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TRANSGENDER STUDENTS, BINARY SYSTEMS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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GENDERISM:
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By

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ABSTRACT

GENDERISM:
TRANSGENDER STUDENTS, BINARY SYSTEMS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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The goal of this study was to make visible the practical issues and unseen power structures of binary gender systems on campus through the experiences of transgender students. My primary research question was: What could the experiences of transgender students reveal about the nature of genderism and its characteristics in higher education? During the 2005-2006 academic year, ten transgender students from two large Midwestern universities chose to volunteer for the study. Participants were white, graduate and undergraduate students, with ages from 18 to 50. In terms of gender identity, they used a broad range of self identifying terms: *transsexual*, *tranny boy*, *genderqueer* or *androgynous*, *M to S (male to something else)*, *two-spirit, third gender* and *still defining* (gender identity was still not known). I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants and used the constant comparative method and grounded theory to interpret data. The study's emerging themes were generally informed by postmodern feminist, queer theory, and critical postmodern perspectives.

As enacted at the two universities, genderism emerged as a social system of structural inequality with an underlying assumption that there are two, and only two genders. This binary system had four primary characteristics: (1) There was a forced social labeling process that sorts and categorizes all individuals into male or female

identities, often at an institutionalized level. (2) There was social accountability for conforming to binary gender norms with related punishments. Individuals who failed to conform were viewed as deviant and/or having a disorder. (3) Marginalization was enacted through an overt and covert privileging of binary systems. (4) Binary systems promoted invisibility of gender non-conforming identities and isolation of transgender persons, making transgender identities inaccessible.

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Chapter One: Framing the Research Questions

Johnny Rogers, a transsexual, female to male undergraduate student, described the first time he requested a faculty member to refer to him by his new name, and to drop the use of "Carol":

> "I was too timid to say anything when you took attendance last week," I stammered, "but I'd like to go by a different name than the one on the class list." God, what would he say? I felt as though I were about to step off a cliff. I wasn't just changing my name; I was taking the first step toward living and moving in the world as a whole person, instead of keeping a chunk of myself buried and covering the remainder with a protective façade. I'd been an out lesbian during my first year on campus, but now, in my second year, I was about to transition to living life as a male. (Rogers, 2000, p. 13)

A growing body of literature has emerged that addresses the needs and concerns of lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender (LBGT) college students (e.g., Kraig, 2002; Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002; Wall & Evans, 2000). While these contributions have been significant, only a small portion of this LBGT scholarship specifically addresses transgender students. Most often, the literature is dominated by sexual orientation issues and lesbian, bisexual, or gay identities. Political correctness drives much of the scholarship to use *lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender* in the research title, with content that ultimately ignores or marginalizes transgender concerns. When transgender identities are the focus, they are often framed in the context of being one-quarter of an LBGT identity politic, instead of being presented as part of an intersecting continuum of sexual orientation and gender identity, or worse, simply unnamed. This

study served to make visible the experiences of a college population that has been largely ignored: transgender students. In particular, this dissertation focuses on an examination of the ways in which transgender students interface with and experience socially constructed gender systems on campus. As an introduction to this study, transgender and related terminology are defined, a rationale and overview of this study is provided, and guiding theoretical perspectives are reviewed.

Naming Terms: Gender Identity and Transgender

The term *gender identity* has been used to describe an individual's internal sense of maleness or masculinity and femaleness or femininity. This may include an understanding of self as a woman or man, or a self-concept in between or outside traditional notions of gender construction (Elkins & King, 1996; O'Keefe & Fox, 1997; Wilchins, 1997, 2002). The vast majority of individuals in the United States, whose biological sex assignment at birth matches their gender identity, are referred to as *men* or *women*. For the purposes of this study, these individuals are referred to as *cisgender men* or *women*. The word *cisgender* originates from transgender inclusive communities that wished to challenge the idea that transgender is "abnormal," and instead reflects the view that there is a broad range of gender experience, rather than one "normal" one (Green, 2002).

The term *transgender* has been used as an umbrella term for a broad range of gender non-conforming identities, including individuals whose biological sex assignment and societal expectations for gender expression are in conflict with the individual's gender identity (Bornstein, 1994; Brown & Rounsley, 1996; Feinberg, 1997, 1998; Wilchins, 1997, 2002). A sample of terms describing transgender identities includes

transsexuals, *transvestites*, *male* and *female impersonators*, *drag kings* and *queens*, *male to female* or *MTF*, *female to male* or *FTM*, *cross-dressers*, and *gender benders* (persons who overtly challenge gender norms for cultural and political reasons) (Bornstein, 1994: Califia, 1997; Feinberg, 1997, 1998; Wilchins, 1997; 2002). Transgender persons may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual or asexual (Bornstein, 1994; Carter, 2000; Elkins & King, 1996). While there are a number of distinctions between sexual orientation and gender identity, scholars suggest some overlapping of these identities as well (Carter, 2000; Wilchins, 1997).

A number of authors note a rapidly expanding language used to describe the transgender experience, including phrases like *gender variant*, *genderqueer*, *gender non-conforming*, *boydyke*, *translesbian*, and *ambiguously gendered* (Bornstein, 1998; Feinberg, 1996; Burgess, 1999; Wilchins, 1997). For the purpose of this study, the term *transgender* serves primarily as an inclusive term for individuals who transgress societal expectations for gender expression, constructing their identities and describing their experience through the terminology outlined above.

Transgender Identities and Higher Education Literature

Higher education literature focusing on gender issues and gender identity primarily addresses an examination of cisgender, binary, male or female contexts (e.g., Bellas & Toutkoushian, 1999; Ropers-Huilman, 2000; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), with a marked absence of gender identity being conceptualized as more fluid or having a transgender component. It is important to recognize the significance of this scholarship, as it addresses inequality and oppression, and most importantly, has named the marginalized status of cisgender women in higher education. Yet, this literature

privileges binary constructions of gender, often ignoring the realities of biological sex variance (i.e., intersexed persons) or varying expressions of gender identity (i.e., transgender persons or gender non-conforming identities). This scholarship, also defined as a traditional feminist perspective (Donovan, 2000), identifies systemic power differentials in static, binary ways. Cisgender men are agents of sexist oppression and Cisgender women are targets of it. Individuals who blur, shift, or change gender identity are not accounted for in these traditional explanations of gender and power. Further, Wilchins (2002) suggests that static male or female categories create a binary social system that results in the oppression of transgender persons, which she termed *genderism*. Wilchins (2002) described genderism and its related power structure:

> Gender is primarily a system of symbols and meanings—and rules, privileges, and punishments pertaining to their use—for power and sexuality: masculinity and femininity, strength and vulnerability, action and passivity, dominance and weakness. It's because gender is not just a system of laws and practices, but also a way of thinking and seeing that it has taken so long to come to the fore as a political issue. Yet, unlike the struggles against homophobia, racism, and sexism, the struggle against genderism will not only be about gaining rights for an oppressed class of men and women. It will be about gaining equality for all men and women. And paradoxically, it will be about the rights of some of us not be men or women. (p. 14)

Wilchins (2002) suggests that a gendered culture exists in society and higher education that assumes gender identity and biological sex assignment to be the same thing. To be female in gender identity means "female" must be biological sex. Biological

sex assignment fixes gender identity as static and unchangeable. The action of this binary gendered culture labels cisgender men and women as normative, and transgender individuals as deviant. Genderism creates norms for conforming to cisgender identities through systems of rewards and punishments. While populations of transgender identified students are increasingly visible on college campuses, little research has explored their concerns, and no studies have addressed the impact of systemic genderism.

Rationale for this Study

For the first time, scholarship is addressing issues for transgender college students. A groundbreaking 2005 special issue of the *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education* focused exclusively on transgender youth, with four articles specifically addressing research on college students. These studies provided significant insight into dimensions of transgender student lives that previously had been unexamined. This scholarship addressed transgender student perceptions of campus climate (McKinney, 2005), identity development processes (Bilodeau, 2005), and outlined suggestions for making campus environments more supportive of this population (Beemyn, 2005; Beemyn, Dominque, Pettitt, Smith, 2005). These studies shared common themes of transgender student invisibility, marginalization, and harassment in a broad range of higher education contexts. Yet, this research lacked a perspective for examining how identity development and campus climate impact transgender students in a social systems context. Positing a transgender college student research agenda and developing strategies for improving higher education practice must account for the operation of systemic gender oppression. As long as genderism and the operation of binary gender systems

remain invisible in higher education, a critical perspective necessary to inform research and practice is missing.

Overview of the Study

The goal of this study was to make the practical issues and unseen power structures of binary gender systems on campus visible through the experiences and identity processes of transgender students. The core research question follows: What could the experiences of trangender students reveal about the nature of genderism and its characteristics in a higher education context? In spring, 2005, ten transgender students from two large Midwestern universities volunteered to participate in the study. They used a broad range of terms to self identify: *transexual*, *tranny boy*, *genderqueer* or *androgynous*, and *still defining* (gender identity was still not known). Participants were a mix of graduate and undergraduate students and were diverse by age, ranging from 22 to 50. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants. Using the constant comparative method and grounded theory, I learned ways that transgender students experienced the environment of their campuses and the impact of genderism. This study's emerging themes were generally informed by postmodern feminist, queer theory, and critical postmodern perspectives on gender. I selected these perspectives because they share a concern for deconstructing essentialized identities and related norms. A summary of each theoretical lens follows.

Postmodern Feminist Perspectives

A postmodern perspective has influenced a number of feminist scholars to take issue with binary notions of the operation of gender dynamics (e.g., Bornstein, 1994;

Butler, 1990; Feinberg, 1993, 1996; Halberstam, 1998). This framework seeks to undermine socially constructed norms surrounding the language and definitions related to gender, as well as challenging beliefs about gender identity as "fixed and stable" (Butler, 1990, p.13). Most significantly, a postmodern perspective seeks to undermine socially constructed norms surrounding the meanings of these definitions (Butler, 1990). As applied to this study of gender identity, postmodernism undermines the idea that gender identity and gender expression are all inextricably tied to male or female biological sex assignment at birth. According to Butler (1990, 1993, 2004), feminists rejected the idea that biology is destiny, but then developed an account of patriarchal culture that assumed masculine and feminine genders would inevitably be built, by culture, upon cisgender male and female bodies, making the same destiny just as inescapable. This framework allows no room for choice, fluidity, difference or resistance. Butler preferred "those historical and anthropological positions that understand gender as a relation among socially constituted subjects in specifiable contexts" (1990 p. 26).

In other words, rather than being a fixed attribute in a person, gender should be seen as a fluid variable that shifts and changes in different contexts and at different times. Butler (1993) argued that sex (male, female) is seen to cause gender (masculine, feminine) which is seen to cause desire (towards the other gender). This process is seen as a kind of continuum. Butler's (1993) approach, inspired in part by Foucault, is basically to smash the supposed links between these, so that gender and desire are flexible, free-floating and not caused by other stable factors. Butler (1990, 2004) suggested that certain cultural configurations of gender have seized a hegemonic hold (i.e., they have come to seem natural in our culture as it presently is) but, she suggests, it

does not have to be that way. Rather than proposing some utopian vision, with no idea of how we might get to such a state, Butler (1990) called for subversive action in the present: "gender trouble," (p. 8) the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of genders, and therefore identity. Butler (1990) argued that all humans are social actors who put on a gender performance, whether traditional or not, and so it is not a question of whether to *do* a gender performance, but what form that performance will take. By choosing to be different about it, individuals may work to change gender norms and the binary understanding of masculinity and femininity (Butler, 2004).

While Butler's work is considered highly influential in a range of academic spheres, other scholars, such as Martha Nussbaum (1999), take issue with Butler's scholarship. Nussbaum asserts that Butler uses professional jargon to make her work appear novel, despite the similar scholarship that came before it. Secondly, she suggests that Butler's work lacks a pragmatic basis in reality. Butler does not position her scholarship in a way that informs or is in turn informed by broader socio-cultural considerations, such a rape, heterosexism in the workforce, or women's health issues.

Queer Theory

Queer theory emerged from gay/lesbian studies' attention to the social construction of categories of normative and deviant sexual behavior (Walters, 2005). But while gay/lesbian studies, as the name implied, focused largely on questions of homosexuality, queer theory expands its realm of investigation (Whittle, 2005). Queer theory looks at, and studies, and has a political critique of, anything that falls into normative and deviant categories, particularly sexual activities and identities (Braumann, 1996). The word *queer*, as it appears in the dictionary, has a primary meaning of "odd,"

"peculiar," "out of the ordinary" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2004, p. 326).

Queer theory concerns itself with any and all forms of sexuality that are *queer* in this sense--and then, by extension, with the normative behaviors and identities that define what is *queer* (by being their binary opposites) (Whittle, 2005). Thus, queer theory expands the scope of its analysis to all kinds of behaviors, including those which are gender-bending as well as those which involve queer non-normative forms of sexuality. Queer theory insists that all sexual behaviors, all concepts linking sexual behaviors to sexual identities, and all categories of normative and deviant sexualities, are social constructs, sets of signifiers that create certain types of social meaning (Braumann, 1996; Walters, 2005).

Queer theory follows feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies in rejecting the idea that sexuality is an essentialist category, something determined by biology or judged by eternal standards of morality and truth (Butler, 1990). For queer theorists, sexuality is a complex array of social codes and forces, forms of individual activity and institutional power, which interact to shape the ideas of what is normative and what is deviant at any particular moment, and which then operate under the rubric of what is "natural," "essential," "biological," or "god-given" (Seidman, 1996, p. 25).

Critical Postmodern Perspectives

A critical postmodern lens adds the dimension of self-liberation of the oppressed to the gender discourse (Allen, 1999). Critical postmodernism has been described as having a primary focus on the concept of human agency and the process of engaging in an emancipatory struggle in opposition to institutionalized and systemic oppression

(Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). From the critical postmodern perspective, the goal is to empower those who occupy the margins of gender identity, the transgendered. Revealing their voices, lives, and ways society operates to maintain oppressive, binary gender systems, becomes a primary concern (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; McLaren, 1993). In a critical postmodern framework, understanding binary gender systems, as well as the ways transgender persons may collude with them create a foundation for examining alternatives for emancipation and self determination (Allen, 1999).

Critical postmodernists concern themselves with issues of marginalization and empowerment. A critical postmodern goal is to help individuals and groups understand how society and psyche have structured peoples lives in such a way that they might organize around self-determination (Hall, 1999). Only through such awareness is social and psychological emancipation possible. Kellner (1989) pointed out in discussion of society and psyche that ideology plays a significant role in human oppression. Sexism, for example, has been the root of much of the feminist critique of women's oppression, and genderism is at the core of oppression of transgender persons. While some social theorists and practitioners focus on specific ideologies, others note the interwoven nature of all oppression. hooks (1984) asserted:

> Individuals who fight for the eradication of sexism without supporting struggles to end racism or classism undermine their own efforts. Individuals who fight for the eradication of racism or classism while supporting sexist oppression are helping to maintain the cultural basis of all forms of group oppression. While they may initiate successful reforms, their efforts will not lead to revolutionary change.

> Their ambivalent relationship to oppression in general is a contradiction that must be resolved or they will daily undermine their own work. (p. 39)

hooks highlights some of the overlapping assumptions critical postmodernists and feminists share, and she names the major aim project of critical postmodernism—to confront oppression by uncovering cultural and ideological constraints that, in turn, assist groups in the process of self-determination. hooks (1984) maintained that people can become accomplices in their own oppression. Nationally recognized transgender author and activist, Kate Bornstein (1994) expanded on this concept by discussing that success in the early transgender movement, meant "passing" as the "opposite" gender. To be undetected, to fit in, blend in, and ultimately, to deny transgender identity also were articulated as primary goals by United States medical and therapeutic communities. And, Bornstein described her own experience as a transsexual, transitioning from male to female identity in a way that reinforces the gender binary and discounts trans people. Said Bornstein (1994),

> When, for example I lived my life by saying I was a man or a woman, I was tacitly supporting all the rules of the gender system that defines those two identities. I supported those rules in order to belong, or rather *not* to be an outsider, a non-belonger. (p. 94)

Reflecting Bornstein's description of her experience supporting binary gender systems, this study will examine ways transgender students may collude with similar systems operating in higher education contexts.

In summary, postmodern feminist, queer theory, and critical postmodern perspectives all share a concern for challenging binary, essentialist notions of male or

female identities, as well as heterosexuality. Instead, they posit identity, gender, and sexuality in ways that emphasize shifting boundaries, ambivalences, and social constructions that change depending on historical and cultural context (Gamson, 2000). Through these perspectives, when individuals express gender in a manner that transgresses social norms, shifting, changing, blurring, or negating gender, they undermine and subvert binary male or female identities (Butler, 1990; Halberstam, 1998). The critical postmodern perspective adds the dimension of examining systemic oppression for clues as to how this may be dismantled to aid in the empowerment of transgender persons.

Towards a Synthesis of Theory and Practice

A challenge for this study was to utilize these perspectives in ways that address essentialized norms about gender, as well as inform action oriented change. I asked myself a number of critical questions. How can I make sense of the complex lives of transgender students in ways that both unmasks genderism in higher education (if it indeed exists) and aids transgender student self-organization and empowerment? At a deep level, it was a priority for me to both inform theory and practice. The growing numbers of transgender students on college campuses demand it.

It is important to recognize that the college transgender identity movement is relatively recent, with campus resource centers, student organizations and higher education in general beginning transgender inclusion practices only within the last ten years (Bilodeau, 2005). Campuses are beginning to examine the implications of a greater presence of gender non-conforming students, as well as their related support needs. In

addition, women's studies programs and lesbian and gay studies have been challenged to consider transgender inclusion and gender constructions less visible in literature.

Most recently, the gender identity movement has grown to address university policy. By spring, 2007, over sixty United States universities have added *gender identity* as a protected classification in their anti-discrimination policies. As a member of the National Consortium of LBGT Campus Resource Directors in Higher Education, and as a Director of a campus LBGT Resource Center, I participate in a national electronic listserv whose participants increasingly address questions about policy related to gender identity. How will student housing be affected? What kinds of bathroom facilities are offered? What are expectations of campus medical and emotional health services for students who are in gender transition? What are implications for student records and career services? How can faculty create transgender inclusive classroom environments? While these are only a sample of the pragmatic questions, at a deeper level, the transgender movement calls into question the carefully crafted, often invisible culture of genderism in post secondary education.

Overview of the Dissertation

The examination of genderism in this study begins with a literature review in chapter two. An overview of cisgender and transgender identities are presented from socio-historical, western medical and psychiatric, human and student development, and feminist postmodern, queer, and critical postmodern lenses. Chapter three lays out the research process from the perspective of the three theoretical lenses described here and related methodology for the overall study. Based on themes that emerged from the research, chapters four and five describe a definition of genderism and its related

operating characteristics. Fundamentally, genderism reinforces a binary gender culture. At the campus data collection sites of this study, only two, cisgender identities were accepted as normative. Transgender students experienced a social labeling process used to categorize all individuals into male or female identities; social accountability for conforming to binary gender norms with requisite punishments; privileging of cisgender identities; and invisibility of gender non-conforming identities and isolation of transgender persons, making transgender identities inaccessible. The aforementioned characteristics of genderism most often appeared to impact transgender student lives in the following contexts: (admission, interactions with faculty, peers in class, academic advising, scholarship opportunities), employment (employment while a student, future career aspirations), campus LBGT communities and student organizations (degrees of acceptance), and campus facilities (residence halls, athletic facilities, locker rooms, bathrooms). Finally, chapter six describes the implications that genderism has for the future of theory and practice in higher education.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

As this study's goal is to make the practical issues and unseen power structures of gender on college campuses visible through the experience and identity processes of transgender students, a number of intersecting bodies of literature should be given consideration. I begin this literature review with a historical overview of transgender identities from global and cross-cultural perspectives, with particular attention to the social construction and positioning of these identities within the United States. Next, scholarship regarding the complexities of human biology and gender socialization processes are discussed, followed by an examination of literature related to western medical and psychiatric perspectives on transgender identities. Medical and psychiatric models clearly reinforce binary gender normativity and their social maintenance in American culture, as well as constructions of gender in higher education and student development literature. Evolving and contradictory scholarship from feminist and post-modern perspectives regarding gender identity and transgender persons is examined in a comparative context. Queer theory is compared and contrasted with feminist and postmodern perspectives. Finally, literature regarding the use of critical postmodern perspectives in organizational and higher education settings is presented.

Transgender Identities: Historical Perspectives

A number of scholars have agreed that transgender behavior has an extensive historical and global tradition (e.g., Besnier, 1993; Feinberg, 1996; Herdt, 1993; Ringrose, 1993). Feinberg (1996) documented several instances in Western European

history where gender variance and transgression existed, including Joan of Arc, Amelia Earhart, and Rebecca's Daughters (cross dressing Welsh resistance fighters). Historically, in many Native American tribes and a number of non-Western societies, transgender identities occupied culturally defined and supported roles (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). Native American cultures adopted rituals allowing children to choose what gender roles they preferred. Children, who selected *not-men* or *not-women* identities, often varying from biological sex, often were given special status (Brown, 1997; Crow, Wright, & Brown, 1997; Feinberg 1996). While the literature is scant, modern multicultural perspectives include Besnier's (1993) analysis of transgender identities in Polynesian cultures, Johnson's (1997) ethnography of the blending of sexual orientation and gender identities in the Southern Philippines, and the evolution of Native American Two Spirit identities (Brown, 1997). Clare's (1999) autobiographical work addressed transgender persons in relation to the intersections of socioeconomic class issues and disabilities. In the majority of modern Western societies, transgender persons are highly stigmatized, often to a greater degree than lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men. (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). Other authors noted that in the United States, homosexual or bisexual hate crimes often are based on the individual expressing gender in a way that varies from culturally defined norms of masculinity or femininity (Blumenfeld, 1992; Pharr, 1997; Reitz, 1995, Wilchins, 2004).

While not all transgender persons identify with LBGT communities, transgender identities have historically occupied a range of positions within non-heterosexual cultures in the United States (Feinberg, 1996; Feinberg, 1997; Wilchins, 2004). And, it is important to note, that transgender persons experienced stigmatization and

marginalization within LBGT community contexts, as well. Wilchins (2004) described parallel historical contributions of transgender persons and their within-community oppression: "by common agreement, the modern gay rights movement began at the Stonewall Inn, when Third-World drag queens and transpeople of color rioted against the NYPD police during one of the cops' routine routs of gay bars" (p. 14). At the same time, Wilchins and others note the role of transgender individuals being erased from many contemporary descriptions of the Stonewall incident to become what is commonly termed a lesbian and gay riot (Califia, 1997; Wichins, 2004). What accounts for this erasure?

A number of scholars suggest that early gay male and lesbian activists were under attack by cultural conservatives who accused them of being effeminate men or mannish women (Califia, 1997; Feinberg, 1996; Wilchins, 2004). Such attacks have been described as gender-baiting and played directly on American's fears of a breakdown in traditional gender roles and the binary gender system (Califia, 1997; Wilchins, 2004). If a primary goal of the gay rights movement was to appeal to mainstream United States culture, as was most often articulated by its male leadership, there was no room for gender variant behavior (Duberman, 1994). No sissies, bull-dykes, or tanspeople allowed. Thus, male advocates of gay rights movement of the 1970s and 1980s stressed both homosexual and gender cultural normativity by saying, "We're just like straight people, we just sleep with the same sex" (Wilchins, 2004, p. 17). This philosophical thread of the gay rights movement remains to this day, and is articulated by regional and national advocacy organizations claiming to be transgender inclusive, most notably the Human Rights Campaign. Noted feminist scholar Marilyn Frye (1983) described this strategy as "phallocratic" (p. 132) in its focus on the construction of an assimilationist gay rights

agenda and colluding with heterosexual male patriarchy to maintain power and oppress women.

Frye and other authors cite that a similar gender-baiting strategy was used to attack early feminist organizations regarding lesbian inclusion, playing on the threat of "mannish woman" (Califia, 1997; Frye, 1983). The Radicalesbians, a New York group, prepared the first major statement of lesbian feminist theory, The Woman Identified Woman, published in *Notes from the Third Year,* in 1971. The term *lesbian*, the authors assert, is indeed a scare word designed to keep assertive, independent women in their place. "Lesbian is a label invented by Man to throw at any woman who dares to be his equal, who dares to challenge his prerogatives (including that of all women as part of the exchange medium among men), who dares to assert the primacy of her own needs" (Radicalesbians, p. 82). As the Radicalesbians point out, an independent woman cannot be a "real woman, she must be a dyke" (pg. 82). Lesbian identities, in the context of male patriarchal systems, are not constructed around sexual orientation, but on variance from male dictated gender norms for women.

Other scholars extended notions of gender oppression further, describing the historical erasure of transgender people of color from Stonewall accounts as an expression of binary gender systems conspiring with racism and genderism, reinforcing white supremacy and male domination (Bornstein, 1994; Feinberg, 1996, 1997; Wilchins, 1997, 2002). In this system, transgender identities are rendered invisible, despite existence of identities termed *third gender* existing in many cultures (Besnier, 1994; Bolin, 1993; Brown, 1997). Within Native American traditions, the identity of Two-Spirit individuals have been negated in the context of white, European dual gender systems

(Brown, 1997). This systematic negation of all gender expression outside of binary, as well as the implications of maintenance of racism, is defined by Wilchins (2004) as a function of power (2004). She elaborates,

> At this point, it should come as no surprise that binaries are all about power, a form of doing politics through language. Binaries create the smallest possible hierarchy of one thing over another. They are not really about two things, but only one. (p.43)

The maintenance of binary gender systems and their ultimately oppressive impact on transgender persons is further replicated in literature describing the development of western medicine and gender socialization.

Reinforcing the Binary: Western Medicine and Human Socialization

How much of gender identity, an individual's sense of maleness, femaleness, a blend of, or neither, is rooted biologically? How much is socially constructed? Literature supports that these questions are complex and not yet clearly determined (Bornstein, 1994; Brown & Rounsley, 1996; Feinberg, 1996, 1998; Wilchins, 1997, 2002). However, related scholarship identifies the western medical model as having significant effects on ideology regarding gender identity development in the United States. Numerous authors related that, for centuries, western studies of human anatomy have been labeled according to biological sex characteristics—male and female reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormone levels/types, and secondary sex characteristics, such as the distribution of facial and body hair (Elkins & King, 1996; O'Keefe & Fox, 1997; Wilchins, 1997, 2002). In western cultures, medical models provide a template for a clear binary distinction between two genders, without a concept of gender variance (Califia, 1997; Feinberg,

1998; Herdt, 1993). Yet, modern research documents the realities of biological variation, of blurring and blending of biological sex characteristics (Wilchins, 1997, 2002). The existence of intersexed persons, individuals who are born with variations of male and female sex characteristics, provide one such example.

Literature regarding human socialization and gender identity suggests adherence to the binary pattern established by the medical model. From birth moment (and often beforehand), biological sex assignment determines human socialization practices, such as gender specific pink or blue blankets and dolls or trucks (Bornstein, 1994; Carter, 2000; Feinberg, 1998). The concept of a cycle of socialization that reinforces binary constructions of gender is further illustrated as a system of rewards and punishments for gender-conforming behavior (Harrow, 1989). These socialization activities include birthing, early childhood and parental relationships, the impact of institutions such as schools and religious organizations, adult workplace experiences, community and regional norms, and policy and legislation (Harrow, 1989). Thus, from birth to death, gender binary systems are reinforced and institutionalized. Transgender scholar and activist Pat Califia (1997) posed a provocative, related question, "Who would you be if you had never been punished for gender-inappropriate behavior?" (p. 3).

Medical and Psychiatric Perspectives on Gender Identity

The maintenance of dual gender systems in the United States is further reinforced by medical and psychiatric perspectives. This scholarship is dominated by themes of transgender identities as forms of mental illness, deviance, and disorder. Medical and psychiatric literature focuses primarily on a binary construction of transgender identity, with an emphasis on correcting gender deviance through reassignment to the appropriate

gender. A section on Gender Identity Disorder (GID) appeared for the first time in the American Psychiatric Association's 1980 publication, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 3rd Edition* (*DSM-III*). GID was described as an incongruence between biological sex assignment and gender identity. Three different types of GID diagnoses were discussed: transsexualism, non-transsexualism type, and not otherwise specified (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). In *DSM III*, the treatments described varied from psychotherapy to sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Three more editions of DSM have appeared since 1980.

The current edition, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision* (*DSM-IV-TR*), continued the use of the GID classification, but expands diagnosis standards introduced in *DSM-III*. In *DSM-IV-TR*, there are four major criteria which must be present to make a diagnosis. There must be evidence of a strong and persistent cross-gender identification, described as the desire to be, or the insistence that one is of the other sex (Criteria A). This cross-gender identification must not merely be a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex. There also must be evidence of persistent discomfort about one's assigned sex or a sense of inappropriateness in the gender role of that sex (Criteria B). The diagnosis is not made if the individual has a concurrent physical intersex condition (Criteria C). To make the diagnosis, there must be evidence of clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (Criteria D). In the case of transexuality, individuals are further categorized under primary transsexualism (emerging in early childhood) or secondary transsexualism (emerging during or after puberty) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). GID is used primarily to diagnose issues

related to transsexual identities, while another classification, Gender Identity Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (GIDNOS), applies to conditions such as intersex anatomy or cross-dressing behavior (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). *DSM-IV-TR* is complimented by the fifth edition of the *Harry Benjamin Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders* that outlines a treatment framework including therapeutic and medical guidelines, as well as standards for ongoing evaluation of patients who are undergoing sex reassignment surgery (Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, 1988). While various researchers, as well as members of the transgender community, regard these medical and psychiatric approaches as invaluable for addressing the needs of gender variant individuals (Burgess, 1999), others disagree.

A number of scholars have been highly critical of *DSM-IV-TR* and the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care, citing their pathologizing nature (e.g., Bornstein, 1994; Carter, 2000; Mallon, 1999). In order to access sex reassignment surgery, an individual essentially must be documented as having a mental illness (Carter, 2000). Literature consistently identified a growing outrage regarding the GID diagnosis in transgender communities (e.g., Califia, 1997; Carter, 2000; Wilchins, 2004). A transsexual protester at an American Psychological Association meeting said, "Transsexuality is not a disease. I am not crazy. It is who I am" (Olezewski, 1993, p. 13). Pressure to remove gender identity disorders from *DSM-VI-TR* has been compared to the 1973 removal of homosexuality as a mental illness classification (Mallon, 1999). Pauline Parks, a transgender activist, argues that every psychiatrist who diagnosis GID in a patient, merely by virtue of the individual's transgender identity, is complicit in the manipulation and control of transgender people and their bodies. In diagnosing someone with an illness that

the person does not have, the psychiatrist engages in behavior that is not only unethical, but constitutes medical malpractice (Cooper, 1999).

Other researchers suggested that the introduction of GID into the *DSM*, with its emphasis on conformity to United States social constructions of masculinity and femininity, have been inappropriately and harmfully used with lesbian, bisexual, and gay populations (Cooper, 1999; Mallon, 1999). These authors asserted that diagnosis of childhood GID, beginning in *DSM III*, came as the result of a United States Government study on gender variant boys that took place in the 1970s. This research found that very few "feminine" boys would go on to become transsexuals, but that a high percentage of them (one half to two thirds) would become homosexuals (Cooper, 1999; Mallon, 1999). Pazos (1999) cited the work of Moberly (1983) and Zucker (1990) as two of numerous examples of the way GID is being used to harmfully attempt to "cure" homosexuality, particularly in adolescents.

Other scholars suggested that medical and psychiatric professions collude with genderist systems in the United States to reinforce binary constructions of gender (Bornstein, 1994; Califia, 1997; Wilchins, 2004). Treatment and therapeutic approaches, such as sex reassignment surgery, are designed to assist individuals in moving from one sex to another, to become either male or female. Medical and psychiatric perspectives greatly marginalize individuals such as genderqueers, androgynous persons, gender-benders, transsexuals who do not desire surgery, and the expanding gender variant identities embraced by today's youth who fall outside of dual gender systems (Wilchins, 2002). When asked to describe personal gender identity, Triston, a participant in a study of transgender college students, said,

> I'd use the word 'transgender'. I'd also use 'non-operational female to male.' I'd also use the word 'genderqueer'... I've tried with my identity not to reinforce the binary system, and options have been limited to the trans community by focusing so much on transsexualism. The only option is, if you're male, to become female, or vice-versa. Transgender youth have felt that the binary gender system is not for them...Transsexualism isn't necessary to break gender boundaries. We want to increase the number of genders. (Bilodeau, 2005, p. 4)

Youth and Student Development Perspectives on Gender Identity

Not surprisingly, human development literature regarding youth is primarily concerned with individuals whose biological sex assignment at birth matches gender identity. As an example, it is widely cited that by ages 3 or 4 a child develops a "natural" sense of gender assignment as male or female (e.g., Green, 1971, 1974; Meyer-Bahlburg, 1985; Money, 1973; Kohlburg, 1966). This literature is devoid of child transgender identity processes, which instead appear most often in scholarship related to GID. In recent years, an increasing number of studies of transgender people have been published (e.g., Denny, 1998; Devor, 1997; Lev, 2004; Rubin, 2003), yet little of this scholarship explores how youth come to identify as transgender, or propose a healthy, non-pathologized model of transgender identity development. A significant exception is Mallon's (1999) book, *Social Services with Transgendered Youth* that primarily focused on adolescent populations. In particular, the text addressed problematic issues of *DSM-IV-TR* and broadened constructions of youth gender variance outside the binary. Mallon (1999) asserted that it is not appropriate for social service practitioners to utilize traditional development models taught in most human behavior and social environment

traditions, citing Erikson (1950), Marica (1980), Offer (1980), and Offer, Ostrov, and Howard (1980), because these theorists posit concepts of gender role identification in cisgender, biologically based constructions. Though scant, literature regarding the impact of social stigmatization and oppression on transgender adolescents and young college-aged adults indicates high risks of suicide and depression, dropping out of school, homelessness, verbal harassment and physical assault, as well as unemployment (Bilodeau, 2003; Mallon, 1999; Renn & Bilodeau, 2002; Ryan & Futterman, 1998).

While still marginal, student development literature is emerging that addresses the needs and concerns of transgender college students. This literature has included the call for increased services for transgender students in the higher education LBGT Resource Center movement (Lees, 1998), giving voice to the personal narratives of transgender students through the text *Out and About on Campus* (Howard & Stevens, 2000), and advocating for inclusive student development practices regarding gender variant students (Carter, 2000). As mentioned in chapter one, the 2005 special issue of the *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education* contained four articles specifically addressing research on transgender college students. In a 2002 study of LBGT student leaders, Renn and Bilodeau (2002) noted that transgender student experiences appeared to follow a developmental pattern posited by Anthony D'Augelli (1994), which he originally designed for addressing issues of sexual orientation. A follow-up study by Bilodeau (2005) appeared to confirm that transgender students may experience gender identity processes in the context of the D'Augelli (1994) model.

Reflecting a human development perspective, D'Augelli (1994) contended that identity development occurs in a context—the simulateous development of a person's

self-concepts, relationships with family, connections to peer groups, and community. This perspective has been termed *lifespan* as it views sexual and affectional feelings as being variable over a lifetime. D'Augelli (1994) used the phrase "developmental plasticity" (p. 320) to suggest that human functioning is responsive to both biological factors and environmental circumstances. In addition, D'Augelli (1994) suggested that sexual orientation may be very fluid at certain times in the life span and more fixed at others.

In applying D'Augelli's framework to issues of gender identity and transgender students, Bilodeau (2005) adapted the model which is described as follows. Process 1, *exiting a traditionally gendered identity*, involves recognizing that one is gender variant, attaching a label to this identity, and affirming oneself as transgender through coming out to others. Process 2, *developing a personal transgender identity*, entails achieving the stability that comes from knowing oneself in relation to other transgender people and challenging internalized transphobia. Process 3, *developing a transgender social identity*, focuses on creating a support network of people who know and accept that one is gender variant. Process 4, *becoming a transgender offspring*, consists of coming out as transgender to family members and reevaluating relationships that may be disrupted by the disclosure. Process 5, *developing a transgender intimacy status*, involves the creation of intimate physical and emotional relationships. Finally, Process 6, *entering a transgender community*, involves making a commitment to political and social action through challenging transphobia and genderism.

Higher Education and Feminist Scholarship

While student development literature holds promise for transgender inclusion, higher education scholarship, broadly constructed, generally follows dual gender traditions. This literature examines structural gender inequality and includes examples such as discrepancies based on faculty salaries, patriarchal tenure systems, the marginalization of student female voices in the classroom, female and male students being tracked into majors and careers on the basis of gender, and challenges within intercollegiate athletics (e.g., Ropers-Huilman, 2000; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2003; Wolf-Wendel, 2003). These structures are supported by a binary, patriarchal, and gendered culture of higher education, with prescribed dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression (women as targets of oppression, men as agents of oppression). As an example, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2003) described studies comparing cisgender men's and women's faculty experiences in the contexts of being professionals, partners, and parents:

> The literature suggests that while men and women as professionals, partners and parents struggle with the task of achieving a balance between work and family life, the challenge for women is greater than for men, given the simple logistics of the biological clock, the tenure clock, the physical demands of pregnancy and childbirth, the gendered expectations of family obligations, and the ongoing disparity with which women take on the "second shift" through maintenance of of children and home. (p. 236)

Perspectives of Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2003), as well as the majority of higher education gender studies, are rooted in a feminist examination of socially assigned power and identity relations between male and female identities (e.g., Gilligan,1977; hooks,

1984; Lloyd, 1987; Macintosh, 1977; MacKinnon, 1987; Pateman, 1988; Young, 1987). This feminist work made significant contributions to understanding gender through unmasking sexism in identity development theory, giving women's experience voice and visibility across race and class, and naming the operation of male privilege. Yet, these constructions are primarily based on the assumption of gender operating in a binary, male or female manner. Wilchins (2002) commented on the bias of binary based gender theory:

> Gender is like a lens through which we've not yet learned to see. Or more accurately, like glasses worn from childhood, it's like a lens through which we've always seen and can't remember how the world looked before. And this lens is strictly bifocal. It strangely shows us only black and white in a Technicolor world so that, as this book's narratives clearly illustrate, there may certainly be more than two genders, but two genders is all we've named, all we know, all we'll see. And as basic as gender is personhood; changing that will take a more radical political upheaval than we've yet seen from any recent human rights movement. (p. 13)

Postmodern Feminist Perspectives on Gender Identity

Binary feminist perspectives were challenged by a feminist postmodern ideology that took issue with the essentialized, dual nature of gender construction (e.g., Burke, 1996; Butler, 1990, 1993, 2004; Creed, 1995; Halberstam, 1998). Judith Butler (1990) rejected essentialist feminist perspectives on gender because they because they did not leave any room for variation, or for alternative influences on different people in different situations. Butler concluded that gender is not a core aspect of identity but rather a

performance, how people behave at different times. Gender (masculinity and femininity) is an achievement rather than a biological factor. To illustrate this point Butler refers to the Aretha Franklin song, *You make me feel like a natural woman.* In this song, Franklin can sing, "You make me feel like a woman" without this being presumed as necessarily obvious. In other words, a woman does not necessarily feel feminine all the time, any more than a man feels masculine (Butler, 1990). Butler suggested that we think of gender as free-floating and fluid rather than fixed:

> When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one. (p.6)

Butler (1990) advocated "gender trouble" (p.8) as a way of challenging traditional notions of gender identities. Butler's main metaphor for this is drag. By dressing as a member of the opposite sex, drag artists are subverting ideas of gender norms, challenging the "constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity" (Butler, 1990, p.148).

Butler argued that the way we perceive gender roles lies at the very root of the inequality of multiple forms of gender expression. Her argument is that if we deconstruct the way society views gender roles, this might lead to changes in political culture and so improve the lot of those most oppressed by the binary gender system: women, and transgender persons. In other words, if there were no longer conventional roles for binary gender constructions, it would not be unusual for a cisgender woman or a genderqueer person to be in positions of power at work or for a cisgender man to stay at home and

look after children. Gradually, the patriarchal, genderist society which exists would change to become a truly equal one:

> If identities were no longer fixed as the premises of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old. (Butler, 1990, p.149)

While Butler's work is considered a foundational bridge from postmodern perspectives to queer theory by many scholars, not all academics attribute such significance to Butler's work.

In her article *The Professor of Parody*, Martha Nussbaum (1999) attacks the writings of Judith Butler primarily on two levels. She asserts that Judith Butler uses obscure language to make her work appear unique, despite prior scholarship reflecting similar themes. She also suggests that Butler's work lacks practical application to the lived experience. Her first type of attack concerns Butler's use of language. Nussbaum (1999) complains, "A further problem lies in Butler's casual mode of allusion" (p. 44). She suggests that Butler relies heavily on technical terminology and concepts without ever clearly defining them. Butler takes for granted the idea that people know what she is talking about and that her use of paradigmatic language makes her argument acceptable. As Nussbaum (1999) says, "the imagined reader poses few questions, requests no arguments and no clear definitions of terms" (p. 45). Nussbaum (1999) describes the work of several scholars (including Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin) who presented the same ideas as Butler does, but earlier. From Nussbaum's (1999)

perspective, Butler is not advancing new ideas so much as she is re-hashing old perspectives with new jargon.

The real danger of Butler's work, Nussbaum (1999) continues, is its distance from lived experience. She writes, "The great tragedy in the new feminist theory in America is the loss of a sense of public commitment.... Hungry women are not fed by this, battered women are not sheltered by it, raped women do not find justice in it, gays and lesbians do not achieve legal protections through it" (p. 44). According to Nussbaum (1999), Butler removes scholarship from a relevant socio-context. Though Butler reflects on how her gender and sexual orientation have influenced her thought, she is detached from positioning her ideas in a broader, pragmatic, social context. Utlimately, Nussbaum (1999) suggests that this causes Butler's work to fail to be culturally significant. Regardless of these criticisms, many consider Butler's work to be foundational to the development of queer theory.

Queer Theory

Much of Judith Butler's (1990) and Michael Focault's (1979, 1980) scholarship has been cited as having a significant impact on the development of queer theory. Queer theory challenges static, essentialist notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality within the mainstream discourse or as Chauncey (1994) termed it, the "binary sexual regime" (p. 54). Instead, queer theory posits an understanding of sexuality that focuses on shifting boundaries, ambivalences, and social constructions that change depending on historical and cultural context (Braumann, 1996; Whittle, 2005). According to Walters (2005),"To queer is to render 'normal' sexuality as strange and unsettled, to challenge heterosexuality as a naturalized social-sexual norm and promote the notion of 'non-

straightness,' challenging the hegemony of 'straight' ideology (p. 7). This emphasis on non-straightness (and non-cisgenderness) gives queer theory its assimilationist, anti-essentialist lens, "for when one considers the realms of fantasy, the unconscious, repression, and denial, much that is ostensibly considered 'heterosexual' easily falls within the realm of queer" (Morton, 2001, p. 209). While thoroughly disruptive of mainstream constructions of sex and gender "truth regimes" (Garber, 2005, p. 57), queer theory also challenges standard gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender politics (Altman, 1996; Lance & Tanesini, 2005). From Butler's (1990) perspective, these terms are rendered meaningless when stripped of the institutional systems that support them.

Alexander Doty's (1997) notion of "queer reception" (p. 25) in *Making Things Perfectly Queer*, is another way in which standard categories are challenged. Doty (1997) separated "reception" from "identity" and stressed the way a spectator may derive "queer pleasure" by deviating from standard categories in viewing film and television (p. 26). According to Doty (1997), straight-identified women spectators might experience "queer pleasure" (p. 27) at the sexual tension generated between Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon in *Thelma and Louise*; straight-identified men might enjoy the exaggerated homoeroticism of Stallone's *Rambo*. In summary, queer theory literally turns heterosexual and cisgender normativity inside out, rendering these constructions deviant.

Transgender Perspectives: from Feminist Postmodern and Queer to Critical Postmodern

This shift towards a postmodern feminist, queer construction of gender parallels the evolution of what Califia (1997) described as two waves of literature, written from the perspectives of transgender identified authors. The first wave represented a generation of writers who provided autobiographical testimony about the benefits of medically-

mediated transsexual reassignment surgery. These pioneering works include: *Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography* (Jorgensen, 1967), Jan Morris's (1974) *Conundrum: An Extraordinary Narrative of Transexualism* and *Emergence: A Transexual Autobiography,* a lesser known life story of female to male (FTM) transsexual Mario Martino (1977). Califia (1997) noted that these early autobiographies are all dedicated to the doctors and sex researchers who first advocated that sex reassignment be used as a treatment for gender identity disorder. This literature supports the idea that trangenderism's goal is to transition from one gender identity to another, seamlessly blending in and ultimately negating transgender identity in order to pass as the new man or woman.

As described by Califia (1997), the second wave of transgender autobiography and scholarship began a shift away from solidarity with the binary constructions of transexualism and the medical community with Rene Richard's (1983) narrative and scholarship by English FTM transgender activist, Mark Rees (1986). Feinberg's highly acclaimed novel, *Stone-Butch Blues* (1993) and her historical text, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* (1996), addressed ways gender variant and transgender identities intersect with gay and lesbian identities, as well as provide multiple contexts for constructions of gender identities across cultures. The scholarship of Riki Anne Wilchins (1997, 2002, 2004) and Kate Bornstein (1994, 1998), take on a distinctive postmodern tone, with both authors critically analyzing oppressive gender binary systems in historical, institutional, and political contexts.

Literature reflects a trend away from identity and social constructions reinforcing a binary gender system, taking issue with and subverting traditional cultural norms of

male or female (e.g., Burke, 1996; Butler, 1990, 1993, 2004; Creed, 1995; Halberstam, 1998). Bornstein (1994) suggested that gender is essentially a binary class system in which one class will always try to oppress the other. Most radically, Bornstein (1994) argued that there will never be true gender freedom and equality until all social gender categories are eliminated. In *Sexual Politics*, one of the earliest feminist manifestos, Kate Millett (1970) discussed the frustrations of analyzing patriarchy, because there is no alternative social construct to which it might be compared. Patriarchy is the norm. The binary gender system is so pervasive, so taken for granted, and, in the last 20 years, so analyzed that as Wilchins (2002) offered, scholars "can't envision any alternative" (p.13). The movement of transgender authors (e.g., Bornstein, 1994; Califia, 1997; Feinberg, 1996, 1998; Wilchins, 2002, 2004) to liberate transgender voices, challenging constructions of binary gender categories, as well as articulating a vision of social change, represents a shift from the postmodern and queer to the critical postmodern.

Critical Postmodern Perspectives

Numerous scholars describe the critical postmodern tradition as being rooted in a synthesis of critical theory and postmodern thought (e.g., Best & Kelner, 2001; Boje, 2001a; Feldman, 1999; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Critical theory emerged in the 1920s from the German Frankfurt tradition of scholarship surrounding issues of human emancipation, with a goal of understanding the oppressive nature of society in order to enact individual and social change (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Its aim is to create conditions so that those oppressed may liberate themselves (Best & Kelner, 2001; Boje, 2001a). The attempt to understand society in this manner means that critical theorists dismiss positivist notions of knowledge and science (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). As an

alternative, critical theory presents knowledge as being socially and historically determined and a consequence of power. The social and historical construction and interlocking nature of power, its oppressive influence, and liberating empowerment in social and historical contexts are central to critical theory (Boje, 2001a). Critical theory's ultimate aim is research which leads to the creation of social structures which enhance empowerment and democracy (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Yet, like Butler's (1993) criticism of feminist ideology, critical theory does not offer a level of analysis that questions issues related to social categorical identities, such as *woman* or *man*.

Alternatively, post modern scholarship takes issue with socially constructed identity norms, as well as rejecting critical theory's idea that, through reason, it is possible to achieve agreement about the nature of truth or oppression (Eugene, 2002; Hall, 1999). In scholarship defining postmodern terminology, Gitlin (1989) noted, "Postmodernism is completely indifferent to issues of consistency and continuity...It neither embraces nor criticizes, but beholds the world blankly, with a knowingness that dissolves feeling and commitment into irony" (p. 52). Instead of focusing on the struggle of groups or individuals to overcome oppression, postmodernism seeks to deconstruct the socially constructed nature of what is meant by "groups," "individuals," and "oppression," through multiple perspective analysis (Grace, 1997). Most significantly, postmodernism seeks to undermine socially constructed norms surrounding the meanings of these definitions (Butler, 1990). Postmodernism challenges the ideas and beliefs about fixed and stable identities.

A number of scholars and theorists present a synthesis of critical theory and postmodern discourse to frame what Henry Giroux (1992) termed "critical

postmodernism" (p. 7). Critical postmodernism "takes into account both the macropolitical level of the organization and the micropolitical level of different and contradictory manifestations of oppression as a means of analyzing global relations of oppression" (McLaren, 1993, p. 119). Of significant concern to the critical postmodern perspective are the ways in which language, culture, and power interact to shape the social experience (Giroux, 1994; Tierney, 1993). For critical postmodernists, a core focus is the concept of human agency and the process of engaging in an emancipatory struggle in opposition to institutionalized and systemic oppression (Feldman, 1999).

Critical postmodern perspectives have been utilized by scholars in analyses of business and industry, as well as higher education. Boje (1993, 1995, 2001c) has studied major corporations such as Disney, Nike, and Las Vegas casinos from a critical postmodern theoretical framework. Boje (2001c) summarizes,

> Beyond the virtual corporate core of the Nike campus in Beaverton, Oregon, are 720,000 (mostly) women working in some 730 sweatshop factories in pre-Tayloristic work conditions. Beneath the postmodern architecture and 'Happy Kingdom' of Disney, is the mechanistic assembly lines, the Tayloristic story production machine, and the women of Haiti, and now China that make the garment and toys Disney sells in theme parks and Disney stores. Postmodern casino resorts fashion a Paris, an Egyptian Pyramid, or a Venice more real than the real, and use Circus acts, street carnival, and the rides and exhibits of a Disney, as well as the mechanistic of McDonaldization to attract entire families to participate in gambling and sex addiction. In short, the postmodern has its dark

side and is in strange hybridity with both modern factory, and pre-modern sweatshop and the carnivalesque. (p. 8)

Critical postmodern theory has been used to analyze these corporations from multiple perspectives. Ways organizations are able to sustain a curtain of invisibility over a voiceless workforce, as well as maintain positions of prominence economically and in popular culture are primary issues for exploration (Boje, 1995). More significantly, critical postmodernism offers an emancipatory alternative. According to Boje (2001c), a critical postmodern project can move society beyond exploitation, racism, sexism, and abuse by reframing and restoring organization theory away from its patriarchal language in order to reaffirm social justice, equality, democracy, and the "wonders of multiplicity" (p. 9).

Tierney (1993, 1994) is noted for his influential application of critical postmodernism to explore multicultural issues in higher education articulating a process he referred to as "building communities of difference" (p. 3). Tierney asserted that a postmodern conception of difference affords individuals the possibility not only of understanding other people's lives, but also of coming to terms with how they are situated within society, how their specific identities are framed and shaped by society, and roles they play in the contexts of privilege, oppression, and related cultural systems. Further, he suggested that critical theory's advocacy for empowerment and the development of voice be fused with the postmodern notion of difference. Tierney (1993) presented twelve proposals calling for the transformation of higher education, in which norms are challenged and difference becomes an organizing concept. Proposals are framed with critical theory's emphasis on struggle and the postmodern belief in the

power of the norm. The critical postmodern framework has also been applied to college-based service learning initiatives (Hayes & Cuban, 2001), as well as nursing curriculum (Hall, 1999). While Rhoads (1994) used critical postmodern theory in his study of the experiences of gay men in higher education, it has not yet been used to examine transgender student identities in collegiate contexts. Yet, the critical postmodern tradition may be seen as influencing the emergence of a new term related to the transgender experience: *cisgender.*

Cisgender and the Critical Postmodern Framework.

Cisgender is emerging as a term to describe individual who are non-transgender and is used throughout this disseration, thus warranting attention in the literature review. One of the first recorded uses of *cisgender* was in the *alt.transgendered* usenet group in May of 1994 by Dana Leland Defosse (Green, 2006). In April of 1996, Carl Buijs, a transsexual man from the Netherlands said in a usenet posting "As for the origin; I just made it up" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 54). Green (2006) suggests that the term logically stems from Latin prefixes, in which *cis* (on the same side) is the opposite of *trans* (on the opposite side).

Transgender communities increasingly prefer *cisgender* to *biological*, or *genetic* male or female because of what these words imply (Rombad 2004). As an example, using the term *biological female* or *genetic female* to describe cisgender women suggests that transgender women also not biologically female; since there is debate over whether transsexuality has a genetic or biological cause, some individuals may argue that transgender women are also biologically female. Thus, as an application of the critical postmodern framework, the terms *cisgender* and *transgender* disrupt the traditional

gender paradigm that gender identity follows normally from a particular sex, rendering transgender identities abnormal (Rombad, 2004).

Literature Review Summary

A review of literature regarding gender identity and transgender persons reveals themes of an essentialized nature of gender based on a binary, two-gender, biologically based framework. This framework permeates much of western medical, psychiatric, and human development literature. To deviate from this binary gender system is viewed as "disorder," "malady," and "deviant." While some feminist scholarship reinforces binary constructions of gender, post-modern feminist perspectives, the work of Judith Butler (1990), challenges categorical notions of "male" or "female," suggesting that much of gender is performance in socially constructed contexts. Instead, gender is viewed as a continuum of multiple expressions. The use of postmodern, queer, and critical postmodern lenses may aid to further deconstruct and subvert binary gender systems, as well as give voice to a generation of transgender students previously marginalized in higher education scholarship.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The goal of this study was to make the practical issues and unseen power structures of binary gender systems on campus visible through the experiences and identity processes of transgender students. I used semi structured individual interviews, the constant comparative method and the generation of grounded theory to explore this study's core research question: What could the experiences of transgender students reveal about the nature of genderism and its characteristics in a higher education context? Chapter three describes the theoretical traditions related to the research question; positions my identity in relationship to the study; and provides an overview of participants, procedure and data analysis, and study limitations.

Research Context: Postmodern, Queer and Critical Postmodern Traditions

The study sought to understand ways transgender students experience binary gender systems in a broad and complex range of campus cultures, environments and interpersonal contexts. Given this focus, a research methodology reflecting postmodern, queer, and critical postmodern perspectives was selected. As applied to research, these perspectives share an emphasis on understanding how structural power operates in relationship to socially constructed identity groups that have been marginalized in society (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Olsen, 2000). While data are just emerging about transgender student populations, they clearly represent a group that has been disenfranchised in United States culture (Bilodeau, 2005). Further, research methodology reflecting postmodern, queer, and critical post modern perspectives all seek to recognize that the identity processes and experiences of research subjects occur in wide ranging and

complex socially constructed contexts ((Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Olsen, 2000). It was important that the methodology I employed would account for these complexities.

From postmodern feminist, queer and critical postmodern research perspectives, a number of issues related to role of the researcher warrant examination. The scholar's identity, relationship to research and subjects, points of privilege, and operating assumptions are viewed as being intimately connected to the social "fabric" of the research process (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Olsen, 2000). These factors must be named and accounted for in the research methodology.

Methodology

As my research question focused on how genderism and binary gender systems impacted transgender students in complex campus cultures, a qualitative methodology focusing on individual interviews was selected. The interpretive framework for this study utilized the constant comparative method, as well as the generation of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Strauss and Corbin (1994) would describe the use of grounded theory as methodology appropriate for this study, particularly given its exploratory nature. Postmodern, queer and critical postmodern research lenses require that students' experiences be examined in a number of socially constructed contexts. Individual interviews explored their lives in relationship to the broader gender dynamics occurring in classrooms, student organizations, residential settings, campus events, and other relevant settings. Interview questions were designed in an open-ended way to account for these complexities.

Research Methods

Transgender identified students exist in small numbers on most campuses, if at all. I hoped to have a minimum of ten students participate in the study. I preferred to focus on one data collection site and decided that a large public research institution would best fit this goal. Knowing that campus LBGT resource centers are often important places of connection for transgender students, I chose to solicit center directors to request assistance and support in conducting the study on their campuses. The LBGT campus resource director from the large public research institution that I preferred for my study, agreed to assist. For this study's purposes, I will refer to this institution as *University A*. In initial discussions I had with the director, he described the campus transgender student population as comprising approximately 15 to 20 individuals, and thought there would be a strong interest in my study. He forwarded an electronic announcement (see Appendix C) about my study and request for participants to LBGT campus list servs and transgender student organizations. However, only four transgender students volunteered to participate. Though these individuals were very enthusiastic about the study, and shared information about it with their transgender peers, I did not receive any additional responses.

My home institution was the only other large public research institution in the state. I was aware that there was a campus transgender population of 8 to 10 students and decided to solicit participation from this group. I recognized that there were potentially problematic elements, as some of these students were individuals who I had relationships with in the context of their participation in campus LBGT student groups. However, none of the students were ones with whom I had an employee or supervisory relationship. Nor

did I serve in any form of an evaluative role. I solicited participation in the study by sharing an announcement message to campus LBGT student electronic list servs and to email accounts of transgender student organizations. Six students volunteered to participate. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to the institution that these students attend and where I am employed as *University B.*

Individual Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants at each of the institutions. Given the personal and confidential nature of the interviews, I invited participants to select the location where they might be the most comfortable being audio taped and speaking with me. At University A, I met with most of the students in a quiet corner of a very large campus food court. I met one individual at the office of a student organization. Overall, students at University B preferred to meet with me at my office. With two participants, I shared a meal in a quiet restaurant off campus and the interview followed.

Participant interviews lasted from ninety minutes to four hours and subjects self-selected pseudonyms for anonymity. I asked open-ended questions that were clustered around two primary questions, "How supportive has your university been of your transgender identity?" and "If I were to ask you to describe the gender system at this college, how would you describe it?" (see protocol in Appendix D). Interviews lasted from ninety minutes to four hours. I was pleased and surprised by the eagerness of the students to participate in the study. Over the six weeks that I conducted these interviews, I learned that, for a number of the participants, I was the first person who had ever given them a formal opportunity to reflect on their experiences as a transgender college

students. Four participants independently contacted me post the initial interview and said they enjoyed the experience, had continued to think about the questions, and were eager to talk further. After the interview phase was completed, I had the audio tapes transcribed by a professional service. While I believed that my relationship to interview subjects as well the protocols described above all fell within appropriate research guidelines, qualitative scholarship also calls for a thorough positioning the researcher in relationship to the study.

Positioning of Researcher in Relationship to Subjects

I identify as a 44 year old, white, middle class, gay, cisgender male, who serves as the director of a campus lesbian, bisexual gay and transgender (LBGT) resource center at a large, Midwestern university. Though I have had prior experience working with transgender students and conducting research about related identity development processes, this was the first time that I had worked specifically on binary gender system issues, either as a practitioner or a scholar.

Yet, as I reflected on my personal experience, the impact of binary gender systems was not completely inaccessible to me. My personal experience with oppression based on sexual orientation was that it was based in part on my gay identity, but also on societal gender expectations. My being gay, to be physically and emotionally attracted to men, was often socially perceived to being effeminate, non-male, and in fact labeled me female. Thus, I violated social gender norms.

Despite my limited experience with binary system oppression, I also was aware of ways that I had colluded with it. I specifically remember work done early in my career with transsexually identified faculty and staff who were transitioning from male to female

genders. In my efforts to provide support to these individuals, I also operated from a philosophical framework that sprang from an erroneous myth that the goal of all transgender persons was to make a linear transition to the gender opposite biological sex assignment. I am grateful that I later developed an alternative perspective, today viewing gender as non-dualistic. Yet, I still wondered how my many years of socialization in a binary gender system would impact my perspectives in relationship to the study. Going into the research process, I remember being curious about what transgender students would reveal about gender systems that my cisgender place of privilege might mask and render invisible. Issues related to positioning my relationship to the study were further addressed by attention to authenticity, trustworthiness and credibility.

Authenticity, Trustworthiness, Credibility

Given the qualitative framework guiding this study, data analysis needed to account for the factors of authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness. In this context, authenticity may be described as the overall lens for interpreting data. Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest "authenticity criteria," named this because, "...we believed them to be hallmarks of authentic, trustworthy, rigors, or "valid" constructivist or phenomenological inquiry" (p. 180). Lincoln and Guba (2000), discuss three types of authenticity criteria: fairness, ontological and educative, and catalytic and tactical. These approaches share the idea that all participant, interviewer, and stakeholder (invested outsiders) "views, perspectives, claims, concerns, and voices should be apparent in the text" (p. 181). Thus, establishing authenticity may be informed by qualitative methods related to trustworthiness and credibility (Cresswell, 2003).

Trustworthiness involves the awarding of credibility only when constructions of reality are plausible to those who constructed them. Even then, there may be disagreement as the researcher may see the effects of oppression in the constructions of those who are researched; effects that those who are researched may not see (Olsen, 2000). Credibility of the researcher may also be established through identifying colleagues to check data analysis procedures (Creswell, 2003; Schwandt, 2001). My accounting for issues of credibility and trustworthiness in this study follows.

All participants were given the opportunity to review their personal transcripts and an eight page executive summary of study findings. They also had the option to meet personally with me to discuss feedback, or by telephone or email. One participant from each of the two institutions volunteered to do so. I was concerned about how my identity as a cisgender male might influence my data coding and analysis. To check my coding against that of a transgender identified individual, I recruited a transgender colleague familiar with qualitative research and binary gender system issues, to code two transcripts and provide a written response. I also recruited a transgender identified student at University B who was not involved in the project to code two transcripts from interviews at the University A and provide written responses. These volunteers all independently agreed with my major codes, and had some slight suggestions for modification, which I incorporated.

Data and Analysis

The data for this study consisted of transcripts, field notes from the individual interviews, and information gathered though trustworthiness checks. I designed a coding scheme based on the Strauss and Corbin (1994) procedures. In addition, Miles &

Huberman (1994) provided a description of strategies for organizing interview data and "tactics for generating meaning" that I utilized during data collection, coding, and analysis stages of this study. As grounded theory relies on both the perspectives of the researcher and participants, I found the framework ideal for a study that focused on understanding the ways participants engaged in meaning-making around binary gender systems.

Regarding analysis procedures, I hand coded the transcripts based on individuals interviews. The initial coding framework clustered data broadly around themes related to the students experience of binary gender systems on campus and the impact of these on their student experience. I used this initial framework to develop second level codes based on emerging themes related to: academic experiences (admission, interactions with faculty, peers in class, academic advising, scholarship opportunities), employment (employment while a student, future career aspirations), campus LBGT communities and student organizations (degrees of acceptance), and campus facilities (residence halls, athletic facilities, locker rooms, bathrooms). These second level codes were used to inform third level coding, this scheme being used to examine themes related to genderism, its definition and characteristics. These codes focused on ways students experienced the dynamics of cisgender privilege and transgender oppression (often in the context of the second level coding framework).

As the research study unfolded, I applied an inductive analysis of data from all study sources. This analysis formed the baseline for the executive summaries shared during the trustworthiness and member check phases of the study. I then compared the themes generated through grounded theory and constant comparative analysis to the core

research questions. From the coding processes, the following primary themes emerged as descriptors of genderism: (1) There was a forced social labeling process that sorts and categorizes all individuals into male or female identities, often at an institutionalized level; (2) There was social accountability for conforming to binary gender norms with related rewards and punishments; (3) Marginalization was enacted through an overt and covert privileging of binary systems; (4) Binary systems promoted invisibility of gender non-conforming identities and isolation of transgender persons, making transgender identities inaccessible. While I expand on these codes and themes in chapters four and five, profiles of the student participants who gave voice to these themes follow.

Profiles of Participants

A total of ten students participated, four from University A and six from University B. When asked to self identify by gender identity, three individuals described themselves with the word *transsexual*, three used the phrase *tranny boy*, one identified as *genderqueer* or *androgynous,* one used the terms *m to s (male to something else*), *two-spirit* or *third gender* to self identify and *still defining* was the phrase used by two other participants. The three individuals who identified as *transsexual* all had undergone varying degrees of sex reassignment surgery. Each had legally changed their names and gender documents such as birth certificates and drivers licenses. Regarding the students who used the phrase *tranny boy* to identify, all were biologically female, yet were living full time as men. None of the tranny boys had undergone sex reassignment surgery or sought to legally change their names or gender designations, but anticipated doing so in the future. The student who self-labeled with the terms *genderqueer* identified gender as neither "man" or "woman," but instead described self as blurring and blending of gender

expression, and sometimes alternating between multiple forms of gender expression. The participant who used *M to S (male to something else)*, *two-spirit* or *third gender* to identify did not consider self to be a man or a woman, yet expressed gender in ways that was in some respects male and in others female. This individual ultimately described the concept of gender as a spectrum in which there were many forms of expression beyond a simplistic binary construction. The students who used the phrase *still defining* to identify were biologically female and currently used male names and pronouns to identify. Yet, these individuals were unsure whether they had arrived at their final gender identities, or if they ever would. All participants self selected pseudonyms for anonymity. A more detailed overview of each participant follows:

Transsexual

Debbie:

Debbie was a white, M-F, transsexual woman, who was 50 years old, and a second year law student. She transitioned from male to female gender assignment prior to attending University A. At the University, she had joined the LBGT law school organization, Outlaws where she described being voted, "not only the most popular girl in law school, but the most visible person in the entire university," ultimately being given the "media darling award." Wendy worked with Diondre, another student at University A to help found the "Transaction" group. She also participated in the campus LBGT Office Speaker's Bureau and served as the keynote speaker at the university's Transgender Day of Remembrance event. Debbie describes herself as being "very, very out; very public."

In articulating how she came to understand her transgender identity, Debbie discussed feeling she knew she was a woman from the time she was a child. She said,

"The first part of this story is just very typical. As a young child, you just know you're a girl, and so you wish to be a girl, and you go to bed at night and pray that when you wake up in the morning it will all be fixed, and all of that." Debbie discussed privately cross dressing through her teen years. She said that most transgender people cross dress throughout their lives, but this ended for her at age sixteen or seventeen. Said Debbie, "From that time, it never entered my mind again. I just lived my life as a normal boy." She did, however, describe herself as "more feminine" than her male peers, but not in ways that were far outside of the expected range of gender behavior. She said, "I got some teasing, but it wasn't horrific." Debbie dropped out of high school, spent four years in the Navy, married, had three kids and then, "somewhere in my middle thirties it all started coming back to me. I don't understand where it went or why it came back (laughter) and I still don't. I just know it did." Debbie described doing "typical" transgender behavior at this point. She crossed dressed secretly, feeling ashamed and afraid of disclosure. What she describes as "rather unique" about her transgender experience is that she transitioned from male to female identities twice.

During the first transition, Debbie left two jobs. In her first position, she served as vice president of finance for a medical distribution company. Staff at the company suspected that she cross-dressed after work and hired a private detective to monitor her. Debbie was subsequently fired. In the second job, she was the chief financial officer of a small public company. When she informed the company leadership that she intended to transition, Debbie described their response as, "well, you better transition someplace else." She chose to quit this job, underwent gender transition, started hormones, and

began living full time as a woman. She gained employment again in a new position, post transition, but then a personal crisis occurred. Said Debbie,

> And then the woman I was with, this has been a five year period, decided that she really wanted to be with a man, so she left. And I just was devastated and thought, okay, you know, this is now two women that I've loved that have left because of this gender. Maybe I can just not do this anymore. So I went back to being a boy, and cut my hair, stopped the hormones. You know, did all of that stuff. And that was a tough time and I was unsuccessful winning her back, which, in retrospect, is a good thing. She was smart enough to know that I couldn't just do that.

Debbie decided to begin hormones for a second time, and again began living full time as a woman. At that time she was the chief financial officer of a software company which was subsequently sold, leaving Debbie with some money and an opportunity for a career change. She reflected, "And I thought, you know what, I really want to do something with my life that will be for the betterment of the LBGT community. And I thought Law School as the thing to do...so that brings me here."

Diondre:

Diondre was a white, 45 year old, FTM, transsexual man, who had been a Ph.D. student in architecture, but was not currently enrolled at University A. At the time of the interview, he was considering alternative doctoral programs and was interested in becoming a consultant on transgender issues. He transitioned from female to male gender assignment while attending University A. Diondre was highly involved in campus activism and organizing. He co-founded a campus group called "transaction" with Debbie, with a goal of creating space specifically targeting support and advocacy around

transsexual concerns. Diondre was also very active in the campus Graduate Employees Union. In this organization, he played an instrumental role in pressuring the university to adopt a graduate teaching assistant heath care package inclusive of gender reassignment surgery.

In describing his experience of coming to understand his gender identity, Diondre talked about growing up in Boston in an environment that was LBGT inclusive. For many years, he identified as lesbian. Reflected Diondre, "I was 43 and I had tried everything. Really hard. I had tried being a lesbian, and I was clearly, in many ways, happy with being a lesbian. And yet, I was clearly dysfunctional." Diondre talked about being in his early 40's and having a significant emotional "crash." Said Diondre,

> And there were multiple problems there. I mean, the assumption is that you can somehow function without your (gender) identity. That identity is somehow a choice and it's not terribly core. So you can't do without it and if you postpone it, you postpone everything. And that's what happened in my crash. I realized I had postponed everything...when I crashed I couldn't figure out what was going on, I couldn't even do the things I loved. I couldn't garden. I couldn't canoe. I couldn't hike. I couldn't bike. I couldn't walk. I couldn't do my work.

When Diondre chose to transition, he talked with about the advantages he had as a function of his age, race, and social class. Regarding age, at 43 years old, he believed he was seen as having greater social credibility to define his transsexual identity, well developed self-agency skills, and family support. In contrast, he described his concerns about transgender individuals in their late teens or twenties. Because of their youth, they are often inappropriately socially labeled as confused, or too hasty in identifying as

transsexual. Diondre reflected on this and the intersections of race and class with his transgender identity, saying,

> I did this all at age 43, 44, 45. I had—the reason I was able to access physical (medical) services is because I'm lucky, and my family supported me in transition, and I'm privileged. I come from a white, upper middle class family that had money to put together to help me do this. And. I had 43 years of experience behind me in dealing with things, and negotiating things, and getting this to happen. And it was enormously hard for me as a person, as an adult who had credibility. And I think to myself, how is somebody who is twenty is supposed to do this?

Diondre's experience fueled a passion for transgender activism, and in particular, his desire to see more transsexual youth have much easier access to resources to support a transition.

Wendy:

Wendy was a white, MTF, transsexual woman, who was 46 years old and recently completed an undergraduate degree in engineering from University B. She began her college education at University B in the late 1970s and stopped taking courses due to personal and emotional health concerns, many related to her transsexual identity. She eventually returned to complete her education in the mid-1990s, while working full time at the university in a custodial position. During this period, she underwent gender transition, co-founded University B's first transgender support group, and worked on transgender inclusion issues with University B's Lesbian and Gay Faculty and Staff Association.

When Wendy described how it was that she came to understand her transsexual identity, she reflected on having a sense of herself as female from a young age. As an eight year old, she remembered she preferred to play with girls instead of "the rough and tumble play" of boys. She said, "I just seemed to fit better with other girls. And furthermore, the feelings they talked about were feelings that I had seen within myself." Wendy discussed beginning to cross dress at ages eight and nine, reflecting, "...it was something that just felt right. It made me feel good to wear these clothes because it gave me an internal sense of comfort that this is who I am and this is something I can do." Wendy also described as being raised in the 1960s, at a time when she remembered gender and sex role standards much more rigid than today's.

As a child, she quickly learned that she was socially expected to act and behave as male. Yet, by the time she was 18, she described reaching clarity of her gender identity as female. Social expectations conflicted with her gender identity to create a secret life, where she cross-dressed in private. When she talked about her experiences as a student in K-12 school systems and college she said, "...I was consciously conscious of what the (gender) expectations were so I could be sure to accommodate those. It was a difficult time, because in one sense I was devoting a lot of energy maintaining two identities." As a youth, she also had a strong sense that she risked physical violence for failing to conform to gender expectations. She described her late teens as a time when she had the first "deep crisis" about her gender identity and felt "deeply frustrated, sad and depressed."

In 1980, she enrolled as a student at University B. While her experiences at the university will be explored in depth in chapters four and five of this study, she described

arriving at college "in a bad state." This, in addition to the extreme gender rigidity and gender "policing" in the university environment, the constancy of having to hide and repress her gender identity, and feeling disappointed with her academic experiences caused her to make what she described as,

> ...a terrible mistake. I decided to kill my emotions. And to do that I ended up being extremely reclusive for many years. As I say, often to be with people is to be gendered and to not be around them is to be whatever the hell you want. And I did that. And it was very deeply destructive for me.

Though she cut herself off emotionally and limited contact with others, a positive force in her life was meeting her life partner. She met Clara at when she was 19 and they are still together today. Despite the happiness she experienced with Clara, Wendy characterized this time in her life as very negative and unhealthy. Over the next 13 years, she worked full time in "underemployed" jobs and took courses at the university. Yet, she made little academic progress, feeling adrift. At 32, she entered a stage of life reflection, and decided that she wanted change. Wendy challenged self notions of being weak academically and an underachiever, particularly in science and math. She took rigorous courses and performed exceptionally well. She linked her change in academic experience to her decision about gender transition saying,

> That even though it took me a while to have the courage to do this (excel academically), I did it. I'm speaking about the student part and it also influenced my (gender) transition. My feeling is that transition is an end process to a decision that people make about their lives, about what their lives are, about who they want

to be in their life...but the subtext is that all of this is up to you to be the person you're gonna be.

While she felt a new sense of agency regarding academics and gender transition, there was also conflict. Regarding gender transition, she felt as if she had the potential to lose a great deal saying, "I assumed that by doing this (transition), I would have lost my relationship, that I would be fired, that I would be out in the streets...I think I noticed that, at the time, that you had about an 87% chance of being fired and a 98% chance of being divorced." Wendy vacillated between feeling a strong commitment to gender transition, regardless of the consequences, and experiencing extreme fear and dread, including feeling suicidal. Regarding her final decision to proceed with transition, she said, "I mean, screw this; it's my God damn life. Screw them (society). It's their problem, not mine.....I'm going to see this though, whatever. And I did."

Wendy described a long, thoughtful and "methodical" process of gender transition. To get support for resolving depression, she sought therapy, but initially had difficulty identifying a competent clinician. She also described taking two to three years to talk through transition issues through with her partner, "I loved this person so deeply, I needed to spend a lot to time so that she could get through the shock, get through the dismay, get through all of that and start to look at things in terms of what she needed and what we needed."

At the time of her transition, Wendy was working full time at University B and continued her education. Though the college's environment still, as Wendy described, greatly stigmatized transgender individuals, she found new resources on campus. Wendy described receiving a high degree of support from staff at the campus LBGT resource

center, who assisted in interfacing with her employer regarding her gender transition. After graduating, she took a job in technology management at a community college. Wendy continued to support LBGT issues at university B through involvement in the formation of the campus's new LBGT Alumni Association.

Tranny Boy

Asher:

Asher was a white, 21 year old, F-M tranny boy who was a junior majoring psychology at University B. Said Asher,"I use these words (*tranny boy*) because I feel like I'm a pre-adolescent boy." He was living full time as male in most spheres of life on campus, but was not yet out to his parents and family. At University B, Asher served as the panel discussion program coordinator for the Queer Student Alliance, and was a founding member of the Alpha Males, the campus male to female transgender support and advocacy organization. He was employed in a laboratory on campus and had recently been hired as a resident assistant for the upcoming academic year.

When asked to describe how he came to understand his "tranny boy" identity, Asher talked about having awareness of being different from other girls as a young child. He said, "I guess my first memory was always me wrestling with the boys on my block...It was like you always saw the girls sitting around going, "oh, don't do that." As an elementary school student, he consistently remembered feeling more comfortable playing the male role in activities like "playing house." Asher said, "I always wanted to be the Dad." He also described being physically stronger than girls in his elementary school classes and was frustrated with the lack of athletic competition they offered.

Throughout elementary and middle school, he consistently requested to participate in boy's gym classes, which was always denied.

In high school, Asher came out as lesbian during his freshman year, but felt that something was missing. Asher reflected, "And you know, I dated people and nothing ever clicked...even like in my lesbian stage...I was really uncomfortable. I didn't feel correct." He also remembered being mistaken for a boy at times, "which was kind of fun. Like I enjoyed it...Even when I'd be with my girlfriend. It was like, 'whoa they thought I was a boy. That's so cool.'" Yet, despite the male centric experiences of his childhood and adolescence, Asher did not fully connect to the idea that his gender identity was male. Further, though Asher's parents divorced due to his mothers's FTM transsexual transition, he did not connect his mother's experience to his own. Asher felt a degree of personal connection to genderqueer and androgynous identities, in contrast to what he saw as an either/or identity in this FTM parent. He said in reflection, "like my mother is post-op, so she's now a he and my father, I always thought it had to be one or the other."

Asher identified a number of experiences at University B that were instrumental in defining his gender identity. During his freshman year, he fell "madly in love with someone" who was learning about transgender identities for the first time. This partner shared with him that she had been powerfully moved by seeing an LBGT panel of students visit one of her classes. Asher reflected on the conversation,

> I said (to her), 'You're queer and it's a queer panel. You couldn't have learned that much.' She's like, 'I never knew what transgender was'...she basically said blatantly to my face, 'it's you. You're a trans. You just don't realize it yet.'

His girlfriend's feedback had a significant impact on Asher. He used the following summer to reflect on his life experience and gender, and realized that his partner was right. Asher returned the following year feeling determined to make connections to other transgender students, and became acquainted with Triston and Razi. His association with other transgender students was critical in helping him to name and explore his male identity.

Asher felt conflicted about the degree gender reassignment surgery he would undertake, or if he will ever do so. He said,

> Well, my future is mixed. Because I would love to go through everything. I'd love to have, you know, top surgery, and maybe bottom surgery, and I'd love to take testosterone, but unfortunately, I can't take testosterone. I've gone through two kidneys through the years already. And to throw off my body with any more hormones could only lead to more complications, and I don't think they want to put me back on the donor list for a third time.

Though Asher felt that he could pass socially as male through his dress, short hair, and manner, he still worried about his risks for harassment, and whether some form of gender reassignment surgery was inevitable. Said Asher,

> Like there's some days when I'm passing (as male) really well, and I'm like hey, I can just live like this. That would be okay. Then there are other days when I'm not passing really well, and I'm like...the sooner I can get that surgery, the better I'll pass (as male) and won't have to worry about it.

Regardless of the internal conflict Asher had about his ability to pass, he made a decision to start living full time as male on campus. At the beginning of the 2004-2005 academic

year, he began using a new name, and referred to himself with male pronouns. Of this choice, Asher said,

> And this year I took a big step and came back to campus like a whole new person, and I've only heard positive things...Like I feel more comfortable and more confident, and although I was really outgoing before, like now I'm outgoing and even more comfortable with myself. I'm more approachable as well.

Razi:

Razi was a white, 21 year old, FTM tranny boy who was a communications junior at University B. He used the term tranny boy to self identify because, in his own words, "I'm getting ready to start testosterone and I'm having surgery. So it's kind of like I'm a boy waiting to go through puberty. But I'm also not sure if once I transition, I'll go by trans guy or keep the tranny boy identity." At University B, Razi had been involved in residence hall LBGT support organizations, the Queer Student Alliance, and the Alpha Males. When Razi reflected on how he came to understand his gender identity, he said, "Well, when I was younger, I never really wanted to act in the way my mom thought I should, cuz she wanted me to be a girl." Razi talked about preferring sports activities with boys, rejecting her mother's desire for him to play with Barbie dolls. Most significantly, Razi consistently talked about the impact of growing up in a small, Midwestern town.

In this environment, he felt completely cut off from any role models or cultural cues that could have helped him to name his gender identity. Transgender identities were never talked about in his school, by his peers, in his family or hometown. Regarding the inaccessibility of his identity, Razi said, "I think its because I didn't have the vocabulary

for it." By the time he was in high school, Razi said he started to feel that, "oh, maybe I am queer." He talked about feeling attracted to other woman, but never felt fully comfortable identifying as lesbian. Razi also talked about the impact his parents had on his gender expression. He said that his clothing and hairstyle choices were closely monitored, "Like my parents pretty much had to approve all my clothes...I mean they were pretty traditional women and girls clothes. And, I still had really long hair, and then they (her parents) would make me perm it, and it was awful."

When Razi began his first year at University B, he was still uncomfortable with his lesbian identity. During his freshman year, he attended one of the residence hall LBGT support groups, which was recognizing the Transgender Day of Remembrance. A transgender student discussion panel was a focus of the meeting. The panelists led an activity where participants were asked to describe a time that they transgressed gender roles. As Razi shared, he found himself identifying with the life experiences of the transgender panelists. During the remainder of the year, Razi pursued developing friendships with these students. By fall of his sophomore year, Razi was identifying as a tranny boy, with full intention to transition.

Triston:

Triston was a white, 23 year old, FTM tranny boy who was a senior in international relations at University B. Said Triston on how he identified,

> I mean, my most common way I describe myself (is) as a tranny boy or, you know, as a trans guy. You know I say I'm transgender, but that's pretty medicalized or you know, kind of freakish, so once I get on a level that people understand or that mean I say that I'm a tranny boy or a trans guy.

On campus, Triston experienced a wide range of LBGT related involvement, which included serving as the President of one of the campus LBGT Residence Hall support groups, assuming the chairperson's role in the Queer Student Alliance, and helping to co-found the Alpha Males.

Regarding his sexual orientation, Triston first identified his attraction to women at age 14, when he developed a crush on soccer player Lisa Manedez. He remembered writing an entry in his journal which said, "I really wasn't gay, but that I felt so strongly about queer issues that I was thinking that I was attracted to women as a way of identifying as a queer ally, or some bullshit like that." By his senior year, Triston had come out to his parents, but never identified as lesbian. He said, "There's just something about that word that wasn't me. It made me cringe." Though he always felt only attracted to women, he said that at the time, the words that best described him were "bi, dyke, whatever, until halfway through my sophomore year (of college)."

In college, he identified three incidents that were most significant in helping him to identify his transgender identity. In the first instance, Triston was with a group of friends with whom he attended a transgender education workshop. Triston said,

> I was in a van with a bunch of people and I think we had just gone to a training and we were talking and one of my friends, I was talking about my gender or something and she was like, "well do you identify as transgender?" She was just being totally cool about it and I was like, "No, oh my God, no." And she was like, "Why not?" I just had some real fast answer, but then I was like, "I don't know why." And it was kind of like, "Why did I give that fast answer like I thought there was a problem with it?" You know, so it made me think.

While the conference marked the beginning of Triston questioning his gender identity, reading Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* created more internal conflict. Reflected Triston,

> But when I was reading it at the time, I was thinking about this as a trans man. This was a transgender guy. And so I was reading and I was like, "I'm not this, I'm just reading this book to be educated." And I got about half way through the book and there were all these violent things happening to this person. And it was really hard to read...I got to the part where, like the person had been taken in by the cops and was just beating the crap out of him, it was like the person was getting raped and I couldn't...I stopped reading the book and threw it across the room...it freaked me out. I was like, "why does this bother me so much? It isn't me, what's going on?" So I was still pushing it away.

Triston described the culmination of these experiences as an incident when he and his best friend Alex, who was also Tranny Boy identified, came out to each other for the first time. Said Triston:

> We were watching Boy's Don't Cry (a film that chronicles the murder of FTM youth, Brandon Tina) at a Rainbow meeting (an LBGT student group) my sophomore year, and everybody was kind of laughing during the movie at like when Brandon like packed his pants and stuff like that. We (Alex and Triston) were really bothered by that and we stuck around afterwards, just the two of us, and we just cried and then he came out to me and said, "I'm Brandon," who is the main character, and then I was like, "Me too."

During the remainder of his junior year, Triston continued to use female pronouns and his birth name. While he occasionally wondered if he might be more genderqueer identified, he eventually became clear that he was an FTM male, tranny boy. At the time of this interview, just after graduation, he had shifted to male pronouns and new name.

Genderqueer

Danielle:

Danielle was a white, 18 years old, first year, education and German major at University B. She identifies as genderqueer or androgynous. Danielle said, "I usually go by 'she', but if you call me 'he', I don't mind." On campus, she was living on a female floor in a residence hall, and was involved in a number of LBGT and progressive, leftist student organizations. When Danielle described how she came to understand her identity, she talked about experiencing a degree of male identification from a young age, but also continued to claim female identity and gender role. She discussed middle-school as the time in life when she began to understand her sexual orientation. By her first year of college, she was defining as genderqueer, reflecting the ways she experienced identity existing in combinations of both her sexual orientation and gender fluidity. Reflected Danielle,

> ...well in 8th grade I realized that I had feelings for girls, although I didn't know what being homosexual was or whatever. So in the 9th grade, I sort of came out to myself and some friends as bi. And then it sort of progressed into lesbian and then into just genderqueer. So it sort of went along those lines. But basically I guess what that means for me is that I have the mix of both genders; I'm neither overly masculine, nor overly feminine. I can enjoy the fem scene (activities highly

associated with female gender role) and march with the Queer Alliance (a campus student organization which she saw as having a "male" business style), as well as knitting and quilting.

M to S (male to something else), Two-Spirit, Third Gender

Damien:

Damien was a white, 50 year old, Ph.D. student in social work at University A. Damien does not use any gender labels to identify, though presents gender in ways that would more often pass socially as male. Damien said, "You know, I'm not a man. I'm not a woman. I'm Damien." Damien came to University A at the age of 36 for an undergraduate degree. He chose to continue his education by completing a Master's and is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the same institution. Damien was involved in forming and participating in campus and community groups related to LBGT issues, and was and an active member of the campus Task Force on LBGT Inclusion. When Damien talked about his process of coming to understand his gender identity, he said,

> When I was 19, I fell in love with a man, and didn't really know what gay was. And, I really didn't know what transgender was. I knew a little bit about transsexual because I had seen, I think, Christine Jorgensen's name perhaps...But I knew how I felt...I went into the psychiatrist and I said, "I have fallen in love with a man and I need surgery."...And this doctor convinced me that not only that I wasn't transsexual or transgender, but that I wasn't gay.

The experience had a significant and negative impact on Damien. He said, "So I lived until I was thirty-three under the assumption that I was some weird different kind of straight person...I just didn't fit that." Damien began "trying to live as a gay man." Yet,

he also said that at this time he was, "never fitting in (with gay community) and never understanding why I didn't fit in." Regarding circumstances that led to a change in perception about his gender identity, he talked about a friendship with a student who was lesbian and genderqueer that caused him to begin to think differently about gender. He also participated in the campus LBGT Task Force, where he met other individuals who were transgender. As he participated in this group, he began to realize that he identified with the experience of the transgender members. During this time, he also developed a significant relationship with a heterosexual man, whom he loved, which also caused him to reflect on his gender identity. He wondered if this attraction was also about his gender. He said,

> And then, when I started trying to really get it, there were about two weeks when I tried to put myself into another box and try to say, "well, you know, maybe I'm a woman in a man's body." Well, maybe that was true when I was nineteen, but I can't really tell now. I think maybe it was. Maybe surgery would have been the right option at that time. But now, I really—you know, now I'm 50 years old. I've developed my whole life, my communication style, how I relate to people. And its really different if people don't know how to relate to me. And a lot of people think I'm gay, and a lot of people just think I'm strange. But I go like, "This is me and just how I relate to people." So now it's like that (surgery) just does not interest me.

Still Defining

Charlie:

Charlie was a white, 22 year old, junior majoring in kinesiology at University B. He had identified as F-M transgender over the last 12 months, but was currently questioning the identity. Charlie was considering genderqueer or androgynous identities as alternatives, but was ultimately, "still defining." When Charlie reflected on the process of coming to understand his gender identity, he described being raised on a farm in a family that had a "gender neutral outlook." He remembered not being pushed towards any "gender appropriate" types of toys or related activities. He also remembered independently gravitating towards behavior deemed socially appropriate for boys.

Charlie talked his identity in relationship to having a physical condition called primary emonoria, which causes a delay in normal adolescent development. Specifically, Charlie said he did not begin "developing" as a woman until age 19, when he started taking hormones under a physician's care. Prior to that time, he said that he had more of a "boys" body, and was often mistaken for being male. He said, "a big part of my development has been accepting that I can't always have a boyish body."

As a transfer student to University B, Charlie initially identified as lesbian, but as he made connections to the campus transgender community, felt a high degree of identification with the MTF, tranny boy identity. He chose a male name, came out to his family as "transgender" and requested that he be referred to by male pronouns. After approximately a year of this new identity, Charlie became aware that he was not fully comfortable. While unsure of the factors leading to his lack of clarity, he was sure that, "I'm just not comfortable with either pronoun...Right now, I'm leaning a bit more

towards she than he, but I still don't know for sure." He was further frustrated by social standards that would not allow him to be in an undefined places regarding gender. Said Charlie, "It's hard because pronouns really define who you are and I can't just walk around every five months and be like, 'call me this, call me that, call me this.' Eventually it helps to have something consistent."

Nick:

Nick was a white, 22 year old political science senior at University A. Unclear about his gender identity, Nick said, "I'm still searching, so I'd say I identify as lesbian, but I also identify as transgender and use male pronouns. It's kind of in the middle-ish." Nick presented as male at the time of the interview, and by his appearance, could probably easily socially pass as male in most situations. He had a stocky build, wore loose fitting jeans, a men's button down shirt, with short hair tucked under a baseball cap. When Nick talked about coming to understand his gender identity, he described a childhood and adolescence in which he alternated between feeling strong connections to male and female identities. From a young child through 8th grade, he distinctly felt more male identified. He remembered being angry about experiencing breast development as an early adolescent, feeling that it was an assault on his maleness. Then, beginning in 9th grade, he talked about feeling strongly female, and began dressing, acting, and behaving in ways that were "very femme. I even shopped at the Buckle." As a senior in high school he began to come out, first as bisexual, then as lesbian.

His first two years of college were at another public university, during this time, he attended a regional LBGT conference that had a number of sessions on transgender identity. It was at these sessions that he made a connection to a deeper understanding of

both his gender, and the complexity of his experience, claiming transgender identity for the first time. While still sorting out, still defining his gender identity, he was unsure if he would ever arrive fully at a singularly defined male or female identity.

Study Limitations

The transferability of the study is limited in several ways that are worth noting. These include the impact of the identity of the researcher, racial ethnic identities of the participants and the nature of qualitative research. Due to my identity as an LBGT resource center director at University B, I had some degree of prior relationship with each of the participants from that campus. While I worked to assure these participants that their involvement in the study was purely voluntary, I could not help but wonder if my role at the institution created additional pressure to participate. In addition, the University B data may have been biased in a way that I did not expect. Because of the prior relationship, these students may have begun the interview process feeling more comfortable and at ease than the University A students who were meeting me for the first time at a campus food court. However, I did note from the transcripts that the data from both institutions were equally rich. Further, the lengthiest interview conducted, spanning four hours, was with a University A student.

All of the participants who chose to participate in this study were of white, western European decent. Examining the impact of binary gender systems across diversity of race and ethnicity was not possible. Given that outreach to participants occurred through public list servs and contacts with transgender campus organizations, the implication is that "out" transgender individuals may have been more likely to participate. The realities of multiple oppression issues for transgender students of color

may have made participation too great a personal risk. However, it is important to note that at both institutions, participants informed me that, with one or two exceptions, I was interviewing the entire "out" transgender student populations.

Though qualitative research is not generalizable in ways reflected by quantitative studies, the generation of grounded theory is greatly enhanced through multiple voices. This study's focus on 10 participants is merely a partial, beginning lens for such work. While these participants gave voice to significant themes about the impact of binary gender systems on the two campuses, they are certainly not representative of all transgender student voices. In spite of these limitations, the study holds promise for illuminating the experience of transgender students on other campuses.

Summary

This study examined ways that transgender students experience binary gender systems in a broad and complex range of campus cultures, environments and interpersonal contexts. To support this goal, the research process was purposefully framed by postmodern, queer, and critical postmodern perspectives. The data for this study consisted of transcripts, field notes from the individual interviews, and information gathered though trustworthiness checks. Based on emerging themes, chapters four and five, a definition and characteristics of genderism are presented. These chapters also discuss the impact of genderism in the following areas: academics, employment and career aspirations, LBGT student organizations and communities and campus facilities.

Chapter Four: Genderism, Social Labeling and Gender Accountability

Based on themes that emerged in this study, chapter four provides an overview of genderism and its four primary characteristics. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of two foundational aspects of genderism: social labeling and gender accountability. As enacted at Universities A and B, genderism may be defined as the belief or assumption that there are two, and only two genders. As suggested by Lev (2005), genderism inextricably links biological sex assignment (man or woman) to appropriate gender identity (male or female), gender expression (masculine or feminine behavior), and sexual orientation (men attracted to women or women attracted to men). All gender identity and expression is essentialized as one of two options. Genderism is supported socially by a binary gender system characterized by explicit and implicit rules, rewards and punishments for conforming to either male or female identities. At its core, genderism asserts that biological sex assignment predetermines gender identity destiny (Lees 2005). Of the power of biological sex assignment, Foucault (1990) said,

> The notion of sex made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations and pleasures...a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and a universal signified. (p 43)

Thus, at the two universities, sex assignment as "M" or "F" became a "signifier," reinforcing two gender identities as static, immutable, unchangeable and existing without fluidity. These binary based identities operated in dualistic, oppositional ways. Examples from popular culture included terminology, such as "opposite sex," or books like Gray's (2000), *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.*

As an overview of the concept of genderism and the operation of binary gender systems operating at universities A and B, it could be said that norms in college environments created standards and accountability for being seen as male or female. Reflecting on the dual gendered nature of his university, Diondre said, "There's a desire from an institutional and sort of systemic level not to allow the possibility of anything other than absolute male, absolute female, and never the twain shall cross over or meet." Triston described the power of binary gender systems in society and on campus:

> Everything is depending on the gender binary. Like think, there is no way you can exist outside the gender binary. You know like radical queers could talk about how they don't live in binary, but that's bullshit. That's like saying that we don't live in a capitalist society. You know, we do, that's the reality, so this school is very much on the gender binary.

As Triston suggests above, genderism at Universities A and B, was maintained by a system of power and oppression that was, in terms used by diversity educator Rodney Patterson (2005), "systemic and systematic."

Genderism was systemic in that it permeated all aspects of college life and systematic because it was institutionalized through implicit and explicit laws, rules and policies. This power and oppression system had four major characteristics. (1) There was a forced social labeling process that sorts and categorizes all individuals into male or female identities, often at an institutionalized level. (2) There was social accountability for conforming to binary gender norms with related punishments. Individuals who failed to conform were viewed as deviant and/or having a disorder. (3) Marginalization was enacted through an overt and covert privileging of binary systems. (4) Binary systems

promoted invisibility of gender non-conforming identities and isolation of transgender persons, making transgender identities inaccessible. The reminder of this chapter utilizes the experiences of students at the two universities to illustrate genderism's first two characteristics.

A Male or Female Social Labeling Process

Regarding genderism's first characteristic, participants reported experiencing a male or female gender assignment process, often on a daily basis. At each university, a dual gender system created social expectations that individuals fit into prescribed norms for gender expression as either "male" or "female." The binary gendered culture of the university created "absolutes" as Diondre related, for the social construction of two gender categories. Social labeling often occurred without the consent of participants. Damien, who did not claim any gender label, described the operation of binary systems through the student newspaper assigning him to a gender:

> The best example was when I was profiled in the school newspaper...And the heading for my section said, "Opts out of surgery." It was just so weird for me. It totally implied that I was supposed to become a transsexual woman, but "opted out." No, I didn't opt out of surgery. Surgery was never an option, was never considered. It was like just so weird to see this.

Students in the study, who expressed gender outside these norms, often the tranny boy, and genderqueer participants, described an almost daily occurrence of individuals inquiring about their gender identities. They were asked regularly, "Are you a boy or a girl?" Razi said, "It's like they had to know, like it was really disturbing that I didn't fit the category." Charlie reported a similar process of being stopped by students on the

street with similar gender inquiries. Charlie said, "People have a hard time when they can't either label someone's gender or if they don't know what to call them, what pronouns to go by--I think it just makes people uneasy." Charlie was still in a process of self-naming his gender identity, not having clearly arrived at *male*, *female*, or alternative labels to name his experience. He described how problematic this was for peers,

> And everyone keeps asking me, like every two weeks I have these people asking me, "How are you identifying?" "We just want to make sure that we're making you comfortable." I'm like, "just stop asking. Just call me whatever you want."

When reflecting on these interactions, Charlie believed the desire his peers expressed to help him to be "comfortable" was, in truth, a mask for their own discomfort and their need to label him. When Asher described his experience of expressing gender identity as male in a residence hall, but being assigned to live on a female floor, he named a process of collective denial of his identity, "to them (female residents), I had to be a girl. There was no other option. No matter how many times I corrected them, I had to be 'she.'" A similar labeling incident was described by Daneille, who as genderqueer identified, often presented gender outside binary norms. She related,

> I was about to leave the Regan (residence hall) Cafeteria today after dinner. A girl standing right in front of me dropped a glass. There was the usual scene, kids snickering. One of the students decided to make some smart comments like, "Uh, oh, you're in trouble now! I'll have to eat your first born." The girl and I started walking away from the 'scene of the crime' by this time. The student kept ripping new cracks. As I was almost to the caf door, he shouted "I know you're a girl!" I was just sort of thrown of and mildly insulted when he shouted, "I know you're a

girl!" Obviously it was meant as an insult since it had nothing to do with me dropping the glass, which I didn't do. Everyone who knows me knows I'm female, so it's sorta like "wow, tell me something I don't know," but then it's like he's trying to unmask me or uncover some embarrassing secret by revealing that I am (gasp) a girl. I might be female (biologically), but I'm not a girl or a woman.

Beyond the aforementioned incidents of "male" or "female" social labeling described by Charlie, Damien, Danneille and Razi, binary label systems operated to obliterated connections to any other personal gender identity. Explained Diondre,

> It's not just a binary gendering. It's not just a male/female gendering of the institution and suddenly, do I fall in one or the other. It's the fact of falling into one category in some sense means there is no other category. That is deeply troubling. And I mean, I would be deeply troubled if I fell into one or the other categories also, because the institution has a firm position on who's allowed in what restroom...They don't make it possible to be in one category or the other at the same time, or in between. They don't – they just put up barriers. And so (transgender) people are invisible and are isolated.

Binary Labeling Negates Fluidity

Genderism not only assigned Diondre to a single category, "male," with socially defined expectations and privileges (such as restroom use) but also negated the possibility of any gender fluidity. For Diondre, the genderist reality of having to move through life as a static, fixed, "F" or "M," created serious barriers in his ability to access benefits related to health care and domestic partnership. Said Diondre,

> For example, I have an "M" on my driver's license...so I can get my testosterone without triggering exclusion stuff, but I have an "F" everywhere else. Social Security. Passport. Birth certificate. If I say I'm an "M," then I can't access same-sex domestic partner coverage under the college institutional rules. If I say I'm an "F," then I can get my same-sex domestic partner, but not the health care I need. And so if I say I'm an "F," I'm okayed for the same-sex domestic partner coverage, but I'm committing insurance fraud. If I say I'm an "M," then I'm committing insurance fraud again (regarding domestic partner benefits). Insurance fraud is a felony... So you can laugh about it, but it's a felony. And so I cannot be in a position of saying I am one thing or the other right now, because I would be in insurance fraud. Technically one way or another... So when we ask where I am, I'm caught in the institution in terms of gender. Transsexuals are in a terrible place.

From Diondre's perspective, managing identity in ways that expressed multiple gender categories or fluidity, meant risking legal sanction, regardless of the degree of personal necessity.

The social prohibition of gender fluidity also had consequences for Nick, whose "still defining" status signified that he did not clearly identity with either male or female identities, or if he ever would. When Nick discussed his frustrations of never feeling like he "fit in" on campus, he named the genderist male or female social labeling process as deeply problematic. Nick said,

> You know, it's very hard in this society when you're like in the middle...And also, just for me, I think it'd be really nice to be able to be quote/unquote

"normal," you know, and not have to be trapped in the middle and just kind of know... For me it's like I don't know. Sometimes I'm a girl, sometimes I'm a boy, sometimes I'm a lesbian. I mean, sometimes I'm a gay man. Like it's all over the place and I get really confused. But I think it's confusing because it's so much pressure...you can't be fully a gay man and a gay woman at the same time. Like, what the hell is that?

Beyond the ways in which transgender students experienced a social demand that they be named and viewed as, "M" or "F", negating gender fluidity, Diondre described a binary labeling process that worked to obliterate his entire prior experience as a woman. He explained,

> A very funny place for me now is because I'm transitioning, it's not clear to me that anybody thinks of me as having a place in a women's group for example. And this is very funny. I have a scholarship from the Center for Women's Research...And they ask people to speak. They have, you know, alumni speakers at their various functions. And I know I'll never be a speaker. I'll never get asked to be a speaker to women receiving this scholarship. There's groups who are about women in the institution, who talk about women's issues in the institution. And I suddenly feel like I have no authority to talk about those issues. When two years ago, I would have been sought out to talk about those issues. It isn't as though my experience is that dramatically different. So now I could be sought out for a transsexual view on the institution. But nobody seeks those people out. There's not a lot of calls for me to worry about – but I still think about women's issues in the institution, and I have every bit as much experience about that as I

> ever did, and in fact, the way transsexuals are treated is often the way women are treated. It's like crap... And it's about who has a real place at the table. So there's a funny way in which – in fact it's a hideous way really, in which transition drops me out of the areas in which – that I'm vested in and have expertise in, in institutional conversations.

From Diondre's perspective, the scholarship program ultimately worked to deny that he had ever been a woman, or had any understanding of women's experiences. Beyond the obliteration of past gender experiences, the institutionalized gender labeling process also disconnected transgender students from their present identity.

As an example, self-identifying in the classroom was a significant concern for many of the study participants, often requiring that they "come out" as transgender to every faculty member in every class, each semester. For the five students in the study who presented gender in a defined category different from birth assignment, and had not yet pursued legal name or gender change, being authentic in class presented particular challenges. At the beginning of each semester, Asher communicated with all faculty for his courses via email, requesting that he be referred to by his chosen name and male pronouns. Though Asher related that this approach was successful overall, the realities of institutional procedures at University B created barriers to full legitimization of his identity. Faculty often requested that Asher to use his birth name, Jessica Stevens, and student ID number to self identify on classroom tests and quizzes. When Asher reflected on this practice, he said that the reality was that "Asher doesn't pay the bills. Jessica does." Ultimately, institutional policy required Asher to be enrolled at institution with the label female and name Jessica, regardless of his identity.

Similarly, Triston's athletic scholarship forced him into a gender role that denied any other identity. He was a member of the women's athletic team and was required to pass as female. To fully be "out" as male meant the risk of losing the scholarship, as well as being removed from the team. Triston said,

> It was hard. I mean you are in a women's athletic arena, it's women... I'm really happy about that, like it's really important for women to have their own space and just focus to be specifically on women's sports. But my experience was, well I couldn't be out, at least I wasn't going to take the risk of being out because gender identity not in the anti discrimination policy...so there was a fear of losing my scholarship.

Thus, for both Asher and Triston, policy based social labeling as birth defined, biological, "M" or "F" categories resulted in degrees of personal invisibility.

Summary: Male or Female Social Labeling

To summarize, participants in this study experienced genderism working to systematically assign them to one of two distinct gender categories, with clear and boundaries, negating fluidity, and often creating an institutionalized disconnection from personal gender identity. Students described their gender identities as being regularly questioned, and often socially assigned to one of two categories without their consent. Examples included the school newspaper assigning Damien to a "female" transsexual category who "opts out of surgery;" the women in Asher's residence hall continuing to label him with female pronouns, despite his request for them to do otherwise; and Danielle having "I know you're a girl!" yelled at her, as if her biological sex assignment needed to be publicly identified. At another level, participants consistently described a

gender labeling process that was a function of their peers' discomfort with any degree of gender variance, and a need for binary clarity. Taken to an extreme, gender variance was met with "denial" as described by Asher regarding the reactions of the women on his female floor community. In addition, the social labeling process resulted in significant pragmatic dilemmas, as evidenced through Diondre's health insurance and domestic partner benefits. The institutional reality for Asher and Tristion, was that it had to be Jessica who payed tuition bills, and Suzanne who played on the softball team. For the participants in this study, binary social labeling was powerful, influencing every aspect of their lives. Genderism's second characteristic, accountability for conforming to binary gender norms, examines social mechanisms which drive the labeling process.

Social Accountability for Conforming to Binary Gender Norms

As enacted at the two institutions, this second characteristic of genderism created accountability through systems of punishments to enforce standards for conforming to male or female identities. Study participants discussed the challenges and consequences of failing to conform to binary gendered norms in a wide range of higher education contexts. Most often, participants described issues related to social accountability and binary gender identities in relationship to academic experiences, campus jobs and facilities. Related themes that emerged included gender accountability in the classroom and interactions with faculty and peers in class; pressures related to gender conformity and campus employment in relationship to service positions, dormitory resident assistants, and laboratory aide jobs; and the impact of gender accountability and campus facilities as a function of binary gendered cultures particular to residence halls, locker-rooms, athletics facilities and public bathrooms. All participants discussed the concept of

passing and its relationship to the aforementioned campus contexts. Thus, passing serves as a foundation for exploring social accountability.

Passing and Social Accountability

In this study, transgender students discussed the complexities of ways passing as "male" or "female" at times affirmed personal identity, yet was also utilized as a strategy to avoid physical or emotional harassment. Most often, failure to pass was associated with gender deviance and was met with a range of negative consequences including verbal harassment, being ignored, tokenized, and fearing physical assault. For participants in this study, the concept of passing as one of two, socially constructed and normed genders carried multiple implications.

For Wendy, passing worked to have her gender identity fit neatly into a "convenient" category. She passed easily as a cisgender female. Thus, being seen as a woman at University B gave her a static identity, eliminating any other alternatives for gender expression, and most significantly, labeling her "normal," Said Wendy,

> So I'm in this weird situation of where people would perceive me as something convenient, and within their world view, and understanding, and call me that without ever understanding where the subtleties were, much less having any sort of construct that would allow for other possible ways of being. For people who have a strong need to assimilate and need borders; you're either normal or you're not.

At a basic level, to be seen as "normal," was to pass as the correct, socially assigned gender. To pass, participants had to fit the right gender category and express gender within appropriate boundaries. The concept of passing was a critical component

of how genderism supported social accountability systems at Universities A and B. Passing carried a range of emotional meanings for study participants, for some it was deeply validating, for others, it served to reinforce genderism. Triston reflected on the personal affirmation he experienced when passing,

> It always felt so much better when I was called "he." Like it really, really felt right. You know like every time I would pass, I would be like, "Oh my God, this is the coolest thing." You know, "this is great." I guess it wasn't feeling really natural to be called "she." When you don't know anything different...like when you are just the way that you were assigned at birth, you know, and it doesn't necessarily feel all that weird, but it's all you've ever known, but once you start to experience something else, you have that comparison.

While some students were deeply affirmed by passing, genderist pressure to conform to norms also made passing a strategy to avoid harassment. When Wendy reflected on the years she spent living as a male, she used the metaphor of a police officer "being under deep cover." Said Wendy,

> I really resonate with the experience of, for instance, cops being under deep cover because I totally know what that life is. You're constantly thinking about saying the right thing. You're constantly watching yourself to make sure that you don't make a mistake and soon it becomes a second skin. But you're always conscious that this is not who you are. It's very draining.

For participants who sought to express gender in a manner consistent with identity, fears of emotional, physical, and verbal harassment were daunting. Triston, describing his risk for sexual violence said,

> And you know, I'm female bodied and I've been raised as a woman, so what comes of that is 20 years of trying to fight body image issues and trying to fight being afraid of rape which still happens now. I mean, tranny boys are at huge risk for rape if they are not passing.

Wendy described passing as having the ability to attend to a myriad of "unspoken cues" with the requirement that gender expression be finely tuned to the most ordinary, daily interactions. A mistake could result in genderism's social sanctioning. As an example, Nick described his gender being initially read by women as male, leading to related social expectations, and then, shifting to him being seen as deviant.

Said Nick,

> You know, the girls pick up a little bit more easily for whatever reason that I'm, you know, that I'm male. But it's usually like they treat me a certain way, like "Oh, hey dude. Can you hand that to me?" or "Can you do this for me?" But it's then like I open my mouth and they hear that it's like a more female voice. It's like they're smiling and being nice, but the second I open my mouth I get like this distorted "you're a creep" look.

Thus, passing carried a wide range of meanings for study participants and ultimately served to reinforce genderist social accountability. While validating for some participants, others described failing to pass as resulting in potentially life threatening consequences. Similarly, a theme that emerged in this study involved the intersections of passing and social accountability in academic contexts.

Social Accountability, Academic and Classroom Contexts

When Wendy was readmitted to University B to complete a final class for her degree, post transition from male to female identity, she described being treated like a "freak" in her program advising office:

> The office staff knew from my advisor of my situation, having revealed my circumstances of my returning to school to finish this one class, and explaining what happened because my records didn't jive because I had a name change...that I knew that the office staff were looking at me. They all stopped what they were doing...they tried to be unobtrusive, but I obviously could tell they had handled my records and they wanted to look at the freak and you know you just gotta roll with it. But it's demeaning; there's no dignity to this whole thing. It peaks human curiosity, but for transgender college students it's debasing. It's just debasing.

Though Wendy had previously described herself passing easily as a woman, it appears that the disclosed knowledge of her transsexual identity caused her to be labeled deviant. Similarly, in classroom settings, disclosure of transgender identity and failing to conform to social standards for gender expression often resulted in negative consequences.

As related earlier through Asher's classroom experiences, transgender students in this study often requested that all course faculty refer to them by their chosen names and correct gender pronouns. Charlie talked about identity management in the classroom becoming more complicated when he shifted from identifying solely as F-M transgender to genderqueer. Said Charlie,

> Well, last fall you know when I was coming out as trans, I just walked up to my professors and I told them. I said, "Look my name is Anna on the roster, but I'm

going by Charlie, if you'd please call me that. And I have transgender identification, so if you could please use a male pronoun that would be appreciated." And most of my professors were okay with that. I only had one who continued to call me a woman, which was really weird because I wasn't passing as a woman at all at the time. Now, like I said a few days ago, as part of summer school, I had a professor who he didn't really ask about my identity and he was just like, "Why do you go by 'Charlie,' a guy's name?" I didn't really know how to respond to that because I didn't want to say, "Well I was trans and now I'm kind of genderqueer." You know, I didn't want to give him this big long story and I guess I was more worried now about how people would take me being genderqueer, so I just said, 'I like the name.'"

For Razi, self-identifying in the classroom was made more complex by his role at University B as a resident assistant. He was assigned to a female floor and had to be selectively open about his male identity. In all residence hall or classroom situations in which his female residents might be present, he shortened his chosen name to a more gender-ambiguous sounding "Raz," and used female pronouns. His preference, however, was to be out as male in class as much as possible. Razi described a number of situations in which faculty members refused to call him by his chosen name or use male pronouns, "It's awful to get 'she'd', and I'm sitting there, clearly a guy." Similar to Razi, interactions with faculty also proved difficult for Nick.

Though he regularly passed as male, Nick talked about a number of situations at University A where his interaction with faculty changed when he was perceived to have a

higher pitched, female voice. He described faculty members responding to him with the "You're a freak" look. Nick felt that his gender identity could be a barrier to his ability to participate in faculty lead research projects or internships, as well as receiving letters of recommendation. Said Nick,

> I was always one of those people that like, you know, tried to talk to the professor after class and like that kind of thing...So, I mean, like this one professor that I had, it was obvious he was trying to be nice to me but that he thought that I was total freak. I mean like, it's the same kind of things that I was talking about before. Like I walk up to a teacher and they'll be like, "Yes sir, how can I help you?" And then the second I open my mouth and I'll be like, "Well, I don't understand this problem" or something. And then they'll look at me like, "Oh." And then after that they're not as friendly any more...But it's like I'll meet a teacher and I'm like, "Yeah, this is a really cool man. He has all these books out and stuff." But then when I talk to him, he acts like I'm a weirdo. It's not gonna make me feel interested in asking him if he needs an undergraduate, you know, intern for his research or something. It's gonna make me feel like, "Oh, I don't want to spend all summer with him if he's gonna act like I'm a freak everyday." So, I feel like I'd be more involved if I wasn't worrying as much about, you know, what teachers thought about.

Like Nick, Wendy and Charlie discussed ways their lack of conformity to binary gender norms were academically problematic at University B. Wendy talked about being in class just after her M-F transition, "I know I stuck out because I hadn't learned—I hadn't had enough experience living full time as a woman to blend in... things were

really awkward in class for the first few weeks; they knew that there was something deeply different about me and it was a little weird." In his academic department, Charlie's masculine gender expression was deemed acceptable, as long as he was seen as a lesbian. Said Charlie,

> Overall I would say my department—I don't know if we're liberal—but just to generalize there's a lot of lesbian identified people in physical education. You know it's the typical women in sport thing. People, when I'm passing as lesbian, like right now, think it's great. The guys are cool with me; the women are cool with me because I'm just a butch woman. They're okay with that. But as soon as I say, "I'm a guy" it's like, "whoa, no, you're just a butch woman." They don't really get it and I've had some harassment there.

Direct harassment and blatant insensitivity of faculty in class also was reported by participants, often based on binary notions of normality and transgender persons being seen as deviant. Razi described a number of negative experiences in classes. As one example, he related,

> A lot of professors make really shitty trans jokes. Like in one of my books, it gave an example of this one guy who is sleeping with a woman. And then he finds out that this woman's a trans woman. And it's supposed to be an example about like deceiving. But it's really shady. It's like, you know, you'd be upset, too, if you found out you'd actually been sleeping with a guy. The professor thought that that was just hilarious.

In classroom settings, genderism's second characteristic, social accountability to binary gender norms, took a number of different forms. When transgender students failed

to pass in binary gender contexts, or if alternate gender experiences (such as Wendy's) became known, participants feared or risked discrimination and harassment. Similar themes appeared in the context of campus employment.

Campus Employment and Social Accountability.

Study participants employed on campus faced complex challenges. Working full time at University B was critical to Wendy's economic stability while attending college. As an adult in her early forties, Wendy had a number of highly employable skills, particularly related to computer technology. Yet, the realities of social accountability and its risks caused her to intentionally choose a low paying campus job. This was part of her strategy for successfully transitioning from male to female identities. Wendy reflected,

> ...Once I decided that I had to transition, I purposefully stayed on a second shift job in a campus medical facility...so that I would be out of the view of the public, around a lot of unisex bathrooms, with my union seniority to make it hard for them to fire me...My prior job was in a much more public position, in a place that was rather controversial, so if I would have transitioned there I know I would have been transferred or possibly fired... By being an underemployed nobody bottom feeder, sweeping floors when no one else was around, I figured that was the way to do it. And that was a good gamble.

Like Wendy, other participants confronted the risks and challenges of being out about their identities in campus employment. Two participants were hired as resident assistants (RAs) at University B, where RA floor assignments are made based on biological sex. Razi spent two years working on a female designated floor and Asher just had been hired to work in an all female environment. Asher described the RA selection

process as being particularly problematic. On the application, he was forced to identify as either "male" or "female." Because he knew that RA floor and hall assignments were made based on biological sex, he chose the "female" category, and identified self by his birth name. When he arrived to participate in the first phase of the selection process, he wrote "Jessica" on his nametag, expecting to have to go through the process as female identified. He described the negative impact of the selection experience, saying, "That was the lowest point because every time I looked down, it was a reaffirmation of, you know, that University B doesn't necessarily accept my true identity – like who I am."

Both Asher and Razi discussed the complexities of managing identities with peers on the floor, as well as supervisors. As stated earlier, Razi chose to refer to himself as "Raz" and went by female pronouns in all situations where residents from his floor community and hall staff were present. Said Razi, "every once in a while, if there are visitors to the floor, I'd hear something like, 'what's a guy doing being an RA on the girl's floor?'" At the same time, in settings where other hall staff or residents were absent, close friends and select faculty and staff referred to Razi by his chosen name and male gender pronouns. In contrast, Asher has decided to be open with his residence life staff and plans to be "out" to his female floor residents as transgender. Designing a strategy for being an effective staff member and managing his identity became a significant issue. Said Asher,

> ...I have sat down with the Hall Director and we had multiple serious discussions about you know, "how are you going to present yourself when the women first show up?" You know, "I mean, are you going to have facial hair?" I'm like, "No. I'm just going to look like I would every other day." I don't want to freak

freshmen out that are going to be living on my floor. I'd like to foster a good environment." He (hall director) believes that I'll be a great RA, that I'm a great people person, and that I have a lot of skills that even some other returning RAs don't have. It's just whether or not we can get the female students on my floor, you know, to accept my trans identity, which is male. Which is interesting. Right now, I'm working with all of the returning RAs as well as the new ones on this issue.

Razi discussed his frustrations with working with a residence hall director who he described as insensitive, tokenizing, and unable to understand his needs as a transgender student. Systemic gender conformity to a female idenity appeared to be an expectation of both Razi's work role and was reflected by the behaviors of his supervisor. Said Razi,

> Well, when I first talked to her, I just was like, you know, "I'm trans. Just wanted to let you know." Then she's like, "Okay." And then she's like, "What's that mean?" And so I had to do like a Trans 101. I'm like, okay, fine. She's new. Maybe she doesn't know anything... So I gave her Trans 101. Then she's like, "You know, you're first gay person I've ever talked to." And I'm like, "Oh, my God." I was like, "This is not going to be good." And then like later on, she wants to do a safe space training (and LBGT awareness session for RA staff). And then she's like, "Can you work arranging all that for the staff?" I'm like, "That's not my job." She's like, "Well, you know them." Like, I'm not going to argue. She sends me emails that are like just for the female residents. And she's like, "Hey, ladies." And I'm like, "I realize I live on the female floor, but you don't have to address me as female." You can just be like, "Hello, how's it going?" You don't

have to be, "Hey, ladies." She still doesn't get trans issues at all...Like she sent out a really shitty email to all the female staffers, saying, you know, "I'm looking for a baby sitter." It's so like, if you're a female, you baby sit. I'm like, "You need to be educated on so many issues." And she's just awful. Like she's so ignorant on so many issues.

Both Asher and Razi discussed ways that binary social accountability systems at work caused them to feel forced to self-identify in ways that were inconsistent with their identities. Razi said,

I think next year will be a lot better (not being an RA and living off campus). 'Cause I won't have this gender role assigned to me kind of thing. Like, I can go my way for my gender as opposed to what Residence Life sees my gender as.

While Asher planned to become an RA in the upcoming academic year, he currently was employed four days a week in a lab on campus, which presented a number of complex and intersecting challenges. Said Asher,

...the guy that hired me goes to my family's church. So if I'm going to tell him (true gender identity), he's going to tell my parents, and I'm not ready for that. So I go to work and you know, they're like yeah, you got your hair cut. That's cute, blah-blah-blah. So the deal with that is like at work I have to become what I consider my alter ego. Which is Jessica. Like that's a daily thing, especially when I go to work. It's like okay, I'm now Jessica...And then it becomes when I'm at work, going to the bathroom. Because even in a baby blue pair of scrubs, I pass relatively well (as male) and if I go into the women's bathroom with my employer

right there, I get women that look at me like, "What are you doing in here?" And I can't exactly go into the men's room with my employer right there.

Regarding campus employment, social accountability appeared to create systemic pressure to conform to binary gender constructions, often based on fears about safety or being "outed" as transgender. The gendered cultures surrounding resident assistant jobs and related hiring processes appeared particularly problematic. In these incidents, social accountability to dual gender norms was so powerful, that it was practically articulated as a job expectation. Similarly, study participants reported that binary cultures of gender conformity were very strong in relationship to campus facilities.

Campus Facilities and Social Accountability

All participants in the study discussed the negative impact that campus facilities (residence halls, athletic facilities, locker rooms and bathrooms) had on their lives. From the perspective of transgender students, access to facilities was based on their ability to meet social standards for passing as male or female, often resulting in extreme stress and fear of harassment. Beyond visibly passing as the prescribed gender, transgender students had to learn the gendered cultures of campus facilities and to match their personal behavior accordingly.

Residence halls.

Beyond the residence hall employment issues described earlier, living in single gender, male or female environments presented multiple challenges. At University A, Debbie was invited by the prestigious student Legal Club to live in campus housing set aside specifically for women. For Debbie, the idea of living in a female residence hall evoked the possibility of a kind of gender legitimacy and experience that was not possible

when she presented as male during her undergraduate years. Yet, she ultimately declined the invitation. Said Debbie,

> And to be honest with you, I did actually think about going to live in the Legal Club just because it would be an experience that I have never had. I ultimately couldn't do it because I couldn't bring myself to be sharing a bathroom with a bunch of women...I just couldn't do that. But part of me wanted to do that because it would give me the opportunity to live a part of my life that I couldn't live back before and how fun it would be to live in an all girls dorm.

Like Debbie, Wendy made a decision to remove herself from the residential environment. As a student at University B in the late 1970's, Wendy lived on a male floor during her first year, at a time she presented as male. Here, she felt highly threatened by an environment in which men who were perceived to be female-like or effeminate were targets of harassment and violence. Wendy described the culture of the residence hall as linking homophobia and genderism to reinforce a rigid, binary form of male gender expression:

> And frankly it was a frightening environment because it was a very homophobic floor and there was a lot of implied violence that if you didn't fit, you would have been ostracized. You may have vicious hazing-like pranks played upon you. Your life would be made hell. So the male floor was a very threatening environment...In the dorm, I heard comments that were distressing because I could hear the violence behind the comments. The people that should have helped to make a safe environment, the resident assistants, turned out to me to be the

enforcers of the status quo. I remember them making "Don't be such a fag" type of comments.

Wendy described an overt, exaggerated male behavior that played out on her floor community, often on a daily basis. Similarly, Danielle described a "hyper feminine" environment on the floor in which lived. Here, women residents "proved" their femaleness in ways that appeared to reflect biologically-based, cisgender assumptions about women, often linking gender identity and sexual orientation. This behavior was visible most when the group gathered for floor meetings. Said Danielle,

> Like every time a guy would walk down the halls and stuff, girls would start whistling or flirting or you know, "Come join us" or something like that. And conversations always turned to the RA's hot younger brother and stuff...and I'm like sitting there in my shorts with like my unshaven legs and someone is like "Eww, I haven't shaved in two days, you know, that is so gross." I'm like "Yeah, I'm sure." What is so unsanitary about leg hair anyhow? ...When we are in this group, like everyone just becomes a lot more vocalized and you know hyper feminine, but talking with girls on a one-to-one basis that definitely tones it down, but I don't know, maybe it's that when they are in a group they have something to prove.

Danielle described another example of ways residence hall culture reinforced binary gendered and heterosexist assumptions about women through the example of a sex toy party. As she identified as genderqueer and sexually oriented towards women, Danielle felt awkward about attending the event. She reflected,

> There was a sex toy party in the basement of Regan (residence hall) and it was of course it was for girls only and stuff...I got there before they closed the doors...But I went to go and get a drink and then came back down and there was this sign and stuff and there was all these girls checking to make sure it wasn't guys trying to get in or whatever. And it sort of felt, sort of awkward because I'm not a traditionally gender woman, so yeah, but so that sort of felt weird I guess because I'm coming from a different perspective going into a sex toy party where everyone was talking about pleasing their men and stuff and you know. (*Laughing)* Like what man?

Like Danielle, Asher experienced a variety of personal challenges when he chose to express gender outside of social norms in the residence hall. For his sophomore year, he decided to live on the same female floor as the previous year. The significant change, however, was that he decided to be open with all floor members about his male gender identity. Being "out" required that Asher negotiate difficult issues surrounding the community's reactions and pragmatics of daily life on the floor. As he disclosed his identity, women who returned to the floor from the previous year had difficulty adjusting to his new name and, as discussed earlier, particularly resisted the concept that Asher was male. Regarding the name change, he said, "A lot of them stuttered over my name, and that's no big deal." Yet, regardless of how often Asher corrected them; women consistently used a female pronoun in reference to him. He reflected,

> When they're talking to their families and friends, you know, they're like, "Oh yeah, Asher this, Asher that," and trying to avoid those pronouns. A lot of times. But a lot of times, too, it's like, "Asher, she does this, and she does that. And

she's the president of Rainbow (an LBGT hall support organization) and I'm like, "No, *he's* the president of Rainbow, and *he* does this."

Asher was frustrated further by his roommate because she felt she had to hide Asher's male gender identity from her parents.

What caused the women on his floor to negate his identity, and continue to refer to him as female? One perspective Asher offered was that it helped to ease fear, conflict, tension, confusion and just made it more comfortable for them to label him female. In addition, it appeared to him that they could not understand the concept of gender fluidity, making it even more difficult to understand how his male identity could differ from biological sex assignment. Reflected Asher,

> I've gotten a response when I sat down and talked with a couple of people who are returning students that lived on the floor with me last year, they were like, "Well wait, you were a girl last year, but now you're a guy?" Like, they don't quite grasp the concept of like any type of fluidity. And so it's like, "No, no, no. Just wait a minute. Let's step back a second and you now just said, you know, you're either a boy or a girl. And that's not necessarily how it works." And I've had lots of discussions with lots of people on the floor. And I think the majority of the time they are just kind of stuck with uses of pronouns. Like you know, it's just easier to say in a sense, you know, why would you say that oh, there's a boy living on the girl's side? Perhaps at some level they internally know, "Oh, Asher says he's a boy, but it's just going to be easier for me to manage this to just do she, she, she, she, she."

Beyond name and pronoun use, Asher was faced with a wide range of social accountability issues related to his male identity and life in a female floor community. As one example, Asher was concerned about privacy issues and bathroom use, feeling that the women's community bathroom was off limits now that he was identifying as male. He often would choose to go down three flights of stairs to use a uni-sex restroom or wait outside the floor bathroom until all others had left before showering. As Asher's personal frustration increased, he attended a floor community meeting where residents passed a "No boys in the bathroom" policy. Asher went to the resident assistant with concerns,

> When we set up the community standards we talked about, you know, "no boys in the bathroom." I talked about it with my RA. I was like, "Hey, what about me?" And she's like, "You know what? I'm going to edit those community standards." I said, "Oh, really?" ...and she's like, "No boys in the bathroom except Asher." And I'm like, "Oh, thanks for having me totally stick out!" But she did it. She wrote it up for everyone to see. But like, no one ever said anything, so like I don't know if they just thought it was a joke or whatnot, but either way. Like when it comes down to being on that floor and using the bathroom. I am good.

Asher described becoming comfortable with using the floor community bathroom with the support of women residents. He said,

> So it's like, you know, I'll just wait until everyone is out or, you know, out of the bathroom and go in. So like people don't think like, you know, "Some boy's coming into the bathroom." And people started literally asking me, "You know, why would you stand outside of the bathroom and wait 'till everyone was out, and

then go into the bathroom?" I'd say, "Well, because I don't want to make people uncomfortable." And they're all like, "Oh, just go in. We don't care."

While Asher was informed by female residents that use of the restroom was acceptable, it is possible that this was ultimately another way he continued to be labeled "female," rather than peers actually accepting his male identity.

In contrast to Asher's decision to be out to all members of his floor community about his identity, Charlie made a decision to be out selectively, and self disclosed based on who he got to know intimately and with whom he felt comfortable. At the time he was living in residence halls, Charlie identified as male but was living on a female floor. Charlie described having to work through issues of his gender identity with suitemates, but generally, felt support from his hall community:

> At the time I was passing really well (as male) and my suite mate, who eventually became my roommate the next semester; she was pretty sure I was a guy. She didn't understand why I lived there 'till I had to explain that I'm a transgender; I'm not really bio-male, thanks you know, it's great I'm passing apparently. But people on my floor, I lived in Laurence Hall where it's mostly upperclassmen, international students with people in their twenties not their teens, a little bit more mature. People overall didn't have much of a problem with it.

However, Charlie described an incident in which his passing as male was so successful, that other men in the residence hall took issue with it:

> There were a few instances in talking to the hall director, who I got to know really well, his name is Bernie, guys would go up to him and say, "Why does this one

guy get to live on the girls' side. That's not fair. We want to live on the girls' side too." I'm like, "Oh it's great that I'm passing but that just made it awkward."

Like Asher, Charlie felt that his RA was supportive overall, yet Charlie also sensed her discomfort. Charlie said, "Yeah, I mean my RA sort of skipped pronouns because she didn't know really know how to explain it to everyone else on the floor.'

In summary, the binary gendered nature of residence halls created complex challenges for transgender students. In all female or male environments, binary gender norms appeared to reinforce exaggerated notions of masculinity or femininity, and related heterosexual gender roles. In these settings, transgender identities were stigmatized, negated or, in Asher's case, systemically denied. Negotiating the pragmatic realities of roommate and floor relationships, as well as community bathroom use, was often difficult. Further, the challenges transgender students experienced in residence halls extended to other campus facilities.

Athletic facilities, locker rooms, and public restrooms.

In terms of athletic facilities and locker rooms, Diondre, Damien, and Nick all talked about the frustrations of being unable to comfortably access the campus pool and exercise facilities. Entry through either female or male locker rooms was required. For them, campus recreation was off- limits. Commented Nick,

> University A's recreation buildings suck... I wanted to start like working-out, like with weights and stuff. But they only have locker rooms, male locker rooms, female locker rooms. So that makes it really hard to, 'cause I talked to a staff member about it and she's like, "Oh, you can change in my office." But that just makes me feel like a weirdo. I mean, it's coming out of my tuition automatically

for me to be able go and use the rec building. But it's like I can't use it and I'm paying for it. Because I go there and I have to be male or female and really, really, pass—like I need to be seen as guy in there. And that's not possible. Like to get to the pool, you have to go through one of the bathrooms, there are only two entrances. And then, you know, with the weight lifting. It's the same kind of thing. I can go and weight lift. But like most people, I wanna go to the pool, and rinse off, and like cool down after they weight lift. You know? But I have to go in there and do my weight lifting, come sit in my car, get my sweat everywhere in my car because I haven't took a shower or gone in the pool. And everyone else can be like, "Oh, I'm done. I'm gonna go in the pool for an hour." You know, and it's like me I can't, because you know, it's just not possible. If I go in the female locker, I'm sure people in there will freak out. You know, because people do.

All participants discussed the lack of uni-sex or gender-free restrooms as one of the greatest barriers to managing life on campus. On a daily basis, transgender students were, as Nick said, "Forced to choose between male and female bathrooms." Restroom choices were often driven by participant's perceptions of their ability to pass as male or female. When reflecting about whether or not she might choose to use a men's bathroom, Danielle said, "I don't think I pass enough in order to do that." Yet, she also remembers an incident where using a woman's restroom caused her to feel uncomfortable. The Union at University B had a woman's lounge, which was clearly a gender-specific space. Going through the lounge was required to use the first floor women's restroom. Because of Danille's genderqueer identity, the female-specific nature of the space caused her to feel uncomfortable. She said,

> I remember going in there once to use the bathroom and I felt really awkward because you know because there were all women in the lounge. Like this is a really, really, really, female place...so I was like, "Okay, walk in, just walk in with some confidence like I am supposed to be there." And I always use female bathrooms, but for whatever reason, it felt really weird walking into it. You've got to go through the lounge which is you know one thing and then you got to get into the bathrooms and stuff and then you got to get out.

Asher talked about the daily management of bathroom use, planning where he would be on campus, what bathrooms he would be near, how safe he felt using them, and the degree to which he felt that he passed enough to use male restrooms. Said Asher,

> A lot of it on a day-to-day basis is okay. You know, I'm in this building and I have to go to the bathroom, but this is not a building that I've been in the bathrooms before, you know, to feel out their comfort level in a sense like, you know, how are people going to respond to me walking into a bathroom, which also has to do with, do I feel like I'm passing today? If I don't talk, okay, will I pass? Yeah. Okay. So passing is a big deal. Which leads into the bathrooms. You know. I have to go to the bathroom now, can I hold it till I get to the fourth floor where I know it's where no one's going to be? Or can I hold it till I get to the basement if I'm on the fourth floor until, because you know, somebody showed up and I'm not alone.

Diondre and Triston talked about learning the culture of men's and women's restrooms in order to successfully pass. Diondre described learning to manage his identity in women's restrooms at a time when he self-labeled as a butch lesbian, prior to

identifying as FTM transgender. In women's restrooms, he learned to behave in ways that helped him to be perceived as female. Said Diondre,

> And I used to have problems walking into a women's room. I used to do a lot of work on taking the glasses off, I'd unzip my jacket. I would smile and make sure to speak and be friendly. I would do all sorts of stuff to show that I was female. And so I know how upset people can get about being – your being in the wrong place. And I just don't care to trigger all of that.

Alternatively, Triston talked about the dangers of failing to conform to gender role expectations in men's bathrooms. Said Triston,

> But going in the men's restroom is interesting and really scary. That's where I pick up the most about a piece of masculinity, in the men's bathroom. You know it's like because men don't look at each other. And I've made that mistake a couple of times because I'm like a friendly person you know, and like if I washed my hands someone would come up next to me and I'd be like, "What's up?" And then I was like, "Oh God, I shouldn't be talking right now." But I've never, I haven't had any like harassment yet in the bathroom, but it's kind of like I know it will happen eventually. But it's like my heart is always beating. Like I'm sure for my health long term, it's really bad, it's really bad for me because it's such a stressful thing to go into the bathroom and lock myself in the stall. And just waiting for somebody to look over the top you know and then jump in and beat me up.

Nick, who chose to use men's restrooms, talked about occasionally being "stared down" by cisgender men in the facility. When asked to define the intent and meaning of

the stare, Nick said, "Its like, 'What the hell you doing in here?' And, 'You freak'... the person realized, somehow realized like, 'Oh. That's not a boy'." Having life experience using both men's and women's restrooms, Nick reflected on how binary gender socialization played out in bathrooms,

> Like with the guys, it's almost like they're threatened, but they don't feel threatened. It's more like their masculinity feels threatened. Like, "What is this woman doing in the male bathroom?" Like that kind of thing. And then, with girls, it's the opposite. Like they feel how I would feel if I went into a male bathroom and they knew that I was female. You know, it's the same kind of thing. Like they think it's a male with penis walking into the female bathroom, and so they're like, you know, they feel threatened like, "Are you coming in here to rape me or something?" You know, it's that kind of like, "Oh!" And then sometimes I'll say this. I'll be like, "No, I'm a girl." And then, I'll just say, "I'm going to the bathroom." But then it's like they're out there saying stuff under their breath like, "Freak."

The complexity here is worth noting. For different reasons, Nick's presence in restrooms was threatening to both men and women. To be seen as a woman attempting to pass as a man in a men's restroom threatens masculinity. Nick, as well as Triston, interpret harassment and violence a possible consequence of transgressing male restroom norms. In contrast, in the women's restroom, Nick's presence is equated with male violence and rape. Not only do binary gender systems cause transgender students to be seen as deviant, but in this context, they reinforce anti-woman violence.

While all participants talked about pressures to pass as male or female in daily life, nowhere in the study were these comments as pronounced as they were in relationship to campus facility issues. Passing as the appropriate gender was not only a requirement for being able to access the simple necessity of a restroom or residence hall, but was also a strategy to protect self from stigmatization and harassment. All participants discussed negative consequences related to use of bathrooms or living in residence halls where explicit and implicit codes upheld gender conformity. Fear and apprehension about daily decisions regarding bathroom use was a significant issue for many participants.

Chapter Summary

Chapter four provided an overview of genderism and examined its first two characteristics: social labeling and gender accountability. This study presents genderism as a system based on the idea of a seamless alignment of biological sex assignment, internal sense of gender identity, and the social expression with one of two rigid gender options. Further, binary gender systems operating at universities A and B appeared to create accountability standards for being seen as either male or female. Conformity was maintained by complex patterns of negative stigmatization, which these students experienced in many dimensions of their lives on campus. These areas included: academic experiences (admission, interactions with faculty, peers in class, academic advising, scholarship opportunities), employment (employment while a student, future career aspirations), and campus facilities (residence halls, athletic facilities, locker rooms, bathrooms). Thus, the culture of each of the universities created pressure for transgender students to *pass* as male or female. While passing socially was, at times,

affirming for some transgender students, it was also used as a strategy for avoiding stigmatization. If these students missed appropriate gender cues, the result could be being labeled "freak" or risking more serious harassment. While transgender students in this study discussed a myriad of issues related to passing, a theme that emerged in this study was that all students were expected to pass.

As examples, study participants discussed ways their personal identities were marginalized by binary gender systems, yet also described ways their cisgender peers experienced social accountability. Razi described his hall director promoting both genderism and sexism by only inviting women staff members to baby-sit. Similarly, Danielle, Razi, Tristion, and Wendy discussed ways all students were negatively impacted by a classroom culture and related curriculum which focused on binary gender constructions. Wendy described genderist and homophobic systems of accountability in her male residence hall community serving to regulate the behavior of *all* men. While the perceptions, risks, and realities of gender stigmatization impacted all students, gender accountability systems also worked to reward and privilege binary gender constructions. In chapter five, this idea of privileging binary gender systems, genderism's third characteristic, will be discussed in depth. The chapter will conclude with an examination of genderism' fourth characteristic: invisibility and isolation of transgender persons.

Chapter Five:

Binary Gender Systems are Privileged and Invisibility and Isolation of Transgender Persons

Genderism's third and forth characteristics, as enacted at the two institutions, focused on dual gender systems as the accepted, normative, unquestioned standard that permeated all aspects of life on campus (characteristic three), ultimately leading to the invisibility and inaccessibility of transgender student experiences (characteristic four). This chapter leads with an overview of gender privilege with related examples from the study, followed by an examination of the impact of genderism on transgender student isolation, invisibility and disconnection.

Binary Gender Systems are Privileged

An application of the work of Macintosh of Macintosh (1978), may serve as a foundation for exploring genderism's third characteristic. Those who expressed gender within binary norms were given social advantages over those who did not. The privileging of dual gender systems were most often described by participants operating in relation to academic settings, campus employment and career contexts, and within LBGT and broader student organizations.

Privileging Binary Identities in the Classroom

Participants in this study consistently reported feeling ignored or marginalized in class in favor of their cisgender peers. While some individuals reported positive experiences in class, participants most often described feeling tokenized. In some cases, transgender students were relied on as educational resources for faculty and fellow students. In this study, no faculty member was identified as having any expertise on

transgender or gender identity issues. At best, professors were described as personally supportive and willing to be educated by transgender students. An in-depth discussion of the aforementioned constructions of gender privilege follows.

Asher consistently described situations in which he was ignored in favor of his cicsgendered peers. He related,

> In the email (to the professor) I wrote, "I feel really horrible when you look at me and know that I have the answer, but choose someone else. Like when you make direct eye contact with me, and make me feel like, 'You have the answer. You can answer this.' But then choose someone else. You know, I feel both frustrated and very put out because I feel like you know, I prepared for this class as well as the next person, if not better. Why can't my answers be recognized?" And then, the following Monday the professor actually pulled me aside and said, "You know, I'm really sorry that you felt put out and frustrated with the fact that I didn't call on you...I know that you prepare very well for class and I understand you and I did do that. I did make eye contact with you and you know, call on someone else. And I can understand why that would be frustrating." And the excuse was "Well, I'm old." I was like, "Yes, but you can still be sensitive to other people."

At the same institution, Razi talked about being in classroom situations where the manner in which courses were taught privileged binary gender constructions, making his transgender experience invisible, even when disclosing his identity to faculty. Said Razi,

> I told the professor that I was trans, yet she continued to do a lot of "If you're a guy, stand. If you're a girl, stay sitting down." Like, if I stand up with all the guys then, I'm saying I'm this cisgender guy. And if I stay sitting-- It was just

really bad. And she did this all the time. And I'd get into arguments with her. And she didn't get it.

Unlike Razi, Triston reported many faculty who were willing to support his male identity in class, yet, he discussed ways he felt tokenized by faculty and peers. He often felt cast as the "transperson" in class, being expected to provide expertise on all transgender issues. For many faculty and student peers, Triston was the first transgender individual they had ever met. Triston said, "People were like 'Whoa, what's this person going to say next?'" He described a related incident, in which a student approached him after class,

> And she was like this real eccentric girl you know and she was like, "I really like having you in class. I would like to talk to you about your experience of being transgender. Can we make an appointment and we can hang out?" And I was like, "Okay." And then she was like, "and I have ADHD and so I'll tell you about that, because I don't want to tokenize you and have you just tell me about your oppression." And I was just like, "Okay." I mean that's good and of course I want to learn about other oppression, it was just really bizarre. It was like "Here is this transperson; I want to talk to them." You know, "This is my encyclopedia on gender." So I got a lot of that.

In these situations, Triston described transgender tokenization as a function of privilege. He related that classroom dynamics deem cisgender students, faculty and course content as normative, negating responsibility for self education. Triston described gender identity concerns as being seen as "other." Triston commented further on the

internal conflict and personal cost he experienced as a result of choosing to pursue transgender related class projects to educate others,

> Like you know whenever I wanted to do class projects, if I had leeway, I would think this would be a really good time to write about trans issues because this would be a good education piece. And so maybe I could have written about things that weren't my own issue and learn more, but sometimes I would go for the trans piece so that I could educate others. And that was a challenge; you know it's like again being the teacher when you are supposed to be the student.

It is also important to note that other study participants did not identify experiencing the teacher/student role conflict Triston described. These individuals welcomed the opportunity to support scholarship and education surrounding transgender identities. Damien chose a dissertation topic that involved an exploration of the concept of gender fluidity, which he called "gender spectra" and Debbie hoped to use her coursework to address a broad range of lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender (LBGT) legal issues. Danielle utilized a class assignment to conduct qualitative interviews with transgender high school students at the school from which she graduated. Her study revealed the complexities of binary gender systems in secondary settings and gave examples of transphobia occurring on the school's forensics team. Danielle reported that the class instructor was thrilled with the project, "I even saw the teacher sort of go 'Whoa, that is something new.' That was something that definitely caught her attention." Asher was recruited actively by faculty in his academic department to participate in a brain study of transgender persons. Yet, as Triston said, when the transgender student is the research subject or "becomes the teacher," what are the consequences? To what

degree to these activities support collusion with the dynamics of binary gender privilege? By being the primary drivers of transgender education, research, and scholarship, do these students allow cisgender faculty and peers to disconnect from the realities that genderism negatively impacts all members of university communities? These questions warrant further examination through additional research. While much of this study frames issues of transgender oppression in the context of cisgender, heterosexual privilege, participants also described dynamics of gender privilege within LBGT communities.

Privileging Binary Identities in LBGT Communities

Participants in this study consistently talked about a privileging of gay and lesbian identities over all others within campus LBGT communities. For Charlie, who discussed feeling disconnected from the multiple communities in which he had membership. This was particularly challenging. Because his gender identity was in a still defining process, at times identifying as FTM transgender, at times female lesbian, and at others genderqueer, issues of where and how to get support were challenging. He talked about the lack of inclusion of LBGT student groups,

> The LBGT groups were really more focused on you're either gay or lesbian and they gave up the B and the T. I either went to groups all year where they consistently called me "he" and tried to make me feel comfortable as trans, or I went to other groups where they consistently called me "she" even when I didn't want to be called that.

Through Charlie felt a strong sense of identification with the lesbian groups on campus, and often wanted to pass as lesbian, he alternatively felt as if his male

transgender identity and lesbian identity could not exist in the same community sphere. Said Charlie,

> One thing I don't think I'll ever let go of is the lesbian identification because I really like that community and I feel like I fit there. But the hard part is people never see me as male when I'm identifying as lesbian. I know that's confusing to other people. And then that's hard because like right now I want people to see me that way but they're still seeing me as trans.

Though Charlie was seeking an integrated space, a place where a genderqueer or multiple forms of gender expression could exist, campus student organizations did not offer such an option. He felt welcomed and supported by the one student transgender group on campus, the Alpha Males, which was inclusive of all forms of gender expression, but focused particularly on FTM advocacy. Charlie ultimately made a decision to leave the group. Said Charlie,

> Honestly I don't feel that there's a group out there on this campus that I'm aware of that's accessible for genderqueer, gender-variant individuals. Like the Alpha Males, I was initially involved in, but for me it became too focused on FTM transgender. I could be wrong. Not that I wasn't included in that group; I was definitely. But I just felt like there was just sort of an unconscious pressure or something for lack of a better term, to sort of go in that direction of identity. And I don't know that I agree with that, I really don't. For me it just wasn't open enough to different sorts of genders I guess.

Regarding the lack of space for gender-variant individuals, Danielle had a similar experience, "but as far as the genderqueer community, I've only ever met one other

person who is identified as such." As individuals who shared multiple group identities or were androgynous in gender presentation, Nick and Danielle had difficulty finding support.

Like Charlie, Danielle discussed feeling tokenized by campus LBGT groups, "sometimes that 'T' is just tacked on to the standard 'LBGT.' When you know, even when something is advertised as queer, like we had a queer history meeting and that was just on 'homosexual'." Triston had similar impressions one of the major campus activist groups, the Queer Student Alliance,

> The alliance is never going to come out as being transphobic, you know obviously. I mean it's queer and they slap a T on and they have the you know the tranny day and all that stuff, but really it was very clear culturally that it was very much a lesbian and gay group.

Triston and Razi described specific incidents of having their identities marginalized by LBGT organizations and communities. They most often reported being labeled as lesbians or as lesbians doing drag. Both students had roles in an FTM drag troupe, which performs in local LBGT nightclubs, often catering to student audiences. Razi said,

> The one hard thing was when I'm at a show, a lot people just assume I'm a lesbian dressing up as a guy. Like they don't really get that there's like a variety of genders, so I'm like "she'd" all the time at drag shows, and I really hate that. I know that Triston experiences it too. And it's just awful.

Triston contrasted the marginalization he experienced in LBGT student groups with other non-LBGT organizations he found to be supportive. In non-LBGT groups,

where binary gender systems were perceived to be normative, Triston described experiencing more acceptance:

> You know that anytime I come into queer spaces where people aren't super educated about my identity, I'm considered a lesbian. I walk into a space like Communidad (a Chicano/ Latino student organization) and because I'm so much more masculine than feminine, even if people are confused at first, like it fits. Because spaces that aren't queer are more traditionally oriented in gender roles, so I really feel like I fit in more as a traditional male. When I go into those spaces, I pass a lot more. And it's like I rarely ever pass in queer spaces, it's like, "automatic lesbian." I don't ever pass in queer spaces and when people there call me "he," it's because they understand that's how I want to be called. So it's like I'm "queer" and I'm like "lesbian" every time I'm in a queer space. And like in drag (performances), I've never been called "she" more than when I'm performing. And it's so frustrating.

Similarly, Razi described feeling the most support for his identity outside of student LBGT community contexts. Said Razi,

> But I will say that if I hang out with like really privileged people, like straight, white, traditionally gendered everything, like if they see me as a guy, that's how they see me, no questions asked. It's like I feel as though if I tell someone frequently with that crowd of people—because they're like, "You seem to stereotypically be a guy, so you are a guy." Because they're so like in their own little world that like, "You look like a guy so you have to be guy."

In LBGT community contexts, where he expected support for his transgender identity, Razi was disappointed. In particular, he described his frustrations with a transgender male community that reinforced traditional male roles. Razi said,

> Like I've noticed—like because I've been hanging out with a lot of trans guys, not even just like here at (University B)—that a lot of trans guys tend to want to fulfill that male role. And I really don't like that. Like they might like take up the space in the room... Like those are two things I really try to be conscious of like at all times. I see like a lot of (trans) guys like owning their girlfriends, which I think is disgusting. Like, it's really gross. And I really just don't want to turn into like this gross macho guy... And I think that's really interesting and I think I really want to not perpetuate sexism any more than what it already is. And I think because I have this really cool opportunity to kind of create my male identity, that I should do that and be comfortable with my feminine characteristics, and not necessarily be this hyper masculine guy.

Regarding privilege systems in LBGT student organizations and communities, Danielle, Charlie, Razi and Triston described ways the identities of gay men and lesbian women were advantaged over all others. Transgender persons often were treated as if they were non-existent. Or, in the case of Triston and Razi, their gender identities were erased and they were seen and stereotyped as lesbians. Interestingly, these two students felt more acceptance for their identities in non-LBGT community spheres, and Razi was greatly disappointed by a culture that demanded hype-masculine behavior existing in the trans male community at university A. Beyond these examples of direct privileging of binary identities in LBGT communities, Diondre discussed the role that these

communities played in privileging sexual orientation issues over gender identity concerns in educational contexts. He described the popular belief that in LBGT training, sexual orientation should be covered first, implying that it was the foundation of identity and community. Said Diondre,

> The one thing that I really learned is how wrong we were as a gay movement to say that people had to understand gay issues first before they could understand transgender. And I see classes instructed like this today. We have to cover being gay first and then we'll explain being trans. And actually, I think it should be the other way around. And trans people will tell me this. Thirty years ago and twenty years ago, whatever, I didn't quite understand it...I didn't quite get how profound it was (transgender being placed in the second tier of educational training). But I now see that there are many people who can understand...But when they come to understand that somebody might actually be transsexual, that this could be a real thing in the world, that the gap that that opens up in their minds, the possibilities that that opens up in their minds, is so much bigger and there is so much room for more things to be possible. And it's a gap that's very unlike the gap that opens up when people decide that lesbians or gays are possibilities.

Diondre's perspective carries a significant implication. Transgender identities created room for more fluid and multiple gender possibilities, undermining binary power systems privileged both by society as well as gay and lesbian identities. Through their educational initiatives, LBGT communities colluded with dominant culture to promote genderism. In summary, within LBGT communities, transgender students experienced a privileging of gay male and lesbian female identities in multiple contexts. Yet, even for those who

sought support from non-LBGT community spheres, the force of privilege seemed inescapable.

Tranny Boys, Male Privilege, and Marginalization

While Razi and Triston gained some support for their identities outside of LBGT communities, they ultimately felt marginalized. While they experienced some acceptance, they were also challenged to grapple with questions related to male privilege and their identities. Though initially affirming of his male identity, Triston became frustrated when the men of Communidad wanted to "help" him learn how to be a man. Said Triston:

> It's interesting when men try to affirm my identity. The way that they are like, like there is this assumption that I want to learn how to be a guy. And I know how, I'm my own guy. I am perfectly fine with not being a traditionally gendered guy. You know, that's okay with me. But I'm proud of being trans, I mean it's hard, but I'm proud of being trans and I especially don't need help with my interactions with women. Like, I do not need to learn from traditionally gendered guys about how to interact with women. You know, that's not what I'm worried about. So it's kind of funny you know, they'll be like "Dude, you need to do this." And I'm like "Okay." You know like, "What are you talking about? I know how to do this; I'm fine with it."

Though Triston initially described experiencing greater support from Communidad than within LBGT communities, binary gender norms in this group appeared to ultimately privilege traditional expectations for his behavior. Ongoing encounters with the privileging of cisgender identities motivated Triston and Razi to develop strategies for challenging both genderism and sexism. Razi anticipated that as he

passed as a male, after gender reassignment surgery, he would gain a degree of privilege that would legitimize his perspective when confronting cisgender men. Said Razi,

> Because, like I think that would be a lot of power in like a really radical sense. Because, I guess I'll have that male privilege. But I also have a really cool opportunity to be like, "No," and "Look at this," kind of thing. And like, "This is how it works." And like, because I'll be seen as a guy at that point—hopefully—'cause a lot guys really listen to other guys. Like if I'm passing, like, my opinion's valid and just awesome kind of thing. And so I think I have a really cool opportunity to just sit there and just like educate guys, and like, "No. This is what you're doing and it's really fucked up" kind of thing. And so I don't want to be a hyper masculine man because I wanna fight sexism, no matter what my gender is.

While Triston shared Razi's desire to challenge privilege in men's communities, he described his current identity as a tranny boy and concerns related to passing as significant barriers. Further, in a binary gendered culture, Triston believed his willingness to challenge sexism invalidated his own male identity. Ironically, confronting the marginalization of women was a privilege Triston affiliated with cisgender men. He explained,

> There is also this like consistent challenge of my male identity...how much harder it is for tranny boys to be advocates for women and for feminist issues than it is for traditionally gendered men. And you know, which is ironic because we advocate for women all the time. A lot more than traditionally gendered guys do. But it's like if some guy is being a jerk...and I say, "Well you know that's really screwed up" and then talk about women's empowerment, then they are going to

be challenging my actual identity as male. It's making me look like a girl because I care about women's issues. Whereas, it's like for men to challenge sexism might have their masculinity questioned but...no one would ever look to them and say, "well, you are not actually a guy." Like your identity is wrong...and so it's so much harder for me and that happens all the time. I mean the majority of the time I don't pass. Well, I don't know if I can say the majority of the time, but I don't pass as much as I would like to. So in those cases, I get treated like a woman and I get treated like a lesbian.

While Razi appeared to believe that he had more agency than Triston regarding the ability to challenge and subvert cisgender privilege, the reality of its systemic operation created complex personal dilemmas for both students. The picture that begins to take shape, while defined by different students in unique ways, is one in which the dynamics and power of cisgender privilege are inescapable. Beyond impacting transgender student involvement within and outside LBGT communities, privilege systems also appeared to influence ways transgender students approached career aspirations and campus employment.

Privilege and Career Aspirations

Themes related to cisgender privilege and career was discussed by a number of study participants. Debbie hypothesized that the many years of male socialization she experienced ultimately may have been responsible for her choosing to pursue a business and legal career, as well as related degrees,

I transitioned after they (her children) were born and before I went back for my master's (in business administration) and it's funny because when I came back

here for my J.D., which traditionally is a very male dominated field as well, I struggled between doing a J.D. or doing a psychology degree, you know, a social sciences degree just because I was so drawn to that and to interaction with people: although, law is very, very interactive, and it makes me wonder if 35 years' worth of male training didn't help mold my decision even now between law and social sciences, psychology or something. But clearly, clearly the gender role influenced my decision to get an MBA.

The impact of binary gender privilege and the related oppression they had experienced may have influenced six of the study's participants to pursue LBGT related professional work, or a desire to infuse it into their careers. Debbie wanted to use her legal training to influence society to support individuals who had been marginalized by their LBGT status. Asher desired to become a psychologist to support the development of healthy LBGT communities. Like Asher, Triston had community enhancement goals, but, as a social worker, planned to focus primarily on transgender support services. Damien wanted to author a book on ways curriculum in college social work programs could be infused with attention to transgender identities and related advocacy skills. As he prepared for graduate study in higher education and student affairs, Razi hoped to work in residence life in a role that allowed specific attention to multicultural and transgender issues. Though Diondre had entered the university as a doctoral student in architecture, he was not currently enrolled and wanted to explore the option of becoming a professional consultant on transgender concerns and advocacy. Other students wondered if the impact of cisgender privilege and the related transgender oppression they experienced at the university would be enacted also in their post-graduate careers.

Danille's campus experience caused her to be concerned about how her genderqueer identity might influence her success as a teacher and her ability to access career related support from LBGT community organizations. Refected Danille,

> Actually, yeah, seeing the transphobia on campus--that's where I started to get a little worried about being a teacher...And you know I'm less afraid of students and administration, I'm more afraid of parents. But so, I'm sort of wondering how that will work out..., and I wonder about GLSEN, which is the gay lesbian, straight education network. But would I have a place in there? In other words, is GLSEN trans-inclusive? Will it be like on campus where the "T" is just tacked on to LBGT groups, but they aren't really supportive at all?

Nick worried that his negative experiences with faculty treating him "like I'm a weirdo" and possibly preventing him from gaining research internships, could be replicated when he pursued graduate work at (a private research university) and in his future career. Ultimately, he wanted his graduate degree to prepare him to be a human rights advocate at the United Nations. Nick said, "And then when I go to United Nations, I'll be working with like other politicians. Like how many politicians do you know that would like treat somebody decently when they know they are a transgender person?" Danielle and Nick's fear of job discrimination implied that employment would be given to those who were not only talented, but to individuals who most effectively conformed to workplace gender norms.

Summary: Binary Systems are Privileged

While genderism's third characteristic, the privileging of binary gender systems was evidenced in every sphere of transgender students lives, participants in this study

particularly focused on the impact of cisgender privilege in the following areas: relationships with faculty/peers and classrooms contexts; within LBGT Communities and campus wide student organizations; and in the contexts of planning for their future careers. A number of participants struggled with issues surrounding their own identities and privilege systems and whether they could receive it as a result of gender transition, or if they would always be seen as transgender outsiders.

A theme that begins to emerge is that in their totality, binary gender systems privilege cisgender identities as a direct consequence of the oppression of transgender students. While the examples are numerous, the tokenization of transgender students in the classroom, with the expectation that they serve as classroom educators, research subjects, and advocates provides one insight into the operation of this process. Similarly, within LBGT communities, gender variance was utilized most often to support stereotypes of gay and lesbian identities, such as the butch lesbian and the effeminate gay men, negating the identities of transgender students. Gender privileging appears to reinforce and affirm rigid notions of LBGT identities, negating the possibility of fluidity. A final theme that emerges is that, in addition to gender privileging, genderism's other two characteristics, binary gender labeling and social accountability may influence characteristic four: Genderism leads to the invisibility and isolation of transgender persons.

Genderism Promoted Invisibility and Isolation of Transgender Persons

The fourth characteristic of genderism focused on the transgender student experience of invisibility, isolation, and related emotional consequences. While this study concerns itself primarily with the campus lives of transgender students, it is important to

note that most participants described the phenomenon of invisibility, isolation, and emotional consequences as occurring long before their arrival on campus. By implication, genderist systems also operate outside the confines of universities A and B.

Invisibility and Identity Inaccessibility

Six participants described being unable to self identify as transgender prior to being exposed to LBGT issues and peers on their campuses. They described ways that binary gender systems rendered transgender identities invisible in United States society. A number of participants shared the experience of being from home communities or life experiences where the word "transgender" never was heard, and the identities literally were non-existent. Razi said, "Growing up in the suburbs, there just wasn't any language for it." Though Triston talked at length about being raised in a family where his parents encouraged the defiance of traditional female gender roles, he also believed his parent's feminist convictions reinforced transgender invisibility. Reflected Triston,

> I was a Tomboy as a kid and my parents were always really cool about that...it didn't mean that I wasn't a girl, you know, they (his parents) were like, "girls can be like active," so there was never any forcing on their part for me to be different, or for me to fit with traditional gender roles for women. But that made it harder for me to realize that I was trans, honestly. Because you know if I was told that a woman could be anything, and I was like, "whatever I am, I am still a woman."

As systemic genderism appeared to render transgender identities invisible and culturally inaccessible, six participants entered college with an initial gay or lesbian self identification. Powerful encounters with peers and transgender inclusive organizations

led them to understanding a new aspect of identity, as described by Damien, Razi, and Nick.

When Damien began participating in his institution's Transgender, Gay, Lesbian Bisexual Task Force, he defined himself as a "weird, different kind of gay man." Yet, he never felt that he connected with the campus gay community, "I thought that gay men were supposed to meet other gay men, and find someone they love, and have a relationship, and get married, whatever, you know. But that just wasn't happening." The Task Force's emphasis on gender identity concerns, combined with an opportunity to work with other transgender individuals caused Damien to view himself through an alternative lens and life experience. Damien credited involvement with the Task Force as having a significant impact on his embracing a transgender identity. Razi described a similar process of identity shift when he first arrived at University B, initially identifying as lesbian. Said Razi,

> I just felt really weird. I still hate saying the word (lesbian) to this day. Like I never felt comfortable identifying with that. Even when I became more comfortable with my sexuality, like I still didn't like the identity at all. It just didn't fit me.

During his first semester at college, Razi attended a meeting of one of the residence hall LBGT support organizations. The group held a discussion that focused on gender identity and was facilitated by two transgender students, one of whom was Triston. Recalled Razi, "And then Alex and Triston were both there. And they kind of talked about their experiences. And that kind of got me into thinking about like, 'Well, maybe I am.'"

Nick described a similar process of becoming aware of his transgender identity. He talked about identifying as lesbian at the time he graduated from high school, yet there was something about him that was "more than that... Like, I was...kind of different, but I had never met another transgender person, so I didn't know how I was different." At University C, where he attended school before transferring, Nick became involved in an LBGT student organization and went to a regional queer college student conference with the group. At the conference, Nick attended a presentation on gender identity. Reflected Nick,

> I was curious about the transgender subject...so I just went in there and they were talking about it. I raised my hand and starting asking a few questions, and then like, "Oh, do you do this or do you this?" Or whatever. And then I was just like, "Oh, okay. I feel like that." You know, so that started it for me. That was maybe like three years ago. And so that's how I pretty much came to the conclusion that I must be like transgendered, you know.

As described by Damien, Razi, and Nick, genderism's rendering of transgender identities as invisible in childhood and adolescence appeared to set the stage for a powerful self-awakening in college. Contact with transgender persons, often in the context of LBGT inclusive organizations led to identity possibilities previously inaccessible. Yet, in chapter four, a number of these same organizations were described by participants as marginalizing and highly reinforcing of binary gender systems. Perhaps this phenomenon reflects a reality of organizational life: Experience in human groups is rarely entirely negative or positive, but instead a blending and blurring of affirmation, challenge, struggle, and at times, stigmatization. While participation in inclusive

organizations appeared to help a number of the study's participants to transcend genderisms' force of identity inaccessibility and invisibility, invisibility was a times an inescapable reality of students successfully passing as cisgender. Wendy explained,

> For some people who transition, they're able to do it in such a way that when they present themselves to certain key points in the process, the academic process, the administrative process or just being in the community, they have transitioned and they are invisible because (other) people don't know they're trans. Other people cannot look at a person and know they are trans, so they are invisible that way.

Diondre described being at a conference, which had a transsexual F-M focus, and suddenly becoming aware that he could not tell who in the room was transsexual and who was cisgender. While at one level, he was delighted by this awareness, at another, he felt disturbed. If assimilation to a socially defined, correct standard for gender expression became the goal, negating transgender identity, then what were the consequences? As one example, for F-M individuals who still needed gynecological care, accessing a traditional, women's focused clinic was not an option. Said Diondre,

> A big rule for F-to-Ms, don't make them go to the gynecology clinic for pelvic exams. Now I actually am fine doing this, but it is just – it was the rule that people are just going to have to get past. Because they won't go. F-to-Ms won't go. And it is life and death. It's life and death. I mean, it just – it's not – if you're taking testosterone, it's probably messing with your system. You know. It just – the whole thing – that whole piece tells me that the whole – the support systems for getting medical care are complicated.

In this example, gynecology clinics being associated with women was so stigmatizing for transgender men, they were willing to choose serious health risks over getting medical support. For transgender individuals, managing identity often meant struggling with choices about being out or becoming invisible, often with significant consequences.

Invisibility, Identity Inaccessibility and Emotional Health Consequences

The costs of unsupportive academic departments, faculty members, and student peers were described by participants as having consequences for academic success and emotional health. The extreme personal stress of gender transition, combined with lack of support from his department, caused Diondre to drop out of graduate school, though he remained involved with campus-related activism. Razi described choosing to skip classes because of transgender insensitive faculty members, often resulting in low grades. Wendy said that the emotional depression she experienced as male student in the 1970s caused her to extend her education over a 15 year period in ways that she described as "self destructive." Nick talked about experiencing depression related to his "still defining" gender identity status, "It makes it really hard because I feel like it's almost stunting my growth." He related that his relationship with his counselor was the only thing on campus that let him know that his feelings "were normal." By implication, Nick moved through a campus experience that systemically reinforced the concept of non-conformity to binary gender identities as abnormal. Nick believed his depression issues would be significantly helped if he lived in a society and attended a university that did not require him to declare one of two gender options and conform to it. Nick commented,

> If I was surrounded by people that didn't feel like they had to fit into certain masculine and feminine roles, I wouldn't feel confused about it, because I would be okay. I think in that situation I probably wouldn't have a sex change at all. I probably wouldn't even consider it. I'd be like I do certain things on a certain day. Like, "Oh, I'll be male today." And the next, "Oh, I'll be female today." But it's not really like that, where I can feel like that's okay. If I didn't have to deal with it (a binary society), I don't think I'd be so depressed all the time.

Similarly, Charlie described dealing with the motional weight of his "still defining" status, constantly having to justify or explain it, highlighting his desire for a "simpler" way to identify, saying,

> One thing I didn't like, I guess, when I was identifying solely as transgender, not even lesbian, was the fact that I always felt like I was walking around explaining to people all day long. Like, "This is why I just walked in the men's bathroom because I identify this way. Can you call me this? Oh, by the way, my name is this and not that." It just—and maybe that's why I veered away from that (transgender, F-M) identification. Maybe it's just too much work for me. Maybe it's just mental and emotional work because I feel like I'm constantly having to explain myself to people and it's more comfortable for me to walk around not having to tell you what my gender is and not having to tell you how I identify and what my name is and what the pronouns are. It just seems like too much of a hassle and it's causing me one massive headache. I know it sounds silly because if you're really trans you're going to go through all that trouble... But for me, I'm just honestly sick of it. I just need a simpler identification. Maybe just being a

> guy. I mean, not that being trans is complex or something, it's just it's been too much for me. It became too much of my life and it got overwhelming. Every single day I felt like I had to correct people or you know if I didn't correct them then I felt bad. There were too many emotions involved for me because I'm a really emotional person to begin with.

For Charlie, erasure of transgender experience and assimilation to a male identity became a more emotionally attractive and affirming option.

Summary: Invisibility, Isolation, Inaccessibility.

A genderist system at Universities A and B, and broader society, promoted conformity and assimilation to either male or female genders. Yet, at the same time, this system created a culture of inaccessibility to transgender identity and experience. Participants described a range of life barriers to gaining a self awareness of their identities. Asher, Damien, Danielle, Debbie, Razi, and Wendy all discussed ways the erasure of transgender identities from popular culture made the ability to self-identity and name difficult. Significant connections to visible transgender individuals at the university became a means for many participants to self identify for the first time. This culture of identity inaccessibility was compounded by the reality that if one had never experienced another gender emotionally or biologically, never seen or felt the possibility of gender as a fluid construct, the ability to access the identity would be very difficult. Reflecting on the process of coming to understand his identity, Diondre explained,

> But I didn't get it. And so I know why people don't get it. So now what I know is how deeply you cannot know something. To know how hard it is to understand the things that are not available to your own bodily experience. I do not know

how anybody – I don't even know how you (Brent, the interviewer) can be sitting here having this interview, why you could care about it, and not be transgender yourself. Because I think it is – a transgender experience is deeply inaccessible. A transsexual experience I think is deeply inaccessible to people who don't feel it. And it's even inaccessible to those of us who do.

To summarize, in a genderist culture, transgender identities are so highly invisible and marginalized, that "accessing" them is profoundly difficult. For some participants, these difficulties led to significant emotional health concerns, often impacting their quality of life and success as students. For a number of participants who had accessed transgender identity, the daily pressures of identity management created a desire for them to be seen simply as cisgendered male or female.

Conclusion: A Framework for Understanding Genderism

In chapters four and five, the voices of transgender students provided a framework for understanding ways genderism operated at Universities A and B. The two institutions and broader society enacted an unspoken principle that there are, or should be, two and only two genders. This principle impacted all dimensions of life for the both transgender students and cisgender members of university communities. As described by participants, genderism at Universities A and B was enacted through implicit and explicit laws, rules, and policies. Further, genderism was maintained by four operating characteristics: a social labeling process used to categorize all individuals into male or female identities; social accountability for conforming to binary gender norms with requisite rewards and punishments; privileging of cisgender identities; and invisibility of

identities and isolation of transgender persons, making transgender identities inaccessible.

The student descriptions in the preceding chapters imply that in the context of genderism, social labeling served as a foundation, often based in a cisgender notion that biology and gender identity are fused. Thus, all students at universities A and B were socially assigned a binary category at birth and the enactment of one of two categories became a social expectation. At some level, all individuals must be read and seen as male or female every day, every moment, in every interaction. In this study, it appeared that systems which reinforced students being seen as one of two binary identities were driven by social accountability and the privileging of binary gender. These characteristics served as the action of genderism. Students who failed to meet gender expectations experienced wide ranging forms of stigmatization, and faced ways their cisgender peers were privileged and advantaged merely as a function of gender conformity. When transgender students successfully passed as cisgender, the experience was often both affirming and troubling at the same time. Passing often meant that transgender identity was erased, thus leading to genderism's final characteristic: invisibility and isolation of transgender students. While the voices of the participants in this study discussed genderism permeating every aspect of their lives, genderism on campus was most often discussed in the following contexts: academic success, campus employment and career aspirations, dynamics of LBGT communities and organizations, and campus facilities.

In chapter six, implications for theory and practice are discussed. Genderism is described in the ways that it informs, and is informed by postmodern feminist, queer, and

critical postmodern theoretical perspectives. The chapter also details pragmatic strategies for challenging genderism on college campuses.

Chapter Six: Implications for Theory, Practice, and Future Directions for Research

The goal of this study was to make the practical issues and unseen power structures of binary gender systems on campus visible through the lives of transgender students. This system, named as *genderism*, was described by study participants as having significant impact in their campus experiences related to academics, employment and career aspirations, lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender (LBGT) organizations and communities, and campus facilities. Further, beyond transgender students, genderism's influence was inescapable. It impacted all members of campus communities. As presented in this study, genderism offers a core implication: Fluid gender identities, operating in a non-categorical manner, undermine the very nature of the binary gender model. The concept of undermining cultural norms is a notion shared by postmodern feminist, queer, and critical postmodern perspectives. These lenses guided the study's research process and analysis of findings and themes. In this chapter, these perspectives are applied to discussion surrounding implications for further study and recommendations for improving the campus climate for transgender students.

Postmodern Feminist Perspectives and Genderism

Postmodern feminist scholars (Butler, 1990; Halberstam, 1998), suggest that traditional feminist scholarship negates any concept of gender variance or fluidity. And, like genderism and its related binary systems, this scholarship assumed cisgender identities to be fixed. Though Butler's work is contested by some academics (Nessbaum, 1999), her scholarship significantly informs this study's exploration of genderism.

Specifically, Butler (1990), called for subversive action, breaking free from traditional gender constructions, and enacting gender in multiple forms. From Butler's

(1990) perspective, true gender liberation lies beyond binary identity constructions. The postmodern feminist perspective challenges essentialized identities, calling for new scholarship that reexamines traditional constructions of male "privilege" and "women's" oppression.

The emergence of gender variant identities poses new questions. What happens to binary gender, and its inherent power and oppression systems when transgender identities are involved? Are the experiences of transsexual men and women similar to their cisgender counter parts? For those who are androgynous, genderqueer, or don't always "pass" as male or female, what is their experience of gender privilege and oppression? In this study, Triston and Razi shared conflicting perspectives regarding male privilege. Triston believed that male privilege was inaccessible to him. Razi thought that male privilege could give him the credibility necessary to challenge sexist behavior he saw in bio and transgender men. When Wendy experienced sexism at the community college, where she was currently employed, she was surprised by it. Said Wendy,

> I've been in professional situations where my opinion has been devalued. I've been talked over. I have had a certain amount of amazing sexist behavior in front of me, but I am very certain to this day that it's completely unconscious by these people. It's just amazing. I'll be right in the row with them and they'd make all these jokes that were just horrifying. At first, I thought this disrespect was because-I naturally assumed people thought I was trans. I thought they could tell. I thought the word had gotten out at the place that I work, but I was later able to find out that this wasn't true; that they just didn't know that I was a transsexual person. They were just being sexist. Kind of a weird space to be in. It is a real

problem and one of the things that came as a surprise-and I've never really come to grips with this, but one great surprise.

Emerging scholarship about genderism in higher education and society must take into account these new and complex dynamics of privilege and oppression. For example, could Wendy's being "surprised" by sexism be in part due to her prior experience as a "male" and her unconsciousness of male privilege? In contrast, both Triston and Razi, raised as cisgender women, were very aware of sexism and its impact. And, they both struggled with the meaning that male privilege could take on in their lives as they transitioned to becoming men. A postmodern feminist framework would suggest that as transgender students challenge norms regarding gender identity, implications for the study of related power systems must be considered as well.

Queer Theory and Genderism

Queer theory is similar to the feminist postmodern perspective in a significant respect--it also challenges assumptions about essentialized categories. In addition, it gives specific attention to categories operating within, outside of, and in opposition to lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender identities. Queer theory has a particular interest in the construction of normative and deviant categories, primarily focusing on social activities related to the constructions of sex and gender (Butler, 2005). Examinations of language and the socio-cultural meaning of identifying as "non-straight" vs. "gay" are examples of queer theoretical enterprises.

As applied to this study's exploration of genderism, queer theory provides a unique lens for addressing issues of categories and language, specifically, in regards to the terms "deviance" and "norm." At Universities A and B, not fitting into one of two defined

gender categories was not just seen as deviant, but alien. A number of participants, particularly the tranny boys and genderqueer students, reported encountering strangers who gasped, "What is it?" or "What are you?" To not have a clear, binary-based gender identity was to be outside of the human experience. In this study, issues of gender categories, accountability, and consequences emerged as significant themes in relation to the enactment of genderism at the two institutions. Queer theory's attention to categories and language also caused me to reflect on my process of developing the research protocols for this dissertation.

In the early conceptualization of this study, I posed what I thought was a fairly simple question, "What is the standardized terminology for individuals who are not transgender identified?" To my surprise, finding an answer was difficult. Without access to any prior studies on genderism, I sought the advice of other scholars and practitioners who had expertise on LBGT identities and issues. The standard response was, "I never thought about that." My search for this language eventually led me to three terms: "gender normative," "traditionally gendered," and "cisgender." I had heard the first term used at a conference presentation and found it unacceptable. "Gender normative" implied that transgender individuals are abnormal. Regarding the "traditionally gendered" designation, a strongly feminist identified colleague indignantly reacted to the term, saying, "My gender is anything but traditional!" I settled on "cisgender" primarily because it was the term used by transgender communities to describe individuals whose biological sex assignment matched gender identity. Yet, from the perspective of queer theory, the inaccessibility of this terminology also was also evidence of genderism. So

normalized were the cisgender identities of "male" or "female," and so pathologized were transgender categories, that alternative terms simply did not exist.

In comparison, social justice pedagogy regarding other diversity issues has a distinct, though evolving language associated with it, such as "white vs. people of color." This terminology resulted from years of studying the social construction of racism. The term "genderism" has only recently appeared in the literature and has not yet entered the popular lexicon. Queer theory suggests that simplistic, binary categories and related language reinforce the idea of structural inequality operating in simplistic, either/or terms, thus creating genderism's theoretical invisibility. In related examples of race and ethnicity, binaries negate the complexity of oppression experienced by multiracial individuals. Rarely are their experiences named or identified (Renn, 2004). In this context, binary systems, broadly defined, could be said to perpetuate both racism and genderism. More specifically, queer theory suggests that the lack of language for cisgender identities keeps genderism unnamed and invisible. In fact, it is this invisibility that gives genderism its covert power.

This categorical invisibility and the erasure of transgender identities was a theme that also played out in a place I least expected it—at the library. In the early phase of conducting research for this study, I was intrigued by the way I observed gender assignment enacted in the library stacks. Moving through the maze of shelves and stacks, I anticipated the placement of texts related to my study clustered around two primary themes: gender and lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender. The gender section was significant, with multiple rows of floor-to-ceiling texts. Yet, no books related to transgender identities were placed there. The lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender

collection also was substantial, filling a 50 foot, floor-to-ceiling section. Yet, within this section, transgender-related texts filled only one quarter of just one area of just one shelf. It would have been possible for me to checkout all transgender-related books in the library and carry them home (which I did). This experience left me pondering a number of issues and questions. Given the overlapping socio-historical nature of the relationship between lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender communities, the placement of the texts made some sense. Yet, the complete absence of transgender-related books from the *gender* stacks seemed indicative of institutionalized genderism. Queer theories attention to language, categories, and related invisibility within and external to LBGT communities informed the following fact: At the library, gender ultimately appears to be the study of "man" or "woman."

Certainly, this study points to the lack of scholarship about transgender students as evidence of genderism. Yet, at another level, a queer theoretical analysis implies that, not only must there be an active research agenda, but scholars must be highly attuned to ways their work may reinforce binary categories. What does the language of transgender inclusive scholarship look like? While it may be too great a cultural leap for a higher education journal article to be titled, "An Examination of Cisgender Women Faculty," or a description of a sample subjects to read, "David, a white, cisgender male, 47 years old," an anti-genderist research agenda demands that future scholars attend to these concerns. Similar to queer theory, the critical postmodern perspective reveals that which was categorically marginalized or invisible. Yet, this perspective adds the dimension of human agency.

Critical Postmodern Perspectives and Genderism

Critical postmodernism examines the roots of essentialized, categorical norming and how these norms are enacted through systemic oppression. This perspective also explores the human struggle opposing oppression. As applied to this study, critical postmodernism is particularly concerned with ways transgender students enacted identities in relationship to their struggle against campus gender norms. Concepts related to norm and "norming" are explored in-depth by Foucault (1978), whose ideas had a significant impact on critical postmodern thought. He said that "normalization" lies at the core of culture. One significant way that normalization is accomplished is through the "importance of the action of the norm" (Foucault, 1978. p. 144). The norm becomes the prescribed code that all members must follow. From this perspective, all organizations have similar qualities in that they constrain individual action: "prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons" (Foucault, 1979, p. 228).

In this study, "M' or "F" norming was so culturally deep, that it could be traced to the medical model described in chapter two. In this context, the medical model was presented as the foundation on which the dual gender norms were built. To be biologically female assumed female gender identity. In this study, biologically-based "M" or "F" designations and related ideology were fixed into the very the brick and mortar of the two institutions. At Universities A and B, campus architecture fused with binary gender socialization to create implicit, explicit, and often complex standards for male or female behavior in bathrooms, locker rooms and residence halls. As one example, Charlie, Danielle, Damien, Nick and Triston all talked about needing to learn the gendered culture of restrooms in order to pass as the appropriate gender, with clear

risks of harassment. Yet, in the context of bathrooms, Foucault's (1978) idea of social surveillance worked in multiple directions, creating a fear of rape, as Nick described, in cisgender women if men were perceived to be in an "F" designated restroom. Thus, these labels were used to enforce biologically-based norms, and in turn, from the critical postmodern context, transgender terminology became equated with deviance.

While the label *transgender* is used to connote deviance from the norm, the critical postmodern perspective (Grace, 1997; Boje, 2001c), asserted that the term has an additional function. *Transgender* as a distinct category made it possible for non-bio gendered persons to organize around a common identity. Without a sense of group identity there cannot be a unified effort to legitimize transgender identities. It could be argued that it is the socially constructed category *transgender* that creates the context for non-cisgender individuals to resist and struggle to overthrow the gender binary system. At universities A and B, this struggle began, as participants described, with the transgender category as something they "discovered."

In this study, the power of the identity label, *transgender* was reflected by the experiences of Asher, Triston, Nick, and Razi, who had no prior encounters with transgender terminology prior to attending college. The language of non-binary identities did not exist in their schools, hometowns, or families. From a critical postmodern perspective, without language there can be no category, and therefore no identity (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Study participants talked about discovering their gender identities for the first time. New awareness occurred through seeing transgender focused classroom presentations, serving on university committees related to transgender concerns, attending conference presentations on the topic, and attending LBGT

organizations. Further, *transgender* became more than a personal identity, but emerged as a social category equated with critical postmodern concepts of struggle and liberation against genderism.

Nine participants in the study were part of transgender support and advocacy organizations. Diondre named his most profound campus activist experience as the day that cisgender participants in the graduate employees union claimed transgender identities as their own, proudly displaying the protest signs, "We're all transgender GEU!" In the mid-1990s, Wendy was involved with the founding of the first transgender support and advocacy group at University B, which was also one of the few such organizations in the region. This new opportunity for transgender individuals was so significant, that people from across the state came to participate in monthly gatherings, often driving for three to four hours. From the critical postmodern perspective, transgender identity equaled activism, advocacy, and organization for liberation.

In sum, the critical postmodern perspective suggests that the interaction of cultural norms and labeling work to create powerful and contradictory meanings for the term *transgender.* It can be used to label individuals deviant, forcing accountability to binary gender norms. Yet, the very existence of the term also creates a means for individuals to become visible, to discover their identities and to join with others for support and struggle against oppression. An implication of this study is that future research regarding transgender students must not only account for their personal identity development processes, but also include the ways the category *transgender* is linked to struggle and organization against genderism.

Towards a Synthesis of Theory and Practice

In Tierney's (1993) landmark text, *Building Communities of Difference*, he asserted that critical postmodernism was founded in the Marxian goal: "To comprehend the world in order to change it." (p. 9) Critical postmodernists seek to bridge the gap between research and action, a gap that has been promoted by traditional positivist research. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) suggested that positivists have focused to much on understanding the technical aspects of how social change can be more efficient, instead of addressing critical postmodern research questions related to deconstructing the meanings of social change, and who may be empowered by it. As Lather, (1986) asserted, "Rather than illusory 'value-free' knowledge of the positivists, praxis-oriented inquiries seek emancipatory knowledge" (p. 259). Boje (2001c), in discussion of praxis, extends these concepts further,

> Praxis is taking action, not just writing more theory. That is for pretenders to the critical or critical postmodern. There needs in addition to theory, to be a life style of action, more than cynicism and skepticism, there needs, in my view, to be action. Mine may differ from yours. For me, it is a visit to the local slaughterhouse, examining food and clothing habits, spending spring break in a sweatshop, taking a trip to the land of the Other, and conducting an action of non-violent resistance to the dominant narratives and discourse. In whatever praxis, disabuse yourself of the notion that postmodern is without ethical or critical purchase or answerability. (p. 26)

A challenge for this study was to utilize theory in a way that enlightens the understanding of gender theory, as well as a call for action-oriented change. The systemic and

systematic nature of genderism requires a comprehensive approach to addressing its impact and providing support to transgender students in higher education. In this section, alternative practices are suggested, clustering responses to genderism into three areas: creating accommodating facilities, comprehensive education and training, and inclusive and supportive institutional policies.

Creating Accommodating Facilities

In a Maslovian sense, safety and support on campus begins with creating comfort in some of the most intimate environments on campus: locker-rooms, bathrooms, and residence halls. For the transgender students in this study, fears of harassment and violence are connected to daily choices about which restroom to use. At Universities A and B, managing identities in facilities with "M" or "F" designations not only created pragmatic challenges for transgender students, but reinforced a rigid binary gendered culture that had consequences for all.

Restrooms and Locker rooms

At Universities A and B, with few exceptions, all restrooms were "M" or "F" community bathrooms, with few uni-sex or gender-free options. Asher's experience of managing daily life around restroom use mirrored that of many of the participants in this study. He described planning each day in the context of identifying safe bathrooms in proximity to class, personal commitments, and employment. In addition, these decisions were informed by Asher's daily reflections on how well he was passing as male, in addition to selecting restrooms that were, as Asher said, "Off the beaten path."

To support transgender students, a number of universities are considering the creation of gender-neutral restrooms (single-stall lockable, uni-sex restrooms) in existing

and newly constructed buildings. For example, in 2003, student governance at San Diego State University passed a resolution that called for the implementation of safe restrooms across campus for transgender students (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, Tubbs, 2005). To begin the process, the group first approved funding for converting a set of restrooms in the student union from cisgenderto gender-neutral. Changes included the alteration of door signs and instillation of locks. In addition, locations of all gender-neutral restrooms were listed in the university's general catalog. At the University of Chicago and Beloit College (Wisconsin), student advocacy led to the implementation of gender-neutral restrooms in the most frequented campus buildings (Transgender Law and Policy Institute, 2005). Beemyn (2005) suggests that locker rooms can be made safer by creating individual showers with curtains or private changing rooms. At Universities A and B, the issues presented by single-sex restrooms were also reflected by residence hall facilities.

Residence Halls

For the participants in this study, residence hall living, with housing options exclusively based on biological sex assignment, was particularly problematic. Asher, Razi, Danielle, and Wendy described personal discomfort and fears about the reactions of residents to their gender identities. Wendy believed that violence would be a consequence if she failed to pass as a male on her floor. Traditional housing policies, room or floor choices, and assignment procedures reflected genderist invisibility and marginalization of transgender students.

To accommodate housing concerns, Beemyn (2005) suggests that, given the diverse ways that transgender students identify, providing appropriate housing should be handled on a case by case basis, with mutual decision-making occurring between the

student and housing staff. To guide housing assignment and decision making processes, a number of institutions have enacted related guidelines. The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, enacted a policy that respects the gender identity a student establishes with the university and strives to provide accommodations whenever possible. Similarly, The Ohio State University policy states that no student "whom they know to be transgendered will have to find a comfortable, welcoming housing assignment on their own." (Ohio State University, 2005). The housing policy at the University of California, Riverside, focuses on providing "reasonable accommodations" for transgender students, with a request that the university is notified in a timely manner (University of California, Riverside, 2005). In terms of the types of accommodations offered, Asher, Razi, and Danielle all stressed the need for housing choices outside "M" or "F."

A number of institutions are offering "gender neutral" housing options. In gender neutral housing, room assignments are made without regard to the individual's biological sex, so residents may request a roommate of any gender (Curtis and Tubbs, 2004). Among the institutions that provide this opportunity are Sarah Lawrence College, the University of California Riverside, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Southern Maine, and Wesleyan University (Cutris and Tubbs, 2004; Transgender Law and Policy Institute). Some universities have implemented alternative housing options, such as an LBGT and Allies Hall. However, Beemyn (2005) cautions against assuming transgender student comfort in these settings. These environments may not be comfortable for transgender students if they identify as heterosexual or are not open about their gender identity. Postmodern feminist and queer theory perspectives would admonish practitioners to be mindful of the dangers of categorical assumptions.

Some of the aforementioned options may be helpful for transgender students, and forms of traditional housing may be alternatives as well. Asher said that ultimately, he would be most comfortable living on a University B co-ed floor (two room suites of men or women with shared bathrooms, mixed genders throughout the floor), a single room with a bathroom, or even in a university apartment. Yet, given the unique housing assignment concerns for transgender students, it is also important to address issues of financial equity (Beemyn, 2005). As an example, while Charlie would have preferred a single room option, the cost was prohibitive, so he chose to live in an all female suite style room, hoping roommates would be personally supportive. Offering housing options for transgender students may be complicated by the fact that, as Asher related, these students are often afraid to articulate their needs, and are unsure of how administration will respond.

To create more comfort with students self-identifying concerns, a number of universities are changing the sex designation on their housing intake forms (Transgender Law and Policy Institute, 2005). These forms provide alternatives to binary "M" or "F" boxes with simple fill-in-the blank options, "Your gender is: _____," or the multiple choices of "Male," "Female," "Self-Identify: _____." Housing forms also often ask students to indicate any special needs (Transgender Law and Policy Institute, 2005).

Feminist, queer theoretical and critical postmodern perspectives all suggest a need to both examine, dismantle, and alternatively, to expand traditional notions for categorizing gender. Similarly, the solutions presented here ultimately rest in creating more options for diverse forms of gender expression, such as gender-neutral restrooms

and additional housing options beyond "M" or "F." Though some alternatives, such as the refit of facilities, may require significant costs, genderism impacts all members of the university community. Private changing rooms and gender-free restrooms not only benefit transgender individuals, but also families with small children, as well as people with disabilities that require the assistance of an attendant of a different gender. Beyond facility concerns, genderism touches all spheres of institutional life. Thus, comprehensive educational infusion and training about transgender identities and experience is recommended.

The Need for Training and Education related to Transgender Identities

As described by participants in this study, genderism had a significant impact in contexts related to academic experiences, campus employment and career development and LBGT student organizations. In class, transgender students were often ignored, degraded, and tokenized. Campus employment and career development contexts were laden with fears about consequences for being "out" at work, as well as students being worried about how their identities would impact their ability to gain employment or admission to graduate school. While transgender students expected to find support in LBGT student organizations, they were often marginalized in favor of their cisgender peers. Appropriately designed educational initiatives can bring visibility to transgender lives and experiences in all spheres of institutional life.

Curriculum Infusion and Education

In this study, participants discussed faculty insensitivity to their identities, as well as a lack of curriculum infusion on transgender perspectives. A number of authors (Beemyn, 2005; Renkin, 2003) suggest that institutions can create an academic culture

that values transgender related scholarship through related colloquia, inviting nationally regarded scholars to campus, and creating campus networks of faculty and students engaged in research related to gender identity. Others (Curtis and Tubbs, 2004) suggest providing mini-grants as incentives for faculty to engage in transgender related research and curricular infusion initiatives. Providing educational workshops on transgender students concerns for faculty and academic support staff, such as academic advisors, could also help to improve the academic climate for transgender students.

Education Related to Career Development Concerns

This study suggests a need for staff and faculty to be involved with student career development to in order become familiar with issues facing transgender students and provide effective guidance. In application processes related to jobs and graduate school, how, when, and, if at all, does the transgender student explain identity? If name and pronoun changes without legal changes, when and how is this explained? As an example, Razi was applying to graduate school program in Student Affairs. Though male identified, he marked 'F' on the application to conform to legal standards of the university. Razi chose to list his name as Sandra (Razi) Baker. Yet, in his cover letter, Razi chose to explain his identity and his preference for use of pronouns "he" and "him." His rationale for being out in his application focused on a desire to work with transgender students and serve as a role model. Transgender students may be in a wide range of places regarding their desire for "outness" at work and graduate school. A staff member providing career guidance should understand these unique issues. The reality is that a college transcript may reflect a different name and gender than what the student currently uses. Faculty and staff should be prepared to assist students to develop multiple strategies

for managing such discrepancies. Further, campus career service offices should be informed of the growing list of educational institutions and corporations that provide active support for transgender persons.

Training and Education on Employment Issues

Regarding employment, Asher and Razi lived double lives, going by birth name and gender in work settings and being authentic selectively. Others, like Wendy, chose underemployment to help her remain invisible to potentially non-supportive supervisors or coworkers. Few universities have identified procedures for employees who wish to transition at work. A number of organizations recommend the development of a "transition team," which may include a human resources professional, the employee, the supervisor, and sometimes an outside consultant with expertise on transgender issues (Israel and Tarver, 2005). The team provides resources and support to the employee with issues related to: informing supervisors and co-workers of gender change, new name, and when transition will occur; helping the employee find additional support resources for the transition; creating appropriate transgender related education for all those in the workplace; and addressing, if applicable any concerns related to restroom use (Israel and Tarver, 2005). As applied to higher education settings, transition teams may be broadened to include an academic advisor, a residence hall director, or other appropriate university personnel.

Education in LBGT Communities and Student Organizations

While a number of participants described ways that their identities felt affirmed by LBGT communities, others described ways that genderism privileged gay male and lesbian female identities over all others. Numerous examples were given, as Danielle

said, about how the "T" was just "tacked on" to LBGT, when most community and student organization functions really were about "homosexual." For participants like Nick, who shared multiple identities--lesbian, transgender, genderqueer--the segmentation of identity into distinct categories caused him to feel that the had to choose one identity over others. Students who failed to fall into static LBGT identity categories were invisible.

Student Affairs professionals charged to do LBGT work, as well as campus LBGT resource centers, have a responsibility to address genderism within LBGT communities. As informed by postmodern feminist and queer theory perspectives, challenging the overly simplistic nature of LBGT categories may be a beginning. At University B, the LBGT Center has renamed all training and education initiatives to use broader, more inclusive language, with titles such as *Understanding Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Issues on Campus.* This shift in terminology allows for training to provide a broader framework for examining these identities, recognizing the fluidity between, across, and outside the categories of sex and gender. Within LBGT communities, education about gender identity concerns should be a regular and on-going activity, instead of events like the once per year "tranny day" Triston described. Specific examples of such activities include the development of a transgender ally program or speakers bureau, inviting leading transgender speakers to campus to specifically address LBGT communities, and scheduling a separate awareness week for transgender issues (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, and Tubbs, 2005). Education and training to counteract genderism in classrooms, campus employment and career development, and LBGT

organizations are crucial. Yet, the foundation for dismantling the effects of binary systems ultimately lies in the transformation of university policy.

Creating Supportive Institutional Policies

This study suggests that genderism is expressed through institutionalized policies, procedures, and practices that are implicit and explicit. Counteracting genderism also requires legislative power. Thus, university anti-discrimination policies, inclusive of gender identity, are important considerations. As of this writing, 52 colleges have some form of anti-discrimination policy that fully includes gender identity and expression. Neither University A or B have such policies. In this study, Damien, Diondre, Debbie, Triston, and Razi, ranked the need for full inclusion of gender identity and expression in university anti-discrimination policies as among the top priorities for their universities. Diondre believed that if such policies were implemented; responding to genderism would become institutionalized. Beemyn (2005) asserted that a supportive anti-discrimination policy creates leverage for addressing issues related to campus housing and employment. Further, Beemyn (2005) also suggested that such policy should address university records.

The ability to be recognized by gender identity and chosen name was a crucial need for the participants in this study. Institutions can provide better support for transgender students through the adoption or modification of policies and procedures that accommodate name and gender changes. This recognition validates their identities and provides a greater level of personal safety. Students are protected from being "outed" or having their identities questioned in ways that could result in discrimination and harassment. Further, it relieves the onus upon transgender students to have to

explain to each of their faculty members every semester why their name(s), gender(s), and appearance(s) have changed since their credentials were produced upon matriculation. A student electronic mail address is also an identity record, often issued by institutions as a hybrid of student's birth names, such as marchmary@univerity.edu. The ability for students to either self select or modify email addresses is also critical.

A number of institutions have created procedures to address these concerns, with a streamlined, one-stop process. With supporting documentation from an emotional health professional, transgender students at the University of Maryland may change their name and gender on university records (Beemyn, 2005). At Ohio State University, transgender students who legally have changed their name and gender identification may have college records modified by filling out a form in the registrar's office (Beemyn, 2005). At both institutions, these processes led to names and genders being changed on all campus records, including documentation found in admissions and registrars' offices, residence halls, and health centers. It also is important that such processes are flexible enough to accommodate special considerations. While the desire to make such changes is most often expressed by transsexual students, genderqueer or gender variant students also may wish to make such changes as well. Five students in this study were using male pronouns, new names, and were expressing male gender in all aspects of life. Yet, these students may never, or could be years away from making the kind of legal name and gender changes that could, more easily, be accommodated by institutions. For students in similar circumstances, the University of Vermont allows transgender students to request an ID card with a name other than their birth name (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis and Tubbs, 2005). In addition, institutions must account for unique circumstances where an

all-encompassing "M" or "F" designation on all records could potentially harm a student. As an example, Diondre was placed in a difficult situation. To identify only as either male or female could possibly cause him either to lose university health or domestic partner benefits. Institutional systems of name and gender change processes are made more complex by regional differences in name and gender change procedures, which vary by state, as well as by institution. These complexities only magnify the importance of attention to university policy that addresses a range of transgender student concerns. Given genderism's enactment at University A and B through implicit and explicit policies, procedures, and practices, creating institutionalized support for the identities of transgender students is a priority.

Conclusion

Through the voices of the transgender students who participated in this study, I was able to shed light on the practical issues and unseen power of binary gender systems that exist in two higher education institutions. I also examined ways genderism informed postmodern feminist, queer theory and critical postmodern perspectives. From this, I detailed and discussed implications for future research regarding genderism and transgender student identities. Further, through the synthesized lens of both theory and practice, I outlined recommendations for improving higher education practice related to serving transgender students in relationship to the four categories (i.e., academic, campus employment and career, LBGT organizations and communities, and facilities) in which the participants of the study indicated the greatest degrees of genderist oppression. Interestingly, while previous scholarship (i.e., Beemyn; Cutris and Tubbs, 2004) on climate for transgender students provided critical insight for guiding the

recommendations outlined in this chapter, the recommendations that I provide differ significantly. The difference is that the change strategies that I outlined emerged from the transgender student voices of their actual lived experience of oppression. Examples of a few recommendations that emerged from this study include accommodations to locker and rest rooms, different residence hall placement formulas, and modified policies, regulations, and procedures. This is in contrast to other recommendations generated by previous scholarship (i.e., Beemyn, 2005; Curtis and Tubbs, 2004), that indicated the creation of transgender inclusive services in counseling centers and health centers as priorities. These recommendations are not mentioned in my chapter six, and they only barely are acknowledged by the participants of this study. So, why did the transgender students not mention these specific needs?

I do not intend to imply that health and counseling services are not important to transgender students. As Diondre stated, for transsexuals, ongoing health care support is "life and death." But, I must also point out that Diondre, who was the only participant in the study to talk about transgender health issues, spoke generally about these concerns, or named them primarily in the context of oppressive policy systems. He hardly mentioned the campus health care facility. While this issue may be partly accounted for by the fact that none of the participants in this study were currently involved with a medical gender transition, it is nonetheless a curious phenomenon. Similarly, regarding counseling services, three participants accessed support from campus counseling centers, and appeared satisfied with their experiences. Yet, given the historical realities of medical and emotional health agencies acting as agents of genderism, future research should examine related issues for transgender students.

Thus, a core implication of this study is that without research on the lived experience of systemic genderism, there is a gap in the ability to accurately design and implement student support strategies. For the practitioner and scholar concerned with improving campus climate for this population, one assessment question may be, "what do transgender students need?" Yet, a more informative question is, "how do transgender students experience life on campus?" There is a significant difference between asking what needs are, and studying the experience of students to assess their experience to meet their needs. And, as informed by postmodern feminist, queer theory and critical postmodern perspectives, this study suggests that the examination of student needs must account for both the categorical assumptions and systemic nature of oppression. Postmodern feminist, queer theory and critical postmodern perspectives suggest that intentional institutional responses are part of the essential strategies for challenging genderism, with the aim to assist transgender students in self liberation.

In closing, I ponder what lies beyond the gender binary and the ways that transgender youth will redefine themselves and the future of higher education. Thoughtfully and deliberately, Debbie reflected on her own identity and a multi-gendered future:

> I love trans youth because they are unencumbered by some of the traditional thought and I am very encumbered by traditional thought. At some point I see a future where being transsexual in the traditional way that I am transsexual is an anachronism because I clearly do not challenge the binary. I reinforce the binary. I jumped from this box to that box. And I am okay with that. I was born in the fifties. I was raised in a society and a culture that gendered people and roles and

behaviors and so it's particularly difficult for me to extract myself from that training. So yeah, I am fine with being gendered. I just want to be gendered female not gendered male. But transgender youth have this vision that I just find wonderful, where they really don't feel constrained by the binary, and at some point, they are going to break free of it in a profound way where people really are just able to be… But we are not talking about the end of sex. We are talking bout a radical alteration to the social construction of gender identity and expression.

Appendix A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Student,

I am a doctoral student at Michigan State University and I am doing dissertation research on the college experience of transgender students in the Midwest. As you may know, there is very little written about transgender college students, and it is my hope that this research will help students, staff, and faculty to understand the experience of this population on campus. Your participation can make an important difference in the significance of this study. I am recruiting 10—15 Students from _____ University to participate in what I believe will be an excellent experience.

If you choose to participate in this research project, I will ask you to meet with me for an initial one to two hour individual interview focusing on your experience as a transgender student on campus. Should you be interested in further participation in this study, you will be given a disposable camera, and invited to take a series of photographs that captures the "gender system" on your campus. I will cover the costs of developing the photographs. You will also have the option of participating in a one and a half to two hour focus group with other transgender students on your campus, and refreshments will be served to all of those who participate in the session. After I have completed all of the interviews and focus groups on your campus, I will write a summary of the data and you will have the option of meeting with me to share your response to it.

I hope that students who participate in the study will enjoy the opportunity to reflect on their own college experience and to discuss their thoughts on being a transgender student. Students who were part of a similar study I conducted in 2002 said they enjoyed the self-awareness gained from participating as well as the knowledge that they were contributing to the study of gender identity in the United States.

In presenting the results of this study, institutions will be anonymous, any identifying details about you will be obscured and I will use pseudonyms for all participants (you may select your own if you choose). Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point by contacting me at the address, phone or email listed below. Should you have questions or concerns about my research, you can contact me or my advisor, Dr. Kris Renn, any time.

Thank you in advance for your participation and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,
Brent L. Bilodeau
1138 Arbor Dr. East Lansing, MI, 48823
517-337-1658
Bilodeau@msu.edu

Advisor:
Kris Renn, Ph.D., Michigan State University, 517-353-9597

Appendix B

Individual Interview Consent Form

Project Title: Transgender College Student Identity Development

This research study is being conducted by Brent Bilodeau, a doctoral student at Michigan State University. The study focuses on the identity development of transgender students and how this may (or may not) be influenced by their experiences in higher education.

The individual interview is structured to last approximately 60—90minutes. During the interview, Brent Bilodeau will ask you a series of questions about your experience as a transgender student at the university you attend.

In similar studies involving transgender student populations (Renn and Bilodeau, 2003), student participants reported that they enjoyed the individual interview as a means to reflect on their life experiences and often gained personal insight. While the risk is minimal, there is a possibility that talking about your transgender identity and experience on campus could cause you to feel uncomfortable.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, you may chose not to participate at all, or you may refuse to respond to certain questions during the individual interview. You may also choose to discontinue participation in the interview without penalty. Your responses will be kept confidential. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

The signature below indicates that you have read, or that an interviewer has read to you, the above statement and you agree to participate.

_____ _____

Respondent Signature Date

The interview may be tape recorded for transcription and data analysis, but only with your approval. Tape recorded interviews are kept in secured and locked files and are destroyed once the interview tape is reviewed and transcribed. Written transcriptions will be destroyed once data analysis is complete.

- Yes, I consent to the interview being tape recorded.

- No, I do not consent to the interview being tape recorded.

The signature below indicates that you have read, or that an interviewer has read to you, the above statement regarding tape recording and have marked the "yes" or "no" box.

_____ _____

Respondent Signature Date

The following questions are related to how contact information about you was obtained for being invited to participate in this study:

How were you contacted to participate in this study?

The following statement to completed by the researcher, Brent Bilodeau. Please identify how you received the name and contact information on this participant:

Post Individual Interview Option: Focus Group Participation

Should you choose, you may participate in a focus group that will be offered a few weeks after this individual interview. The focus group discussion will center on your reactions to summaries of general themes related to transgender student college experiences compiled from the individual interviews. No personally identifying information will be shared in these summaries about any of the interview participants. All individual interview participants will be invited to the focus group. This focus group will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.

- Yes, I consent to being contacted with an invitation to participate in the focus group.

- No, I do not consent to being contacted with an invitation to participate in the focus group.

If you marked "yes", please provide the following contact information:

Name: Email:
Phone:

The signature below indicates that you have read, or that an interviewer has read to you, the above statement regarding you be contacted to participate in the focus group, and have marked the "yes" or "no" box.

_____ _____
Respondent Signature Date

Questions about this study can be addressed to:

Brent Bilodeau
Doctoral Student
Bilodeau@msu.edu
517-337-1658

Kristin Renn
Faculty Advisor
Renn@msu.edu
517-353-5979

If you find you have questions about or concerns about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact:

University of Michigan Institutional Review Board
Kate Keever
540 East Liberty Street, Suite 202
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210
734-936-0933
email: irbhsbs@umich.edu

Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects
Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D, 202 Olds Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
Phone: (517) 355-2180
Fax: (517) 432-4503
UCRIHS E-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu

Appendix C

Transgender College Student Study
Participant Information

So that I may contact you as needed for this study, please complete the following information. To maintain confidentiality of participants, this information will be kept separate form other study data in a secure location. Thank you.

Name: _____ Year of Graduation: _____

Mailing address:: _____

_____

_____

Email Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Chosen Pseudonym: _____

( ) I would like a summary of the final results of this research

Appendix D

Individual Interview Protocol

Background:

1. Why did you go to choose to attend _____
2. What terms or phrases would you use to describe your gender identity? How did you come to identify as [term] ?

The College Experience

3. Has your coming out process as a transgender person been influenced by your experience at this college? In what ways?
4. How supportive is the university of your gender identity? (prompt for: policies, classroom experiences, curriculum infusion, residence halls, student services offices, student organizations, physical environment of college, peers/friendships)
5. Are there individuals, campus offices, or other campus entities that have been particularly supportive of you? How?
6. Are there individuals, campus offices, or other campus entities that have been particularly not helpful or non-supportive of you? How?
7. What's kept you in college? Why did you choose to stay here?
8. What is your major? What do you hope to do post college?

Gender Systems at this College

9. If I were to ask you to describe the gender system at this college, how would you describe it? (prompts: Is the gender system here more binary? Is there room here for multiple/fluid ways of expressing gender here? How do you see binary and/or fluid gender systems expressed at the college?)
10. How are you impacted by this gender system? .
11. How are students, faculty, staff impacted by this system?
12. How does this gender system impact students from a broad range of diverse experiences? (prompt for: racial/ethnic, disabilities, international, lesbian bisexual, gay)
13. If you could change the gender system here, how would you change it?
14. Do you behave in any ways that are reinforcing of the very things you dislike about the gender system at your college?
14. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your experience at this college?

Closing

-thank the participant

-share information sheet about the option to participate in the "photographing gender on campus activity" and follow-up interview

-invite to participate in the focus group and approximate timing of it

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