves as a potential strategy to resist the gender binary discourse itself. In other words, if there were certain spaces in which others understood and appreciated trans* students' transgressing the gender binary, then these students could potentially create ways to maximize time in these spaces, thereby subverting the overwhelming press of the gender binary discourse on campus.

Arrival: Compulsory Heterogenderism

Rich (1980) first coined the term compulsory heterosexuality in order to highlight the way "women's choice of women as passionate comrades, life partners, co-workers, lovers, tribe, has been crushed, invalidated, [and] forced into hiding and disguise" (p. 632). Through the exploration of literature in which this phenomenon operated, Rich demonstrated the culturally embedded assumptions around the supposed naturalness—and thus the centrality and validity—of heterosexuality. Further, Rich demonstrated that the supposed naturalness of heterosexuality came at the cost of lesbian existence, which had been largely constructed "as a less 'natural' phenomenon, as mere 'sexual preference,' or as the mirror image of either heterosexual or male homosexual relations" (p. 632). Later, Butler (2006) discussed compulsory heterosexuality as byproduct of the ongoing cultural centrality of heterosexual practices, experiences, and activities. Furthermore, she was concerned with, among other things, exploring "to what extent … gender identity, constructed as a relationship among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire, [was] the effect of a regulatory practice that can be identified as compulsory heterosexuality" (Butler, 2006, p. 24). Thus, for Butler, there was a link between the cultural notion of compulsory heterosexuality and one's gender identity. This link, which she discussed as a "matrix of intelligibility" involved the cultural linking of binary notions of sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire in ways that deemed any transgressive practices of gender socially abhorrent, abject, deviant, and impossible.

Expanding upon the aforementioned work of both Rich (1980) and Butler (2006), the data from the present study suggest the existence of compulsory heterogenderism at City, a term

I developed to explain the ways in which participants' gender identities and sexualities were consistently understood in and through each other. Put another way, although participants' sexualities (i.e., being gay, lesbian, or bisexual) are distinct from their gender identities as trans*, the way other non-trans* individuals could make sense of the participants' gender was through their sexuality. These misperceptions were largely rooted in sexuality-based stereotypes that dictated one's sexuality as a direct result of gender presentation (e.g., a masculine presenting female being understood by others as a lesbian). As a result of the linking of sexuality and gender identity that comprises heterogenderism, participants' gender identities often went unrecognized, rendering their trans* identities invisible.

Jackson spoke to the effects of compulsory heterogenderism, particularly in how it regulated how they interacted with others at City. When explaining how they discussed their gender identity with others, Jackson stated, "For a while it was easier for me to identify as a lesbian, because people understood it, you know?" Here, Jackson felt that their being agender was so unknown—and unknowable—at CU (itself a product of the gender binary discourses on campus) that instead, they used a culturally intelligible sexuality (i.e., lesbian) as a marker of their gender identity. Thus, Jackson just "identified as a lesbian," grafting gender identity and sexuality—two distinct yet often overlapping categories of difference—onto one another as a result of the compulsory heterogenderism on CU's campus. Here, the presence of compulsory heterogenderism at City dictated that Jackson set aside their agender identity—an identity that was particularly salient for them—in favor of a more knowable, or legible, identity marker. Similar to Rich's (1980) suggestion that compulsory heterosexuality threatened the lesbian existence, the social reality of compulsory heterogenderism stood as a deterrent to Jackson's existence as agender at CU.

Micah expressed similar sentiments to Jackson regarding others' lack of knowledge regarding trans* identities and expressions. He was also able to clearly demonstrate that such a lack of knowledge—again a result of the gender binary discourses at CU—impacted the way she was read and understood on campus. In one of our first conversations, Micah stated:

> Gender expression—most people don't ask me about my gender expression because they just assume, "Oh, you're a girl, but you dress like a guy." They don't really know what it is, so they don't ask. They are just like, "Oh, you're a dyke," or, "You're Micah." That's how they know me.

Micah's statement highlighted the prevalence of the gender binary discourse at CU in their explaining that most people just assume she was a girl, but dressed like a guy. Although he used different words, Micah explained there were two, and only two, discrete gender categories at CU: "girls" and "boys." Furthermore, any gender expressions that transgressed or challenged the supposed naturalness of this discourse were unintelligible. In Micah's own words, people "don't really know what it [transgressive gender expression] is, so they don't ask." Micah went further, though, suggesting that instead of asking about his gender expression, others made assumptions and "are just like, 'Oh, you're a dyke,' or, 'You're Micah.'" Here, others replaced Micah's gender identity—which ze described as comfortable or genderqueer—for a derisive marker of lesbian identity (i.e., dyke).[8] Even when others did not read Micah as "a dyke," they still did not recognize her gender identity, instead opting to see him as "You're Micah." Although one may think of this as liberating in the sense one could argue others were recognizing Micah—and, as a result, his gender identity—as exactly how they were expressing themselves in these moments, there might be an alternative, more pernicious reading of this comment. Specifically, one could interpret Micah's comments to indicate the ways in which others read his gender identity as a singular aberration or a unique facet of her particular life rather than recognizing Micah as a part of the trans* community. Thus, even if people may not have read Micah's gender expression through hir (perceived) sexuality, the resulting effect was the same as if it had been; their gender identity and expression were still deemed culturally unintelligible.

Adem highlighted the presence of compulsory heterogenderism at City in our first interview. When I asked Adem in which spaces they felt uncomfortable on campus, we had the following exchange.

> Adem: I don't necessarily feel comfortable walking around after dark, which is not necessarily because I am female-bodied and I think I'm gonna get raped, but mostly, I—I have a lot of issues with this because I never know which one it is—'cause there's not only that, but also what if somebody sees me and is like, "You're queer, and I wanna teach you a lesson." And I'm kind of perpetually afraid that I'm either going to be raped or get my ass beat.

[8]It is worth mentioning that some in the lesbian community have reclaimed the word dyke, refashioning it as not being derisive. However, in the context Micah used the word, it was clear the word was being assigned to them in a negative manner. This, then, substantiates my describing the word as derisive in the above analysis.

Z: Now when you say people will mark you as queer, do you mean genderqueer? Are you talking sexual orientation?

Adem: Anything.

Z: Okay…

Adem: Anything. I'm leaving that one completely open.

Through this exchange, it is quite clear that Adem felt unsafe at night on campus. However, what is less clear, even to Adem, is why they felt unsafe. It could have been due to Adem being someone whose sex was assigned female at birth. However, it could also be due to others reading Adem as queer, which they left open in terms of being understood as a sexuality or gender identity. Thus, Adem stated they could never know which identity might result in physical or sexual violence; their sex, their sexuality, or their gender identity. Adem's inability to disentangle their tightly coupled identities speaks to the reality that they may easily see one identity as overshadowing, negating, or replacing another. Such difficulty for Adem could have perhaps been a result of their recently coming out as genderqueer, and thus their not having the time to understand fully how their gender identity influenced how they navigated campus. However, it is equally plausible that Adem had been socialized by their educational environment to see these identities as interchangeable precisely because that is how sex, gender, and sexuality had been culturally (re)enforced at CU. In other words, Adem's seeming inability to decipher what was causing their feeling unsafe may not have been due to a lack of insight on their behalf, but due to their socialization in an environment steeped in compulsory heterogenderism.

Taking the focus off of how Adem was reading their identities in and through each other, it is also worth mentioning that Adem's perception of how others may read their identities also highlights heterogenderism. Specifically, Adem left open the definition of queer in our aforementioned exchange, thus allowing it to be understood as both a sexuality as well as a gender identity. Adem did not know whether the threat of violence may result from people's irrational fear or hatred of their sexuality (i.e., queerphobia) or their gender identity (i.e., transphobia), which could be due to others not knowing, seeing, or perhaps caring about a difference between these identities. Thus, compulsory heterogenderism might have been the underlying logic by which the threat of violence existed for Adem. This suggests that the threat of violence for Adem, while possibly linked to their sexuality as queer—itself an internal and, thus, an invisible identity—could also very likely be a result of their genderqueer expression—an

external manifestation of their internal gender identity. Although compulsory heterogenderism may not discriminate based on which particular identity might initially provoke others' irrational fears or hatred (i.e., sex, sexuality, or gender identity), the results could be equally deleterious.

This extended analysis of the threat of violence Adem felt is reminiscent of Namaste's (2006) suggestion that what some termed "gaybashing" was ultimately a form of "genderbashing," or violence based on one's transgressing culturally intelligible constructions of gender. In fact, based on Adem's commentary, one way to read Namaste's nuanced articulation of genderbashing might be through a lens of compulsory heterogenderism. Put another way, the rationale for why genderbashing is mistaken for gaybashing may itself be an effect of compulsory heterosexuality. Again, this underscores the cultural unintellgibility of trans* identities and expressions and the subsequent ways in which they are read in, through, or are replaced by more culturally intelligible sexual identities.

Departure: Gender expression and/or embodiment. Revisiting the experience Kade had of the queer couple he walked past on campus calling him "a breeder" provides another salient example of the prevalence of compulsory heterogenderism. Below, I have reproduced the portion of Kade's interview transcript where he talked about this experience, italicizing the particular sections that reflect the cultural logic of compulsory heterogenderism. In his interview, Kade stated:

> My experiences [of being trans* at CU] have really shifted … my first year was spent wanting to just be average, I guess. *Now most people don't read me as anything but cisgendered and usually straight …I feel this sense of loss of my identity in a way?* I had this experience last year in the College of Music, and there was a queer couple. It was two men, they were holding hands, and they walked past me and I stared at them, 'cause I thought one of them was cute [laughs], and one of them—*I think that he thought that I was straight* and was offended by them, or was feeling something negative towards them because I was looking at them, and *so he gave me a dirty look and called me a breeder.* And it was just a really weird experience for me because I was like, "Woah," [laughs], *I feel like the tables have really turned from wanting to hide this othered kind of part of my identity to not wanting to be perceived as this normative straight male.* (emphasis added)

As Kade articulated, most people perceived him as embodying a normative gender (i.e., cisgender) and, as a result, having a normative sexuality (i.e., straight). Thus, the way others

read his perceived gender identity and sexuality had the effect of collapsing them in on each other, making Kade fear others may see him as a "normative straight male." In other words, Kade worried that his passing for male meant that his trans* identity was erased, and was instead supplanted with being straight. Thus, the sexuality others perceived him to have, like the couple who called him a breeder, indicating their perception of him as straight, covered over his trans* identity.

Furthermore, Kade's commentary highlights how, due to compulsory heterogenderism, he experienced a sense of loss regarding his identity as trans*. When I asked him to expand on this feeling, he stated:

> It kinda hurts. It's something I'm still kinda dealing with …I always thought it was silly in high school where people would wear pride bracelets and things like that. But it was to, you know, find a sense of community and to express your identity. And my identity always had pretty much been on my sleeve in a way, and now that it's not, I feel this urge to somehow express my identity? So, for example, one of the classes I am taking, there's an individual who I sit next to who presents very androgynous [sic]. I keep wanting to ask what their preferred pronoun is, and [to] talk to them, but it's not really a class where we can talk much. And occasionally I will see people on campus who I think might be gender non-conforming in some way, and I feel this sense of community, and almost, like, familial ties with them, because we have such a small community, and I just feel like they most likely are just perceiving me as one of those normative jerks [laughs].

Kade's remark about pride bracelets and other visual queer artifacts is telling, as it uncovers one of the ways queer people have been able to signify their queerness to others. These sorts of visual signifiers have existed in multiple forms throughout history, with the neoprene bracelets to which Kade alluded having become one of the more recent iterations. For Kade, now that his gender expression and embodiment meant he passed as cisgender and, thus, straight, he now understood the importance of using these visual signifiers. As he stated in the extended quote above, he felt a sense of familial ties with other people who challenged and defied the gender binary discourse at CU. However, without having a visual signifier himself, he worried that other trans* folks were "just perceiving [him] as one of those normative jerks."

Shifting from Kade, who others perceived as expressing and embodying his gender as a man, to Megan, who identified as a trans* woman but did not yet pass as the woman she knew

herself to be, one can see a differential effect of compulsory heterogenderism. Specifically, because others did not perceive Megan as a trans* woman, she was often derided as gay. This had happened throughout Megan's childhood, which she explained was a time during which she experienced intense bullying. In describing the effect this bullying had on her, she stated, "I was being bullied, so I was trying to stop the bullying, so I was like, 'well, obviously they think I am gay, so I have to play the guy role.'" Here, Megan understood that, in the minds of the people who were bullying her, to be gay was synonymous with being feminine. In other words, others substituted her being gay in place of her feminine gender expression, thereby erasing her gender identity.

Moreover, the result of the bullying Megan experienced was that she did not feel comfortable expressing her trans* identity publicly, and even contemplated suicide on multiple occasions. In fact, the semester Megan and I began working alongside each other was the first time she began connecting with other people in non-virtual, online spaces. The metaphor she used was that she had spent most of her life as a trans* woman being "inside" and was now trying to go "outside." In other words, she spent a lot of time in her room, playing video games, learning and connecting with others in online chat rooms and spaces, but had yet to meet and interact with other trans* people in physical spaces. Much of her hesitancy to "go outside" was likely due to the effects of compulsory heterogenderism. Because others continued to perceive her as gay, and continued to bully and tease her about her perceived sexuality, she felt more and more compelled to, as she worded it, "play the guy role." Thus, the result of her being bullied and called gay impacted how she expressed her gender identity. Specifically, she had an opposite reaction as Kade did; namely, instead of feeling a sense of loss around not being perceived as trans*, she tried to be perceived as straight and, as a result, cover her trans* identity.

It is important to point out that Megan's attempts to cover her trans* identity were not a character flaw on her behalf. In fact, Megan had very important and real reasons for covering her identity. Due to her experiences of being bullied and teased throughout her youth as well as during her time at City, she worried that her coming out would result in potential violence. She expressed this most poignantly when she was reflecting on her experience of working together on this study, sharing:

> I always knew that I was gonna get outside of my room eventually, and so I guess this whole time I've sorta been preparing myself for some things I might encounter. And so

> I've always been reading articles, like the bad articles, you know? The sad articles about transgender stories. …I guess some of them are more funny stupidity articles about Fox News not accepting trans* people. But then other stuff you know, stories about where trans* people are beaten, or raped, or stuff like that.

For Megan, her experience of compulsory heterogenderism was that if she challenged the people bullying her, and questioned their perceptions that she was gay—itself used as a pejorative marker of her feminine gender expression coupled with her not yet passing as a woman—there may be violent repercussions. Thus, her choice to cover was, for her, a wise one regarding her own safety and vulnerability. Moreover, her feeling the need to cover her gender identity by promoting an image of straightness speaks to the negative cultural climate produced as a result of compulsory heterogenderism. Recalling again Rich's (1980) comments about compulsory heterosexuality threatening lesbian existence, or Butler's (2006) notion that the cultural unintelligibility of diverse genders produced by compulsory heterosexuality delimited possibilities for trans* people, Megan's remarks stand as a stark reminder of the potential real life costs of resisting such cultural expectations.

Departure: Race. As has been previously discussed, CU has a history of deeply entrenched racism, reflecting the racism and race-based divisions in Stockdale. In fact, during the fall 2013 semester, a particularly egregious racist event occurred on campus, causing the resignation of a high profile Black administrator and instigating a series of campus-wide conversations about race. Upper-level administrators also responded by bringing several nationally known anti-racist educators to campus for a series of free lectures, in the hopes that these speakers could help contextualize the presence of racism on campus. Due to the history of strained race-based relations and events at CU, race became a significant lens through which to view the cultural phenomenon trans* students were experiencing on campus. As such, it was not surprising that the data from the present study suggested the cultural reality of compulsory heterogenderism was qualitatively different when viewed through a racial lens. Particularly, the enforcement of compulsory heterogenderism took on a decidedly community-based aspect for participants of color rather than the individual enforcement experienced by White participants (e.g., Kade, Megan, Jackson, and Adem).

One of the more significant examples of the way race mediated the effects of compulsory heterogenderism occurred during the summer of 2014. At the beginning of June, an upper-level

Black administrator known affectionately as Captain (a pseudonym) for his omnipresence on campus and the high esteem in which the campus community held him, posted a picture of the Black NBA star Quame Smith (a pseudonym) on his Facebook wall. In the picture, Smith appeared to be wearing dark leggings or tight jeans and a brightly colored, floral patterned jacket. In posting the picture, Captain also added the comment, "Metro sexual or suspect? TALK TO ME" (emphasis in original)? A series of Black colleagues and peers then commented on Captain's original post, suggesting that Smith was gay. These comments ranged from one individual posting, "HOMO SEXUAL…" (emphasis in original), another writing, "If this isn't openly gay, what is?," to yet another writing, "Interesting when someone says, 'Why worry about what they wear, it shouldn't matter?' But when the next hour I hear, 'Where are all the single [Black] men?'…their [sic] somewhere wearing dresses."

Far from being a private conversation among Captain's friends, the Facebook post garnered attention from many members of the faculty, staff, and student communities at CU, including Tristan, Ornacia, Silvia, Janelle, who was then the President of TransActions, and Raegan's partner Ginnie. Sharing her reactions in a blogpost, Janelle wrote:

> The word "suspect" is used to convey the idea that basketball player Quame Smith may not be straight and/or a cisgender man. Captain is soliciting input about Smith's gender identity and/or sexual orientation based on a single photo of Smith dressed in a floral jacket and close-fitting pants or leggings. The implication—that gender identity or sexual orientation can be determined by what someone is wearing (or their "gender expression")—is entirely false and harmful to the LGBTQ+ community. (Janelle, personal communication, June 2, 2014)

Thus, not only did Captain's post garner a number of people who supported his suggestion that Smith was "suspect," a pejorative term for someone who is gay, but it also encouraged a range of individuals to speak up in resistance of such a display of compulsory heterogenderism. However, of particular note when looking at the voices of resistance was that the individuals who spoke out against Captain's post identified as being LGBTQ themselves.

What was clear from Captain's post, and the subsequent visceral response from a wide array of Black colleagues and peers, was the overwhelming community support for enforcing compulsory heterogenderism. In other words, this incident was not one in which Captain alone questioned Smith's sexuality based on the athlete's attire, but it was a community effort. One's

ability to understand how race mediated the differential effect of compulsory heterogenderism take on addition context when remembering Nadia's comment that the Black community at CU was just starting to become comfortable with sexuality and gender-based issues. Thus, compulsory heterogenderism was not just something that was enforced between individuals, as was the case for Kade or Megan, but it took on a community aspect, where many in the Black community were vocal in proclaiming that one's transgressing gender spoke to the perception that the individual was not straight.

Silvia also spoke at length about the impact of others telling her she was a paragon of Black womanhood. As an active student leader involved in a variety of student clubs and activities, Silvia had quickly become well known among faculty and staff at CU. In speaking of her obligations, she stated:

> When everything sorta starts picking up and you're doing three programs a week, and you have an awards ceremony on Saturday, and all of these things are happening, and everyone is just going, "She's an example of an excellent woman, an excellent woman," and that's what [I'm] hearing all the time.

The notion of being an "excellent Black woman" was something that others often placed on Silvia, despite her not identifying as a woman. This occurred due to her leadership skills and heavy involvement in campus life. In fact, her involvement had started to snowball, leading staff to suggest she get involved in honoraries and sororities for Black women, all of which then led to her feeling the weight of others' expectations that she was a "perfect Black women." She articulated this by sharing,

> Being in those spaces where I am praised for being active and involved, it's sort of like assumed that I'm gonna go on to do other things. We have women's honoraries on campus, and there is one specifically for Black women, so I've been told a lot that I behave like that, or I should emulate these women. …So it's kinda like, how I am as a student leader, the people that I associate with, and the people that I date, and all of these different tiny tiny specks that amount to the perfect Black woman or something.

At the same time that Silvia was being complimented as "an excellent Black woman," she was also being funneled to join Black women's sororities, honoraries, organizations, and activities, all of which would have signified her being "the perfect Black woman." Of particular note, too, was that Silvia knew that the people she dated were one of the "tiny specks" that amounted to being

seen as "the perfect Black woman." Thus, the campus staff that were encouraging Silvia to join Black women's organizations—many of whom were Black themselves—were perceiving Silvia's gender as an excellent or a perfect Black woman through who she dated, which was held as a signifier of her sexuality. Moreover, when Silvia was involved in groups organized by Black staff members specifically for Black women, she expressed that the expectation was that she and the other Black women involved were all heterosexual. For example, she talked about participating in one group by sharing the following:

> My first meeting there, we were all in the room, going around saying our name. And when that was over, my mentor goes, "Okay, so who here has a boyfriend?" And I'm just like… you know, keep my face in passive, don't react externally… I was in this tiny room with five other girls … I just felt completely outcast, and I just wanted to leave immediately. So, I was sorta traumatized after that, and I sort of didn't go to any of the [future] meetings.

Thus, Silvia was caught in a seemingly endless loop in which she was expected to be heterosexual, and that she be comfortable talking about her presumed heterosexuality to be involved in organizations for Black women, which she had been encouraged to join specifically because others perceived her as being "an excellent Black woman." This expectation was a community expectation that she received from many Black people at CU, be they faculty and staff who were encouraging her to join these groups or students who were participating alongside her in the organizations. Furthermore, she felt pressure to join participate due to the expectation that she was already an "excellent Black woman." Here, Silvia's status as "an excellent Black woman," denoting a gendered identity as a woman, was in some part mediated through her needing to maintain a heterosexual identity. Because this became a community-based expectation placed upon Silvia by fellow Black colleagues, mentors, and peers, one can again see a different nuance to how race influenced the maintenance of compulsory heterogenderism.

It bears stating that, although race influenced the maintenance and effects of compulsory heterogenderism, my highlighting this in the data is not a suggestion of a normative judgment. In other words, I am not suggesting the compulsory heterogenderism manifested in Black communities and spaces was any more or less pernicious than the compulsory heterogenderism present in White communities and spaces. Instead, what I am attempting to do is highlight the fact that race mattered when it came to understanding how participants experienced compulsory

heterogenderism on campus. To not talk about the influence of race in relation to compulsory heterogenderism may inadvertently suggest race did not matter, thereby overlooking a particularly salient identity for Black participants and how they understood and responded to compulsory heterogenderism as a cultural reality. Moreover, elucidating this particular departure may help educators respond in more precise ways to this cultural phenomenon depending on the student populations with whom they work.

Arrival: Resilience as a Verb

Etymologically speaking, resilience is a noun, connoting the impression that it is something one either does or does not have. Framed this way, one might think that if trans* students have the ability to persist through college despite negative cultural climates (e.g., the gender binary discourse, compulsory heterogenderism), or if trans* students can respond positively to any potential negative experiences they may face, then they are resilient. Viewed from such a perspective, resilience is some*thing* that one must possess. Educational scholars doing resilience-based work have yet to address adequately the question of how individuals may be able to develop their own resilience, if they can at all? Furthermore, if one cannot develop resilience, then what happens when that individual is confronted with barriers or hardship?

Despite the aforementioned limited understanding of resilience, the data from this study suggested that resilience might not necessarily be something that one has or does not have (e.g., an ability), but a practice. Thus, the notion of resilience becomes less of a noun, or a thing one possesses, and more of a verb, or an action one can practice. In this sense, even if one does not feel resilient, or does not think of hirself as resilient, one may be able to practice resilience as a strategy to overcome individual enactments of genderism as well as the cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism. Understanding resilience as a practice also allows for a more complex and nuanced understanding of the notion itself, as one may be able to practice resilience with varying degrees of success. In other words, one's practice of resilience may not hold consistently across times and spaces, as might be suggested from the suggestion that resilience as a noun is something one has, and thus, something one may use in all contexts. Thus, the notion of resilience is transformed into an action one develops through practice, the successful deployment of which may shift across times and spaces. It follows, then, that resilience as an action suggests one must repeatedly attempt to put the concept to work in various contexts and across various times in one's life.

Such a perspective of resilience suggests there may be something performative about the concept. I use the word performative not to suggest that one's practicing resilience is disingenuous, or that it signals a falsity in intention or action. Instead, I suggest an understanding of performativity closely aligned with Butler's definition of the term. Specifically, Butler (2006) coined the term to highlight the ways in which individuals repeatedly practiced their genders in an attempt to make their genders culturally legible and, thus, their lives more livable. Butler also suggested that the need to practice repeatedly one's gender was due to the consistent failure to emulate culturally intelligible expectations around gender, especially in relation to cultural expectations related to how gender should align with one's sex, sexual desires, and sexual practices. In other words, because we, as individuals, all fail consistently in our attempts at practicing an intelligible positionality in relation to gender and its entailments (e.g., sex, sexual desires, sexual practices, race), we are left with no other option than to repeatedly practice, or *do*, our gender. Put another way, a practice is a habitual act that we all engage in, and does not necessarily entail one "gets better" at what it is one is practicing (in this case, practicing one's gender). Recognizing practice as a habitual action rather than a process of "getting better" also strips away the mythical notion that there is one "good" or "right" way of practicing or doing one's gender. Therefore, in the present context, I utilize the concept of performativity to highlight how participants repeatedly practiced resilience in various contexts and across the duration of our work together as a way of *doing resilience*.

Viewing resilience as a practice-based orientation also has the added benefit of aligning with the affirmative approach through which I framed my work alongside trans* participants. In other words, our work together was less about figuring out if they were resilient, and more about developing strategies through which they could practice resilience. In other words, in participants were able to practice resilience in ways that were particularly successful for them, they could reenact those practices in other spaces or at other times. However, if their practicing of resilience did not prove effective in particular environments, they could always try a different approach the next time they were confronted with a similar situation. They may also choose to practice resilience by not going back to such environments, thereby allowing them to better navigate their college environment by avoiding places and spaces where they met resistance. In this sense, practicing resilience is not about "getting better" at the practice, but figuring out the areas and the people with whom one can best be successful, and thus, best navigate their

collegiate environment. In this way, the notion of viewing resilience as a practice challenges the staid preconceptions that trans* students must always already face victimization by recognizing the alternative possibility that trans* students have agency, which they are able to use to navigate the gender dichotomous collegiate environments in which they inevitably find themselves. Extending this even further, recognizing trans* participants' practice of resilience also works to depathologize those students who do not or are unable to be resilient in various contexts. In other words, reorienting one's perspective of resilience allows one to recognize how particular environments might limit one's practicing resiliency due to cultural manifestations of genderism (e.g., the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism at CU). Thus, one's environment is interrogated as the source of such an inability to practice resilience rather than it suggesting a character flaw or a problem that reflects negatively on any particular individual.

Of particular interest for the present study were many times when, during formal interviews with participants, I would ask if they felt resilient only to hear negative responses. For example, during our second interview, Silvia stated, "I don't really feel resilient at all." Similarly, thinking about the seeming incompatibility of his genderqueerness and Black racial identity, Micah mused,

> Before I got the idea of like, "You know, I'm just gonna be me," I would sit and think, like, "Maybe I'm not supposed to be a part of this community. Maybe I am not supposed to function inside of this community. Maybe it's not something that I'm supposed to do. Maybe it's something I'm gonna have to let go."

Furthermore, Jackson questioned their resilience in our first formal interview, sharing they had not faced overt, extreme hardship (e.g., gender-based violence) and, as such, wondering if they even had anything to overcome. However, at the same time, participants were able to identify ways in which they practiced resilience, oftentimes doing so in close succession to questioning their own resilience.

Although the specific ways participants practiced resilience varied widely, there were two overarching similarities across the data. First, how participants practiced resilience changed based on the particular environments in which they found themselves. For example, when I mentioned to Adem that I often listened to music on campus as a way to tune out other people's reactions to my gender presentation, they stated, "I won't put earphones in if I am walking around campus, because I want to know what the hell is going on behind me. …I'll text, but I am

not going to be that distracted." For Adem, texting someone while walking across campus was a practice of resilience that reflected their environment, specifically wanting to know what was happening around them in large public spaces. Another way Adem practiced resilience as a result of their discomfort with the large public nature of CU, and particularly Central Square, was to know about, and remain as close as possible to, queer-friendly areas of campus. In their own words, Adem expressed,

> Usually, if I am within, like, a certain radius to the Student Life building, I'm okay, because I'm like, "Oh, well The Center is right there, and the Women's Center is right there, and Coffee Express in right there, and Coffee Express is always safe for queer people, and…this is good, this is like my area."

Adem's practice of resilience, then, was about developing a sense of "their area" on campus. Although Adem traversed spaces beyond that area, they knew it was always a space to which they could return. Furthermore, knowing their area was there increased Adem's ability to feel safe, comfortable, and able to navigate spaces that were less welcoming.

Raegan Darling also based their decisions on how to practice resilience based on their environment. In particular, Raegan would often rely on Ginnie's support to navigate resisting gendered norms and expectations. For example, Raegan talked about having Ginnie help in confronting staff members in Full Press when they were misgendered. As Raegan described:

> Ginnie actually, she helps me a lot with it. Because sometimes, like, I'm so, like, emotionally exhausted from all of this … I don't want to say anything. Like, it's like, literally, if I say something, I'm gonna burst into tears. …So Ginnie's like, "Well, would you like me to, like, correct them? Would you like me to say something?" And usually I'm okay with it. 'Cause someone will be like, "Oh, hey ladies," and she'll be like, "Oh, just one lady."

Here, Raegan and Ginnie were able to partner to find a way to help Raegan practice resilience so as to not become exhausted by continually confronting the gender binary discourse on campus. Moreover, Raegan's partnering with Ginnie to practice resilience relates to Adem's resilience-based practice of texting people when they were walking around campus. These practices suggest that resilience is far from an individual or solitary process. In other words, rather than the typical ways resilience is framed as an individual attribute (Gupton, 2015). For example, Wolff (1995) stated, "Resilience is an enduring aspect of the person" (p. 568). Contrary to this

understanding of resilience, the present study indicates there may be an interactional or relational component to practicing resilience. In other words, participants oftentimes practiced resilience in relation with other people. This nuanced perspective of resilience, namely that it is can be viewed as a group process as well as an individual practice, is significant in expanding how one might view and work to build resilience. Specifically, if one can practice resilience alongside other people, then it may open up resilience as a concept to populations who may place more value on community rather than individuality. Again, recognizing the potential to practice resilience as a group would help depathologize populations who operate from communal values (e.g., Indigenous populations) and, thus, may previously have not been thought to be resilient through an individualistic framework.

The second similarity across the data related to participants' level of outness influencing where and how they practiced resilience. Kade spoke about this in the context of classroom spaces when he said:

> I think that for me coming out, like, in most classes, like, a lecture hall, there is no point, you're not even talking to anyone else. Um, and even in smaller classes, like, if I don't feel like it's relevant to what we're discussing, to me there is no point in coming out.
>
> Um…but if it's a—you know, what I would consider a safe space [I will come out].

For Kade, sharing his trans* identity was an important act of resilience, especially due to his ability to pass as a cisgender man and his feeling a loss of his trans* identity as a result. However, he did not come out in all situations. Instead, he gauged his level of safety and comfort in particular contexts, thus allowing him to make good choices about where and when he would disclose his trans* identity. Furthermore, in class settings, Kade suggested that his coming out as a practice of resilience had to be "relevant" to the course. In the previous quote, Kade linked his comfort with the notion of relevance, giving them equal weight in determining how, when, or if he practiced resilience in the classroom by coming out. He started by saying if coming out was not relevant, he would not do it, but if he considered the class a safe space, he would. Thus, he connected the two concepts, needing both to come out.

Kade further expressed this linkage by talking about one particular class in which his trans* identity was relevant, but coming out would not have felt safe for him. The course had been challenging for Kade due what he identified as the anachronistic way the professor framed trans* identities. Specifically, he said, "Just the title of that class [session] being sex changes …

already I'm like, 'Uh, I don't know how this is gonna be.' Um, so those are maybe, like, risky spaces?" Here, although the particular class session Kade mentioned was discussing gender confirmation surgery for trans* people, thereby making his trans* identity relevant, the space still felt risky. Thus, rather than coming out, Kade practiced resilience in other ways in that class, such as addressing the professor individually and, eventually, asking Tristan from The Center to intervene on his behalf.

Megan and Silvia's level of outness on campus also mediated how they practiced resilience. Specifically, because they were not out during the time of their participation in the study, they had to find other ways to practice resilience. For Megan, who was a Computer Science major, this came in the form of gaming. For example, when Megan played single user role-playing games, she would often play as women. She explained:

> There's games out there that basically you play as a fantasy character, like a madge or warrior or stuff like that. Nowadays, most of the games like that you can choose your gender as well. And I used to only play guys whenever I was in high school. But now, I have switched over to playing females. …For me really, I [am] trying to play myself.

Although Megan had begun HRT midway through our working together, she had yet to come out as trans* to her peers, faculty, and staff on campus. She also had not come out at the company where she was doing an internship. Far from seeing Megan's choice not to come out as a negative reflection of herself, the choice was rooted in her feeling unsafe. This lack of safety was largely rooted in her previous experiences of being bullied and teased, as well as her reading articles and seeing news stories about trans*-based violence. Therefore, instead of coming out, Megan used her passion for gaming to practice resilience by "playing herself," or playing characters that resembled who she was: a woman.

Silvia explained her choice not to be out as agender by simply stating, "That's not really a thing for me. It's very much centered to TransActions stuff and people who go to TransActions." Partially, Silvia's choice not to be out revolved around issues of safety, especially when thinking about her being both Black and agender. Additionally, Silvia had learned that the gender binary discourse on campus did not allow others to see her not having a gender as a legible or possible choice to make, thus reinforcing her choice not to be out. Due to her not being out, however, Silvia needed to find other ways to practice resilience. These strategies largely revolved around creating spaces in which her agender identity almost ceased to matter or be relevant. One

particularly salient way she was able to practice resilience was through making art. In fact, she spoke about one art course specifically, stating:

> Last semester … I was enrolled in my first video arts studio class, and I know that it's really dramatic to say that a class saved your life, but I sort of feel like that without that class, I would not have made it through the semester. I sort of found the outlet to put everything into and get to work on an independent project, and direct it, and produce it, and edit it, and go through the process of getting it critiqued. So, it really helped me.

In contrast to Kade looking for spaces where his trans* identity was relevant in order for him to practice resilience, Silvia practiced resilience by finding spaces where gender became irrelevant. A main difference between how Silvia and Kade practiced resilience revolved around their varying levels of outness at CU, particularly in terms of their safety and comfort being out. Although Kade did not feel safe in all settings, he did feel comfortable in several spaces, thereby allowing him to use coming out as a way to practice resilience. Because Silvia did not feel safe, and because she had ascertained the campus community's overall lack of awareness and comfort with non-binary gender identities, she practiced resilience by not coming out, and in fact, existing in spaces where gender faded into the background. Of course, it is important to highlight how Kade's being White and his ability to pass as a cisgender man mediated his comfort and ability to leverage coming out as a practice of resilience. However, Kade's ability to pass made him feel as though he lost a part of his trans* identity, suggesting that even his passing as a man—something he actively worked to do as a result of his biomedically and socially transitioning—was implicated in how he may (or may not) have been able to practice resilience.

Departure: Disability. One particularly salient departure from the practice of doing resilience related to disability. Specifically, Silvia identified as having several disabilities, including being neurodiverse, having Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Temporomandibular Joint Disfunction (TMJ), and, during our last semester of work together, being diagnosed as having Fibromyalgia. Both her TMJ and Fibromyalgia made navigating the hilly terrain of City's campus increasingly difficult for Silvia during the winter months, often causing her to miss whole days. Her last diagnosis of Fibromyalgia in particular seemed to affect Silvia on a deeply personal level, shaking her own belief that she could practice resilience. Prior to being diagnosed with Fibromyalgia, Silvia had likened resilience to a fabric that, after

being stretched out, can return to its original shape. In reflecting on her own experiences as a Black agender student, she said,

> I feel very stretched out when I'm at campus. And I'm okay living this life that other people have sort of assigned to me. Do I [then] retreat home and go back to how I naturally feel? I think that some days I do more than others. I certainly hope that those moments increase for me, because I think I'm healthiest when that happens.

Here, Silvia was able to articulate that she felt "very stretched out" while on campus. Her feeling stretched was itself emblematic of how the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism affected Silvia. The overwhelming presence of these cultural realities for Silvia, as well as how her Black racial identity and her agender gender identity mediated her experiences of these phenomena, stretched her out of shape, making her feel discord and discomfort. However, by going home, she was often able to shrink back to how she "naturally felt." Thus, one way Silvia practiced resilience was by leaving CU. Her practicing resilience in this way (i.e., by leaving campus) is important, as it suggests that there may not be any preferred outcome of resilience, such as staying at UC. In fact, remaining on campus could have negative implications for individuals, as it often could for Silvia. Thus, her practice of leaving campus as a strategy of resilience expands possibilities for what resilience could look like for other students, as well as how educators could best work with students to promote the practice of resilience.

Of further note, however, is that Silvia associated practicing resilience with health. At the end of the passage quoted above, she stated she hoped the moments of her being able to practice resilience and, as a result, shrink back to her natural state would increase in frequency. She then stated, "I think I am healthiest when that happens." Thus, for Silvia, practicing resilience was linked with health and remaining healthy. Resilience as a practice, then, was more than a way to navigate campus successfully for Silvia; it was a way of maintaining one's health, both physically and emotionally.

However, her own self-reported ability to practice resilience shifted significantly after her doctor diagnosed her with Fibromyalgia. During our last formal interview, Silvia described her feeling a lack of resilience by stating,

> Well, I was thinking about the word resilient. And I was sort of doubting my own resiliency. …Coming out of [the] fall semester with sort of like hit after hit after hit, like,

> never in my entire life … has so much happened all at the same time? And I sort of came to a moment with myself where I was like, "I don't really feel resilient at all." …I feel like I have not gotten up yet. I feel like I am still just dealing with those hits …I don't feel like I'm over it. I don't feel stronger. I don't feel put back together.

Silvia went on to compare her current feelings with those of the previous semester, saying,

> I do things that I did last semester, and they don't feel the same. And I don't think I do them as well, and then that leads to more guilt, or, you know, I can't make a meeting because I'm in bed 'cuz my legs hurt so badly. So, I don't feel physically like I'm standing again. I don't feel like I'm on the same level of productivity, but also socially or emotionally, there's just a lot that I can't deal with right now? So I feel like I may have regressed.

Again, Silvia discussed not only the physical impact on her new diagnosis, but the social and emotional impacts as well. Her ability to practice resilience allowed her to maintain not only her physical schedule (i.e., going to meetings), but also her emotional and social well-being. Thus, due to her new diagnosis, and the dissonance she experienced in not feeling "stronger" or "put back together," meant that she felt unable to practice resilience. Furthermore, as a result of this lack of resilience, she explained feeling as though there was a lot she could not yet cope with and, as a result, suggested that she had regressed in her abilities to 'shrink back' from feeling stretched on campus.

Linking resilience and health again, Silvia further stated, "I don't know if I'm gonna bounce back. Point blank, that's it. That's all. I know that I'm never gonna bounce back from having a chronic illness. I'm never gonna be a healthy person or whatever that means." Of interest in this statement are two insights. First, Silvia's continued linking of the concepts of resilience and health are evident, specifically her feeling that her lack of ability to be resilient is also reflective of her lack of being healthy. For, as she stated, if she will never bounce back from having a chronic illness, then it follows that she will never again be healthy. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it seemed as though Silvia was beginning to come to a critical consciousness around the notion of health, especially what it means to "be healthy" and who it is that controls this definition. Her last sentence, "I'm never gonna be a healthy person *or whatever that means*" (emphasis added), suggests that Silvia might not have been completely sold on the idea that she was then, or necessarily would always be, an unhealthy person. Instead, Silvia's

dismissive "or whatever that means" comment could have signaled a dormant critique of what it means to be healthy. Furthermore, if Silvia ever were to truly challenge notions of health, particularly who controls the definitions of health and how such definitions may diminish possibilities for those pathologized as "unhealthy," then it may stand to reason that she could either uncouple her sense of resilience from being healthy or that she might reconceptualize health altogether. Both possibilities might rearrange how she could practice resilience and, as a result, feel successful as a Black agender individual with several disabilities.

The previous extended analysis of how Silvia's (in)ability to be resilient is striking for two reasons. First, several participants identified as having disabilities, including Jackson, Raegan, and Derek. Although none of these participants discussed their disability as having an effect on their ability to be resilient, their identifying as being both trans* and having disabilities suggests there may be efficacy to future research looking at this particular convergence of identities. Furthermore, although there is no way to quantifiably accurate measure to point to an increase in trans* students pursuing postsecondary education, there is evidence to suggest trans* students "are growing in visibility and voice" (Marine, 2011b, p. 59). Similarly, there is also evidence suggesting that students with disabilities are increasing in number on college and university campuses (Haller, 2006; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999). Taken together, these facts indicate that, far from being an aberration, trans* students with disabilities may be more numerous than the four participants in the present study. Indeed, these four participants made up almost half of the participants in the overall study, and while I am not suggesting that almost half of all trans* college students might identify as having a disability, it stands to reason that perhaps the phenomenon is more pervasive than one may think. Therefore, Silvia's experiences may suggest a call for further research into the lives of trans* college students with disabilities. Whereas there has been previous scholarship focused on the convergence of these two identities, most notably the work of Eli Clare (1999, 2001, 2003), it has yet to be focused on in relation to college students and higher education. Thus, the departure related to Silvia's disabilities and how they mediated her (in)ability to practice resilience provide an important call for future research.

Departure: Academic departments. A second departure for participants in how they could (or could not) practice resilience was in their academic departments. Although some departments allowed participants to thrive in practicing resilience as trans* students, others

delimited possibilities for how they felt they could talk, act, and express themselves. In the spaces where students did not feel comfortable practicing resilience, they then had to make choices about whether they would stay in their major field of study. Thus, some students' inability to practice resilience had long-lasting effects that extended beyond their college experience, as changing majors may also result in their changing career paths.

One example of a student who was in the process of changing majors due to a negative academic department was BC. As I detailed in an earlier section of this chapter, BC shared with me that she had planned to switch from Economics to Journalism. Her rationale for making this choice was because she felt unable to practice resilience in classroom spaces. She shared a particularly frustrating story in which she had to "dress professionally" for a class presentation. Although she had wanted to mix women's and men's professional attire for her presentation, she ended up not doing so. Instead, she said she "ended up throwing on a pair of pants and a dress shirt," further explaining that to queer notions of professional attire "would take time, money, and preparation." There are a couple salient points worth elucidating in BC's comments. First, she linked the ability to practice certain forms of resilience to money. Specifically, for her, she needed some money to be able to blend women's and men's attire together, thus allowing her to practice resilience in a way that was comfortable to her. Because of her lack of money, however, certain modes of practicing resilience were foreclosed to her.

Second, and perhaps less clear, is the connection between the practice of resilience and preparation. It is possible that what BC meant when using the word 'preparation' is that she would have had to think ahead about what she wanted to do. Perhaps this was difficult for her as a student, and as someone who usually worked up to deadlines, she did not have the foresight to prepare an outfit with mixed articles of clothing. However, there is another way to understand her need for preparation. BC had previously shared her disdain for her academic field of study, particularly in relation to the lack of space for and recognition of gender diversity. Thus, BC knew if she were going to transgress the gender binary discourse that regulated her classroom space, she would need to be ready for some pushback from other students and her faculty. Therefore, perhaps her suggestion that she would need to prepare was a reflection of the need to prepare for the microaggressions she would likely face from her peers. Rather than have to face these, BC made the choice just to throw on a pair of pants and a shirt. In this sense, then, BC was practicing a form of resilience in not choosing to transgress the gender binary discourse in

her Economics classroom. Put another way, because BC knew she would confront hostility, her not transgressing gender norms—and ultimately, her decision to leave her major—was a way for her to practice self-care and persist through her academic career. Thus, one could understand BC's experiences in her academic department, and her subsequent choice to leave that department, as both a practice of resilience and a reflection that she could not practice resilience; or, at the very least, that she could not practice resilience in the ways she wanted to on a consistent basis. Thus, her decision was to leave and find an academic department in which she could be more comfortable and safe practicing resilience on a consistent basis (e.g., by talking about her queerness in academic papers, which she highlighted as something she liked to do).

Contrary to BC's experiences as an Economics major, Jackson discussed their field of education as liberating. In our first interview, Jackson had worried about what it would mean for them to transgress gender as a teacher in classroom spaces. However, four months later in our second interview, they had become far more resolved about their gender expression. In part, this was a reflection of the education curriculum at City, and specifically, the faculty's explicit approach to gender diversity. As Jackson stated:

> I can remember when we had the syllabus up in one of my [education] classes on the first day and [the professor] was talking about how we need to be respectful of, you know, race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender variance is what [the syllabus] said. That was great, you know?

The simple act of including gender variance in one's syllabus, and then enacting this value by respecting and honoring gender diversity in the classroom, made Jackson feel much capable of practicing resilience in classroom spaces. In fact, Jackson felt comfortable enough to raise issues related to gender identity during class presentations and discussions. They stated,

> A lot of my projects that I do, or presentations, I try to gear them towards trans* issues just because I think it's important for people to hear about [them] to get more exposure to that and see that it's normal.

Not only was Jackson's focusing projects and presentations on trans* issues a reflection of their comfort in the classroom, due in large part to the enacting of inclusive values, but it was also a way in which Jackson could practice resilience. By sharing information and reflecting their life through presentations and projects, Jackson felt as though they belonged in their education classes and, thus, could have a future as a teacher.

Similar to Jackson's experiences in the Education department, both Adem and Silvia suggested that the College of Art was a comfortable department in which to practice resilience openly. Most poignantly, Silvia expressed:

> I love [the College of Art]. It's sorta like the quirky cousin [at CU], and it's sorta like, "You're kinda weird, but I like you." And every time I'm there, I just walk into [the College of Art] and I feel home or something. Like, I feel like it's okay to be a little weird because there is someone else in [the College of Art] who is weirder than you. So it just feels okay.

Silvia's use of the word "weird" in this statement is far from pejorative. In fact, she seemed to be providing a queered definition of weird, where its use signaled something to be desired and embraced. Thus, from Silvia's perspective, "being weird" by transgressing the gendered cultural expectations at CU was openly embraced in the College of Art. This space became a haven for her, as well as Adem, to do gender as they wished, and on their own terms. Therefore, as a space, the college provided an environment where they—and potentially other students—could practice resilience as trans* students in ways that were not open to them—and others—in different settings, such as the College of Business.

Adem likened this ability to practice resilience in the College of Art to the thought that many students were themselves queer. In our first interview, Adem stated:

> I know [it] is not statistically true, but at least when I think of the stereotypes in my head, most of the people that would have need of an LGBTQ Center would be in [the College of Music] or [the College of Art].

Although Adem admitted this was not statistically accurate based on the students who frequented The Center, there is something powerful about the perception of certain academic spaces on campus being open to queerness and transgressing gender. Put another way, the perception that the Colleges of Art and Music were "queerer" than other academic departments afforded Adem the ability to practice resilience in different, and perhaps more comfortable, ways than they were able to do in other academic settings. So, although it may not have been true that more queer students gravitated toward the Colleges of Art and Music at CU, the perception was significant enough for Adem to feel comfortable practicing resilience in those settings.

It is also worth pointing out that Adem had stopped being a College of Art student after their first year at CU. However, when we were first getting to know each other, they took me to

the College of Art, which they said was a significant area to them on campus. Adem described the space as still being comfortable, and a space in which they felt they could return and be themselves. Thus, the ability to practice resilience in certain academic spaces on campus, like the College of Art, was not dependent on students currently being members of these colleges. This seems particularly important to note, as there was something about the College of Art and the College of Music that superseded one's need to enroll in their academic programs of study. Furthermore, instead of students having to enroll in certain academic programs in order to practice resilience in the classroom, this insight suggests there was a particular ethos regarding gender identity and expression within the College of Art and the College of Music that potentially could be adapted by other academic departments on campus. In other words, rather than suggesting that all trans* students study in particular academic programs, there are ways in which the programs themselves could change to embrace gender diversity.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, several participants discussed certain academic departments as being conflicted spaces in which to practice resilience. For example, although Adem discussed the Women and Gender Studies department as being a welcome space for them as a trans* student to practice resilience, Silvia and Kade suggested it was not always a place they felt comfortable doing so. Additionally, Kade spoke about his confusion regarding the Psychology department at CU, particularly the lack on behalf of some faculty to make their classrooms welcome for him as a trans* masculine person to practice resilience. He stated:

> The Psych department, which is my department, I always expect them to be better. The teachers in general are really good, but most of the student population is not. They're super binary and a lot of them have proven to be really homophobic and transphobic. And I think that I just expect people in that field to be more progressive.

Not only did most of the students hold regressive ideas regarding gender identity in Kade's opinion, but he also shared several stories of faculty expressing negative views toward trans* identities in the classroom. In one experience, a faculty member neglected to correct a student's pejorative commentary regarding gender diversity. This experience signaled to Kade that he could not be out as trans* in the classroom, as he did not feel protected in that setting. Additionally, in his final semester at CU, Kade took a class with a faculty member who continually expressed marginalizing views of trans* people. Specifically, the instructor used the pronouns she/her/hers when discussing trans* men and discussed trans* people as feeling

"trapped in the wrong body," thereby suggesting that all trans* people are in need of correction (e.g., surgery, hormone replacement therapy) to be recognized by their cisgender peers as being "in the right body." Furthermore, this viewpoint links being trans* to one's body and, extending this notion, to one's desire to change their body. Although Kade was biomedically transitioning, he knew this view was extremely limiting for other trans* people who chose not to do so, and was appalled that his teacher continued to promote these damaging ideas. Thus, despite Kade stating "the teachers in general [were] really good" in the Psychology department, there were still several faculty members with whom he had negative experiences. Furthermore, the lack of progressive students in the major, and the lack of some faculty correcting negative views of trans* people and identities, belied Kade's conflicted relationship with his academic department. Therefore, even within areas that some had hoped or viewed as supportive (e.g., Psychology, Women's and Gender Studies), it was unlikely that these departments were wholly supportive, or that these classroom spaces were always places in which participants felt comfortable practicing resilience.

Departure: Living on campus. Although many participants had experience living on campus, only one (Raegan) lived on campus throughout the duration of our working together. In fact, many participants shared that the reason they did not live on campus was due to their repeated run-ins with the gender binary discourse when they had lived in the residence halls. For example, Kade described his short time of living on campus by stating,

> I lived on campus for a week. …I wanted to dorm on campus my freshman year [sic] because I think it's really good experience and an easy way to meet other people and get involved in college life and I wanted the full college experience, but none of my gender markers were changed, so I had to dorm in the female dorms. [Because I started at CU] in the middle of the [academic] year [my roommates] had already been there for half the year and I introduced myself and … one of my roommates, she freaked out, and she was like—'cause I supposed passed to her as male—"Well there was definitely a mistake, we'll get this fixed out." She was really sweet about it, but she was convinced [the residence life staff] accidentally put a boy in the girl's dorm. And so I had to explain to her that I was trans*, and she was pretty nice about it. I had three roommates, and the other two—one was like, kind of ambivalent about it, and then the third one, I think I met her once, because she refused to come back to the dorm because she was afraid that I was

> going to sexually violate her in some way, just because of my identity. [So] obviously that's not a good living situation. And I made friends in the dorm from other floors and stuff like that, and, ah, there was this constant fear that I would be outted [as trans*] just by where I live[d]. So I just decided not to do it anymore.

Kade's experience living in a sex-segregated residence hall designated for "women" posed several challenges for him. First, his roommates were less than accommodating, showing a distinct lack of awareness and understanding about his trans* identity. Although Kade expressed that one of his roommates "was really sweet about it," his suggestion that she was "convinced [the residence life staff] accidentally put a boy in the girl's dorm" belies her misgivings about living with someone who transgressed binary conceptions of gender. Furthermore, the experience of having a roommate who would not even come back to their room for fear of Kade sexually violating her is consistent with the pejorative assumption that all trans* people are perverse and/or sexual predators (e.g., Nicolazzo & Marine, in review; Serano, 2007). Due to Kade's history of bouncing around between primary and secondary schools due to transphobic school climates, it makes sense that he would not want to deal with the living situation he was confronted with upon arriving at CU.

Similarly, Megan shared negative experiences living in the residence halls, which she did for her first year at CU. She stated:

> Everybody on my floor were [sic] the best of friends. We were the [Foley] Nine—we lived on the ninth floor. …We were just this big group of buds, just doin' whatever. But there were a lot of times where they would go out and play frisbee, or they would go out and play soccer and I would play with them, too, just to get outside and do stuff, but at the same time, I felt like, I don't want to do this. …Or there would be some times where I would want to watch a movie or something, but they wouldn't. 'Cause it would be too girly, or they would want to get outside and do stuff.

Although Megan began describing her floormates as being "the best of friends," she went on to express feeling unable to express her femininity around the men with whom she lived. She also shared that the men often teased her when they saw her doing something that could be construed as, in her words, "girly." Returning to her practicing resilience by playing female video game characters, Megan stated the men she lived with would often pick on her, recalling:

> I do remember that some of my dorm friends would occasionally catch me [and would say], "What? Megan, you're a girl character?!" I would get really embarrassed for a second, then I would use the excuse, "What? Girls are cute. Would you rather play someone that looks nice or would you rather play someone that's a guy?" So, I guess I would try to play the gay card on them.

As problematic as Megan's strategy for combating the teasing she faced was, it underscores the incredible reach of gender policing that she encountered in the residence halls. She also shared that her roommate would tease her, stating, "There would be the occasional joke, like, 'Oh [Megan's given name], you're so girly.'" These instances of teasing mirrored the teasing and bullying Megan experienced as a youth. These experiences did little to encourage her to come out, and were part of her moving off campus after her first year at CU.

Kade and Megan's experiences were far from the only negative experiences shared by participants about living on campus. These experiences built on each other for participants, suggesting that to practice resilience meant living off campus. However, the move most participants made to living off campus had another negative implication, specifically that studies have shown that living on campus positively influences student persistence (e.g., Jacoby, 2015). Although these studies do not indicate a causal relationship between living off campus and the lack of persistence, it is worth noting that four of the nine participants involved in the study (i.e., Derek, BC, Jackson, and Adem) stopped out from CU. In fact, only BC returned to CU, and that was after she spent a full academic year away from campus. This means that of the eight participants who lived off campus, half of them stopped attending, with three not returning to complete their degrees. Regardless of the reasons for their leaving, which were varied, it stands to reason that living on campus might have helped them remain students, if doing so had not been such an alienating or frustrating experience for them.

It is also important to point out that while the participants were all practicing resilience, sometimes doing resilience was not enough to allow them to navigate campus successfully. In other words, the significance of one third of the participants alongside whom I worked leaving CU and never coming back cannot be overlooked. In fact, it suggests that despite these students efforts to practice resilience—and perhaps despite their leaving campus *as an act of resilience itself*—they still did not earn a degree, and thus, potentially decreasing future possibilities and opportunities. In other words, regardless of participants' abilities to practice resilience, the twin

cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism were *so* large, and *so* pervasive and overwhelming, that they could not successfully navigate CU's campus, no matter how hard they may have tried. Rather than signaling a lack on behalf of those participants who left CU and chose not to return, these data suggest the omnipresence of systemic genderism and the suffocating effect it had on participants' ability to be successful in college.

And yet, there was one participant, Raegan, who lived on campus during their involvement in the study. Moreover, Raegan was a Resident Assistant (RA), denoting their taking a leadership role in the residence halls. During our time working together, Raegan had been an RA for a year, and they were intending on returning for a second year in the position. Although Raegan shared experiences in which their gender identity was not recognized by fellow staff members, their desire to return to the position, and thereby extend their time living in the residence halls at CU, suggests this was a comfortable environment in which they could practice resilience. In fact, it may suggest that being in a leadership role gave Raegen the ability to practice resilience in a manner that other participants might not have been able to do while living in the halls. However, because becoming an RA would involve committing to living in the residence halls beyond just one week (in Kade's case) and one year (in Megan's case), and there would be no guarantee of an improvement in climate or experiences, the possibility of attempting to be an RA may be too much of a chance for some trans* students to want to take.
Moreover, as I have written elsewhere (Nicolazzo & Marine, in review), the RA application and selection process can be a marginalizing space for trans* applicants. Several CU staff members mentioned to me throughout my time on campus that a number of upper-level staff members in the Office of Residence Life (ORL) were not receptive to efforts to increase trans* inclusion in the residence halls. In fact, the perceived lack of interest in trans* inclusion on behalf of several staff members, including some new staff who had been hired toward the end of my time working with participants at CU, led one genderqueer ORL staff member to leave the college. It also stands worth mentioning that Raegan came out as trans* masculine after becoming an RA. They discussed the experience of coming out as trans* to the both the ORL and RA staffs, stating,

> I had training for my RA job, and…during the diversity training … I was, like, "I would like to be called Raegan Darling now. I'm not really sure about…ah, what pronouns yet. But, I'll tell you if they change, and also, like, don't call me 'girl.' Don't be like, 'Hey, girl.' Don't refer to me and another woman as 'ladies,' and the closest word I can find that

> describes my gender is genderqueer." But I [didn't] know if I want to identify as that, so it was kind of like a—like a precautionary little speil I did. And then … a month later, I was like, "okay, I'm trans*."

It is impossible to say what effect Raegan's gender identity might have had on their application process if Raegan had been out beforehand. However, given the perceptions of a non-inclusive Office of Residence Life staff, and the negative experiences many participants shared experiencing while living in the residence halls, it is reasonable to suggest that trans* students may not be interested in living in the halls longer than they needed to, let along applying for, being selected, and/or serving in leadership roles within ORL.

Arrival: The (Tiring) Labor of Practicing Trans* Genders

Ahmed (2012) wrote:

> Diversity work can involve an experience of hesitation, of not knowing what to do in these situations. *There is a labor in having to respond to a situation that others are protected from*, a situation that does not come up for those whose residence is assumed. (pp. 176-177, emphasis added)

Although Ahmed was writing specifically about diversity practitioners in higher education, there was some precedence at CU for thinking about trans* students as needing to take on the work of educating others about gender identity. For example, thinking back to the welcome speech made by City's CDO at The Center's fall welcome event, I made the following reflections in my fieldnotes:

> In talking with Tristan, I mentioned to him that at The Center Meet and Greet, the Interim Chief Diversity Officer on campus thanked the queer students for being on campus, because we "teach people about difference," and "help other people learn," and "educate students" (*as if that is our job*). (September 18, 2013, emphasis added)

Here, the CDO linked students' trans* and queer identities with a form of labor, namely that of educating the heterosexual and cisgender campus population about issues related to gender and sexuality. Referring back to Ahmed's words, then, the CDO was suggesting that "we," as trans* and queer members of the CU campus community, were needed to undertake the labor of responding to a situation (e.g., education on diverse genders and sexualities) from which others (i.e., heterosexual and cisgender members of the campus community) were protected. Furthermore, heterosexual and cisgender people at CU were protected from the need to educate

themselves or others about gender because gender was so normalized, so institutionalized, that it ceased to exist to them. In other words, the cultural embeddedness of the gender binary discourse at CU, along with the reality of compulsory heterogenderism, had cemented normalized, binary understandings of gender to the point where to practice gender differently was itself a form of labor. As Ahmed (2012) stated, "When things become institutionalized, they recede. To institutionalize *x* is for *x* to become routine or ordinary such that *x* becomes part of the background for those who are part of an institution" (p. 21, italics in original). Therefore, if one understands "x" to signify gender identity and expression, then the institutionalization of gender identity and expression—via the cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism—meant that gender itself receded into the background. Furthermore, for those who practiced diverse gender identities and expressions, like myself and the nine participants alongside whom I worked, it was seen as up to us to do the work of dragging gender out from the background, for pulling it out from the shadows and back into the light.

The suggestion that it was up to trans* people to teach others at CU about gender suggests a connection to an overarching neoliberal ideology in which education, once viewed as a public good, is turned into a private and individual commodity (Giroux & Searls Giroux, 2004; Harvey, 2007a, 2007b). That neoliberalism has become an underlying logic upon which post-secondary education operates is a widely known and discussed by various scholars (e.g., Giroux & Searls Giroux, 2004; Tuchman, 2009). However, what is less discussed is the connection between neoliberalism as an ideology and its press upon those with diverse sexualities and genders (Elia & Yep, 2012). Discussing this very connection, Elia and Yep (2012) wrote, "Identity-based production, distribution, and consumption—as products of consumer culture—have increased exponentially in an ever-expanding neoliberal economy" (p. 882). Thus, the commodification of diverse genders and sexualities as something to be discussed, dissected, distributed, and understood, suggests that one's very identity was imbued with the potential to be traded, sold, or purchased like any other good. In other words, the suggestion that trans* people should teach others about gender was based on the commodification of diverse genders as *something* which one could acquire through participating in a training, educational session, in-service, or class experience. Here, one's own identity (a someone) is turned into a something that others can gain, pass along, or overlook. In other words, trans* genders are turned into objects

of curiosity and educational sessions which offices, departments, and organizations could contract out for in an effort to be taught about diverse genders. Furthermore, the onus of doing such gender-based work, of pulling gender out from the shadows either by practicing and/or educating others about trans* genders, was largely placed on trans* members of the CU campus community. This burden, itself connected to the neoliberal logic present at CU, just as it has been at other institutions of higher education, was often overwhelming for participants, many of whom expressed feeling tired, worn out, or exhausted by practicing and/or educating others about trans* genders.

Raegan provided an example of the exhaustion brought about by constantly having to confront the gender binary discourse on campus. When they talked about being misgendered, they stated, "Sometimes, I'm so emotionally exhausted from all of this, like, I just don't want to say anything. It's like, literally, if I say something, I'm gonna burst into tears." For Raegan, it was the consistent and constant misgendering they faced that wore them down emotionally. Although these incidents were not malicious in intent, the impact was overwhelmingly negative for Raegan. BC shared similar feelings of tiredness due to confronting the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism on campus, suggesting that one of the ways she dealt with these cultural realities was by detaching and "reading, playing video games, [and smoking] pot a little bit."

Adem also mentioned feeling exhausted by the labor of practicing trans* genders, albeit on an intrapersonal way. In other words, whereas Raegan and BC mentioned feeling exhausted by confronting genderism at CU, Adem felt a different type of exhaustion connected not to external genderism, but their own internal process of coming to understand their trans* identity. In particular, Adem discussed not knowing how to consolidate their feminist identity with their emerging trans* identity. In trying to work through the complexity they felt, Adem stated,

> I know there is a lot tension between feminism and the transgender community, especially, with the Michigan Womyn's Festival and all that…[pause]…And I don't know how well I would be able to straddle that tension. And I wouldn't want to have to sacrifice one part of myself for another, so…I think it's definitely all intertwined, and it's weird to say that, "Okay, well, feminism and transgender issues are totally connected," because at the most obvious surface level, there is a disconnect. Especially if you are female-to-male transgender, because you are like, "Well, this is a feminist movement,

> this is for women and females," and you are not [a woman]. Even if you were at one point, you are not anymore. And I think a lot of people forget that yes, maybe, and I didn't feel comfortable identifying as [a woman], but at the same time, I understand what it's like, I've been through it, I've dealt with it, I've seen the things that you're talking about and I can give evidence of them existing even in today's society. And so, I think it's kind of encouraged me to stay in an in-between space.

This statement came at the end of a long conversation where Adem shared deep anxieties about what it may mean if they identified openly as trans*, and how they felt that some would question their identity as a feminist, which was also a salient identity for them. After Adem finished, there was a pause, and I reflected, "That's a lot." "Yeah," Adem stated, "It's been a very exhausting semester so far." Here, Adem's exhaustion was less about confronting genderism on campus, and more about trying to make sense of their internal trans* gender identity.

By extension, the tiredness participants' experienced from the labor of addressing gender, or of what Henderson (2014) termed "bringing up gender," made some participants state they did not want to do any education around gender identity and expression. Moreover, when participants did decide to educate others by "bringing up gender," they did so only under certain conditions or with certain people. One way of understanding these choices about whether, when, how, and with whom to "bring up gender" was as a mode of self-care and self-protection. In other words, participants brought up gender in situations that allowed them to practice resilience. Conversely, participants often chose *not* to bring up gender in situations where they were likely to be dismissed or overlooked, or with people who did not have a vested interest in them as individuals. Thus, by *not* bringing up gender, they were able to save their energy for people and situations that helped them feel refreshed, rejuvenated, and able to cope with the cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism they experienced at CU. Put another way, participants' choices (not) to bring up gender was often a reflection of how best they could practice resilience in that situation and, as a result, remain successful at CU.

The aforementioned sanguine reading of participants' decisions (not) to bring up gender belies another, more insidious reading. Specifically, the press of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism turned some participants into "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1995) who, by not bringing up gender, allowed the status quo to be maintained. In writing about the notion of docile bodies, Foucault (1995) stated, "Discipline produces subjected and practised

[sic] bodies, 'docile bodies.' Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)" (p. 138). In other words, participants were disciplined, via the cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism, to be obedient and compliant to the norms of gender rather than resist and push against them. Thus, by not bringing up gender, participants became complicit in the furthering of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism. This is not to say the participants are to blame for their docility. Indeed, Foucault (1995) suggested that a number of social institutions—among which he specifically named education—encouraged all community members to be docile in the face of cultural norms and expectations. Thus, participants' lack of bringing up gender is one way of how cultural norms and privilege (e.g., genderism) are maintained through a variety of modes (e.g., gender binary discourse, compulsory heterogenderism) that evoke a sense of tiredness and, thus, promote inaction. Although such inaction could very well be a practice of resilience, it is also undoubtedly a practice of compliance with overarching systems of privilege and power, thereby reinscribing the norm and, thus, allowing trans* oppression to persist.

For example, Kade talked about times when he would cycle in and out of openly resisting the gender binary discourse on campus. He talked about doing this by being out as trans*, and suggested that at times, being out was a tiring experience. During our second interview, he said,

> I cycle through periods in my life where I change the level of outness I have. Sometimes I'm like, "Yeah, I want to be super out, and be a voice for the [trans*] community or a part of the community [at CU]," and I think that's really important. And then I have some bad experiences, or it just gets to be too much, [and I get] tired of being a spokesperson.

Here, Kade suggested he made choices about when to bring up gender, which he did by disclosing his trans* identity in public settings on campus, such as classroom spaces. His decision making was largely influenced by what would allow him to practice resilience; specifically, if he felt he could be out in a given situation, and that by being out, he would be able to successfully resist the gender binary discourse and/or compulsory heterogenderism on campus, he would disclose his trans* identity. However, being out and, in his words, "being a spokesperson" for the trans* community got to be tiring. At these times, Kade retreated and did not come out as trans*. Not bringing up gender in these situations was itself a practice of resilience for Kade, allowing him to navigate campus successfully. However, it also meant that

Kade was complicit in allowing the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism to persist.

It is possible one could suggest that my implying participants were complicit in the discourses and overarching systems of inequity that allowed genderism to persist at CU is unfair; that suggesting that trans* participants aided in furthering the systemic oppression that harmed them is somehow suggesting they are the makers of their own negative destiny. However, it bears repeating that Foucault (1990, 1995) discussed the inescapability of the institutions that made all citizens into docile bodies. Therefore, it is less a matter of fairness, and more a matter of reality that everyone both complies with and resists the cultural norms that regulate life chances (Spade, 2011). The participants alongside whom I worked in this study are no different, and thus, we all both resisted and complied with the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism at various times, and in various spaces, throughout the study.

Oftentimes, our compliance/resistance was mediated by various factors. For example, at one point during my study, I was misgendered by a Black undergraduate student in a group setting. Although she knew my pronouns, I paused in correcting her. I worried that our differential educational backgrounds (i.e., my pursuing an advanced degree versus her pursuing her Bachelor's degree), racial identities (i.e., my Whiteness versus her Blackness), and our gender identities (i.e., my gender non-conformity versus her cisgender gender identity) may have a negative impact if I were to correct her on my pronouns. Put another way, I was worried what it may look and feel like to her, as a Black cisgender woman, to be corrected by a White gender non-conforming person. I worried that my correcting her would position me as "angry," a worry that for me was reminiscent of how many Black women and women of color are continually positioned as "angry" when they stand up for themselves (e.g., Ahmed, 2010; Patton & Catching, 2009). I worried that my educational level might suggest that correcting her incorrect use of pronouns in reference to me was theoretical in nature rather than something I experienced as a microaggression. For these reasons, I chose not to correct her, nor did anyone else in the group. Although I had reasons for not bringing up gender in that situation—and it could be argued that my not bringing up gender may have been a practice of resilience in itself—I myself was complicit in allowing the gender binary discourse to persist; I was complicit in allowing the student to believe (and promote) the notion that there were two distinct gender categories into which people had to fit on campus. Therefore, even though it is difficult to uncover the ways in

which trans* participants and I were complicit in the furthering of genderism at CU, it is an important reminder of the realities that we had agency in making choices around our (not) resisting gender norms, and that our (in)actions came with consequences.

Departure: Education. As discussed previously, participants felt compelled to educate others at CU about gender identity. However, participants' doing education rarely came without conditions. For example, both Micah and Jackson talked about the importance of engaging in educational conversations with cisgender peers only if those individuals showed an investment in them as trans* people. In holding to this condition, Micah and Jackson were resisting the pejorative notion that trans* people are strange, exotic, abnormal, or objects of curiosity (Nicolazzo, 2014; Serano, 2007, 2013). For example, Micah stated emphatically, "I'm not a teacher; I'm not gonna educate [people] about everything." When asked if there were times at which she would engage in educating others, Micah explained:

> I will educate you if you are genuinely open-minded about it. …I'm okay with stepping out of my bounds and educating that way. But, if you're just blissfully ignorant, I could care less about educating you, because I don't want [it] to be a waste of breath. That's just what it is.

For Micah to engage in conversations about trans* identities, others needed to show an investment beyond mere curiosity. The development of this condition for engaging in education was likely informed by the many instances of cisgender individuals objectifying hir and other trans* students. For example, on numerous occasions during our 18 months together, cisgender students would visit the TransActions meetings in which Micah regularly participated. During these visits, the cisgender individuals would share they were visiting because they needed to do a class project focused on a marginalized student population and they wanted to learn about trans* people. Without exception, these people would never come back to any other meetings, and conversation when they were there was stifled, as if the trans* members of the group, including Micah, were wary of the new cisgender participant.

Similarly, Jackson explained the conditions by which they participated in education about gender identities. Specifically, they stated:

> In terms of explaining myself I just don't [laughs]. I don't really feel the need, [especially when] it's just like, "Oh, I want to find out if that's a dude or not," you know? If they are

> coming at me from a different way than that, then I would definitely be really accommodating. But aside from that, I don't really feel the need.

Here, Jackson put words to the feeling to the phenomenon of cisgender people trying to "figure them out." This sort of experience is certainly not new, as the trope of trans* people being deceptive or trying to fool people about our genders has a long and unfortunate tradition (e.g., Halberstam, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2014; Serano, 2007, 2013). In fact, this is the same illogical thinking behind cisgender individuals using the notion of "trans* panic" to defend the murder of trans* individuals (e.g., BTL Staff, 2014).

Raegan also discussed their being more comfortable addressing and correcting individuals rather than groups. Raegan also mentioned they had ceased talking with people as much over the past year because, as they described, "I (Raegan) get really overwhelmed with just so many thoughts and, like, just so many things that I have to do on a daily basis," including the constant need to educate people on their trans* identity. Raegan further explained their hesitancy to educate others, stating:

> When it's just me and another person, I'm more comfortable being like, "No, not she, they" (referencing Raegan's pronoun preference). But when [I'm] in a group of people … it's like we're all laughing about something, having a good time, everybody's laughing, and [when] somebody [refers] to me as she, I'm like, "God." …And I'm like, I want to correct this person, but if I really corrected people as often as I would like, it would be, like, every, like, five minutes. So, and I wouldn't mind doing it, [but] I guess my fear [is] sounding repetitive and sounding particular, you know what I mean? Like, sounding petty and, you know, nit-picky.

Here, Raegan underscored they felt more comfortable addressing microaggressions as learning opportunities when they were in one-on-one situations. Raegan's comment aligns with others who have written about the complexity of addressing gender misidentification in group settings (Spade, 2010). It also provides further context for why Raegan had withdrawn from much social interaction throughout the past year as well as their reliance on Ginnie to address others when they were misgendered in public venues. Far from being an isolated experience, Adem, Micah, and Silvia also discussed being burned out from doing trans*-related education at CU. Furthermore, the year after our study concluded, two of the three (Adem and Silvia) ceased all leadership positions, with Adem having stopped attending CU the last semester of the study and

Silvia traveling abroad to focus on coursework. Although Micah remained involved in educational organizations, they did so reluctantly, and as a general member rather than a main leader. Thus, Raegan's comment also stands as a potential sign of danger, as student involvement and community building—the very opportunities Raegan, Adem, Silvia, and Micah had withdrawn from over the past year—has consistently been shown to increase student success in college (e.g., Astin, 1993; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper, 2000; Renn, 2007).

Raegan's comment highlights something that is perhaps more frustrating, however. Specifically, Raegan mentioned not wanting to correct people due to the potential of being perceived as "nit-picky," "repetitive," or "particular," all of which were conveyed as being pejorative. Although Raegan was quick to identify their feelings were likely a result of their gender socialization throughout childhood, they also echo the current neoliberal sociopolitical moment in that Raegan was made to feel as though they should be able to "get over" or "rise above" such incidents without the need for "special treatment." In particular, Raegan's experiences reflect their neoliberal context by suggesting everyone was on equal footing and, as a result, Raegan's inability to "get over" such incidents indicated a lack on their behalf. In other words, Raegan was made to feel like they were asking for "special attention" and like a nuisance for asking for their human dignity as trans* to be recognized by others using their proper pronouns. Under neoliberal logic, Raegan should not have needed such "special treatment," as they should have been able to push through on their own. In light of the illogical assumptions of neoliberalism and the burden such a perspective placed on Raegan and other trans* participants, Raegan's having to confront these experiences on a regular basis was exhausting. In addition, this exhaustion also led Raegan to not addressing microaggressions in certain contexts and receding from public settings, both of which could have a negative impact on their (and other trans* students) ability to remain resilient.

Departure: In/visibility. Although some participants wanted to see more trans* representation at CU on the student, faculty, and staff levels, the sentiment was far from universal. Furthermore, participants had different views of what trans* representation may look like, highlighting the diversity of trans* communities and, for some, the desire to resist trans*normativity, or the notion that there is a unified and stable understanding of who is trans* (Boldy Go, 2013; Jourian, Devaney, & Simmons, in press). For example, Raegan, who identified as non-binary, stated:

> If I'm at The Sandwich Depot, or places like that [on campus], it matters to me [to see other non-binary people]. I may never meet this person in real life, I may not ever interact with them, but if I know that they're there, it makes me feel better. …I'm kinda biased [chuckles].

Raegan's "bias" for seeing other non-binary people on campus makes sense given their own identity as non-binary. It makes further sense given Raegan's desire to reclaim the notion of passing as a process of being read by others as being a man or woman. In fact, Raegan stated that their "ideal setting for passing is people not knowing [their] gender." Thus, it makes good sense that seeing other people who are similarly playful with their gender expression would increase their comfort. This was much the same for BC, who stated her ultimate desire was to "change [her] appearance daily; real butch to real femme, and then androgynous, and always make people question."

However, as suggested above, the politics of trans* visibility were far from settled. Recalling Kade's profound feeling of loss of community due to his passing as a man, it is hard to know just what heightened trans* visibility would look like at CU. Kade discussed being trans*, but not being perceived as trans* due to his socially intelligible masculine gender expression. In this sense, one might understand Kade as being trans*, but not feeling "trans* enough" due to his not being read as trans* by other (cisgender) students, faculty, and staff at CU. I recorded something similar in my fieldnotes at the start of my second semester at CU, writing:

> I am intrigued by the fact that I have no clue who may be a potential participant in my study! …There are not obvious physical indicators (or not necessarily anyway) that "mark" trans* students. Even those markers that may exist (e.g., "boys" wearing nail polish, "women" dressed in a butch way) does not always translate to someone's identifying as trans*. This *invisibility* could be both challenging *and* wonderful. …This also makes me think about all the assumptions *I make* about bodies, expressions, and identities. For example, I see many bodies around me, all of which I immediately ascribe particular sex and gender designations. …Maybe this means sex/gender designations say as much (or more) about the one designating them as about those on whom they are being designated. (August 28, 2013, emphasis in original)

Although both Kade and I would have preferred to know there were more trans* people at CU—Kade spoke at length about the importance of trans* community, which I will explore in the next

set of arrivals and departures—the contestation was around what (in)visibility meant. In other words, the comments both Kade and I wondered related to what assumptions we were making when we suggested there was a "lack of trans* visibility" on campus. Were we privileging non-binary and openly disruptive expressions of gender? How might this privileging dismiss those who did not feel safe, comfortable, or interested in expressing their trans*ness in this way? Furthermore, in light of Micah and Silvia's comments about the lack of interest in even discussing gender transgressions in Black spaces on campus, it may stand to reason that privileging openly transgressive expressions of gender may privilege Whiteness at CU. When added to BC and Raegan's reflections that transgressive gender norms on campus cost money—suggesting the need for disposable income that many of the participants did not have—it becomes clear that desiring trans* visibility could easily slip into reinforcing classism as well as White supremacy.

Lastly, Adem pointed out another nuance to the ideal of having increased trans* visibility at CU. In our second interview, they stated:

> I would definitely like to see more [of a trans*] presence. I would like to see that in the hiring practices. That would give me hope for the future, but at the same time, I feel like that automatically pigeonholes [me]. …Like, if there's a trans* identified professor in computer sciences and there's me, and someone happens to know both of us, or somehow we end up connect—like, it's because of that [their shared trans* identity]. I don't know, I feel like it narrows my scope of possibilities [for meeting people].

At the same time that Adem recognizes their desire for trans* inclusion to be embedded in institutional practices like the hiring process, they also suggested it may serve to limit them and, by extension, other trans* students. Specifically, Adem felt that increased visibility for trans* people may mean their cisgender peers would only encourage them to interact with fellow trans* people. Again, this is a form of identity commodification reflective of the neoliberal context in which Adem and all participants, including myself, found ourselves. By turning our identities into something to be seen, which could be a potential byproduct of increased trans* visibility, Adem worried their lives would be limited by others regulating those with whom they could befriend and associate. In this sense, Adem's comment reflects my aforementioned fieldnotes, in which I suggested trans* invisibility could prove both challenging and liberating.

It is worth further emphasis that neither participants nor I suggested that an increase of trans* students, faculty, or staff would be a de facto bad phenomenon at CU. In fact, as Adem's extended quote above suggests, participants had an acute awareness that in terms of structural diversity alone, increased representation and visibility for trans* people at CU was incredibly important. Participants and I were steadfastly in agreement about this particular point. However, what was at stake for us was what such representation and visibility meant in relation to the wide diversity amongst trans* communities. Thus, it was not a matter of if we would want there to be more trans* people at CU, but of what assumptions we made about who counted as trans*. In other words, when we admitted we wanted there to be more trans* people at CU, we were suggesting there was a lack of people we would identify as trans*. Thus, we all had a vision of what trans* people looked like and, by extension, did not look like.

This complexity is particularly hard for me to write about, as it underscores the way I have been socialized to buy into the very concept that continues to harm me as a trans* person; namely, notions of not being "trans* enough." For example, when I say I want to see more trans* visibility, I am basing my desire on wanting to see more people who disrupt gender normativity. Given the vulnerability of doing this, along with the amount of money it may take to do so and the complex intersections of race and gender identity that foreclose such expressions of gender at CU, it becomes clear to me that my desire is a reflection of wanting to see more White, middle-class representations of genderqueerness and non-conformity. To want something different, then, would mean recognizing the tensions inherent in placing value on trans* visibility in the first place, as if to be trans* is synonymous with being visible as such.

Therefore, although structural diversity—and thus, an increase of visible trans* bodies—is necessary, it is by no means sufficient to recognizing the multiplicity of trans* lives. In fact, stopping at mere structural diversity may reify various other forms of systemic oppression (e.g., racism, classism, disability) by suggesting there is a particular way in which trans* people should show up on campus to be counted as "visibly trans*." Applying this concept to educational praxis, one can see how initiatives like capturing aspiring students' gender identities via formal measures like questions on college applications (e.g., Jaschik, 2014) could unwittingly further specific visions of who is seen as trans* and, thus, reify various intersecting systems of oppression.

Departure: Multiple forms of exhaustion. Although multiple participants talked about the tiring nature of "bringing up gender," the form that tiredness took was not uniform. Some participants (e.g., Kade, Micah, Raegan, and BC) discussed a mental fatigue around educating others about gender. This mental fatigue then caused different effects for each participant. For example, during our last formal interview, Micah described himself as being "a lot more snappy" than usual, explaining that she thought it was "specifically being fed up with certain situations," such as bringing up gender. Micah then when on to discuss her brother, with whom she had become particularly frustrated with regarding issues related to gender identity and expression. Although they loved each other, Micah felt his brother did not allow her to identify and express their gender how ze wanted. She stated:

> He's very stuck on gender roles and things like that …And I'm just like, "That's not me." Personally, I don't identify with either … and sometimes I don't think he gets that. …He's very binary. …I feel like he thinks of gender as just…the sex you're assigned at birth. …And I'm just like, "It's a lot more mental to me than physical."

Micah's feeling snappy with her brother had spilled into other areas of her life. Although she originally suggested the feeling she had was "just senioritis," as he began talking, Micah began to express that hir tiredness was a direct result of the constant need to bring up gender with people and in situations where his trans* identity was not being recognized or respected.

Raegan also felt a similar mental exhaustion when they had to educate others constantly about gender. Specifically, they described the frustration of having to correct people on their incorrect use of pronouns. Specifically, Raegan said, "Sometimes, I'm so emotionally exhausted from all of this I don't want to say anything. It's like, literally, if I say something, I'm gonna burst into tears." Although Raegan had particular strategies for counteracting the exhaustion of having to bring up gender, most notably working with Ginnie to have her confront issues when they were together, the frustration and exhaustion was still palpable for Raegan. Moreover, because Ginnie and Raegan were not always together, it was highly likely that Raegan would often encounter situations in which they were alone and would need to make a choice about whether or not to bring up gender.

Both Kade and BC also discussed the emotionally exhaustive element of constantly having to bring up gender, particularly in the classroom. They both encountered multiple situations in which incorrect or negative representations of trans* people were discussed in the

classroom. BC described one particularly terrible occurrence when she told me, "I've heard death threats or similar things like that [in classroom spaces, which] made me feel shitty." Similarly, Kade shared stories of experiences when teachers had laughed at jokes students had made during classes about intersex individuals as well as one particular professor who continued to convey incorrect and negative information about trans* people to Kade's entire class. When Kade attempted to bring this up with the instructor, he was dismissed by the professor and the incorrect information was not addressed adequately with the rest of the class. Kade described his experiences in these classroom spaces as conflicted, stating, "I'm not really feeling this external threat anymore now that I'm read as male. But internally, it's still not great knowing people think these negative things about your identity."

The exhaustion both BC and Kade felt from the microaggressions, threats of violence, and the persistent sharing of inaccurate information regarding trans* individuals in classroom spaces was made all the more difficult given the imbalance of power between instructors and students. Kade highlighted by stating, "They [students] can say anything. But the teacher has the ultimate power to step in and say, 'No, actually…[trails off].'" Although Kade mentioned having several faculty member who would step in to correct inaccuracies about trans* people, BC's experience was far different, leading her to change majors entirely. Thus, the exhaustion felt by BC was less than a particular annoyance, but could possibly reorient her choice of career. Furthermore, it is important to remember that BC decided to leave CU after our first semester working together. It would be misleading to say that her leaving City was a direct result of her negative classroom experiences, but given their persistence and their gravity, it is hard to deny they may have had some impact on BC's decision; or, at the very least, BC's negative classroom experiences did little to encourage her to stay enrolled. In fact, when BC came back to CU, she had switched her major to Political Science, thus adding more weight to the claim that her negative classroom experiences as an Economics major contributed to reorienting her future academic and career aspirations.

Conversely to the aforementioned participants' experiences, Silvia described her tiredness as physical. In our last formal interview, Silvia linked her tiredness regarding gender to the tiredness she felt in her body due to her having fibromyalgia. Specifically, she stated, "This semester already dealing with fatigue physically, I just can't fight two fatigue battles right now, you know? I have to focus on not feeling tired all the time. Like, just in my body." Here again,

one can see a link between Silvia's gender identity and her experiences as a student with disabilities. In particular, the emotional fatigue of bringing up gender that Kade, BC, Micah, and Raegan discussed was transformed into an embodied exhaustion for Silvia. Moreover, Silvia noted that she was unable to "fight two fatigue battles" at the same time, suggesting she had "to focus on not feeling tired all the time … in [her] body." This statement highlights how Silvia did not have the energy (physical and otherwise) to bring up gender due to her already feeling fatigued by her multiple disabilities. Additionally, Silvia's highlighting the confluence of multiple forms of exhaustion speaks to the importance of addressing the intersections of gender and disability identities. In particular, because there were no spaces at CU that recognized this specific intersection of identities, Silvia felt she had nowhere or no one to whom she could turn to help her make sense of her identities as an agender student with disabilities. Thus, not only does Silvia's remark stand as an important reminder of the embodied nature of the exhaustion that bringing up gender induces, but it also suggests the importance of addressing multiple intersections of identities throughout educational praxis. Had this been the case at CU, Silvia would likely still have felt exhausted, but she may also have had an outlet for her exhaustion, allowing her to begin to process and make meaning of her experiences as an agender student with disabilities rather than feeling the need to choose which form of fatigue on which she had to focus.

Arrival: A Constellation of Kinship Networks

The last set of arrival and departures revolved around notions of kinship networks. Although the phrase itself may evoke images of blood relatives or one's 'family of origin,' many scholars have extended notions of kinship beyond this limited understanding. In particular, Rubin (2011) noted that anthropologists have long been exploring kinship as a phenomenon that transcends one's bloodline. Specifically, Rubin (2011) wrote, "A kinship system is not a list of biological relatives. It is a system of categories and statuses which often contradict actual genetic relationships. There are dozens of examples in which socially defined kinship statuses take precedence over biology" (p. 41). Weston (1991) put this non-biological notion of kinship to work within gay and lesbian populations, suggesting that "gone are the days when embracing a lesbian or gay identity seemed to require a renunciation of kinship" (pp. 40-41). Weston's ethnographic study stands as one of the first empirical analyses of the creation and maintenance

of kinship networks among queer populations, specifically the gay and lesbian communities in San Francisco during the late 1980s.

Weston's study did not explicitly include trans* participants, however, the data from the present study suggests the notion of kinship, and the development and maintenance of kinship networks, was an important factor for participants successfully navigating the gender-dichotomous environment of CU. This development stands as unique in its own right, being the first study in the field of higher education to specifically explore notions of community, coalition, and kinship-building alongside trans* participants. To date, only one other article has been written that focused on notions of trans* kinship as a strategy for promoting college student success (Nicolazzo, Pitcher, Renn, & Woodford, in review). However, it is worth noting the data from which this article was developed came from a larger mixed-methods study focusing on LGBTQ student success. Thus, the study was not expressly focused on trans* students, nor did the study set out to collect data regarding kinship-building as a specific strategy for success. Furthermore, although Carmel, Hopwood, and dickey (2014) wrote, "Those of us [trans* people] who build connections to supportive community do better" (p. 325), they neither cited literature to support this claim nor did they explain what they meant when using the notion of 'doing better.' Therefore, the current findings regarding trans* kinship-building have the ability to be foundational when thinking about how trans* students build, maintain, and leverage kinship networks to navigate campuses that may be far from welcoming spaces for them.

For the purposes of this study, one can understand a kinship network as a close group of peers who: (1) recognized and honored participants' gender identities, (2) provided a refuge from the cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism on campus, and (3) acted as a potential site from which participants could resist or push back against systemic genderism, if they so chose. Additionally, there are two further nuances worth noting. First, the membership of the kinship networks participants created were not exclusively trans*. Some participants talked about the importance of engaging in trans*-only spaces, however, this was not a prerequisite for the development and maintenance of a kinship network. Secondly, participants spoke about engaging with multiple kinship networks. Thus, the findings from this study expand upon Weston's study, which discussed kinship from a singular perspective, or of gay and lesbian people developing a family of choice rather than multiple kinship networks.

Moreover, the kinship networks trans* participants developed did not always overlap with each other. Some networks were mutually exclusive from one another, meaning there was no overlap of individuals and/or goals from one group to the next. For example, Adem spoke about creating a kinship network among the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department on campus, specifically among graduate students. This group operated completely separately from TransActions, which Adem was also a member for the first semester of our work together. Moreover, the two groups had completely different purposes and goals, with the former being academic and social in nature and the latter being activist and educational in purpose. Many of these kinship networks were also associated with particular locations both on and off campus. Therefore, one might imagine these networks as specific sites on a map, and participants' movement in and among these networks creating a constellation of relational spaces in which they could retreat to gain temporary respite from the cultural regulation of gender.

Participants often spoke of the kinship networks they created as "queer bubbles." For example, Jackson stated, "There's a queer bubble, and I'm all up [in it]." Similarly, BC spoke about several "queer spheres" in which she felt comfortable and safe on campus, listing "TransActions, Pride to a certain extent, and The Center" as three of those spheres. During our second interview, Adem provided perhaps the most cogent statement on their need for—and subsequent development of—multiple kinship networks. Specifically, they stated:

> I joke around a lot about being in a queer community and, like, my little bubble. But at the same time, I think I need to expand that. And I am not necessarily [suggesting] expanding it beyond a queer bubble, because I am definitely still in a queer bubble, but it's just not the rainbow room.

Here, Adem was suggesting the need to expand their queer bubble beyond 'the rainbow room,' a term they used to denote The Center. Adem was careful to point out that although they still wanted to create queer-only spaces, they needed more spaces than the one in which they had been spending a bulk of their time (i.e., The Center). Therefore, one can see that queer-only groups were important spaces in which Adem could retreat from the effects of the gender binary discourse on campus. Furthermore, Adem's comment denotes the need for more than one space to which one can turn to find solace and comfort.

In discussing notions of trans* kinship, it seems especially important to note two particular nuances. First, participants varied in how they made sense of and used these spaces.

For example, some participants used them as social sites in which they found a sort of safe haven from the cultural regulation of gender via the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism. For example, Megan discussed her decision to seek out a trans* community group in Stockdale by explaining, "The main reason why I went was to … meet other transgendered [sic] people and make friends." Megan also explained wanting social spaces as a reason for curtailing her involvement with TransActions, stating, "They do have social meetings every now and then, but at the same time, it feels like it's more about activism than socialization." For Megan, who had spent most of her youth in isolation, an important aspect of her developing a sense of who she was as a trans* woman was meeting and socializing with other trans* people. She was not interested in gender-based activism, but was mostly looking to create friendships and have fun with other trans* people as a method of increasing her own comfort with her trans* identity.

Conversely, Kade spoke about kinship networks as sites for developing deep and meaningful relationships, participating in activism, and even finding potential people to date. Specifically, Kade talked about the strong bond he felt with other trans* people, stating, "I will see people on campus who I think might be gender non-conforming in some way, and I feel this sense of community, and almost familial ties with them, because we have such a small community." By using the word "familial," Kade was emphasizing the importance of connecting with other people who transgressed gender on campus. More than just wanting to develop social friendships, as Megan had sought to do, Kade felt a deep sense of connection with other trans* people, and his investment in these connections underscored his desire to exist in kinship networks alongside other trans* and queer people.

Kade also saw his kinship networks as fertile sites for activism and resisting cultural gender norms as well as developing romantic relationships. During our second interview, Kade shared several stories about going on dates with gay men at CU the previous year. These experiences all turned negative when he disclosed his trans* identity, making him wonder if he should be thinking differently about where to find people to date. Since those negative experiences, however, Kade had begun dating Brin, who identified as genderqueer and whom he met through one of the off-campus kinship networks of which he was a part. Speaking about the dynamics of dating within his trans* networks, Kade stated:

> It's always more comfortable dating someone in the community. I definitely don't even feel like I have to behave in any specific way. …I would say it's more likely that I'm gonna be happier with someone in the community and so I tend to date them more often, 'cuz I don't have to deal with all this other stuff. You know, I spent a good bit of time going on dates with a lot of cis gay men on campus. …But I really just got really sick of the transphobia and having to come out and having to explain.

Thus, by seeking potential romantic partners from within his kinship networks, Kade was able to avoid the transphobia that had marred some of earlier dating experiences. He was also able to connect with people who he did not have to educate or worry about negotiating their feelings or reactions to his trans* masculine identity. In this sense, Kade's shift to dating within his kinship networks also highlights a practice of resilience for him, as it allowed him to navigate finding partners successfully rather than deal with the triggering and frustrating incidents that occurred when he dated outside his kinship networks.

Secondly, it is important to note that kinship networks were neither equally comfortable for participants nor were they consistently comfortable across each particular participant's time at CU. Returning to Adem's earlier comments about expanding their "queer bubble," I witnessed a noticeable shift in where they spent their time during our second semester together. Whereas Adem had spent almost all of their free time on campus in The Center our first semester working alongside one another, they hardly spent any time there the following semester. While some of this was admittedly due to a new partner Adem had begun dating, it was also a result of Adem's discomfort being in the space as much as they had been. Specifically, Adem stated:

> Last semester I didn't really have anybody outside of The Center. So I would go in and talk to Tristan and Silvia and Janelle and that would be it. And that was fine. But I think that once I got involved in more student groups and met more people … I needed and I wanted a little bit more, so I went out and got it. And at the same time, I feel kind of…not uncomfortable being in The Center as often as I was, but weird about it. …Now I have people in my program that I like a lot? Which I have never had before.

Whereas Adem had originally relied on The Center as a locus of support and developing friendships, they had since branched out and made kinship networks through their academic coursework. As a result, Adem became uncomfortable with how often they had been in The Center, causing a shift in their behavior. Similarly, BC's earlier comment about Pride being a

comfortable space in which to be "to a certain extent" speaks to the inconsistency of particular kinship networks. In other words, although BC thought it was important to attend Pride meetings, and she sometimes felt comfortable doing so, she was only comfortable "to a certain extent," signaling there were other times in which she was uncomfortable.

Furthermore, while some participants viewed some kinship networks as comfortable, other participants viewed these same spaces as uncomfortable and avoided them. Extending the aforementioned example regarding Pride, although BC tried to attend meetings on a regular basis, several other participants explicitly stated they did not attend Pride meetings. Their not attending was due primarily to what they viewed as a dismissive attitude toward trans* identities and issues. Participants' negative sentiments about Pride was so strong that many of them would laugh or make a joke of the group when it came up in conversation, perhaps as a way to practice resilience against the previous hurts they had experienced. Adem even went so far as to publicly mock Pride, posting a photo on one of their social media accounts of them making a face with a caption that read, "When someone says 'my friend in Pride,'" denoting Adem's disdain for Pride and those who were members of the organization (Figure A).

Figure A: Adem's Face

Similarly, participants had different perceptions of spaces like The Center or groups like TransActions. For example, while The Center was an important space in which to cultivate kinship networks for some participants (e.g., Micah and BC), other participants distanced

themselves from The Center. Specifically, Derek felt The Center was not a welcoming space for trans* people, sharing that staff members were not doing as much as he would like to promote trans* inclusion in the office as well as on campus. Similarly, Raegan discussed not spending much time in The Center during our interview. Specifically, they stated:

> My freshman [sic] year I fucked around a lot. I did a lot of just sleeping around. And it's awkward now. I'm not embarrassed by it? I'm totally okay with it … and I don't regret what I did. But it's really awkward for me.

Thus, contrary to many participants' experiences of The Center as a comfortable space to develop kinship networks, Raegan had a drastically different experience. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Raegan's lack of interest in viewing The Center as a site for developing and maintaining kinship networks is a result of previous romantic relationships with people who frequented the space. This stands in contrast to Kade's suggestion that he preferred dating within his kinship networks. However, both Kade and Raegan were in significant committed relationships during our study; relationships that have continued even to the time of writing this dissertation. Thus, their experiences provide multiple (conflicting) strategies of dating and finding romantic partners as a way to practice resilience.

Departure: Virtual kinship. Although the development of kinship networks occurred within material spaces (e.g., The Center, TransActions, local Stockdale spaces), a number of participants also talked about the importance of virtual spaces in cultivating and maintaining such community. For example, in our first interview, Jackson stated, "I exist primarily on the internet, you know? That's pretty much my hometown." Jackson then proceeded to tell me how they used the Internet as a venue to locate and develop a sense of community and connection with other agender people. They said they would often just type trans*-related words into Google and would then peruse the search results as a way to connect to various others throughout the world who identified in similar ways to them. Thus, although Jackson expressed wanting more trans* representation at CU, they used the Internet as a tool through which to locate and maintain the sense of kinship they lacked in physical spaces.

Other participants echoed the importance of the Internet, particularly in relation to learning about trans* identities. For example, when Kade discussed first coming out as trans*, I asked where he sought information, and if he used books and other print publications as a source for knowledge. He replied, "I wouldn't know where to go in terms of print publications. I

researched through the Internet." BC shared a similar perspective, stating, "I found Tumblr, and there is quite a queer community there, and that's what started it," with her use of the word "it" referring to her developing sense of her trans* identity.

Megan discussed using the Internet to learn about trans* identities in a way that was both comfortable and safe for her. As previously mentioned, she experienced bullying during her youth, making her hesitant to come out as a trans* woman or talk with others in physical spaces about gender diversity. Thus, the Internet became a safe haven through which Megan could learn about and connect with other trans* people. Specifically, she talked about websites and chat forums like Laura's Playground, which she described as allowing her to get to know other trans* people for the first time. In detailing her early experiences using the Internet to connect to other trans* people, she stated:

> I guess the biggest [site I used] would be Laura's Playground, which is a forum for transgender people of all types. They have chat sessions and everything. They even have suicide prevention rooms where you can go in and chat with moderators. …[We would] mostly just talk about general stuff … about, like, "I went out with a friend today." I guess chatting like you would with a friend.

For Megan, who had felt isolated throughout her childhood, the importance of her being able to connect with other trans* people through virtual spaces cannot be understated. As the above quote suggests, Megan was able to not only connect with other trans* people, but was able to talk with them "like you would with a friend." It is worth noting that although she was connecting with other trans* people, her conversations were not limited to gender or trans*-related topics. Instead, she was able to develop a network of relationships that allowed her to understand and appreciate that trans* peoples' lives were not as sensationalized as media outlets may have often suggested. In talking about how this media coverage influenced her thinking about trans* lives, she stated:

> I've always been reading articles … the bad articles, you know? The sad articles about transgender stories. …I don't know, I guess some of them are more funny stupidity articles, like, about Fox News not accepting trans* people. But then other stuff, like stories about where trans* people are beaten, or raped, or stuff like that.

Megan went on to talk about representations of trans* people in film, specifically talking about the movie Boys Don't Cry, a fictionalized account of an actual case in Nebraska where a trans* youth was raped, beaten, and killed due to his gender identity. Megan said,

> Whenever I do see those movies, after I'm done watching it, I sorta have a hatred for the world. …'Cause at the end of the movie, there's always that climax where something really bad happens to the trans* person, and after I see that, it's like, "How am I living in this world? How is this world the way that it is?"

Thus, the ability to connect with trans* people through the Internet served as an important counter-story to the array of negative media portrayals Megan had read about and watched. In fact, being able to connect with others and see positive representations of what it meant to be trans* allowed her to realize that trans* people were "just normal people trying to live their lives." Indeed, just as cisgender people often lead mundane and everyday lives, so too do trans* people. Although this may seem like a fairly obvious fact, Megan's interactions with other trans* people through online chat forums allowed her to gain an appreciation for this fact in ways that were eschewed by the media coverage she followed.

More than just using the Internet to learn about trans* identities, participants also talked about the Internet and virtual spaces as a location in which to spend time. For example, one evening Raegan texted me asking what I was doing. In the course of our impromptu conversation, Raegan said they were at home playing around online. They then texted, "I've found that YouTube is the most comforting place second to meeting trans people in person. I like watching people's transitions and hearing their advice and stories." Here, Raegan asserted the importance of the Internet, and specifically YouTube, as a location in which they could spend time. Furthermore, Raegan's description of getting advice and listening to life stories mirrors the way friends may talk with one another. Therefore, although Raegan had never met anyone from the YouTube videos they watched in real life, they felt a sense of kinship and connection with them. As a result, they regarded YouTube to be "the most comforting place" to be aside from meeting trans* people in person.

Shifting back to Megan, one can gain an appreciation for the breadth of the virtual spaces in which participants engaged. Specifically, Megan spent a lot of time playing video games. As previously discussed, Megan used this time to confirm her identity as a trans* woman by playing female characters. Thus, Megan was able to use virtual spaces as a way to reflect who she was

in a way that was comfortable and accessible to her. Along with other examples of how participants used the Internet, Megan's use of gaming as a way to mirror one's identity also underscores a potential implication for practice, specifically the expansion of notions of space to include more than just physical, campus-bound contexts. In other words, educators could look to the multiple virtual contexts in which trans* participants were already engaging as a guide for how they may engage others with diverse genders. Although not every trans* student may benefit from or desire to connect with virtual communities, the use of virtual spaces stands as an important injunction in developing and maintaining kinship networks that reflect myriad ways of practicing gender in ways that specific campus contexts may not be able to support or maintain. Put another way, by using the Internet and other virtual spaces like video games, educators may be able to help trans* students find others who reflect similar trans* identities, expressions, and embodiments. As previously discussed in the section about trans* in/visibility, this was something that many participants discussed as wanting. Thus, although there may not always be a wide diversity of trans* identities, expressions, and/or embodiments at CU, leveraging virtual spaces as a way to develop and maintain kinship networks would proliferate possibilities for making these very connections.

Lastly, it is important to recognize that virtual spaces, specifically social networking sites like Facebook, were instrumental in developing and maintaining kinship networks between participants and me. Although not expressly a requirement of the research process, participants sought me out through virtual space and, as a result, we were able to develop and maintain our own sense of kinship. In this sense, the participants used the research process—a process during which we were exploring notions of community and connection—to develop and maintain our own kinship networks. Reflecting on this in my fieldnotes, I wrote:

> For Adem, it seems like they are reaching out to me and envision their participation [in the study] as a way to build relationships and develop community. Community, then, is not something [exclusively] external to the research process, but is also coming as a result of the research process. I can also see this from Adem and Derek "friending" me on Facebook. (April 3, 2013, emphasis in original)

Participants continued to develop relationships with me through virtual spaces throughout our working together. Sometimes, these virtual connections served as a conduit for developing deeper kinship networks in physical spaces. For example, Kade invited me to join a monthly

book club through adding me to a closed Facebook group. Additionally, Raegan's participation in the study was itself a result of their desire to include me in their kinship networks. Although Raegan did not have a Facebook account—itself a practice of resilience for Raegan, who deleted their account so they would not have to encounter transphobic comments from family and acquaintances online—Ginnie, Raegan's partner, did and had befriended me. Through our being connected, Raegan then approached me on campus one day, saying they wanted to join the study. When talking about the impetus for their desire to do so during our first interview, Raegan said, "Half the reason I wanted to do this [join the study] was because I wanted to get to know you." Thus, although the relationship Raegan and I developed occurred in person, it was facilitated through virtual kinship networks, specifically through Ginnie, who was connected to both Raegan and me.

This specific departure stands as an important disruption to staid notions of the 'loss of community' in US culture. For example, Putnam (2001) suggested the decline of community-based activities such as bowling leagues pointed to a similar decline in the notion of community itself. However, the data from the present study suggest an alternative understanding to notions of community and kinship. Specifically, participants' use of the Internet and virtual spaces as a method through which to develop, maintain, and engage in kinship networks suggests that it would behoove educators to reorient how notions of community are conceptualized. In other words, thinking of virtual spaces as a generative site for the development and maintenance of kinship networks may very well proliferate possibilities for how educators could work alongside students with diverse genders to learn more about who they are, make connections with others with similar identities and experiences, and increase their senses of comfort and safety.

Departure: Leaving campus for kinship. A second divergence in the development of kinship networks was that several participants spoke about doing so by leaving campus. Kade, who was in his last year as a student during our work together, described his seeking kinship in the local Stockdale community in terms of a progression from moving on-campus to off-campus. Specifically, he noted:

> I feel like the trans* community around here for the longest time was just through people, like, a network of people. So, you would meet one trans* person and they would have a friend who was trans* and then you would just all...[trails off]. So that was my initial experience. And then [in] TransActions I met a handful of people. And [now] I would

> say that the trans* community is developing a decent community in Stockdale right now. Um, so there's Stockdale Community Trans* Alliance, which I volunteer for. I would say that I meet the most trans* people now through there.

Of particular note in Kade's comments are two insights. The first is his explicit use of the word "network." His comment breathes life into the arrival from which these data depart, particularly in its explicit reference to the development of relationships within and among other trans* people occurring as a result of networks between individuals. Put another way, trans* community did not just happen in one location, but evolved for Kade over time due to the people with whom he was in contact introducing him to other trans* people. As a result, Kade was able to develop his own trans* kinship networks. Secondly, Kade did not describe his seeking community off-campus as a binary between on- and off-campus. Instead, he talked about his off-campus kinship networks occurring *as a result of* his previous on-campus involvement. Therefore, Kade reflected his leaving campus for developing kinship as an *extension of* rather than as *opposed to* notions of campus-based kinship. This insight could be of use to educators, as it signals the importance of viewing local communities as fertile sites for extending kinship networks. Put another way, Kade's comment suggests educators should look to local trans* networks as a possible extension of what is occurring on campus. In doing so, educators working alongside trans* students could assist in the development of deeper kinship networks. Furthermore, extending kinship networks past the campus environment may also ease students' transition post-graduation. Although Kade did not speak about his kinship networks in this way, his having such networks likely eased his transition after graduation, especially given that he has remained active in local communities and continues to reside in relatively close proximity to Stockdale.

Jackson also strayed from campus to create and maintain kinship networks. Specifically, Jackson found kinship in their workplace, where they ended up spending a lot of their time. Talking about The Loft, the cinema they worked at, Jackson said:

> I guess work is overly important to me. I know that it's not what I am going to be doing forever, but I really like my job. I spend too much time there, like whenever I am at my house and I can't do schoolwork or something, I'll just walk over to The Loft and clock in and start organizing things.

For Jackson, The Loft represented a space they felt comfortable; so comfortable, in fact, they went there to decompress when they could not focus on other tasks like schoolwork. Therefore,

even though Jackson suggested work was "overly important" to them, they kept returning to The Loft, as it represented a comfortable space in which they had developed a meaningful kinship network.

Similar to the previous discussion of Kade's development of kinship networks as an extension of his on-campus networks, Jackson's network at The Loft was not wholly separate from previous networks they had developed. During our first formal interview, Jackson stated, "one of the other managers at work, I have known her since middle school, and we have been best friends." Furthermore, when Jackson became a General Manager for The Loft, they were moved to a secondary location. In talking about the staff there, Jackson stated, "I knew a few people there [already] so it's not as scary as it would be with any new job." Here, one can clearly see how Jackson's kinship networks transgressed work boundaries due to them knowing some of the people with whom they would work in their new role as the General Manager. This insight provides further emphasis on not thinking about kinship networks as just being developed or maintained in discrete spaces. Instead, Kade and Jackson's experiences elucidate the ways in which some kinship networks resulted in the development of additional networks. Their comments also speak to how kinship networks often traversed multiple spaces and locations, suggesting that educators would be well advised to seek partnerships across various locations both on- and off-campus in order to assist trans* students in developing and maintaining kinship networks.

Departure: Academic kinship. Participants described academic departments and classrooms as contested spaces in which to develop and maintain kinship networks. Although several participants (e.g., Jackson, Adem, and Silvia) discussed academic spaces as fruitful environments in which to develop kinship networks, others experiences (e.g., BC and Megan) told a more ominous story. Thus, academic departments and classrooms stood as places that mediated participants' abilities to create and maintain kinship networks in various ways.

Jackson spoke positively about the Education department at City, suggesting there was wide support for gender variance. Speaking about their coursework during our second interview, Jackson stated:

> Education classes are very [welcoming] because when professors are talking about the variance in the students you are going to be teaching, they're wanting to respect the variances in everyone in a lot of ways. I can remember when we had the syllabus up in

> one of my classes on the first day and it was talking about how we need to be respectful of race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender variance is what it said, and I was like, "Oh, that's really"—that was great, you know?

The open nature of Jackson's education courses encouraged them to focus their projects and presentations in these classrooms on issues related to trans* students. As Jackson stated:

> A lot of my projects that I do, or presentations, I try to gear them towards … trans* issues just because I think it's important for people to hear about [them] … if they haven't, or even to get more exposure to that and see that it's normal, you know?

More than education classrooms being a comfortable place to discuss diverse genders, Jackson shared they had also been able to develop friendships with classmates who they had originally thought may not be interested in discussing trans*-related issues. In other words, the inclusive ethos that seemed to pervade education courses promoted the development of kinship networks for Jackson. Speaking about one such unexpected friendship, Jackson said:

> I had a girl in one of my classes, and we were paired up for something and I had a lot of preconceived notions about her. …We just got to talking, and we started talking about what we wanted to do with education, and … we talked about Montessori school and stuff like that, and we started talking about … trans* issues in the classroom and … gender variant students, and different variances other than that with students and she was there with me, you know? And for me it was like, "Oh, I need to stop prejudging these people."

Jackson's ability to make connections and friendships with peers, despite their seemingly different backgrounds and experiences—particularly as they related to gender identity—is particularly noteworthy. Thus, for Jackson, the positive climate regarding gender variance mediated positive connections with peers.

Adem's experiences in the Women's Studies Department also convey the ways in which a positive academic climate regarding gender transgression can motivate the development of kinship networks. During our second interview, Adem began talking about the shift they were making from spending a bulk of their time in The Center to developing a peer network through their involvement in Women's Studies classes. Specifically, they stated, "Now I have people in my program that I like a lot? Which I have never had before; I have never had friends who are people in my classes, so that's a weird experience." The weirdness Adem mentioned was a

positive sentiment, as they had not previously experienced building kinship networks through coursework. However, their ability to do so was a welcome development, and one which allowed them to create kinship networks beyond The Center, signaling their ability to be comfortable in multiple spaces across the CU campus.

Conversely to Jackson and Adem's experiences in classroom spaces, BC and Megan's experiences suggested they faced academic environments that were far from trans*-inclusive. As has been previously discussed, BC was so disillusioned with her inability to transgress gender norms in her business she changed majors. Describing her decision not to come out in classroom spaces, BC told me, "Classrooms I don't come out in. Ever. …I don't want to deal with people being dumb and I don't think they would respect me or use my name or pronouns. I think I would just get shit for it, so it's not worth it." When I asked her to expand on what negative reactions she thought others would have if she disclosed her trans* identity, she responded, "Um, just people telling me I'm not a girl, or that I can't be a girl, or that I'm sick. All sorts of stuff." For BC, the possibilities of confronting overt hostility in the classroom not only influenced her to not come out, but also to switch majors. Furthermore, gender identity played a major factor when deciding her new major. Speaking of the different majors she was considering, BC stated:

> It [my major] will be changing to Journalism, I believe. The College of Business is dumb. I think very few queer people are there. And the English department probably won't be as good as Women's Studies, but even Women's Studies isn't that great at CU.

Not only does BC's comment suggest the salience of gender in her making a decision about which major to switch to, but it also points to a different understanding of the Women's Studies department than what Adem shared. BC and Adem's different experiences of Women's Studies mirrors the differences participants expressed regarding the previously discussed comfort of various spaces and organizations across campus. In other words, there was rarely, if ever, one space—be it academic or otherwise—that was beyond contestation for participants. Thus, as will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter, educators would be well advised to not seek a specific list of "best practices" they can implement to increase trans* inclusion on campus, as such lists will undoubtedly lead to suggesting practices and policies that may impact students in a variety of positive and negative ways.

Conclusion

As the data from this study suggest, gender heavily mediated participants' abilities to navigate CU. However, despite the overwhelming and omnipresent presence of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism on campus, participants were able to practice resilience in ways that allowed them to remain successful. Furthermore, the weight of both the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism at CU affected participants in various ways, including inducing a sense of tiredness due to the labor of having to negotiate if, when, and/or how to "bring up gender" (Henderson, 2014). Of particular importance for participants was the development and maintenance of kinship networks, in which they were able to create a sense of home and family within and among other students, faculty, staff, and local Stockdale community members.

The data suggest both ways in which participants' experiences converge as well as the various ways in which they diverge from each other. The spaces where participants' experience differ, those spaces I explored as departures, are of particular importance, as they expose complex fissures about which educational researchers and practitioners would be well advised to think through before implementing strategies to redress gender equity and trans* inclusion on college campuses. In other words, while the points at which data converged are essential to understanding trans* students' experiences in college, the departures, or points of dissonance, expose the myriad ways in which simplistic attempts to address increasing life chances for trans* students will always fail.

The data signal a collegiate context awash in genderism (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009). The data also highlight the complex interplay of multiple identities and how these intersections mediate trans* students' experiences to varying effect. Thus, the complexities of participants' experiences demand complex solutions to promote more welcoming collegiate environments. In the chapter that follows, I will pose a variety of implications from the study, all of which address how educational researchers and/or practitioners can continually (re)think the effects of gender on college and university campuses. Similar to the work of Spade (2011), I offer suggestions as an attempt to increase life chances for trans* people in higher education. Furthermore, in a manner similar to Butler (2006), I adamantly believe such liberation is only possible if those in the fields of higher education and student affairs are willing to actively work to proliferate possibilities for practicing gender. This does not mean everyone needs to transgress gender

expectations themselves. However, it does suggest that everyone needs to be involved in interrogating, exposing, and resisting the insidious ways gender regulates all our lives, particularly the ways in regulates the lives of those who identify as trans*.

Interlude: An Ending Full of Beginnings

In describing the process of "thinking with theory" Jackson and Mazzei (2012) stated that the analytical approach was "a process to diffract, rather than foreclose, thought" (p. 5). They further expounded that to think with theory was "meant to be irruptive in an opening of ways of thinking and meaning. ...[A way] to shake us out of the complacency of seeing/hearing/thinking as we always have, or might have, or will have" (p. 14). Thus, although Jackson and Mazzei focused on pushing data to their analytical limits, the process of thinking with theory has an impact in terms of how one thinks about the data that are stretched, (re)presented with multiple meanings, and (re)constituted from divergent vantage points. As the above quotation suggests, the effect of thinking with theory is that one will see/hear/think about data in unconventional, untraditional, and unconstrained ways.

For these reasons, readers will find the following chapter diverges from what may be expected from a chapter focused on implications for practice. That is, rather than focusing on a series of best practices educators can implement to become "better" working alongside trans college students, the participants and I pose a series of problems, challenges, questions, and complications. Our purpose in doing this is to invite readers to think with us about the ways in which gender regulates not just the lives of trans* people, but also, everyone. Once this is established, it becomes clear that we all have a stake in confronting the insidious nature of genderism, including the many ways in which we are all complicit and/or resist the limiting constraints of binary notions of gender. In other words, rather than providing an easy list of tasks to complete, suggesting that genderism is something "out there," which one can grasp and tame, participants and I suggest genderism is something that is "in us," and thus, has a grasp on all of us. Because of this, providing a list of best practices, despite its envious simplicity, will never adequately help us address the full complexity of the issue at hand.*

Similarly, readers will recall that Spade (2011) wrote that Critical Trans Politics "helps us investigate how the norms that produce conditions of disparity and violence emerge from multiple, interwoven locations, and recognize possibilities for resistance as similarly dispersed" (p. 21). Thus, for Spade, the multifaceted nature of the problem (i.e., genderism and the violence enacted on trans people as a result) requires a series of interventions and a new way of thinking about solutions that are equally disparate and various. Spade went further, advocating for a completely inverted strategy of addressing the pernicious effects of genderism through what*

he terms the "trickle up" method of activism. In doing so, Spade suggested that rather than working on rights for a few and then "coming back" for more marginalized populations, we should work to attain rights for those populations who are most marginalized and who experience extreme threat. In doing so, Spade articulated that such rights would invariably cover those who do not experience such overt threat and hostility, thus allowing the rights won for highly marginalized populations to "trickle up." In the tradition set forth by Spade, participants and I propose college educators adopt this inverted model of activism and begin to ask themselves what it would mean to approach their work by thinking first about the needs, barriers, and life experiences of those highly marginalized and potentially invisible populations on college and university campuses (e.g., trans people of color, trans* people with disabilities). Indeed, we suggest it may even behoove student affairs educators to approach their work from a perspective of how they can make campuses more equitable in an attempt to welcome those who do not even currently have access to higher education (e.g., homeless trans* youth, trans* people living at or below the poverty line, incarcerated trans* people).*

Although this is the final chapter of this dissertation study, it is, in many ways, the first chapter in the work educators can (and should) do alongside trans college students. Thus, what follows has been written intentionally as a call to action, and a call full of potential beginnings that educators are encouraged to take up in their daily practice. Just as participants and I have worked alongside each other for the past 18 months, we now invite our readers to work alongside us in making strides to promote cultural change that bends toward gender equity and trans* inclusion. Rather than handing you, our readers, a list of "what to do," we extend our hands and ask you to wade through the murkiness of systemic genderism together. Just as we have done for this study, we believe the only way to proceed is with one another. Therefore, we invite you to join us so that we may go on, and we may do so together.*

Chapter Five: Discussion

> Some people have asked me what is the use of increasing possibilities for gender. I tend to answer: Possibility is not a luxury; it is as crucial as bread. (Butler, 2004, p. 29)

Implications for Theory and Practice

In the following chapter, I used data from the 18-month study participants and I invested in together to elucidate six implications for theory and practice. These implications include:

1. Moving beyond best practices;
2. Recognizing how gender mediates everyone's lives;
3. Embracing a "trickle up" approach to diversity and inclusion work;
4. Reconceptualizing college environments;
5. A call to recommit to intersectionality; and
6. The development of an epistemology of love.

Each finding is framed as a call to action for educators to imagine new possibilities and ways of working in college and university settings that would proliferate possibilities for how one may think about and/or practice gender. As such, the calls for action are intended to be read as imbued with liberatory potential rather than as an indication of what educators have been doing wrong. Put another way, the implications derived from this study signal a hopeful turn for how one may work alongside people with diverse genders to address the pernicious effects of systemic genderism in higher education.

Moving Beyond Best Practices

On the surface, the creation of best practices, or sets of recommendations that all educators should seek to emulate and reproduce on their campuses, seems like it would be a good idea for me and others working toward gender equity and trans* inclusion on college campuses. Indeed, creating best practices seems like a best practice. However, when taking a critical trans politics approach to gender equity, one understands the notion of best practices as increasingly interested in reaching a singular point of arrival; a point which, upon further investigation, is a utopian myth.

In the introduction to *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of the Law*, Dean Spade (2011) wrote:

> I hope to show how critical trans politics practices resistance. Following the traditions of women of color feminism, this critical approach to resistance refuses to take for granted

national stories about social change that actually operate to maintain conditions of suffering and disparity. It questions its own effectiveness, engaging in constant reflection and self-evaluation. And it is about practice and process rather than a point of arrival. (pp. 19-20)

Thus, for Spade (2011) and others committed to practicing a critical trans politics, to suggest one has arrived is, in and of itself, antithetical and counterintuitive. Although it may indeed be the case that gender activists and those seeking trans* inclusion may get somewhere (and certainly this is the hope), to be content with that somewhere elides the reality that critical trans politics is a process. In fact, as Spade (2011) pointed out in the aforementioned extended quotation, critical trans politics is a practice. This, then, mirrors the Butlerian concept of gender as a practice, or something that one continually repeats.

If critical trans politics is a practice, and if its being a practice means one must continually repeat it—or, using Spade's words, one must practice "constant reflection and self-evaluation" (p. 19)—then to provide a list of best practices becomes a gilded experiment; something that provides the veneer of progress regarding trans* inclusion, but may, in its very existence, cover up practices, attitudes, and an overall ethos of trans* exclusion. For example, as I have written about elsewhere (Nicolazzo & Marine, in review), the emergence of trans*-inclusive housing as a best practice within student affairs works in a couple ways. First, it proliferates some options, albeit with limitations, as to where trans* students may live on campus in a comfortable environment. However, at the same time, suggesting that creating trans*-inclusive housing is a "best practice" overlooks the fact that stopping at having a floor, wing, or entire building dedicated to the practice of inclusive housing provides a rationale for all other campus housing assignments to be made under the rubric of genderism. In other words, having a space for trans* students to live comfortably on campus, although a positive step in many ways, overlooks the fact that genderism continues to regulate how all other residential spaces are organized. Thus, if creating a trans* inclusive building on campus is a "best practice," then that best practice simultaneously promotes gender inclusion *and* genderism (Nicolazzo, in press).

Another example of the way best practices overlook systemic genderism in the name of progress is in the creation and dissemination of campus climate indices, such as the LGBT-Friendly Campus Pride Index put out by Campus Pride. First, many of the measures of inclusion on this (and other) indices are policy-based (e.g., if a campus has a LGBT-friendly housing

policy or if a campus recognizes sexual and gender diversity in their non-discrimination statement). As I discuss later in this chapter, such policies are symbolic in nature, and do little to improve the overall lives of trans* youth. Thus, suggesting that inclusion comes as a result of adopting certain policies is overly optimistic. Secondly, the Index does not require student input in its collection of data, and thus, as a basis for its findings (FAQs, n.d.). Due to this, the determination of which campuses are "LGBT friendly" are based solely on administrators' impressions of support, inclusion, and comfort. In other words, campuses that may appear to be "LGBT friendly"—perhaps the campus has not had a reported LGBT-motivated bias incident, perhaps the campus has several gender inclusive restrooms—may also be *un*friendly places. For example, similar to the above comments on trans*-inclusive housing, having several gender inclusive restrooms reinforces genderism in all other restrooms across campus. Additionally, if a student attends a campus that is found to be "LGBT friendly" by these indices, but then feels it is unsafe or uncomfortable, the student becomes the problem rather than the campus. In other words, the campus has already been marked as "safe," so the student is seen as the problem (e.g., the accommodations made on campus for LGBT students is "not enough," or the violence the student may experience is discussed as an aberration).

An example of this logic can be seen when looking at my home institution of Miami University. At the writing of this dissertation, the campus had a rating of 4.5 out of 5 stars on the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index, garnering a 3.5 out of five stars for its LGBT Housing and Residence Life rating. These ratings, however, belie the fact that homophobia and transphobia are experienced by queer students, faculty, and staff regularly and the campus only offers "gender-neutral housing on a limited basis, [which means] space is limited to two suites in two halls (four students per suite) and one apartment" (Conrad, 2012, para. 11). Given the inconsistencies between the campus ranking and student experiences, it becomes clear that the suggestion of Miami University being a "friendly" campus is troubling, and as a result, such a suggestion must be troubled.

Again, it bears repeating that by resisting the pull of best practices, I am not suggesting I and other trans* activists are directionless. Much to the contrary, moving beyond best practices means recognizing we always have more work we can (and, I would argue, should) be doing to promote gender equity and trans* inclusion. It means recognizing that although some efforts are positive steps (e.g., the creation of trans*-inclusive housing areas on campus), they must not be

seen as an end goal. Moving beyond best practices means asking ourselves as educators hard questions about how, even when we take positive steps, we may still be complicit in furthering genderism in our policies and practices (Nicolazzo, in review). Moving beyond best practices wrestles us as educators out of the mythical notion that we can ever arrive at fully inclusive practices, and demands that we see our work as being about practice, process, reflection, and self-evaluation, to use Spade's (2011) words. Such a paradigmatic shift also requires educators to reach out to trans* students, faculty, and staff so that our voices are central in the practice of a critical trans politics that seeks liberation for us as a marginalized population. This process may be messy, and likely will not fit neatly into neoliberal rubrics for measuring "effectiveness" or if a campus is "friendly." However, the move away from best practices—and toward a critical trans politics—is one that educators would be well advised to take as a way to promote gender equity and trans* inclusion on college and university campuses.

Recognizing How Gender Mediates Everyone's Lives

Although the present study focused explicitly on trans* students, it is important to highlight that the cultural manifestations of genderism at CU (i.e., the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism) regulated everyone's lives. Put another way, all students, faculty, staff, and visitors to CU were (re)oriented in both overt and tacit ways regarding how they should think about, present, and do gender (Ahmed, 2006). At first blush, this finding appears innocuous; of course cultural notions of gender influence all members of that culture. However, what is more complex is the way this finding—a finding largely about cisgender people—continues to recenter trans* people and their counter-stories of success forwarded in this study. Specifically, this finding suggests that if binary notions of gender influence everyone, then it would behoove cisgender students, faculty, and staff to shoulder the burden of initiating large-scale cultural change on college campuses. This would seem to be the case due to the negative impact of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism on all lives, in particular those of trans* people. Furthermore, if this were to happen, and trans* students were to be released from the need to continually fight for recognition and an adequate redistribution of time, attention, energy, and resources, they would be better able to focus on developing and maintaining the kinship networks participants identified as being particularly important to their success at CU.

Admittedly, I feel uneasy about forwarding this implication, as it revolves largely around the notion of interest convergence (Bell, 1989), or the idea that progress will only be made when what is best for marginalized populations also benefits majoritarian populations. However, recognizing the fact that gender mediated everyone's lives at CU serve the purpose of continually calling one back to the narratives, experiences, and needs of trans* students, which is a central tenet of the critical paradigm in which this study was rooted (Anzaldúa, 2007; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Spade, 2011). Moreover, as stated above, it would also allow trans* students to focus more time and attention on building and maintaining the kinship networks that were vital to their success.

Recognizing the myriad ways gender mediates everyone's lives also resists the need to answer questions about how many trans* people there are on college and university campuses. In other words, if everyone's lives are regulated by gender, it deviates from the need to count and categorize trans* people, a practice several trans* scholars have problematized. For example, Spade (2010) discussed how the counting and categorizing of trans* people has led to increased surveillance and policing of gender, particularly as it relates to race and nationality (Beauchamp, 2013; Puar, 2007). Furthermore, not only is there not a reliable way to quantify how many trans* students there are in higher education (Nicolazzo & Marine, in review), but the question about numbers is often used as a way to suggest trans* people are rare, oddities, and/or a population worth time, attention, and resources. Questions about how many trans* students there are also suggest that to be counted, which requires one being comfortable being out in some way, privileges visible representations of trans*ness, which I discussed in the previous chapter as making certain raced, classed, and able-bodied assumptions of who counts as trans*.

In realizing the ways in which gender influences everyday modes of being, acting, and thinking, cisgender people are forced to see themselves as benefitting from the promotion of gender as an unstable and flexible construct. As discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, there are people who do not identify as trans*, but who may blur normative understandings of gender. Examples include Wilkins' (2008) discussion of goth men who paint their nails and/or wear makeup and Pascoe's (2007) discussion of the "Basketball Girls," who dressed and acted in stereotypically masculine ways despite being assigned female at birth. Thus, it is clear that more than just trans* people would be well served by cracking open restrictive social understandings of gender. Put another way, the expansion of gender as a category can be seen as a project where

interests from multiple populations converge and, thus, could benefit trans* students without requiring them having to shoulder the burden of constant education and resistance; a burden participants highlighted was often exhausting and in which they sometimes refused to engage. Moreover, the reduced burden of expanding notions of gender—produced by the aforementioned critical theoretical notion of interest convergence (Bell, 1989)—would allow trans* students more time and energy to focus on developing and maintaining the kinship networks participants identified as essential to their success. That is, by not having to constantly address gendered microaggressions, or not having to think about if, how, or when to address problematic situations caused by the twin cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism, trans* students would have the time and space to create and be amongst the kinship networks participants identified as being essential to their success on campus.

For an educator to recognize the ways gender organizes and influences daily life, one needs to be prepared to think about the multiple ways in which gender "shows up" in one's life. From the mundane and tacit to the provocative and explicit, educators must ask themselves questions about how gender influences their actions, attitudes, behaviors, dress, policies, and practices. For example, questions about why dress codes are necessary, how dress codes enforce normative gender expectations, why gender-specific language is used in policy documents, how gender structures conversations with colleagues, and what assumptions are made about others with whom educators interact based on appearance, style, demeanor, or voice inflection are all important ways educators can uncover how gender influences one's life. By asking these questions, and encouraging other cisgender individuals to do the same, trans* people will be released of the burden of always having to "bring up gender" (Henderson, 2014).

Embracing a "Trickle Up" Approach to Diversity and Inclusion Work

Data from the present study elucidated how the cultural realities of a gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism mediated trans* students' ability to successfully navigate CU. Moreover, as I suggested in the above implication, these culturally reinforced notions of gender as an always already naturalized and dichotomous set of social identities press upon everyone in the college environment, not just trans* college students. In other words, the way gender was culturally (re)enforced at CU continually (re)oriented all members of the campus community, including guests and visitors to campus, toward binary notions of gender. Therefore, echoing the work of Ahmed (2006), the question educators should seek to answer is

how they can work to reorient themselves and others toward more liberatory modes of thinking, being, and doing gender on campus.

In answering this question, it may be seductive to think of grand gestures from upper administrators regarding gender equity and trans* inclusion as providing the best way to counteract genderism. However, to suggest such a facile solution to such a complex cultural phenomenon is myopic at best. A wide array of social movements suggested that state-based solutions are unlikely to solve adequately such systemic oppression. Additionally, historical perspectives on social action rightly point out that the state itself has often fueled the very forms of structural inequities upon which such systemic oppression is based (e.g., Hanhardt, 2013; Orleck, 2005; Spade, 2011; Sylvia Rivera Law Project, 2007; Warner, 1999; Worley, 2011).

Translating the state's complicity in furthering systems of inequity to college campuses, it could be suggested that the aforementioned grand gestures from upper-level administrators to counteract the gender binary discourse and/or compulsory heterogenderism may have little influence on improving the life chances of highly marginalized populations (e.g., trans* students). Indeed, recalling Adem's comments, they discussed the inclusion of the phrase "gender identity and expression" in CU's non-discrimination policy as being akin to "caution tape." What Adem meant was that the policy acted as a suggestion of what community members should not do rather than provide a hard rule by which all had to abide. Similar to caution tape, which can be easily pushed away, torn down, or otherwise disregarded, having language about gender identity and expression in CU's non-discrimination policy did little, if anything, to move beyond a mere symbolic gesture to increase life chances for trans* students on campus. In fact, as I have written about elsewhere (Nicolazzo & Marine, in review), relying on such policies may provide little protection, as was the case for Kaeden Kass, a trans* man whose discrimination lawsuit against my home institution of Miami University. Ultimately, Miami General Counsel dismissed Kass' case in 2012 due to a supposed lack of evidence, and despite the inclusion of gender identity and expression in the University's non-discrimination policy (Taylor, 2012).

Although symbolic inclusions such as including the phrase "gender identity and expression" in campus non-discrimination policies is important, data from this study suggest college educators could approach diversity and inclusion work in different ways that may better recognize the dignity and worth of highly marginalized student populations. Spade (2011) articulated one such strategy, which he termed the "trickle up" approach to diversity and

inclusion work. In this approach, Spade suggests that rather than waiting for upper-level administrators to recognize and affirm the lives of trans* college students—a prospect that may yield little of consequence in changing the material and psychic realities of genderism on campus—trans* students, faculty, and staff should seek partnerships and coalitions within and amongst each other to create communities of support and promote self-efficacy and intragroup safety. Furthermore, trans* students can reach out to like-minded populations who may not be trans*, but share similar goals and needs regarding safety and recognition on campus. As Spade (2011) wrote, such coalitions are

> centered in a practice of building non-professional relationships that ground political practice and understanding in mutual care and trust. …This work prioritizes building leadership and membership on a "most vulnerable first" basis, *centering the belief that social justice trickles up, not down*. …It is this space, where questions of survival and distribution are centered, where the well-being [of the most vulnerable will not be compromised for promises of legal and media representation, where the difficult work of building participatory resistance led from the bottom up is undertaken, where we can seek the emergence of deeply transformative trans resistance. (pp. 222-224, emphasis added)

For Spade (2011), creating a broad-based, coalitional movement seeking justice on a "most vulnerable first" basis is a way to resist the seductive rhetoric of inclusion that often comes in the form of broad policy reforms, statements on inclusion and diversity made my upper-level administrators, or a college or university's suggestion of having a "commitment to diversity," which is often a statement used throughout mission statements, regardless of its actual veracity (Morphew & Hartley, 2006).

Based on the present study, approaching diversity and inclusion work on college and university campuses with a "trickle up" approach would mean centering the voices, needs, and experiences of those who are the most marginalized. This may mean recognizing who is not even present or visible on college campuses, and what may be prohibiting their presence and/or visibility. It also means focusing time, attention, and energy on various intersections of identities that produce decreased life chances, particularly for trans* youth. In the context of higher education environments, this means educators should pay particular attention to the lives, experiences, and needs of trans* people of color, undocumented trans* people, trans* people living in poverty and/or who are homeless, and trans* people with disabilities, as these are

populations who invariably fall into the category of being of the "most vulnerable" student populations. Furthermore, as participants in this study articulated, and as I will discuss in a later implication for theory and practice, CU did not attend to such intersections of identities. By neglecting such important intersections, or by addressing them in ancillary or perfunctory ways, participants like Micah, Jackson, Silvia, Derek, Adem, and BC faced decreased opportunities to succeed at CU. Indeed, the reality that almost half of the participants left CU before attaining a degree may itself be emblematic of educators' lack of prioritization of students on a "most vulnerable first" basis. In this sense, taking a "trickle up" approach to diversity and inclusion work might not only have had a positive impact on those participants who left CU, but would invariably provide rights and privileges to other marginalized and vulnerable populations (e.g., people of color, working-class students, students with diverse sexualities, students with chronic illnesses). In other words, by focusing on the needs of the "most vulnerable first," as Spade (2011) suggested, rights will trickle up to those who also face marginalization, invisibility, and have yet to be recognized on college and university campuses.

Taking such a radically different approach to diversity and inclusion work on college and university campuses will likely take some patience and explanation. However, it is my contention that such a shift is not only necessary, but can often be tied to an institution's mission and values. In other words, if, as Morphew and Hartley (2006) found, it is true that phrases like institutions having a "commitment to diversity" are well represented across mission statements, then it would make sense to frame the taking of a "trickle up" approach to diversity and inclusion work as a method by which one can live such a commitment. Taking a "trickle up" approach to diversity and social justice work also means asking hard questions regarding which populations are present/absent, visible/invisible, and targeted/welcomed on college and university campuses. From here, educators can begin to frame educational initiatives, programmatic efforts, and support services around those whose access is the most limited.

One should not understand taking a "trickle up" approach as always being about making a massive shift in attitudes, behaviors, or approaches to student affairs practice. Indeed, many practitioners and offices already use a "trickle up" approach to their daily practice, even if they do not expressly define it as such. Strategies such as rethinking office hours to accommodate various student schedules, promoting programming *for* rather than *about* highly marginalized student populations (e.g., trans* students) (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014), and being vocal about

the various ways systemic oppression negatively influences vulnerable populations on campus are positive steps toward taking a "trickle up" approach to diversity and inclusion work. Although reorienting oneself, an office, or an entire division of student affairs toward a "trickle up" approach will not occur overnight, Spade's (2011) call is an essential shift to start making if student affairs educators are to take seriously their role as being "committed … to the cultivation of diversity" (Marine, 2011a, p. 1168).

Reconceptualizing College Environments

There is a robust base of literature regarding higher education campus ecology and environments (e.g., Renn & Arnold, 2003; Renn & Patton, 2011; Strange & Banning, 2001). There is also a growing body of literature that focuses specifically on identity centers on college campuses, including Black Cultural Centers (Patton, 2006a, 2006b) and LGBTQ Centers (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014). When combined with quantitative datasets such as the 2010 State of Higher Education for LGBT People (Rankin et al., 2010), it is clear there exists a substantive depth of literature regarding how college environments influence the lives of those who live, learn, work, and play on campus.

What is lesser known or focused on is how virtual spaces can expand how educators come to understand campus environments. In particular, although virtual spaces are beginning to make an appearance in higher education literature (e.g., Kasch, 2013), they have yet to expand the way college educators think about notions of "campus environments." For example, in applying the work of Bronfenbrenner on human ecology to college contexts, Evans et al. (2010) noted:

> Although Bronfenbrenner did not include computer-mediated contexts in which college students now experience "activities, roles, and interpersonal relations" (p. 16), in the twenty-first century it seems reasonable to include these contexts, which are not face-to-face settings, in the definition of microsystems since they are sites where social, physical, and symbolic features may provoke or retard engagement with the environment, as described by Bronfenbrenner (1993). (p. 163)

Therefore, when considering the data from this study, it is imperative that college educators expand their notions of campus environments to include virtual spaces such as social media networks, online forums, video games, and video-sharing websites. Specifically, when considering the way participants leveraged virtual spaces to both learn about themselves and

their gender identities as well as successfully navigate the physical environment of CU, it becomes clear that virtual spaces were not merely a way for trans* students to pass time. In fact, in many ways the participants lived online. For example, recalling the words of Jackson, who stated, "I exist primarily on the internet, you know? That's pretty much my hometown," gives a clue to how prominent virtual spaces were for some participants. Furthermore, Megan talked about spending most of her youth "inside," which she used as a synonym for being alone and gaming in her room. When she came to college, she discussed gaming as a way to reflect her identity as a woman, specifically by playing women video game characters. Therefore, for Megan, the act of playing video games became imbued with an ability to practice her gender identity in a way that was foreclosed to her in physical due to the overarching cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism at CU.

Moreover, the Internet became a medium through which kinship was cultivated between participants and me throughout our 18 months together. Far from just providing a sense of connection during the study, these connections have proliferated and persisted today. For example, Micah, who left CU and, as a result, ended their participation in the study before its conclusion, has continually reached out to me via social media networks, thereby maintaining a sense of connection and kinship. Similarly, Silvia, who decided to study abroad for the entire year after the study concluded, has maintained contact through virtual technologies such as Instagram and email. Therefore, these virtual spaces and computer-mediated contexts were not only important for participants developing a sense of self, but they were also extremely important to the project of finding, connecting with, and maintaining bonds of kinship that persisted long after any official "end" to the study that brought us together in the first place.

In light of these data, college and university educators would be well advised to think through how expanding notions of campus environments may proliferate strategies for marginalized student populations, such as trans* students, to navigate their campuses successfully. For example, in what ways could educators encourage gaming as a productive tool for exploring one's identities, particularly those identities students may be reticent to share due to a lack of safety, heightened vulnerability, and/or their own uncertainty? How might educators connecting with students via social networking platforms be a useful strategy for developing community as well as for connecting students to other people and resources outside of any particular campus? What are the benefits of seeing virtual spaces not just as a way to "meet

students where they are at," but as a tool to engage with students in a more private, and potentially more safe, way? Building from this, how can such connections through virtual spaces begin to be understood as an important aspect of outreach beyond just inviting students to events and physical centers, which may carry with it certain risks or concerns? For example, if one thinks back to the experiences of Micah and Silvia as Black trans* youth who felt some sense of ambivalence toward the overarching Whiteness of The Center, how might providing opportunities to connect through virtual space provide a way for Micah, Silvia, and other Black trans* youth to connect without having to run the risk of facing racial microaggressions by physically being at The Center?

Moreover, participants talked at length of the importance of digital technologies and virtual spaces when beginning to explore their own trans* identities. However, most, if not all, of the educational programming done at CU regarding diverse genders and sexualities occurred in physical settings (e.g., classrooms, clubs and organizations, and facilitated workshops). Therefore, a disconnect emerged between the ways trans* participants *came to learn about their possible gendered futures* and how practitioners *educated about those same possible gendered futures*. Putting Raegan's reflection that "YouTube is the most comforting place second to meeting trans people in person" to work, data from this study suggest college educators should rethink educational programming efforts to align with where students are already going for such information. Although it is true participants sought out physical spaces, such as TransActions, and that at least one participant (BC) made the decision to attend CU based on the existence of more inclusive spaces for trans* people, these physical environments were not sufficient for trans* students learning, developing, and/or feeling comfortable navigating their collegiate environments. Thus, the data from this study assert educators should become adroit in their use of virtual space as a tool to connect with, promote learning and development of, and encourage community building alongside of trans* college students. The data from this study also align with one other study regarding virtual space as a significant domain of kinship-building for trans* college students (Nicolazzo, Pitcher, Renn, & Woodford, in review), providing further impetus for college educators to give serious consideration to how virtual space and digital technologies are leveraged to promote trans* student success.

A Call to Recommit to Intersectionality

Although emanating from the critical legal scholarship of Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s, intersectionality has recently experienced somewhat of a renaissance in the field of higher education. As Jones (2014) stated, "Many in higher education were initially drawn to intersectionality because it emphasized linking identity to structures of privilege and oppression (Jones & Abes, 2013)" (p. xi). Despite this enthusiasm for using intersectionality as an analytical tool, Bowleg (2008) articulated, "Conducting and designing intersectionality research … poses a variety of thorny methodological challenges" (p. 312). Several higher education scholars have located particular "thorny challenges" when discussing research with marginalized student populations (e.g., Stewart, 2010; Tillapaugh & Nicolazzo, 2014), a reflection that embodies Jones' (2014) claim that "higher education scholars have been relatively unsophisticated in the application of intersectionality because they overemphasized its identity applications" (p. xii). This "overemphasis on identity applications," or what Hill Collins (2009) referred to as a "turn[ing] inward, to the level of personal identity narratives" (p. ix) overshadows the ways in which people navigate a social context marked by multiple interconnected systems of inequity.

Moving from the theoretical and methodological to the practical, the data from the present study indicate that student affairs educators at CU similarly struggled with what intersectionality looks like in practice. As some participants suggested, what educators heralded as "intersectional programmatic efforts" were stand-alone, co-sponsored events between offices. However, as Micah suggested, "[We trans* people] are people period. Very, very diverse and very intersectional." What Micah was suggesting was that a commitment to intersectional praxis took more than individual programs focusing on two or more identities. In effect, this comment reflected what Bowleg (2008) articulated, specifically that Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman. This sentiment was further emphasized by Micah and Silvia's stating that The Center was a predominantly White space and, thus, struggled to reflect and discuss the complex realities of being a Black trans* person at CU, itself an institution with a deep history of racism and trans* erasure.

Given the previous insights, higher education researchers and practitioners would be well advised to seek to reflect students' lives in ways that honor the complexities of their experiences and the depth with which their various social identities mediate their experiences at all times

rather than just during specific programming efforts. Put another way, higher education researchers and practitioners must recommit to intersectionality in a way that honors both the core tenets of the analytical lens itself as well as the lives of the students alongside whom one works. To do so means first recommitting to understanding what intersectionality means, which has become muddled (Hill Collins, 2009; Jones, 2014). Rather than resting on additive assumptions, intersectionality seeks to uncover the ways in which interlocking systems of oppression press on individuals to influence their (in)ability to navigate various social contexts (Bowleg, 2008). As I have written about elsewhere, "Any discussion of intersectionality without due consideration given to the implications and effects of systemic power misses the proverbial mark" (Tillapaugh & Nicolazzo, 2014, p. 114). Thus, researchers and practitioners should avail themselves of the various texts and exemplars of intersectionality (e.g., Jones & Abes, 2013; Mitchell, Simmons, & Greyerbiehl, 2014) that have begun to emerge throughout the field of higher education. Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to go back to the primary founding documents of intersectionality, including—but not limited to—the work of Crenshaw (1989, 1995), Hill Collins (2009), Dill and Zambrana (2009), and Bowleg (2008).

Next, researchers and practitioners should give thought to *understanding what intersectionality does*. In other words, researchers and practitioners should have an awareness of what the intentions of intersectional approaches to research and practice are and move forward accordingly. As Micah's aforementioned comment suggests, the intent of intersectional research and practice is not to discuss multiple identities for a limited amount of time as a part of an isolated, stand-alone program. Rather, intersectionality as a theoretical and analytical tool has the power to articulate how possibilities are proliferated and/or foreclosed for individuals based on their identities and the systems of privilege and power that shape the environment in which they live. For higher education practitioners, then, approaching one's work through an intersectional lens means interrogating the very structures that keep offices siloed and unable to partner in ways beyond one-time, stand-alone programs in the first place. It also means questioning why thoughts of working alongside each other in more substantive ways may generate concerns—themselves rooted in neoliberal logic—about offices and/or budgets being collapsed into one another as a cost-saving measure.

Taking an intersectional approach to both educational research and practice has the power to undo neoliberal logic that keeps offices and departments from partnering in more synergistic

ways. It also has the power to create spaces in which researchers and practitioners recognize Micah's commenting that he and other trans* students are complex people who all hold various, intersecting social identities. Thus, while the following call for recommitting oneself to intersectionality is rooted in the critique that, as a field of higher education scholars and practitioners, we have continually missed the mark, I also agree with the variety of scholars I have previously cited in that we can do better. Indeed, we must, both for the future of intersectionality research and practice, but more importantly, for the lives of the students alongside whom we seek to work.

The Development of an Epistemology of Love

Articulating what they termed an "epistemology of love" as a standpoint from which researchers could approach inquiry, Palmer and Zajonc (2010) asked:

> At first, love seems to have little to do with knowledge and our understanding of how it works, but if we set aside romantic love for the moment, is it not true that we come to know best that which we love most? (p. 94)

Palmer and Zajonc further suggested that such an epistemology of love was the "true heart of higher education" (p. 94), claiming that to approach educational praxis from a place of love had the potential ability to increase one's connection with others and the environment in which one is situated. Implicit in Palmer and Zajonc's extended quote above is the unnecessary conflation between love as intimate personal connection and love as erotic or romantic desire. This conflation, although overly facile, has likely stood in the way of educators discussing or embracing such an epistemology of love throughout research and practice. Instead, I suggest that developing an epistemology of love in student affairs and higher education means seeing and hearing each other for who we are, which requires giving each other the agency to define who we are for ourselves as well as allowing each other to change and amend who we are or could be in the future. It is my contention that were we as educational scholars and practitioners to embrace such an epistemology of love, we may very well be able to do research, and create educational environments, that proliferate possibilities (Butler, 2006) and increase life chances (Spade, 2011) for trans* students.

Speaking of the benefits of loving in community, hooks (2000) stated:

> Enjoying the benefits of living and loving in community empowers us to meet strangers without fear and extend to them the gift of openness and recognition. …Unlike other

> movements for social change that require joining organizations and attending meetings, *we can begin the process of making community wherever we are*. (p. 143, emphasis added)

At first, the thought of extending loving kindness seems overly simplistic, impossibly quixotic, or downright unimportant. However, the data from the present study suggest that "living and loving in community" is precisely what the participants found through the development of kinship networks. Furthermore, this was exactly what they desired, but found lacking, from other students, faculty, and staff as well as their environment at CU. Although I agree with hooks that living and loving in community can begin wherever we are, the reality is that the overall lack of such love-in-community undergirded the manifestations of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism that engulfed CU's campus. Whereas making community can happen without "joining organizations and attending meetings," the likelihood of this happening organically looks far less optimistic that hooks' comment suggests.

As a final implication for research and practice, I suggest that educators spend time thinking about how to cultivate an epistemology of love through which to work alongside students. Particularly for students with marginalized identities (e.g., trans* students), love is something that may be missing from their lives. I myself have often struggled feeling I am unloved and, worse, that I am unlovable. Thinking about the connections and kinship participants and I developed over the course of our working together, we were able to create a counter-story to this negative perception that our being trans* marked us as "weird," "strange," and "freaks." Raegan's words are particularly poignant, as they stated, "Half the reason I wanted to do this was because I wanted to get to know you (Z)." Thus, for Raegan, the possibility of being connected with me as another trans* person was a main motivating factor for reaching out and entering into our research together. Even Tristan's telling me the one week out of the year he felt most comfortable was when he left CU to attend Creating Change, a conference attended by many people with diverse genders, was indicative of both the importance and slipperiness of cultivating kinship.

As Magolda and Knight Abowitz (1997) stated, "Understanding community and achieving a sense of it in higher education is difficult—despite near universal endorsement of this ideal" (p. 267). The word has, in many respects, become vacuous, due largely to its concurrently being overused and misunderstood. However, cultivating community, or kinship as

participants and I have come to think of it, is a precious and highly prized value in higher education settings. More than just being important, the development and maintenance of kinship networks has the potential to radically reorganize the way trans* students experience and navigate their collegiate settings. While participants talked about their ability to develop kinship networks, there was a noticeable absence of discussion about cisgender students, faculty, and staff seeking to create and maintain similar kinship networks with them. I do not mean to suggest these partnerships were entirely absent. Certainly Adem and Raegan's dating cisgender partners, and the membership of groups like TransActions not being entirely made up of trans* people are just two quick examples of the ways non-trans* people created kinship networks with the participants in this study. However, such connections were rare. In fact, the data indicate that the overarching cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism at CU actively resist such trans*-gender kinship formations.

Educators, particularly cisgender educators, should take it upon themselves to find ways to cultivate, take part in, and infuse notions of "living and loving in community" throughout their daily practice. This means exploring the many ways in which connections between strangers are both encouraged and discouraged. It also means addressing the myriad ways systemic privilege and oppression operate on campus and university campuses to influence such (dis)connections. Truly engaging in such work means making a commitment to self-reflection, which may uncover the ways in which one is complicit in systemic genderism. These realizations are never easy, desirable, or welcome. However, it behooves us all to take on this project if we are to embrace an epistemology of love that may very well proliferate possibilities for students being and doing trans* genders in college.

The Possibilities and Challenges of Collaborative Methodologies

At the outset of this study, my dissertation committee asked several questions regarding what it meant for me to take part in a collaborative project alongside participants. These questions related to the ethics, possibilities, and demands of doing collaborative research with college students. I was unable to answer these questions in any substantive way beyond theoretically or conceptually at the time they were asked. However, having finished the study, I now am able to discuss both the possibilities and challenges of using collaborative methodologies, especially alongside trans* students.

As I have written about elsewhere (Jourian & Nicolazzo, in review), there is significant liberatory potential when using collaborative and participatory methodologies alongside trans* populations. Not only does it provide an opportunity for trans* people to take part in authoring their own counter-stories and to have more control over their (self-)representations, but collaborative methodologies also allow for a more equitable and transparent research process. However, suggesting a study is "collaborative" has a number of challenges. First, how collaborative a study is may vary widely. For example, for the present study, participants did not help construct the study design, decide on research questions, or participate in writing this final dissertation document. However, participants did take part in data analysis and were consulted throughout the research process when I ran into challenges or had questions related to the writing process. Furthermore, the relationships between participants and I exceeded traditional participant/interviewer relationships, as suggested by Bhattacharya (2008). Specifically, relationships with participants were highly reciprocal, were rooted in deep connection and trust (Foley & Valenzuela, 2008), and embodied a sense of shared solidarity (Lykes, 1989). Despite this, I often wondered how collaborative the study needed to be in order for my to substantiate it being a collaborative study in the first place.

I also worried about participants' time in the crafting and doing of collaborative research. On the one hand, I did not want to ask too much of participants given their already demanding schedules. However, I also did not want to presume participants could not make good choices for themselves about how, when, and to what extent they participated in our study. The balance of too much/not enough involvement was consistently on my mind throughout the 18 months participants and I worked together. Although I am not sure I ever negotiated the question of time and involvement as best I could (or should) have, any guilt I felt about heaping on too much work was assuaged when participants shared sadness about the research study ending and then kept in touch after the study concluded. In fact, the lasting relationships I still have with many of the participants alongside whom I worked is a major benefit of collaborative research itself, and may indeed signal its efficacy as the chosen methodology for the present study. Far from being hyperbolic, I can honestly say the relationships I have kept with several participants have been some of the most meaningful, inspiring, and honest relationships I have constructed in my adult life. I am eager to remain close with these youth, and am anticipating with great zeal hearing about the great things they do as they graduate from CU and move out into the world.

The Possibilities and Challenges of Resiliency Research

Along with there being possibilities and challenges associated with the collaborative nature of the research design, doing affirmative, resilience-based research itself posed several conundrums through which I needed to wade. Taking a resilience-based approach served as an important counter-story to the overwhelming deficit-based rhetoric surrounding trans* lives, both in educational research as well as the social imaginary. However, I worried that focusing heavily on resilience and success may overshadow the pain, frustration, and fear some participants shared (and I myself felt) at times throughout our working together. I often felt trapped in an either/or binary where we as trans* people could either be resilient or weak, successful or failures, visible and accounted for or immaterial and impossible. Furthermore, I worried that if I tried to create a more complex tapestry of trans* lives—as the data indeed suggests—it may be too hard, murky, or confusing to follow. I did not want to do an injustice to the stories and experiences of the nine people who spent the better part of a year and a half working alongside me, but I also did not want to have their experiences lost due to readers' inability to follow the complexity of emotional and material lives.

Although there were much more data than could ever be represented in this dissertation, I feel I have been able to do justice to the participants who shared so much of themselves with me. I did not shy away from sharing difficult moments (e.g., Megan's having been bullied during her youth, which led to her contemplating suicide, Silvia's suggestion that she would never bounce back from her diagnosis of Fibromyalgia, Raegan's statement that sometimes the gender microaggressions got so intense they didn't want to leave their room), nor did I stray from sharing their many incredible successes. Just like all other people, the participants alongside whom I worked lived lives that were sometimes contradictory. They experienced pain alongside joy, fear alongside possibility, and kinship alongside alienation. At the end of my research process, I now know that what participants and I were searching for all along was not mere resilience or success; what we were searching for was raw experience and to have our counter-stories heard. So perhaps, in the end, resilience and success may not have been particular points of arrival, but they came through the process and practice of being alongside one another and searching together.

Study Boundaries & Transferability

Although I discussed goodness criteria in Chapter Three, I find it important to discuss the study's boundaries. Far from attempting to compensate for some supposed lack of validity or ability to generalize the findings to broader contexts (themselves standards of post-positivist and quantitative research, which I never intended to take on), I do find it important to offer some suggestions for how readers may transfer findings from this study. I also find it important to acknowledge the ways this study was framed as a reminder of what the study—and by extension, the findings—both was and was not. I start by elucidating the study boundaries and then move into a discussion about the questions readers may want to consider when attempting to transfer the study findings to various contexts.

Boundaries

Although I was intentional about choosing City University for fieldwork, I am also cognizant that only two of the participants alongside whom I worked identified as Black. I had no participants who identified as Latinx, American Indian/Indigenous/Native American/First Nation, or Asian American/Pacific Islander. This lack of racial and ethnic representation was limiting, as the participants did not reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the wider trans* population. Furthermore, although participants certainly did not have large amounts of disposable income (in fact, BC's leaving CU before attaining a degree was itself a reflection of her needing to work to earn money), the very reality of their being in college signaled a particular socioeconomic status that many trans* people may never achieve. In fact, Grant et al. (2011) found that trans* people were four times more likely to make less than $10,000 or less annually, which was not a reality with which participants (or myself) had to deal. However, in a related—and eerily similar—statistic, Grant et al. (2011) found that less than half (45%) of trans* people aged 18-24 were in school. Although all participants began our study in school, four of the nine left CU and have yet to return or enroll at a different institution of higher education. In other words, just over half of the students participating in the present study (all of whom were 18-24 at the time of their participation) have or are on track to complete their college education, closely aligning to Grant et al.'s finding.

Furthermore, I was only able to be at CU two to three days a week for the 18 months of fieldwork. Although I was able to see, experience, and listen a lot, there was much I missed due to the limited time I was able to spend on campus. In other words, although the time I spent on

campus was significant, it sometimes felt like it was not enough. For example, participants sometimes told me they had been waiting to tell me things, or share stories about particular experiences they had. I wonder what it would have been like being with them when they were having those experiences, and think, had I been able to do so, it would likely have made for a richer set of data from which to draw. I do not intend for this to read as a flaw on behalf of participants' memories, but more so a realization that, although I spent much time on campus, it sometimes felt like I could not be as present as I (or several participants) would have liked me to be. This also speaks to the closeness of the kinship networks participants and I were able to create, and as a result, our desire to be with and alongside each other whenever possible.

Finally, I was expressly concerned with trans* students rather than the meaning faculty or staff (trans*-identified or otherwise) made of trans* students' experiences. Marine (2011a) has studied the thoughts of administrators at Women's colleges regarding trans* students, and while there is still room for additional scholarship regarding how faculty and staff understand gender transgression on college campuses, this was not something I attended to for the present inquiry. Thus, when interpreting and transferring the results of this study, readers should take care not to assume what participants and I found relates in any way to faculty and staff.

Transferability

Mertens (2015) stated, "In qualitative research, the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context" (p. 271). However, it strikes me as important to mention several things readers should consider when they attempt to transfer the results of the present study to their own educational contexts. First, it bears repeating that the city of Stockdale, in which CU is located, has a history of racial tension and anti-LGBTQ legislation. Because campuses are microcosms of their environments, it is fair to suggest Stockdale's history influenced the cultural understandings of gender on CU's campus. Readers in different sociocultural contexts or locations without such a tenuous history of racism, genderism, and homophobia may want to consider how their unique historical context may differ from Stockdale's and, thus, how their campus context may also diverge from that of CU.

It is also worth noting that understanding one's cultural environment enough to recognize when, how, and if the findings and implications of the present may transfer takes time. For example, the findings and implications of the present study took over two and a half years to

develop, 18 months of which consisted of prolonged engagement with participants in the field. Fully understanding one's culture is a study in time and patience. Likewise, determining the transferability of the present study to other contexts may also require similar amounts of time and patience. Despite the neoliberal push to do more with less resources and in less time—embodied in the notions of "heightened productivity" and "efficiency" that are becoming increasingly popular throughout higher education—I suggest one slow down in determining how, when, or even if the findings and implications from the present study can be transferred to various contexts. The twin cultural realities of the gender binary discourse and compulsory heterogenderism, along with the other findings participants and I developed throughout the course of our working alongside each other, are complex. As a result, they demand complex solutions. It would be disingenuous, risky, and unethical to assume one could easily or quickly transfer the findings and implications from this study to other contexts without having a handle on the way gender mediates students' experiences in other contexts. Thus, I advise exercising caution and practicing prudence when determining the transferability of the present study. Also, in reflecting the communal nature of the present study, I suggest determining the transferability of the findings and implications *in community with trans* students, faculty, and staff*. Not only will this center the voices of those of us who are often overlooked, forgotten, or told we do not exist, but it will also empower trans* people to take the lead in determining how change is implemented in their own collegiate environments.

Epilogue: In Their Own Words

In finishing this dissertation, I believe the manuscript should end where the study began: with the participants themselves. What follows are what participants shared as what they hoped students, faculty, and staff would do to better work alongside trans* people.

Kade: I think just education is the biggest thing. I think that a lot of people even that talk about trans* issues don't really have a great understanding of it? Like, it's very textbook surface definition of what it means to be trans*. So one, if you're gonna discuss it in class, do your homework? [Chuckles]. Yeah. And then, just like with any group that you don't understand, just very basic kindergarten things like, don't say something that you wouldn't want said to you? Like, you wouldn't go asking some random person about their genitals, or really private things that you don't know, but with trans* people, it's totally cool. [Laughs sarcastically]. Yeah, so I just think general consideration is really important.

Megan: I would think if they were unsure of someone's gender, they could ask for their proper pronouns, and what name they want to be asked…and that's about it, really. I mean, if you treat 'em as the gender they want to be treated as, then they'll be just fine with you.

Micah: I would tell people, honestly, I feel like I would sit them all in a room—faculty, staff, students, educators—everybody—the whole shebang. And just sit there and make sure they are well mixed up individuals, like, you're not always sitting next to someone that is just like you, and I would kinda do the look to your left, look to your right type [thing], and [say], "you know, these are the people of your future. You're going to encounter these people every day. People who look like their not—people aren't always gonna look like you. People aren't always gonna believe the same things that you believe." And my challenge would be, "Just look at yourself and say do you want to be the person in the middle who can't get along, that doesn't work well in this society because you are letting certain things create those walls." And [I'd say], "Now take those walls and tear 'em down. Do you think [the person next to you is] gonna do something that completely compromises who you are? If you can't say yes to that question, there is no reason why you can't sit down and have lunch with this person. Or you can't sit down and study with this person, or this person can't properly educate you about something. You just have to tear down those walls and not be so stuck in your own ways and your own binaries in which

we were taught as a child because we are clearly progressing." We are a progressing society, this is America. And that would be my challenge, like, can you do those things?

Jackson: I can't really think about policies that are bad necessarily, I'm just thinking of actually getting to know somebody as a person before … like, the most basic form of getting to know somebody as a person before you pass a judgment based on their gender expression or whatever.

Um, I think that it's important to bring up in curriculum. You know, when you bring up different … kinds of social issues that you don't ignore the trans* issues, because I feel like that's something that happens a lot, even within the gay community, you know? …I think a lot of issues with people being intolerant is people … growing up in a really homogenous area and not having really learned about other people. …And then if there is a way to influence policy in that way and, you know?

Adem: I would tell [the] administration to step up their game and get their shit together. They're just—in so many respects, they are lagging. I don't see it so much with the administration that I deal with on a daily or weekly basis, but…[pause]…I mean, and not even just in trans* respects, but as far as it goes in making it a welcoming and inclusive campus, like, what are you [the administration] doing? [President Kigawa] can talk about diversity all he fucking wants, but at the end of the day, it's [CU's] just bigger. Bigger doesn't make it more diverse. Bigger doesn't make it better, bigger doesn't make it more welcoming, bigger doesn't make it more important; it's just bigger.

Finally, I close by sharing the words of BC, who gave me the title for this very dissertation by reminding me how I should enter spaces as a trans* person myself. She made her comment in response to my sharing with her the anxiety I had about my impending job search, which at the time was over two years away. After I told her how worried I was about my trans* identity potentially foreclosing job possibilities for me, she looked at me calmly and made the following statement. Although I do not have regular contact with BC, her words are the ones I replay the most in my mind, using them as a mantra to calm my own fears and, as a result, promote my own strategy for success. What she told me was, "Just go in looking good."

Appendices

Appendix A: Call for Participants

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS
LOOKING FOR TRANS* COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO ARE WILLING TO BE A PART OF A STUDY ON RESILIENCY

Hello. My name is Z Nicolazzo, and I am a gender nonconforming doctoral student at Miami University in the Student Affairs in Higher Education program. I am seeking participants for my approved dissertation study (IRB Reference Number: E00659) on trans student resiliency. The purpose of my study is to explore how trans* college students navigate their gendered cultural context, paying particular attention to narratives of success and resilience. Put another way, I am interested in exploring how trans* students navigate the cultural messages they learn about gender, gender expectations, the gender binary, and subverting the gender binary while on campus.*

Please read the information below to determine if you meet the criteria for eligibility. If you are interested in participating in my research, then please follow the link listed below to the informational questionnaire, and use the participant code in the appropriate portion of the questionnaire.

<u>Link</u>
https://miamioh.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cwHmRJ764d9kGW1

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?
I am seeking participants who meet the following criteria:
1. *Self-identify under the umbrella term of trans*. Trans* can include, but is not limited to: transgender, FtM, MtF, genderqueer, agender, genderfuck, gender nonconforming, pre-transition, post-transition, pre-hormones, pre-surgical, tranny boi, tranny grrl, trans* man, trans* woman, transmasculine, transfeminine, gender variant, and transgressing gender binaries.*
2. *Currently enrolled (part-time or full-time) as an undergraduate at the University of Cincinnati. Please note that one's year in school is not important and will not preclude an individual's participation in this study.*
3. *18 years of age or older.*
4. *English speaking.*
5. *Born and raised in the United States.*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?
If you are interested in participating in the study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire to provide demographic information on your identities, year in college, and if you are a part- or full-time student. Selection of participants will be based on the above stated criteria for eligibility, which will be obtained through your completion of the aforementioned questionnaire. Everyone who fills out the informational questionnaire will be contacted via email to verify interest in participation. If you are selected, I will set up a phone call to answer any questions you have about the study and set up a date, time and location for us to meet in person. I will then travel to you for all meetings, interviews, and time spent together.

WHAT DOES BEING A PARTICIPANT INVOLVE?

The study I am undertaking is an ethnographic study, which means I am studying the culture of transgender college students. In order to perform this cultural study, I will be spending time with you doing participant-observations, which means I will observe and interact with you as you go through your daily life. I will talk with you before entering each location and place in which I will be a participant-observer with you to ensure your comfort with my doing so and also to maximize your confidentiality as a study participant. If, when I am a participant-observer with you, I am asked by others who I am or what I am doing, I will identify myself as an acquaintance of yours, but will not identify you as a participant in a research study I am conducting. I will do this as a way to provide you the greatest amount of confidentiality I can through the research process. My study will also involve 60-minute interviews (one per semester of involvement) and narrative summaries, which are responses you would write based on prompts I provide. You would write these narrative summaries once per semester, and you would determine the length and/or depth of your own summaries. After each semester of your participation in this study, I will share a composite of fieldnotes and all interview transcripts (verbatim scripts of interviews) with you to review, clarify, and/or verify.

Due to the extended nature of my study (18-24 months), you have the opportunity to be in my study for up to two years. Of course, this depends on your ongoing interest in being a participant as well as your graduation date. If you plan to graduate before the completion of my study, you are still able to participate. However, upon graduation, your involvement in the study will change. I will no longer perform participant-observations of you, nor would you participate in interviews or write narrative summaries. However, I would allow you the opportunity to provide feedback on my study once I begin to draft it; a process called member checking. You may also have the opportunity to write a personal reflection that could be used as a part of the final draft of the study report.

If you would like to end your participation at any point in time during the study, you would get to determine if you would like the data you provided (through participant-observation, interviews, and/or narrative summaries) to be used in the overall study. If not, I will destroy all fieldnotes, transcriptions, and summaries about or by you.

HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

The following procedures will be used to protect your confidentiality. I will keep all records and data in a secure location. Only I will have access to the fieldnotes, audio-recordings, transcripts, and other data. You will be provided with an Informed Consent form before the research process, which will allow you to choose your own pseudonym (fake name). All digital, audio, and other data will only identify you through your pseudonym, and any specific information about your university will use vague descriptors such as "an urban Midwestern University" or will use the pseudonym City University (CU). Your email address and personal demographic information will never be shared with any other individual. At the conclusion of the study, I may publish my findings. To protect your identity and confidentiality, any publications or presentations about this research will only identify you through your pseudonym and vague descriptors of your university.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
I will be happy to answer any questions you have about this study. If you have any further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the student researcher, Z Nicolazzo (nicolazd@miamioh.edu or 513.461.3724) or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Elisa Abes (abeses@miamioh.edu or 513.529.0164). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Miami University Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship (OARS) at 513.529.3600 or neal.sullivan@miamioh.edu.

CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?
You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out of the study at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do now want to participate.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please fill out the demographic survey, which you can access from the link below.

Link
https://miamioh.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cwHmRJ764d9kGW1

If you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me via email (nicolazd@muohio.edu) or phone (513.461.3724). You may use a pseudonym if you want to remain confidential. I will then use this pseudonym when getting back in touch with you.

Please feel free to pass this along to…
Friends who might be interested in participating!
Colleagues who may know students who would be interested in participating!

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

Hello!

My name is Z and I am a gender nonconforming doctoral student at Miami University in the Student Affairs in Higher Education program. I am seeking participants for my dissertation on trans* student resiliency. The purpose of my study is to explore how trans* college students navigate their gendered cultural context, paying particular attention to narratives of success and resilience. Put another way, I am interested in exploring how trans* students navigate the cultural messages they learn about gender, gender expectations, the gender binary, and subverting the gender binary while on campus.

If you are interested in participating in my research study, please fill out the following questionnaire. This should take approximately 5 minutes. I will then follow up with you using the phone number you provide to describe the study in more depth. I will also answer any questions you may have.

If you have any questions, you can email me personally at: nicolazd@miamioh.edu

Preferred Name

[ ]

Participant Pseudonym

please pick a fake name to protect your identity throughout the research process. Your pseudonym will also be used in all research publications using the information you provide.

[ ]

Participant Criteria

I am seeking participants who meet the following criteria:

1. Self-identify under the umbrella term of trans. Trans* can include, but is not limited to: transgender, FtM, MtF, genderqueer, agender, genderfuck, gender nonconforming, pre-transition, post-transition, pre-hormones, pre-surgical, tranny boi, tranny grrl, trans* man, trans* woman, transmasculine, transfeminine, gender variant, and transgressing gender binaries.*
2. Currently enrolled (part-time or full-time) as an undergraduate at the University of Cincinnati. Please note that one's year in school is not important and will not preclude an individual's participation in this study.
3. 18 years of age or older.
4. English speaking
5. Born and raised in the United States

Do you meet all of the following criteria?

○ Yes

No

Preferred phone number
what is a phone number at which I can follow up with you?

Questions
do you have questions regarding the proposed study? If so, write them below and I will address them when I follow up with you via phone

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Introduction and Greeting

- Greet student upon arrival
- Thank participant for coming to the interview
- Explain and complete Interview Consent Form
- *Ask student which gender pronouns they prefer*
- Explain your role as interviewer and investigator
- Note that participation is voluntary and they can decline to answer any question during the interview and can withdrawal from the study at any time without penalty
- Convey that all interview materials will be kept in a secure location and that confidentiality will be maintained
- Reconfirm their commitment to a 60 minute interview and note the approximate time the interview will conclude
- Also note that at the end of the interview the participant will have an opportunity to ask questions
- Explain who will have access to interview materials and explain how the information will be used
- Remind participant I will use the pseudonym they have already chosen when transcribing their interview

Reintroduce the Study

"The reason why we are meeting to talk today is so I can learn more about your experiences as a trans* student on campus. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how you experience, navigate, and remain resilient in the midst of your gendered college context. I recognize every student has unique and varying experiences and I believe it is important to learn from your experiences and perspectives."

"You have been selected to participate in this study due to your identity as a trans* college student."

Sample Interview Questions

Topic 1: Background, education, college choice

- Tell me a little bit about yourself. What is important for me to know about you?
- How would you define your gender identity?
- What led you to choose to attend this college? Why have you decided to stay?

Topic 2: Campus-Based Gender Expectations

- What are the expectations you have been taught on campus regarding gender identity and expression? Where have you learned these?
- In what spaces do you feel more comfortable on campus? In what spaces do you feel less comfortable on campus? Please explain.
- With whom do you feel more comfortable on campus? With whom do you feel less comfortable on campus? Please explain.
- Tell me about a time when you did not feel able to express your gender identity on campus. How did you respond to this? What did you do?

Topic 3: Resiliency

- How do you define your success?
- How do you define resiliency?
- Do you feel like you have been resilient through your time on campus? Why/why not?
- What has allowed you to remain resilient despite times during which you felt uncomfortable expressing your gender identity?
- What are the strategies you have used to increase your own resiliency and success?

Closing

- Allow participant to ask follow up questions or express concerns
- Encourage participant to contact you with follow-up questions or potential recommendations for other participants
- Reiterate contents of the consent form and procedures for withdrawing from study
- Give participant the referral list
- Thank participant for their involvement and reiterate the value of their contribution
- Make plans to follow up with participant for further participant observation fieldwork

Appendix D: Narrative Summary Prompts

1. What are places on campus where you feel comfortable? What are places on campus you feel uncomfortable? Why do these places make you feel this way?

2. What stands out to you this semester about your experiences on campus as a trans* student?

3. What is your definition of success? How have you been resilient in promoting your own success?

4. What has this campus taught you about gender?

5. Describe your experience as a research participant in this study. Has your involvement influenced your thinking about your gender identity and/or the campus environment? If so, please explain in what ways? If not, please explain why not.

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